

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

My family and I thank you so much for your prayers, cards, memorials and outpouring of love in the recent loss of our husband and dad, Ken. Although Ken had some health issues, his passing was very unexpected and a great shock. We are doing the best we can to go on, but his loss is a huge one for our family and his many friends.

So-here we are again at the beginning of the grieving process. Again, there is shock and disbelief, a sort of numbness and detachment and feelings of being overwhelmed and inability to make decisions. This numbness and detachment is kind of a blessing. I'm just not ready to face the fact he is gone. I find myself thinking "I need to tell Ken....," or "I need to text Ken...", "I can't wait to tell Ken what happened today..." and then I realize I can't. It is a very lonely feeling. I was very blessed to share my life and love with such a good man for such a long time (we recently celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary), but I wasn't ready to give him back to God.

One of the things that struck me that hasn't changed is that often, grieving people end up comforting everyone else, and taking care of their needs. Most of the time it's not a bad thing, but it can be emotionally exhausting. I understand that people need to tell me their stories to help them heal. They need to tell me how much Ken meant to them, and how he made such a difference in their lives. I understand-his kindness, generosity and passion for his work were some of the characteristics I loved the most about him, and some of the things I will miss the most. But some days I just don't have the strength to answer another phone call or answer the door. I cannot even tell you how difficult it is to have to fill out forms stating you are now "single" or "widowed" after being part of a couple for forty years. It brought back so many painful memories when I had to close out Aaron's college savings account.

Again, I find myself grieving for the future memories we will not have as a family. We were so blessed to be able to attend our son Luke's wedding to his beautiful Kate just three days before Ken passed, and share those joyful times with our children, family and friends. But now I realize Ken won't be there with us to watch his sons graduate from college, see our youngest son marry, and any future grandchildren we may have will never know him as their grandfather. Ken was truly the compass and heart of our family, and we feel unable to navigate without him.

Ken loved to cook and entertain. He loved "gadgets" and learning to cook with them. The holidays will never be the same without him sampling my cornbread dressing or sweet potato pie or finding a new recipe he wanted to try out on the family. He loved to research items he was thinking about buying and trying to figure out the best "deal"-shopping will never be the same without his input.

Figuring out the holidays this year will take some thought, prayer and more than a little heartache. Our sons have expressed they want to be together as a family, and I think it will be helpful for us to be able to support each other. Maybe there will be some happy memory sharing and smiles, very likely some tears, maybe some new traditions, but there will be great love. There will be another empty chair, but there will be great love.

If you are newly bereaved or even a little further down the path of healing, try to figure out how you plan to get through the holidays. Do you want to stay with your family traditions because they bring you comfort, do you want to just skip any family traditions because you are emotionally too fragile, or do you want to create new traditions?

Grief over losing a child can drive many couples apart, and one of the things I truly appreciated about Ken is that he always supported my involvement with Compassionate Friends to help me heal from the loss of our son. He grieved in a different manner; more privately and usually with a trusted friend, but he understood I needed the support of the group, and he was incredibly proud of my courage and gift to reach out to others through this column. Try to remember that everyone grieves differently and at a different pace-be supportive and respectful to each other's grief needs.

Our family's biggest comfort is knowing that Aaron was there to meet his dad in the Light. They were together to celebrate Aaron's birthday this year and will be together to celebrate the birth of Jesus in Heaven.

I wish you the comfort of happy memories of your loved ones gone on before us, the comfort of family and Friends who understand, and the peace of God's eternal love and the promise of eternal life.

In friendship,

*Nadine*

