

Grief, a state of mind

In early March of 2004, I was introduced to the terminology 'grief monster'. This was a term used by other widows and widowers to indicate their feelings after loss. Using the words grief monster seemed to indicate a battle needed to be fought with grief. I didn't think that was the case then and I don't think it is the case now.

With a new loss, feelings of grief are again merging with my life. I think that the feelings of grief are there for a reason. Grief is a coping mechanism. While grief isn't a comfortable feeling, it should be welcomed. We need time to deal with sadness and loss.

The intensity and duration of our feelings of grief indicate where we are in our grief journey. Since people are different, the length and duration of our journeys are also different. The only way we know how far we've come is to look at how we feel grief.

In these difficult times of loss, I've seen grief as a friend. Not always a friend I want around, but as a needed friend. Tears, anger, frustration are all tools to handle our loss. To fight these feelings, as if fighting a monster, would be counterproductive to help they can bring.

Grief can and will come at unexpected times. These times may be inconvenient or embarrassing, but they need to be accepted. As an adult male, I have been taught to harness my feelings. I found that after my wife's death, I no longer do this. If tears are needed, tears will be shed. I no longer shy away from my emotions. It has helped with my healing.

There has been new loss in my life. Another grief journey has begun. The road is the same, but different. It is a journey not taken alone, but with the help of others.

A journey begins with one step; a good journey begins with one step reaching for another's hand.

To guide thoughts

Today I started something on this computer that would allow me to channel my thoughts in a more productive way. You see, with everything going on in my life I needed something to prevent me from going down a dark path. In any event, I decided to try using speech recognition on my computer. Instead of typing this post, I decided to dictate it.

This actually takes a great deal more concentration my usual typing. When I am typing, I am able to correct words as I type. With speech recognition, corrections are made after the sentence is finished.

The tutorial suggests that the speech recognition will learn my voice the more I speak to it. As far as I can tell, the best part about this is that spelling is usually perfect. (unless I mispronounce the word)

So thank you for letting me get a little negative energy out.

Unfortunately, I had to use wordpad to dictate my post.

What next?

This may be a difficult post to read. It was certainly hard to write.

No happy or witty sayings in this post. This is a story of life, death, mourning and maybe life again.

At the beginning of this year many wonderful things were in the making. My 3rd daughter had her wedding scheduled for June. My fourth daughter was to graduate High School. Those two events happened as planned.

Also occurring early in the year, my two oldest daughters told me they were expecting new arrivals. The oldest was due in September, my second daughter due in November. Expanding of family going full force this year. I was really looking forward to visiting my new grandchildren.

The first bad news came when my 2nd daughter had a miscarriage. I was unable to fly down to Florida and be with her. I am very glad she has a wonderful network of support with her. At that time, I had a countdown to the impending birth on my blog. I quietly removed that and all other mention of that news from my blog. This was news I didn't feel like sharing with the rest of the world. Stick with the good news. Too much bad news news in the world.

Last Thursday brought news that my oldest daughter lost her baby too. Much farther along, she had only a month before the due date. I quietly removed the countdown that that impending birth, and wrote a quick cryptic post. The mind was not working well enough to post anything else. I could write about the cause, but I will let [this site](#) handle that. I just needed to get these words out.

I spent the past few days with my oldest, at the hospital and her house. There were many tears flowing. Hugs given and

received. While the words were not initially spoken, we were worried about my oldest daughter's life too. She had a serious medical condition that could have taken her as well. In this we were fortunate. Physically she is recovering well. The emotional and spiritual recovery will take more time for all of us.

I did say something about life again didn't I. There is a little bright spot in all of this. I've written a few posts about my daughter's friends. These are people I consider to be my friends also. Our ages and backgrounds vary widely, but they are true friends. People who will be there for my daughter and son-in-law. My children came home to a clean house, because someone thought this would be a good thing to do. They didn't ask, they acted. The bedroom for the newborn was in the final stages of finishing, but the door was off the hinges. It was put back in place and closed. Friends and family will supply food, companionship, or solitude when needed or wanted. Can we ever ask for more?

Through all of this, I've had many old wounds opened again. I keep wondering if each new death will bring back the memories of others. Faces I've not seen in years, faces I never saw, came into my thoughts and dreams. The past and future molds into one. The laugh of a child not heard may be one of the saddest moments in life.

Things change

Well moving days are coming up. Yes, I did say moving days. There will be at least two of them.

The first will be next week at work. We are moving to a new building, and we are scheduled to move as soon as it passes

inspection. That should occur this week. A little farther to drive, but it should be a nicer work environment. We will see how that goes. Good news, no students in the halls. Bad news, the way the cubicles are set up, my back will face the entrance. I never did like having my back to the door.

