

FAMILY #5 - COMPTON FAMILY

Ann Compton was an unemployed divorced woman living alone in Virginia when she read the ad in the Catholic Herald calling for the assistance of bereaved parents. She responded to the ad and participated in the interview alone.

In 1974, Timothy and Ann Compton were living in Cheyenne, Virginia, with their three children ranging in ages from 21 to 17 years old. The Comptons were a white, Catholic/Lutheran, middle class family with a series of family problems. Ann had a nervous breakdown 9 years before Milly died, initiating a procession of worsening family and personal problems. Such incidents as Slim assaulting Ann, Milly almost drowning at the beach and Slim totalling the family car occurred in the winter of 1974 alone.

Just prior to her death on April 10, 1974, Milly (the youngest child) had told her mother that if anything should happen to her, she wished that her mother would not look in the boxes in her closet, which turned out to be poetry. That morning at 1:30 am, Milly secretly left the house.

"So apparently she got into the car, and she'd never done this before, went over the Suzy's house. They made up Suzy's bed to look like Suzy was sleeping in it and then they split. Nobody knows whether they were chasing after the boys that left down the roads for the hell of it or what. But she made it all the way down Mountain Road; down there is wild. And then she hit the brakes and Suzy was a mess. She was pumping a dry heart. She had a broken femur, punctured lung, face completely smashed. What else? And she went through plastic surgery, she came back so fast, it was unreal, after that."

"Well it seems to me somebody told me that a trashman found her. It was such a nightmare. Four o'clock I woke up as I usually did and did bed check. Milly wasn't in bed. Slim had a room in the basement, so I went and I yelled down, 'Where's Milly?' And he said, 'Oh, Mom,' he says, 'She's spending the night at Suzy's.' And I was steaming mad cause she hadn't asked me if she could spend the night at Suzy's. And I said, 'I'm going to take those keys away from her in the morning.' Cause Slim had given her the keys. You know how he felt, right? So then, 4:30 the policeman was at the door just after I'd done the bed check. And they never told me until I got to the hospital that she was dead cause I had a nervous breakdown when I was 34. And they were afraid that I'd just flip out."

Ann called Timothy, who was out of town on business. Ann recalled Timothy saying:

"I just sat there on the bed. You know, nobody said I'm sorry. And that upset him cause nobody said that they were sorry."

He returned the following day to arrange for the funeral.

Following Milly's death, Timothy and Ann did not talk about their feelings or anything related to the loss of their daughter. Ann remembered that the death caused Timothy to "bury himself more and more into his work".

In the process, Tim met Joann who he had an affair with and subsequently married. It is not an uncommon occurrence to leave one's family and memories in an attempt to start over or re-do one's life so that the slate can be wiped clean. Ann hypothesized that:

"He thought he'd just been cheated. And I guess he figured then he wasn't going to be cheated anymore. He was going to have himself his young, little new family and do it right this time."

"I think he really wanted to completely erase the past. I think that had an awful lot to do with it. I really don't think he could handle losing Milly. I think if she'd still been alive, we would still be together."

"Milly was a lot like me and I often thought that's why he left. I think he really wanted to completely erase the past. I think that had an awful lot to do with it."

As opposed to Timothy throwing himself into his work, Ann found herself extremely isolated - unable to stay at home yet incapable of handling society and the work force. Becoming a homemaker meant spending most of her day surrounded by Milly's presence. Getting a job meant being exposed to others' questions and comments about the death. Ann did attempt to work, however, it was unsuccessful.

"I couldn't stay at work. I had to quit that job because people would keep coming in and saying things to me. It was such a public place, you know, I was a receptionist. And I'd break down. I got to the point where I couldn't handle that. And I had this terrible feeling that something else bad was going to happen. There'd been so many bad things, I thought, 'What's next?' Little did I know that the next thing was the divorce, right?"

A year and a half after Timothy left, Ann claimed that she was touched by the Holy Spirit and converted to Catholicism, or in her words, became a Born-Again Christian. She felt that Milly's death was preordained according to a supernatural plan unknown to ordinary mortals.

"Oh, you know what I had done the night before? It was terrible. It was April, right? And usually April's nice. But this night, for some reason, the azaleas were out in bloom beautifully. And we had this cold snap come in and there was snow, light snow in the air. I went out and I took everything I could find in the house to cover the azaleas. To keep them from having the snow get them. Cause I didn't want to ruin them. And, of course, when people came in the morning, it shrouded the whole thing. That's the only time I've ever done that in my life. It was almost like I had put out the sign that the death was coming."

