

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

Do you fear that people will forget your child? I think most bereaved families have this thought, especially those of us who have lost very young children or many years have passed since we lost our child. As time goes on your child's friends grow up and move away, we lose more loved ones who knew and loved our child, and we worry that the stories will be forgotten and our child's life will become insignificant to anyone but us. I worry that someday his life will be reduced to his name and date of birth and date of death on his headstone.

When I visit my son's grave I often wonder about another little boy who is buried near Aaron. He was the same age as Aaron when he died, and I wonder about his family and the story of his short little life. I wonder if there will be another family someday visiting the cemetery who sees our son's grave and wonders who he was and what his story was.

A beautiful thought I once read says a story stays alive as long as there are two people: one to tell the story and one to hear it. I suppose that is one of the reasons I continue to write this column. It is very healing to me to tell the story of my wonderful little boy, and he continues to live on as long as I can tell his story and someone reads that story.

Parents who have lost their child through stillbirth, miscarriage or SIDS also know that their child was loved and his life significant, even though he or she may have lived only minutes. Their grief is no less than a bereaved parent whose child died at 20, 40 even 60 years of age. It is important to acknowledge that grief and listen to those parents' stories and loss of their future memories and dreams for their child.

This year will mark the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Aaron's death. Our other sons are growing up and moving on with their lives, and soon I fear there will be hardly anyone left who knew and remembers our precious little boy. Luke was so young (18 mos. Old) and Chase was not even born, so they have very few memories of him, other than those we have shared with them.

I know I will always be able to share my Aaron stories with my family and my Compassionate Friends family. You may not have known him when he lived here on earth, but you know him now from my pictures and stories. I hold his memories close in my heart-his beautiful blue eyes, deep chuckle, dimples and the way he could not pronounce his "L"s. His brother Luke was "Yukie". Because of his illness we spent so much time rocking and reading stories and watching TV, especially the old Batman series, Sesame Street and Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. I did not know that those many precious minutes of holding him was going to have to last me a lifetime, until we meet again in Heaven.

Because my parents are getting older and life can be so uncertain, I am going to ask them, my siblings and my older nieces and nephews to write down stories and memories they have of Aaron. It would have been too painful for all of us right after he died, but I think time has softened our grief and it is time to preserve those memories.

I have decades of pictures I need to organize and put in albums, but for many years it was so painful I could not make myself do it. It was painful when I found pictures of Aaron, and it was even more painful when he WASN'T in the family pictures; but I think I am finally at a point where I am strong enough to tackle this project. I am also going to go through my parents' pictures for copies I don't have and make copies for our family.

A Compassionate Friend suggested several years ago that I check into publishing a book of some of my columns. I was very touched that she feels they are helpful to others walking this path of healing (thanks, Cindy!) A book of columns, stories and pictures would truly ensure Aaron's story goes on.

I encourage you to jot down or record your memories of your child; even if you dream about your child. Dreams can be extremely comforting and help you express your feelings. Jot down or record your feelings-good or bad. Your feelings are your feelings and you are entitled to have them! Don't let anyone tell you that "you shouldn't feel that way". Be sad, be angry, be happy if you can. Just express your feelings in a safe way-don't be self-destructive.

I wish you many gentle memories of hugs, kisses, laughter and so much love. I wish you comfort and healing and the strength to remember and record those gentle memories.

In friendship,

*Nadine*