Then at the end of the month, my youngest heads off to college. That may take a trip or two depending on how much she needs to move into her college room. When I went to school, I was able to fit everything I needed into the back of a Chevy Chevette, I have a truck now, and I still wonder how many trips I will need to take.

At this point in time, I guess I should be feeling a bit of the 'empty nest' syndrome. I'm not sure I will in the same way other parents do. The whole point in my parenting was to get my children ready for the world. It is time for this one to spread her wings and see how she flies. A bit of anxiety, sure, but I'm ready to let her try more on her own.

There is another part of the empty nest that I really never expected when I first thought of this some 10 years ago when the first daughter spread her wings. I have the nest to myself. The question I really need to ask is "How will I spread my wings?" For more than a quarter of a century (over 1/2 my life) I've been a parent. For most of that time I've been a husband and then a widower. Before that I was in my childhood. What am I going to do with the time I will have for myself? What will I be when I grow up? □

Life is all about the change...

Hello. How are you? It's been a while.

I haven't really been in a mood to write anything recently.

I've been reading the comics again, and once again [Funky Winkerbean](#) has me thinking.

The current story line has a character return after being presumed dead. His 'widow' in the story has remarried and lived with the thought of him being gone forever.

I'm not sure how the story will sort out, but the concept of it bothers me a little bit. As I've said before, the author of this comic does not shy away from touchy subjects, and this is no exception. What would this do to family, friends and others when a person they know to be dead, comes back to life?

On a material note... Do you have to pay back any insurance, Soc. Sec. benefits, and other things only received on one's death?

On an emotional note... What happens to the new people in the lives of loved ones? People grow and change over time and generally change together when their lives are shared. People who are apart change in different ways. Rough go.

And on others... There is another family that lost a loved one in this strip. Are they overcome with envy when they see someone else come back from the dead, and not their lost love?

And this is only a daily comic in the newspapers. Deep thoughts for the funny pages.

As a widower, there were many (are many?) times that I wish my dear wife could come back, but I know that this is only a wish. As in the song "One More Day" by Diamond Rio, we keep wishing for that one extra day, but what happens if we

actually get it?

Midnight in the land of good and evil

Last night at around 11:00pm, I took my daughter to see the latest “Harry Potter” movie. No this is not a review (I found I don’t get that much out of 12:00am showings), more a reaction to the early morning movie experience.

This is the third late night movie I’ve seen in the past 5 years. I can’t remember going to any before that time. (Ok, I can remember going to see The Rocky Horror Picture Show late at night, but I was much younger then and it started before midnight.)

I find it interesting that so many people will come out in the wee hours to watch movies. This was in the middle of the week, and our small little theater sold out two of their screens. I’m sure if they had another copy of the film, they would have filled all three screens. Some turnout.

There were people in costumes of course. You had your witches and wizards in their ‘normal’ costumes. Wizards and witches trying to dress like ‘muggles’ (if you don’t know what that is, you are one). And even people in pajamas. They were all out to have a good time.

A little over 2.5 hours after midnight, the movie ended. The crowd made their way to the exit. Some half asleep, some excitedly discussing the show. Why did they do it this way? What were they thinking? Not enough. Too much. All differing opinions, but many excited folks. Me, I was tired. I failed to

arrange the day off, so I knew I was going to have to be up and on my way in less than 3 hours. Hmmm, not much sleep. I'm sure there were others in the same boat.

Review when I see it again, and I probably will. I promised the youngest she could take a friend or two to the movies. I have a feeling this is what they will see.

I was just wondering, what kind of show would we have to put on to draw crowds like this? A wonderful thing to completely sell out. I'm not sure there is a stage show that would pull in that type of crowd. Fun to imagine.

Traffic in Nowhere Kentucky

We made it back from Florida in one piece, but the trip back was a bit of an adventure. This will be a short update with more to follow.

Today started out well. I spent the night with my oldest sister and we were able to talk about this and that. Just sharing some family time. It was a delight. My youngest and I got up early to try to avoid the rush hours in Cincinnati (some 7 hours away). The initial drive started so well. Light traffic, wonderful weather and plenty of coffee. I was good to go.

It was all good until we got to Kentucky. Somewhere near our entry to the State we stopped for lunch and a bit of a stretch. All was still good, and then it started to rain. This was somewhere near the Cumberland Gap on I-75 (if anyone knows their geography). A good bit of rolling hills, steep grades and steep rock faces on the side of the highway (complete with 'falling rock' notices). This slowed the traffic considerably. And it also had the benefit of bunching it up nicely. It

rained about halfway through the state of Kentucky and then we had a lane shift to go from 3 lanes to 2. Traffic slow down. Little did I know there was a bit of construction just ahead that took the traffic from 2 lanes to 1!!! Major traffic stoppage!!. We were bumper to bumper stop and go traffic for 15 miles of Nowhere Kentucky. No exits, no rest areas, no way out of the middle lane. That took over 1 and 1/2 hours.