Betty (Milly's 19 year old sister) had a difficult time reconciling Milly's death. When Milly died, Betty was in college and, according to Ann, barely completed the semester.

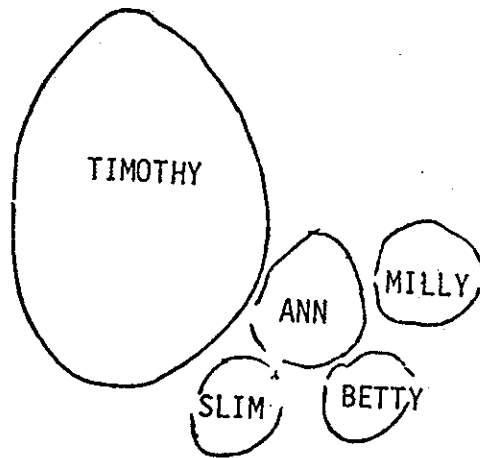
"She's still upset about the divorce, the family split up. And I think she jumped into marriage real soon after the divorce. She met and married in a month. And I think she did that because of Milly. Slim did the same thing. I think that boy wouldn't have gotten married as soon as he did if Milly were still around."

During the interview, Ann focussed heavily on the splintering of the family immediately after the death. With sadness, Ann said,

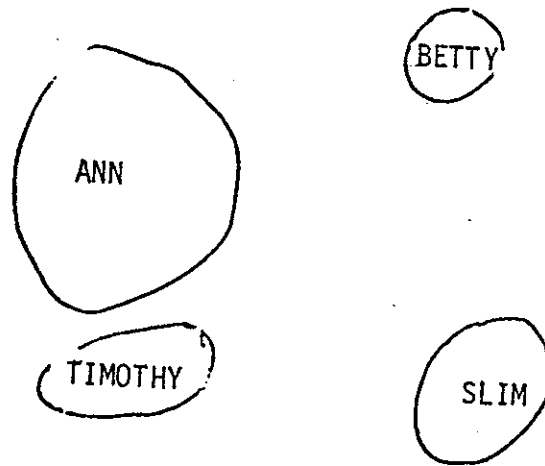
"The family's so split up that there's just no family for me anymore, really."

The Life Space Diagram illustrates the splintering of Ann's family through the increased space between the family members. Following the death, Ann represented Timothy as being smaller (less visible) and her as being bigger and more important after being touched by the Holy Spirit.

BEFORE



AFTER



FAMILY #6 - NORTON FAMILY

Jack and Tina Norton are a white, Catholic, middle class couple residing in Virginia with their two children, Terry and Pamela. Tina saw an ad searching for bereaved parents' assistance and volunteered their time for this study. Jack withdrew unexpectedly but later joined the meeting in progress.

In the summer of 1977, Jack, Tina, and their three children, Suzanne, Terry, and Pamela lived in Buffalo, New York. In July, the family was fully involved in normal summertime activities, with few responsibilities. On July 13, 1977, Tina, Terry, and Pamela were in Tennessee visiting friends and awaiting Jack and Suzanne's arrival the next day. Suzanne, a friend, and her mother were driving to school to participate in a drum corps show when a truck carrying blacktop collided with them and killed all three riders. Jack later went to the show, overheard talk of an accident, and proceeded toward the paraders when he:

"Looked up and saw the policeman coming and the policeman had his hat off. And so they told him. They sent someone from the drum corp to identify her because they told him that they didn't want to send him. They didn't feel that he should see her."

Jack arrived home, called Tina, and attempted unsuccessfully to get a flight to Tennessee where they would bury Suzanne. Tennessee was chosen as Suzanne's burial place because the family had developed their closest family friends there. Jack spent the first 24 hours after the accident alone with his thoughts. Finally, the family was reunited for the funeral.

Tina recalled that Jack initially felt numb and indecisive. Later, he became quite angry when he saw the driver of the truck in court.

"The man came up to him later and said how sorry he was and just couldn't begin to express his sympathy ... he just wanted to reach out and take ahold of him and tell him that he couldn't sleep. He couldn't hold his job. He's not a physical person. I've never really seen him want to fight with someone. But he said, 'I had the feeling if ever I wanted to hit him. I wanted to. I wanted to just deck him'."

Also, Jack felt tremendous guilt for allowing Suzanne to go with her friend instead of insisting that she ride with him.

