

Our classmates aren't supposed to die. Oh, many may come and go through our lives, but the core - those like Mike who are here year after year - they're not supposed to die, for their presence brings stability to our lives. We know as the day begins that we will see familiar faces, hear familiar voices, and that is somehow calming in this frantic world.

No, these classmates of ours aren't supposed to die because they are us, and we're not ready to die. We know much about their lives as we hear about their triumphs and their sorrows, their dreams and their realities. We laugh with them, we sing with them, and sometimes we cry with them, but we never cry *for* them because our classmates aren't supposed to die.

Our classmates aren't supposed to die because their children and grandchildren are still growing, still learning, still chasing their dreams. We hear about their grandchildren's births; we see their children grow and mature. As days and years went by, we knew when their children started to drive, had their first date, went to the prom, and left for college. No, our classmates aren't supposed to die because if they die, they might miss these things, and we don't want them to miss these experiences because we wouldn't want to miss them.

Sometimes our classmates leave us as they move away or begin their retirement. But these are happy events as new worlds are being explored. We wish them well because we know that they can still be part of our life if we want them to be. We can always call and say hello, and with some, we often do. But die? No, they're not supposed to die because that separation is forever, and we can't imagine that.

As I sit here in my sorrow, I become angry and I want to shout at Mike and the others who have passed and say, "How could you leave us! Don't you know that there are too many experiences yet to happen, and too many places still to visit? You had no right. . . it isn't fair. . . you had too much of a life yet to live! Don't you know our classmates aren't supposed to die!"

And yet now I realize that although they may be physically gone, they will forever be part of us. When we hear the Beach Boys or the Beatles sing, we will think of them; when we watch the Steelers or the Redskins play, we will remember them; when we share a box of chocolate or a beer, they will be in our thoughts; when we have a reunion of even two of us, they will be there with us. Our classmates aren't supposed to die, and with our memories of them, they never will.

Howard Young
On the Occasion of our 50th Reunion
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