

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

May

Dear Compassionate Friends:

It's been said that the only constant in life is change. Some change brings us great joy, such as beginning marriage with the love of your life, bringing a child born of that love into the world or adopting a child of your heart.

Some change is bittersweet, such as seeing those dearly loved children graduating, marrying or moving away to begin a new chapter in their own lives. You feel joy at their happiness and excitement, but a grief as well, because the chapter of their childhood has ended. You will never have those days of sticky jelly kisses, dandelion bouquets or misspelled Mothers' Day and Father's Day cards back. You now expect to create new memories of your child's wedding, college graduation or the blessing of grandchildren.



Bereaved families, however, must deal with the cruelest change of all. We now know that some change is abrupt and ends your life forever as you knew it. Losing our child also meant losing the future memories we expected to share with them. We grieve for the loss of those memories as well as the physical loss of our child.

May and June can be especially difficult months for bereaved families to get through. Mothers' Day, Memorial Day, graduations, weddings and Fathers' Day all have special significance for us, and it can be quite painful getting through them, especially the first few years. Having a plan with your family as how you will handle the day or celebrate your child's life can make it meaningful and maybe a little less painful. Some families find great comfort in keeping the same family traditions-others like trying new ways of making these holidays meaningful. Some families find it too painful to attend their child's graduation; others find it comforting to have their child remembered and honored by their friends and classmates. Some families are placed in the odd situation of attending their child's former spouse's remarriage. It must be bittersweet to still be considered family but realize their child's spouse has now moved on-there's that change again!

This year those holidays and celebrations will be especially bittersweet (again), with the loss of the heart of our family-my husband and my sons' dad. Our plan is to create some new memories together and remember happier times with Ken's friends when we spread his ashes. Many joyful memories "and fish stories" will be shared and celebrated. It will be hard to get through those days, but we will be together and be able to be there for each other. I am so happy that Ken and Aaron can be together in Heaven, but we miss them so!

I hope that in the midst of change you are able to take a deep breath, find the quiet, still place inside you and replay the comforting memories of happier times. You may cry at first. You may cry a lot at first, but I promise it hurts less as time goes on. You will heal, you will hurt less. You will remember the happier times more than the pain. You will smile again. You will take joy from life again. This is my wish for you; that time brings healing and comfort to your broken heart. Remember the love of your child and the joy their life brought you. Death cannot break the bond of love-it is timeless, all-powerful and crosses all boundaries. Death has no power over love.

In friendship,

Nadine