Tina responded to Jack's confusion by being very decisive, almost mechanical in making necessary decisions. Tina spent many sleepless nights crying and hurting, not only because of the loss of her daughter but also the rejection she felt when her own parents refused to come from California to Tennessee and be with her at her daughter's funeral.

"They felt they were hurting too much that they couldn't come to be with us. And I hurt because of that. I felt let down that my parents and my husband's family, no one could come."

Prior to Suzanne's death, Tina and Jack spent six years as foster parents to approximately twenty foster infants for periods of eight weeks to eight months per visit. One reaction exhibited by Tina to her daughter's death was to discontinue foster parenting because as she described it, "I just didn't feel I could let go."

When describing Terry's reaction, Tina said,

"Terry was very aware of everything that was going on. And then I could see in him this real push. He's all of a sudden from middle child to oldest. And I found him wanting to take that responsibility to take her place. And then wanting to do everything for his little sister that Suzanne had for him."

Terry spent the next year either being quiet and withdrawn or ridiculing Pamela and feeling angry. Tina found him to be overly sensitive, which not only caused poor peer relations but significant difficulties in school. Terry would cry easily. Because he was overwhelmed with Suzanne's death, he could not concentrate on his studies, and this left Terry with an even greater sense of depression and isolation. In addition, he complained of frequent nightmares.

Tina noticed that the 2½ year old, Pamela was quite affected by her older sister's absence.

"One day she'd been sitting outside and she came in and just was so dejected and laid on the floor and was crying and I said, 'What's the matter, Pamela?' And she said, 'Suzanne, hers gone and gone and gone and gone'."

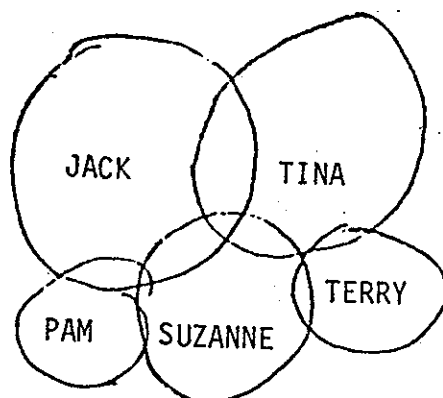
"One night she was laying in bed crying and crying and I'd go up and she said, her reason was that Suzanne wouldn't get to see her grow up. And that shocked me because I thought, 'My God. That was what was making her cry. She said 'Her won't see me big'."

Jack and Tina decided to turn Suzanne's room into a playroom so that the children might become adjusted to Suzanne's absence in a less harsh way than if the room was left empty.

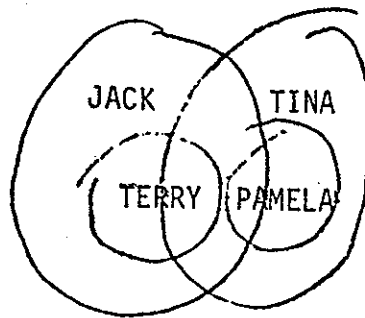
"They kept wanting to go in there. So we moved some of her things out and we put their toys in. And they would find comfort in going in there and playing. And sitting in her room. And then I'd find they maybe taped a flower up on the door or something like that."

Tina was obviously concerned with maintaining the family unity despite Suzanne's death. Therefore, Tina aggressively pursued open communication as a way of avoiding the kinds of family deterioration evidenced by other cases in this study. There are several major causes for the family's eventual closeness. First Tina was open and able to deal with intense emotion well. She could see her children or husband cry and just be there for them never judging the behavior. Second, she positively reinforced the grieving by encouraging her family to grieve together never alone, which is a very rare occurrence. And third, she incorporated Suzanne's life into their family following the death. Instead of closing the deceased child's door and making the child's name prohibitive, Tina spoke of Suzanne frequently and as mentioned, made Suzanne's room a playroom for the surviving siblings. In this way, the death did not disrupt the family as severely as the strain of pretending the child did not exist. This phenomenon is also depicted in the Life Space Diagram, where the family appears closer and more connected.

BEFORE



AFTER



FAMILY #7 -- MARCUS FAMILY

Jack and Trish Marcus were referred by Haven, a local private non-profit agency dealing with issues related to death and dying. A week prior to the interview date, Trish separated from Jack, taking their daughter Karen with her. Therefore, Jack was the sole participant in the study. Trish was unwilling to participate despite numerous phone calls urging her to do so.

In 1978, Jack (a construction laborer) and Trish (a teacher) were parents of Jess and Karen, fraternal twins. The Protestant, white, lower class family was residing in Pineview, Virginia.

