Silence seeped out from under the closed door like steam from a hot shower. No television, no earbuds, no tap, tap texting.

It was only 11 p.m. and all I could hear coming from my youngest son's bedroom was a faint whir from a small fan as it swayed back and forth.

The eerie quiet is so unusual in my house that I had to check it out.

I pushed the door open just a little. Actually, I could only move it a few inches.

A robust layer of two-a-day T-shirts, worm-stained jeans and pool towels built a barricade that I was not armed to battle.

No need. I could see from the doorway that everything was right where I expected.

As I scanned the room I wondered, though, if the blue of the neon tube in the wall clock had distorted objects like the side mirror of my car warns.

The body in that bed resembled my "Stinky Face" but it appeared much larger.

Where was the little guy who demanded a straw for his pink milk and ate Cheerios only from a plastic baggie?

I was expecting to find the child who, just yesterday, played basketball with foam soap in the shower and read “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” before bed.

Could this be the same kid who buried his sling-shot in the back yard to hide evidence that might tie him to a broken window?

The young man lying there looked a little like my son but he had hair under his arms and whiskers on his chin.

Then reality hit.

My “Tyler Bear” isn’t a kid anymore. He crashed early because the next chapter—his senior year—opened in the morning.

We hear it every day: “Where does the time go?”

Our time went to early-morning soccer games and late-night homework. We spent it baiting hooks and playing Monopoly, telling tall tales and saying good-night prayers, catching fireflies and roasting marshmallows.

The senior year brings with it many “lasts” for parents. This was the final time I would tuck my child into bed on the night-before-the-first-day-of-school.

I closed the bedroom door and walked away knowing it is not the end. It’s not even the beginning of the end.

It is merely the beginning of what comes next.