

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

Grief has certain milestones, along with any other journey in our lives.

The most obvious of those milestones are the first few anniversaries of your child or sibling's birthday or date of death, of course. We certainly expect that holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter will also be tough to get through. You might be getting along and coping pretty well, thinking you made it through those big ones, and then something completely unexpected comes along, and you are right back to footstep one. Maybe this year your child would have gone to kindergarten, or lost his first tooth, or began talking or walking. Maybe this year your child would have gone to college or attended his first prom. Maybe this year your child or sibling would have gone through Driver's Ed, gotten his first job or bought his first car.

Grieving the loss of a child or sibling is so different than losing another loved one, say, a grandparent, because you also mourn the loss of future memories, not just past memories.

In addition to the loss of the future memories mentioned above, my son Aaron died the day after his fifth birthday, and I was so fearful with my other children when they turned five that something would happen to them also. Other Friends have shared that their surviving children often went through tough grieving times when those children reached a new stage of development, and almost had to "relive" and work through their grief before they could go higher developmentally.

Even my youngest son, who was not even born when Aaron died, went through times when he asked a lot of questions about Aaron, and how much he wished he would have known him.

My husband and I have recently become "empty nesters", and this is a milestone for us as well. You encourage your surviving children to stretch their wings and reach for their dreams, but you so wish you could keep them with you forever. You never lose that fear. My middle son expressed his frustration with my overprotectiveness, and I told him he would always be my baby. I didn't care whether he was 15 or 55 I was always going to wonder where he was and what he was doing. I wasn't going to change, so he needed to get used to it!

I guess the best way to get through grief is to be aware that there will be unexpected milestones. You may get through them with just a little twinge of the heartstrings, but there may be times you are "kicked in the gut". It takes time, but time really does help heal the pain. You can live with a hole in your heart. In time the really bad times will be fewer and there will be more time in between. Learning ways to cope and reaching out to others who have "been there, done that" helps a great deal.

I wish you comfort and healing as the milestones come along.

In friendship,

*Nadine*