On May 10, 1978, Jess Marcus was walking home from school with several friends who were teasing him. Inexplicably, he darted out into the street and was hit by an oncoming car. Although Jess was alive when he reached the hospital, the accident caused lung and heart damage which quickly proved fatal.

Jack was informed of the accident by his foreman while at a restoration site.

"I was working downtown restoring houses for this other company. And a call come in on this job site. And my foreman was talking to the police. And I could sense that whatever he was talking about was me cause I found out since then that I have extreme sensitivity about me -- and then he come over and told me Jess had been hit but he'd be alright. It was just some kind of dread that I was feeling that something's wrong."

He rushed to the hospital, saw Jess on the operating table but knew that he would not survive. Jack and Trish decided, following his death, to bury Jess with an open casket so that Jess' friends could say good-bye.

Jack was enraged at the uselessness of Jess' death. Jack had contacted City Council complaining about the same intersection where Jess was killed, and was told that there was nothing they could do. Jack wanted to sue the state after the death, but was informed by his lawyer that the state holds sovereign immunity.

"You see, a year before we had went down to the Council and told them about this hazard. They knew the hazard existed for years. They hadn't marked that street for about 7/10 of a mile. There wasn't no crosswalks, no stop signs on the main street at all. No signs that said 'Kids Playing', 'School Crossing'. No speed limit signs or anything for 7/10 of a mile. They used that area as a speed trap for years. So the year before I'd been down there and they refused it. Says it doesn't meet the criteria."

Only after Jess' death did the Council put warning signs up on the street.

After the funeral Jack emotionally withdrew and could not eat or sleep. He went to his family doctor, who, in turn, kept him tranquilized for a period of days. Also, Jack was unable to drive because:

"I felt like I was running over him every time I went over in that area in a killing machine. I was terrified to ride in a car and a couple of times I attempted to go off by myself in a vehicle and I couldn't drive. And I'd have to get on the phone for somebody to come get me to drive the vehicle back.

Jack found himself incapacitated after his son's death. Three weeks after the accident, Jack and Trish sought grief counseling at Haven, where they were involved in both couple and individual work. Although Jack found counseling helpful, he was unable to go back to work and has been on disability since the accident. In order to remain on disability, he saw a psychiatrist periodically to confirm his inability to maintain employment. Throughout his unemployment, Jack attended school, (taking philosophy and psychology courses), received his ministers license from the Universal Church, and became active with the Metaphysical Society.

Due to Jack's leave from work, he went through a dramatic role change from "breadwinner" to "househusband". This affected not only his perceptions of malehood, but had changed his role in the marriage.

"I'm not in those old places where a lot of those guys are. And they kinda bug me to a degree. Cause they'd come over and say 'Well, it's time to get yourself straight, Jack. Come on and get yourself together. You can't do nothing about it, you know. Just go on off and start to work and forget the whole thing.'"

"(Trish) resisted and resented the idea of having to work before this happened. Cause that means I was falling down on my job and I was doing a lousy one. And she resented that. She's still got that stuff, too. And that's one of the reasons why she cut. Because I wasn't doing what I was supposed to do. I should get my lunch bucket and I should go out in the morning and just go to work and forget about me, about life and any other thing that was going on."

Jack and Trish's marital difficulties were present before Jess' death, and were exacerbated by the tragedy. A week prior to the interview (approximately two years after the death), Trish took Karen and moved to her parent's house with the intention of filing for a legal separation.

Jack remembered Karen's reaction:

"... A pretty traumatic thing. She had nightmares. She was very afraid for a while. She wondered why he was killed and she wasn't. And why she couldn't go with him. And why he got killed and left her."

Jess' presence remained in the house, most noticeably through his untouched room. The family members stayed away from the empty room as much as possible.

"I couldn't touch it, I didn't want to go back in there. It was a year, I think, or so before she did anything."

Jack had a hard time removing anything with Jess' imprint.

"I couldn't cut the back end of this grass over here on that side of the house. Cause a week prior to that him and his sister had took scrap boards and things from my building site and he designed and built a little house there all on his own consciousness."

Jack's perception of his family is represented in the Life Space Diagram. Prior to Jess' death, Jack saw Jess and Karen as the couple's whole lives. The way Jack drew the diagram it seems that if it were not for the children encompassing them, there would be no union at all between Trish and Jack. Following the death, Jack saw himself as large and as important as the children, which supports his belief that he is now more spiritually aware. Trish is still portrayed as being small and removed from the family. The diagrams clearly display the lack of closeness in the marriage and the importance the children played within the system. Therefore, a major crisis such as Jess' death exacerbated the pre-existing weaknesses in the marriage and may have caused their ultimate separation.

