

# 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.

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

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## 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...

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## **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?

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## After 5 and 1/2

Today would have been my wife's 47th birthday. She never got to celebrate any birthday past her 41st. In the past I've bought coffee for everyone that entered our favorite coffee shop. That little place closed many years ago, and that 'tradition' has ended.

A new tradition started that first birthday she did not get to celebrate. I took my available daughters to a Mexican restaurant. Mexican food was always her favorite, and would be the request if we went out to dinner on her birthday. So what family I can get together, celebrates the day with a little Mexican cuisine.

Today it was my two youngest daughters and newest son-in-law. It saddens me a bit that the two youngest son-in-laws never met their brides' mother. From what has been said, my first

son-in-law liked her. I'm a bit biased, but I thought she was special.

After lunch today we celebrated the first birthday of a very special young man. Check other Tangents blogs for more information on this.

All in all a very relaxing day.

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## Life in the Comic Section

Sometime back the comic strip [Funky Winkerbean](#) had run a series on the death of one of the main characters. It hit me hard at the time, because the character was a wife and mother who died of cancer. The comic strip jumped 10 years into the future and we now see the lives of the characters after this death and the death of another character (presumably in the war). I've seen bits and pieces of things I feel written in the comics.

Currently they are dealing with the widower of the first character who died. He is trying to raise his teenage daughter (been there, doing that) and even started on the road to dating (not yet, not quite or maybe, I'm confused). I find it interesting to read the comic and it almost feels like the author has done his research in one way or another. Usually it is very close to some of the things I feel and think.

It is hard to explain what I feel to a person who hasn't dealt with the same situation. In most cases, I don't even know where to begin. This comic explains and shows things in a way I never could. But then, I found someone else who reads that comic and they didn't see the same things. Maybe I just see it because I have been in the same boat. I guess I need to think

and ponder that. My life in a comic, who would have guessed.

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## Even after 5+ years

I've had some good news. I've had some not so good news. I've had some bad news. For 20 years I would go home and discuss the events of the day with my wife. After 5+ years of being widowed, I still miss that time. Talking about the same things with my daughters or friends just doesn't give the same feelings. Funny how some things just hit me.

My logical and analytical side has been thinking about that very thing the past couple of weeks. Deaths, upcoming family events, things at work have been in the front of my mind recently. Every one of these events would have be part of the evening discussions. What was so special about those discussions? 'Twas a puzzlement, but I did figure some things out.

1) Depth of personal involvement. On top of being Husband and Wife, we were best friends. We just enjoyed being together. Anything we did was better when we were together. Trying times a bit less trying. Good times were always better. We were very compatible.

2) We did not agree on everything. I was logical and thoughtful, she was more emotional and reacted with her feelings. I was often slow to react to things. Discussions with her made me think of things differently. It was sort of an instant 'out of the box' experience. I never had to come up with another way of looking at things, she was there to do for me, and I did it for her. We were complimentary.

3) Depth of feelings and empathy. We knew each other very

well. We shared our deepest thoughts and emotions from almost the beginning of our time together. She knew that I would often have a 'delayed' reaction to something. I knew that the reaction she was having could have been triggered by a unrelated event. In some ways we were truly one.

Over the past few years, I've learned to be on my own again. I became comfortable with myself as an individual. Even when some of my friends see me as a appendage to one of my daughters (or the other way around), I am just me. For 20 years it was J and S (... S and J?), now it is justj. The meaning and reason behind my blog-name comes to light, and that is a good a place to stop as any.

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## **Just when you thought...**

Tonight was an evening of celebration. I had a wonderful time with a bunch of friends celebrating a very special occasion. I'm sure someone else's blog will give a complete rundown of the events, so I won't here. But I did enjoy myself. This post is not about that joy and celebration, but more a feeling of loss, when later events happened.

For the past few years, I've always had a few bittersweet feelings at wedding and anniversary celebrations. These were events that would remind me of what I lost. This was the very first such event in the past five years that I did not have the deep feeling of loss. Two of my daughters were married and those events nearly knocked me flat emotionally.

It has been over 5 years since I last held my wife in my arms. 5 years when the wedding vows were fulfilled. You never really think about that clause "until death do us part". At least not until it happens. Today at the celebration, I did not think

about the loss I had, only the joy being shared. A good evening.