Needless to say, we hit Cincinnati just at the beginning of rush hour....

And I missed it.

Many people know that I really enjoy my coffee. My dear wife and I used to frequent a local coffee establishment until her death. During the many years of enjoying the coffee and company, I found that I know a thing or two about a good cup of joe. I was sad on the day that little coffee shop closed its doors for the last time.

I will still visit our other local coffee shops, but I no longer make it a weekly habit. I tend to buy good coffee and share it with the people I work with.

We also used to visit many small coffee shops while on vacation. I really liked getting the feel of a location in the local place. I did stay away from the big chain coffee shops, since their goal is to move people in and out. Most local shops have a customers that will stick around and talk over their cups of coffee, not stare into computer screens or newspapers.

But I am sad to say I missed visiting one coffee shop with a bit of a twist. I haven't been to Maine yet, so I didn't get

to visit the 'Topless' coffee shop. It [burned down this week](#). The owner had no insurance on the building, so it may be up in the air as to any reopening of the business. I am curious as to what my lovely wife would have thought of this establishment. I am sure that we would be glad our daughter worked at our local coffee shop and not the topless one... ☐

Things I've noticed...

I've been living on this earth for a bit over 50 years now, and I've noticed a thing or two. Some of this has to do with normal aging, but some is just things I've noticed over the years.

1) I've always liked spicy food, but I've come to the realization that it doesn't like me. I won't go into all the symptoms, but I'm glad modern medicine has kept up with my eating habits. Tums and Roloids just don't cut it anymore. Thank goodness for Zantac... Maybe the medicine world will keep up with me as I get older year after year.

2) For some strange reason I just can't sit in the lotus position as long. My knees and ankles rebel at the thought. I'm still limber enough to flex, but my body doesn't like the same position, any position for very long. At least I'm getting my exercise by moving around. No, I can't touch my toes now, but I couldn't in high school, long legs, short arms (really).

3) The old eyes just don't focus as well. Oh well, I guess that's why they make glasses. What is funny is that I used to be able to focus on distant object while wearing my reading glasses. That takes some doing now, but gives me a headache if I do it to long.

- 4) People respond better if you are nice to them. People respond quicker if you are loud and obnoxious. People give you strange looks if you sound like Stitch or Bullwinkle. ☐
 - 5) Friends are worth their weight in gold. If you could convert them to gold, would you choose heavier friends?
 - 6) Being alone is not the worse thing in the world. When you know what true companionship is, and you are now alone is in the top 10 of the worse things.
 - 7) Tomorrow doesn't always come, so make use of your time today. See the first part of number 5, it makes it easier to use your time today with friends.
 - 8) I'm glad they never developed a way to get smell over TV. Some of the shows are real stinkers.
 - 9) Sunsets should be time to reflect on the day. Sunrises should be a time to plan the day. Rest in between them, you may need it.
 - 10) Sleep is overrated until you don't get enough of it.
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Things that make me go HMMM...

I was scanning the web site for a local paper, and came across a picture of a bunch of school kids releasing balloons into the air. I'm sure they are hoping that some people would find them and send the cards back to the school. This has been an interesting human interest activity for kids. But recently this sort of activity is frowned on because of the problems those pesky balloons can do in the 'wild'. We've all heard stories about various animals eating and choking on the balloons. All well and good, less flights of balloons.... But

the thing that made me go HMMM was the fact that the school was celebrating the successful campaign of recycling milk cartons. Hmmm, adding to environment problems after helping the environment...

Second thing that made me go HMMM, is our local paper's web site. I would love to give you the link for the article I read, but I don't think it is there anymore. If it is there, you need a subscription to read the full article. Because of this tedious fact, I won't even give the name of the paper. It looks like with a subscription you can get a full 30 day archive!!! (sarcasm here) Anyway, because of the unfriendly atmosphere, I won't link to the site. No free advertising from me. It would be in the paper's best interest to allow access to at least the community announcements. But no, that isn't happening. Oh well, it isn't my paper.

And finally an [article from CNN](#). Apparently Pete Rose (the guy banned from Baseball for life) thinks that Alex Rodriguez deserves a hall of fame nod. Since he is banned, why is anyone asking him? I'm sure he thinks he deserves a spot in the Hall too. Not that A-Rod doesn't, but since he hasn't been retired for 5 years, isn't it a bit early to start thinking of that? Hmmm..

Any others?