The major consequence of Jess' death was the ultimate isolation and abandonment that Jack was forced to face. In 2½ years, Jack lost his son, wife and daughter, job, and emotional stability, and was left to build a life alone.

BEFORE

Jess & Karen - Whole Paper

JACK

TRISH

AFTER

KAREN

JESS

JACK

OK

TRISH

FAMILY #8 - JONES FAMILY

Sue Jones now lives with her mother in Maryland. Sue answered an ad in a military newspaper, Stars and Stripes, and volunteered her assistance in the project. The interview began with the assumption that Sue's mother was uninterested in participating; however, Mrs. Parker joined mid-way through the meeting.

In 1978, Sue, who worked for a military hospital, was living in an apartment in Maryland with her only child, Celia. Divorced for nine years, Sue and Celia had no contact with her ex-husband and were financially independent of him. The later 1970's was a tumultuous period for the mother-daughter dyad because of Celia's rebellious adolescence and need for independence. In early August of 1978 Sue and Celia decided to vacation for a week at the beach. There, a reconciliation took place which brought them closer to each other.

In August, 1978, Celia went out on a date with a new boyfriend. When she returned home, Celia decided to bicycle to her old boyfriend's house with the hope of ending the relationship. Following the visit, Celia was bicycling home when a car hit her from behind and left her in the street. Two black couples found her and while one couple went for help, the other stayed with Celia. In the meantime, a white woman was driving down the same street, saw the black men flagging her down, thought that they meant harm, and in turn put her foot on the accelerator. Consequently, the woman hit Celia and dragged her - with the bicycle - for approximately seventy feet, leaving her totally mutilated and unrecognizable. (The case is now in the courts to determine whether the first or second car actually killed Celia.) Unfortunately, the firemen came and cleaned up the accident prior to the detectives seeing the evidence, so there was no way to determine who may have been initially responsible.

Sue attended her daughter's funeral. However, she remembered very little of it. Her ex-husband was notified by Sue's brother and was also present.

"My brother called him and let him know what had happened. He came to the funeral parlor one night. He's remarried now. But, we had a long conversation and he took me home and we talked. I hadn't seen him in about fifteen years. Actually we'd been divorced or separated for several years before that. And Celia did not know him. And he didn't know her."

"She wanted to see her father and I said, 'Fine.' And she made contact with him. And they were about to get together when this happened. He was just so sorry. He had been neglecting of it cause he didn't know what to say to her after all those years. And he didn't know just how his (new) wife would take it and how I would take it, which I can understand. But he was a good man. They were going to get together so that pleases me, but it makes me feel sorry, too, because they didn't."

Sue recalled her initial reaction was numbness and then a temporary lapse of memory. The denial then evolved into intense yet undirected anger due to the anonymity of the driver. Sue would have nightmares about the driver and then would call the police in the hope of confirming the psychic vision.

"I had terrible nightmares. I would dream, right after the accident, where the whole accident had taken place. And it was just so vivid and I got on the phone and called the police and I said, 'I know what happened, I saw it in a dream.' And they followed it through. Of course, they don't know if it was or not."

"You have to put your blame somewhere. At first I would get on my knees and I'd say, 'Lord, just show me who it was, just show me who it was.' You know this type of attitude."

"I went row by row hunting for this car. I went back and I searched for anything I could find."

Sue was in a unique position because she lost her major emotional support system in one swift accident. She did not have a husband or another child to help fill the void left. The Life Space Diagram poignantly illustrates the stark isolation that Sue felt, cruelly thrown from a family of two to a family of one.

"Cause you really... have to talk, you know. I got very nervous and I just had to talk. I was just talking like a machine. And I talked like that for, maybe, two or three weeks."

Sue said she felt "robbed" of the opportunity to share her child's adulthood, especially after such a turbulent adolescence. Furthermore, Sue was robbed of the security that there would be someone there to take care of her in her old age.

"But I'm still involved, still trying so hard. Even harder now in a sense because I know that I don't have her in the future to take care of me. So that adds a certain amount of pressure to my life now that I know that I have to get prepared to be alone cause I don't intend to remarry again. I have to plan on not getting married again. You never can tell. I'm not sure that I'm not going to be in an old age home without any money."

