

DOWN HOME: Prayer for our child as school begins

August 28, 2008

Say it ain't so, Jo: Our "baby," Molly, started her senior year of college this fall.

Seems like only, oh, a half-hour ago when Joanna and I put her big sister, Lindsay, in our family sedan and drove to kindergarten in Nashville for our family's first first day of school.

Since then, Lindsay grew up, graduated from Hardin-Simmons University two years ago and moved half a continent away with her husband, Aaron. This year, Molly started her last year at Baylor University.

So, we have celebrated 19 first days of school. When the girls started college, our first-day-of-school ritual changed a bit. By the time Lindsay was at Hardin-Simmons and Molly was at Baylor, they lived in Abilene and Waco, so we couldn't stand them beside a dining-room chair and take their pictures, to see how much they'd grown in the past year. And we couldn't eagerly anticipate dinnertime and a long discussion about how everything went that day.

By then, cell phones replaced our kitchen table, and so we called them to find out about classes and friends and all the developments and possibilities of a new year of school.

After 19 first days of school, not to mention the toned-down nature of living in another city when our kiddo starts a new school year, you'd think this would be routine. Maybe even boring. But I still get excited on the first day of school.

Deep down, I'm as thrilled for Molly as she starts her final year at Baylor as I was for Lindsay when she embarked upon kindergarten. My prayer for Molly on the first day of school 2008 echoed my prayer for both girls during the past two decades:

- **“Lord, expand her world.”**

Education is one of life's greatest blessings. I pray Molly will think new thoughts and explore new ideas. May she sit under teachers who will challenge and encourage her, who will push her to re-examine her presuppositions and dissect ideas she's never considered before. I expect she will encounter pros who realize they are stewards of her intellect, and they will elevate her view so that she can examine vistas her mother and I haven't even visited.

- **“Enrich her relationships.”**

Class is only one part of college. So, I pray Molly will deepen existing friendships and make new friends whose love and affection will stick with her for a lifetime. I pray at least one professor will become a mentor for her, shepherding her spirit as well as her mind.

- **“Deepen her sense of your work in her life.”**

Learning can make a person smart, but wisdom is a gift from God. I pray Molly will recognize, as she has already, that God's will and a love relationship with Christ are the essential, guiding elements in her life. With all my heart, I pray they will be as clear for her as the golden dome atop Pat Neff Hall. “Amen.”