But then it happened. I was waiting for my youngest daughter to finish up a game, so I did some shopping at the 24 hour place. I ran into a man who I knew and, I haven't seen him in over 5 years. He did not know of my wife's death. The question "How is your wife?" blew me out of the water. I wasn't expecting to have to tell that to anyone in this area. I live in a small community, I really thought everyone knew.

The comfortable day took a drastic turn with one short question. Emotions filled my every thought. I hesitated on the answer. It was like a punch in the gut. We then shared a few memories and parted. Slowly, the flood of feelings calmed. This is the way of life and death. The memories of our past can warm us as well as send chills down our spines. Those we loved live on through us, and in the stories we tell. In that I found some peace

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## Thoughts on Random Thoughts

Today marks one year of my blog. More on that in the next post... ☐

I was wondering how random my thoughts have really been in the past year. I've written about a lot of different topics that interest me, but I've seem to have posted most about the things in life that are most important to me.

Family and Friends.

Posts written in times of sadness revolved around family and friends no longer in my life. Posts written in better times



revolved around family and friends I share my life with now. Theater posts revolve around plays and my dear friends that I've met through that theater. Even posts on space and science go back to family events I've kept in my mind through many a year.

Just how random?

Over three hundred posts and some posts fit into more than one category, but here is a rough break down.

160 Thoughts on Life (default category could contain anything)

100+ posts on Family

50 posts on Friends

48 on the theater

42 on movies or reviews

37 on Widows and Widowers

24 on Science and Technology

10 to 20 on the remaining categories.

If we add the posts for family, friends and widow/widowers together, that is over 1/2 my post total. Yep, kind of shows where my mind is most of the time. This place is a dumping ground to clear my mind and help get thoughts back in gear. I've always know what is important to me, and it is good to see that my thought 'dumps' confirm this.

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## **It's the end of the world as we know it...**

No, nothing to do with the song, but with a movie I saw with my daughters this weekend.

I saw [Knowing](#) on Friday evening. Decent enough movie, but it was not one I would have picked just to see a movie. We picked this one, because I was too tired to drive to another town to see the movie we really wanted to see. It was the best of the three in our local theater.

If anyone can remember my scale of movies... This one was a wait for a rental. A fairly predictable movie, and it had moments of a couple of other Nicholas Cage movies. Yes, the character and surrounding story was a lot like the [National Treasure](#) movies. The plot driving it could be taken out of any 'end of the world' movie.

Two things I noticed in the movie were that Cages character was a widower (that kind of stands out to me) and he drank way too much. I mean if any 'normal' person was drinking as much as his character did, I wouldn't have trusted them to know much of anything about what he was doing. He had at least 3 good glasses of whiskey before he started to work on the numbers project. I would have been too messed up to even see the numbers....

On the widower point, I think that was handled fairly well. Some widows/ers do turn to booze to help them cope with loss. They can be overprotective of their children. They will turn down chances to meet someone else. They will wear their wedding rings long after the death of their spouse. Even without the booze, they will forget the days they are running the car pool. And the children will see all of this. Yes, this part of the story was handled well. No fake romance thrown in. The caring seen between the two adults in the situation, was because of the situation, not because of romance. Well done.

I just wish this much care had been taken in the story/plot/characters. It had moments that could have made it a much better movie, but 'things' got in the way. As stated above this could just as easily have been a "National Treasure end of the world" story. That for me made the movie a bit less

interesting. I didn't think Cage was that one dimensional, but maybe I'm wrong.

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## **A question asked...**

On one of those email 50 question things, one question struck me differently than most others. This was mostly a fun little time wasting exercise, until question 50.

Question 50: What is the farthest you traveled from home. I've traveled from coast to coast. East, West, North and South. I've traveled far from home. What hit me was my furthest journey. I traveled farthest in the days following my wife's death. Sitting in the dining room or in my room I traveled very far indeed. It is a journey I would not want anyone to take, but I know many who have. It was and is a long journey to take.

It has been over 5 years since that fateful day. I've grown and changed over the past few years. But I've grown and changed every year of my life. Not the path I set out on, but the path I must take.

Life, the longest journey we ever take.