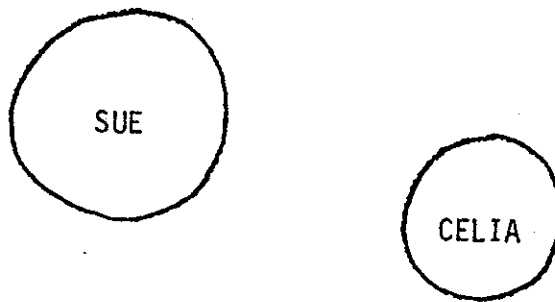
Therefore, since the funeral, Sue has thrown herself into her work not only as a way to keep busy and not dwell on her loss, but also as insurance that she will have adequate savings.

Mrs. Parker, Sue's mother, suffered a series of heart attacks (three over a period of two years) after Celia's death. Mrs. Parker complained of "having a lot of time on her hands" to think about Celia, which may cause her to become anxious and excited. Sue also suffered some physical ailments after the death. She began smoking heavily, had some benign tumors which resulted in a full hysterectomy, and had two back injuries which required an extended period of bed-rest and time off work.

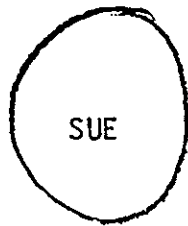
Another change in Sue's life is that Sue and her mother now live together. After Celia's death and Mrs. Parker's preliminary heart attack, Sue decided to extend the invitation to one of her only remaining family members.

"And it's not that she's taken the place of Celia or... I'm taking the place of my dad. It's not that way, it's just that we moved in as mother and daughter trying to make it together."

BEFORE



AFTER



FAMILY #9 - MYERSON FAMILY

Peter and John Myerson were living in Virginia at the time they were contacted concerning an interview. They had been referred through a woman who had worked with Cindy, Peter's wife, prior to the accident in 1979. Both Peter and John participated in the home visit interview.

In 1979, the Myersons, Peter (an architect) and Cindy (a teacher) and their two children, Denise and John, were a white, middle class, Presbyterian family residing in Virginia. December 22, 1979, they decided to visit Cindy's family in Redwood, South Carolina for the Christmas holidays. Cindy drove until slightly after midnight when she gave the wheel to Peter to continue the rest of the way. At about 4:30 am,

"A young man was driving a Ford vehicle, 1969, left the road, lost control, went across a field and came in from the right hand side of the road and hit us, almost head on."

Cindy and Denise never regained consciousness. Peter suffered a multitude of facial lacerations and head injuries, and John was virtually unharmed.

The details of the accident were peculiar in that the two men in the car that hit the Myersons' (a father and son) switched places after the accident because the son (the actual driver), had his license revoked due to repeated drunk driving violations and a previous accident which left a victim permanently handicapped. The father suffered a broken leg and, because he claimed to be the driver, served several months in prison until they were required to take a polygraph which confirmed the deception. The son was convicted and sentenced to a one-to-three year term in prison.

After Peter's hospitalization, they returned to Virginia with his in-laws, who stayed for several weeks to assist in the transition. Upon arrival, Peter immersed himself in his work in the attempt to elude some of the emotional pain connected to the loss of half his family. Although Peter stayed quite active during the day, the nights were the most difficult time because, as Peter said, "that was our family's useful time when they were alive." Peter also noted that he could still smell Cindy in the bedroom which reminded him of the poignant loss of their 13½ year marriage.

A unique and particularly devastating aspect of the Myerson's accident was that the surviving family was forced to cope with multiple deaths, both a wife and child.

"I think that for him (John), since Denise was his age and the one that he spent most of his time with, that he can probably give you good related feelings as far as child to child is concerned. And although he lost his mother, I don't equate his feelings the way I equate my feelings to Cindy. And to some degree, I think that the dual loss, the greatest loss to me, of course, and it's hard to say which

it is, but, I know for a fact in my life, that just from the way I have to live that Cindy was the greater loss."

In essence, Peter felt the loss of a wife, a co-parent, and a best friend or primary support system. Therefore, Peter was thrust into the single parent role and the sole financial participant which led to future financial difficulties, (e.g. large business debts). In addition, the following year brought personal emotional instability, several car accidents, other family deaths, and a series of hospitalizations for both Peter and John. The deaths also brought Peter and John closer together, primarily because they had gone through the same crisis and needed each other.

John's reaction to his sister's death precipitated the need for professional counseling because of his fear of death. Peter and John recalled a situation where John had fallen off of his bicycle and feared that he would die.

