

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

Memorial Day has a whole new meaning for us now. I did not grow up in a military family, and never fully appreciated the sacrifice of all those soldiers who gave their lives for their country, and their families who bravely watched their babies leave to fight in a faraway country, knowing they may never see or hold them again. I can only imagine those loved ones' fear and fervent prayers to keep their child safe and bring them home again. So, so many never came home. Although our country is actually quite young in the history of the world, we have lost so many brave young people in so many wars.



A close friend's son recently returned from the military, where he served six tours in Afghanistan. I knew how she worried and prayed fervently for his safety, and said many prayers myself for him to come home safely. I was so relieved and happy for her family when our prayers came true, and he came home safely.

The magnitude of the sacrifice and loss was first brought home to me when my husband and I visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. in 1984. My husband is a Vietnam veteran, but never spoke of the war, because of how shamefully those soldiers were treated when they came back from Vietnam. As we walked along the memorial, he began to walk faster and faster as he saw names of soldiers he knew on the wall, and began to have a panic attack and struggle to breathe. I don't think he had ever dealt with the loss of friends he knew, and seeing their names and little remembrances people leave on the wall made it too real.

I'm glad that soldiers who return from service now are generally treated with respect, honor and gratitude for their service and their sacrifice. There is now a much better understanding of their needs when they return to civilian life, especially those with injuries, whether they be internal or external. There is help now for those soldiers and their families. They are not treated like they are expendable.

It is hard enough to bury a child under any circumstances. All of us are painfully aware of how hard it is. We loved our babies, rocked our babies, tried to keep them safe and healthy, only to lose them to death, whether it be to an accident, an illness or at the hands of themselves or another. I can't fathom the grief and fright of sending your child into a war, but now having experienced the pain of burying a child, I am even more aware and thankful for our freedom, the liberty to make our own choices and government born of democracy. My admiration and thankfulness go out to those soldiers and their families across the ages for their courage to make that sacrifice for all of us.

In friendship,

Nadine