"Well, he (John) got hurt and his reaction was that he thought it was bad and he was going to die. So he went and hid. Brandy, the dog, in the winter time has a place inside that she sleeps and in the summer time we keep her outside. And he had crawled into Brandy's little cubbyhole and was there. And that's where Mamam (the grandmother) found him."

Along with John's fear of death was an equivalent anxiety regarding the possibility of Peter's death. The question facing John was if it was possible for Mom and Denise to die, what would prevent my father from being killed? Almost a year after the deaths, John would become agitated and upset if Peter planned to go out alone at night with friends because he worried about the possibility of never seeing his father again.

John felt the loss of his sister, not only as an older sibling, but also as a playmate and confidante.

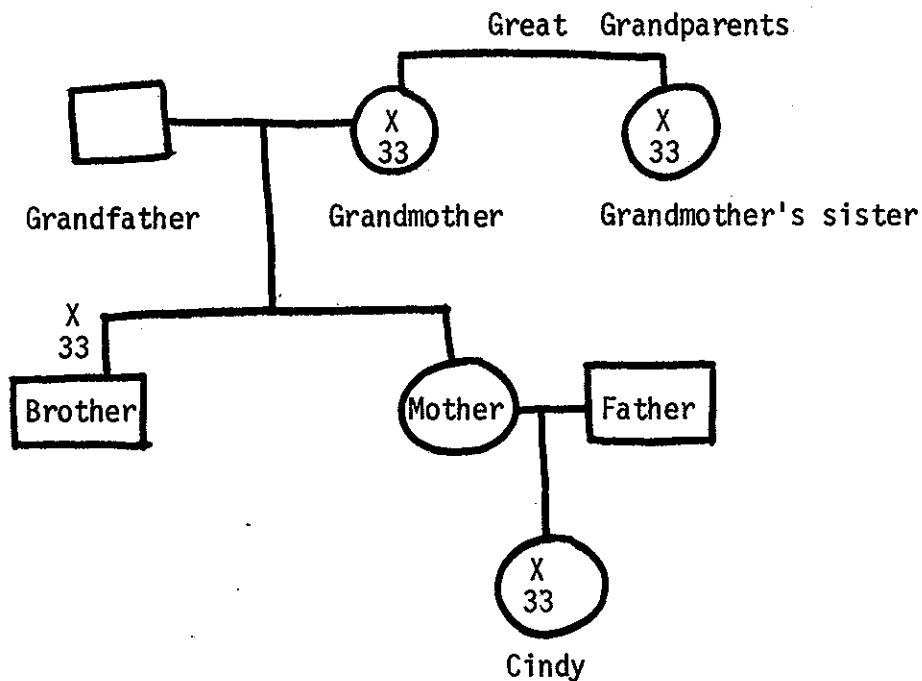
"When I start to get done with my toys, I just think in my head that I was having more fun with my sister. I would just sort of like close my eyes and look what it would be like with my sister playing what I was going to play."

Because of his older sister's death, John was given more responsibility and was expected to mature more quickly than if the death had not occurred. Peter had reservations about this and was concerned that John may be forced to mature too fast. The Life Space Diagram shows John doubling in size.

Peter made a point in the interview that his in-laws have been the most hurt by their daughter's death due to a strange family coincidence.

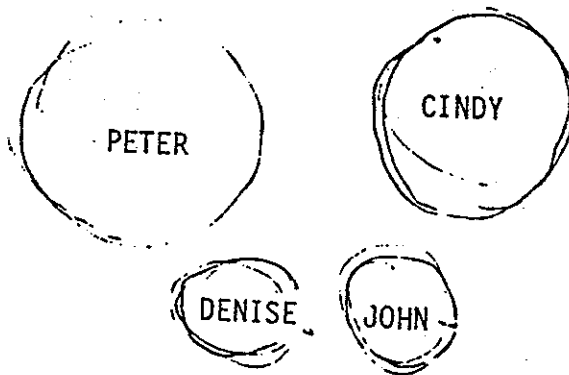
"My father-in-law and mother-in-law lost his mother and father in a head-on collision too. So, from that standpoint, they lost, John and Sally, both mother and father, and daughter and granddaughter. And if you really want to get down to the real nitty-gritty and talk about some people that have been in tragedy, his (John's) brother, Les, not only lost, of course, his parents but on the same road, she (Les' wife) lost her parents also head-on. That's six in their family."

Cindy's grandmother died at age 33, as well as her mother's brother, her mother's sister, and Cindy. Presently Cindy's brother is 33 years of age and is in the process of getting a divorce.

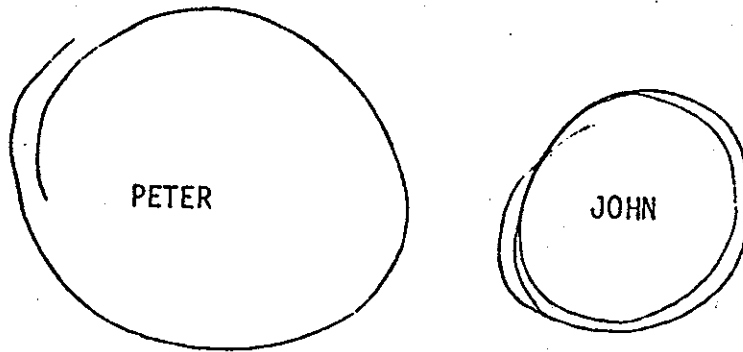


A major point to consider in this case is that when both a parent and child die within a family, often the surviving family members bond closely together and attempt to continue the roles the deceased family member left behind. For example, Peter began cooking, cleaning the house, and performing not only his paternal roles, but Cindy's maternal roles as well. In turn, John began assuming some of Denise's chores around the house. The responsibility of continuing the family fell solely on Peter and John.

BEFORE



AFTER



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ILLUSTRATION I

Dear

I request your assistance in a study entitled "Children in Automobile Accidents: The Effects on the Family System" involving Washington area families. This research is being conducted by Lorrie R. Rubin, A.C.S.W. under contract (No. DTNH22-81-C-07052) from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). This can be verified by contacting:

Carol MacLennan
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration NRD-13
Washington, D.C. 20590
Telephone: 426-2957 or 4862

The data that I gather will be used to educate the public, to improve the quality of information available to professionals and service agencies which assist families who have lost children, and to develop a framework for future research in benefits analysis.

The only people who can provide the information I need are those who have suffered through the loss of a child and its aftermath. I want to speak primarily with the surviving relatives of children ages 2 - 18 years of age who died as a result of an automobile or pedestrian-oriented accident.

I therefore make the following requests, if families that have lost children in automobile-related accidents have been among your past or present clients or congregation:

1. Would you please inform these persons of my research and ask them if they would permit me to interview them?
2. If their response is positive, could you have them either
 - a. call Lorrie Rubin at home: ----- or work: ----- for further information, or
 - b. write their name, address, and telephone number on the enclosed sheet, in which case I ask that you gather as many names as feasible on this sheet and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope.

My interview will last roughly two to four hours and will be conducted only with the informed consent of volunteer respondents at a time convenient to them. I will ask questions about their perceptions of the accident itself, the consequences the death had on the family members, and changes in their

personal life and family relationships as a result of the accident. I want to hear what they have to say about what happened to them and how they have coped since the accident.

I greatly appreciate your cooperation in helping me locate suitable respondents for my research.

Sincerely,

Lorrie R. Rubin, A.C.S.W.
Research Consultant
Department of Transportation

* Letter courtesy of Bilge-Kaufman Research
Contract No. DTNH22-80-C-07695
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ILLUSTRATION II

Release of Information Form

I, _____, being eighteen (18) years or older, and having full capacity of informed consent, volunteer to participate in a research project entitled, "Children in Automobile Accidents: The Effects on the Family System."

I understand that the purpose of this research is to study the human and social costs of automobile accidents. The findings of this study will be used to educate the public, improve information available to the agencies that work with accident victims and their families, and develop a framework for future research in benefits analysis.

I recognize that the only people who can provide this information are those who have experienced such tragedies. I understand that some of the interview questions may be distressing to me and that I may suffer a resurgence of grief. Nevertheless, I realize that sincere and truthful answers are of great importance if the research findings are to be useful. I am aware that I may refuse to answer any of the questions, and that I can stop the interview at any time. I also can withdraw from the project altogether. The interviewer may speak with my minor children and contact the friends, neighbors, professionals, and service personnel who assisted me and my family only with my written permission.

I understand that the interviewers will treat all personal information I provide confidentially. Interview tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the contract. All names will be dropped from the interview transcripts and reports, so that only the researchers and interview respondents will be able to recognize our case therein. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions about this study, and they have been answered to my full satisfaction.

This research is being conducted by Lorrie Rubin under contract No. DTNH22-81-C-07052 of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Should I encounter any difficulties as a result of my participation, or need to contact the interviewer for any reason, I may call her at -----.

Signature of Participant

Date

** Contract courtesy of Bilge-Kaufman Research
Contract No. DTNH22-80-C-07695
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration