

# The Center of the Bed and What Still Remains ...

*I* sleep in the center of the bed now. Three years after my husband's death I have moved from "my side" to this new venue. It has been a gradual, unconscious, inching toward the middle—a metaphorical grief journey of sorts. It has been movement toward acceptance of what is no more: two bodies, warm, entwined, holding hands before sleep, spooning through the night, comforting in storms, ancient oak branches hitting roof and deck, lightning flashing, thunder cracking, safe in each other's arms. No more whispered nothings, no more laughter before sleep. No more conversations when troubles loom, when possibilities are parsed, finally given over to prayers, to the Our Father. No more quiet gazing at the love of my life, a lock of silver hair gracing his brow. No more listening to the soft even breathing he takes in deep sleep.

We shared a bed for 57 years, with few nights apart. I do not chide myself for the missing, for the wonder still, that this is my reality. I do not chide myself that it took three years to inch the pillows to the center, to relinquish my fears in the midst of a storm to the Creator who made storms and oaks, and who can elicit in me a kind of awe at the grandeur just outside my bedroom window. I can say "widow" now easily. I can say I am mostly content. I can say that gratitude undergirds most days far more than lament, than sadness.

I watched a segment of “This is Us” recently. Mandy Moore’s character is in the deep throes of grief, and her agony, though “it’s only a story,” is palpable. I recognize that agony, the never-ness of missing. The earth-bound person is unable to touch the person in “a better place.” I recognize the sobs, the wrenching, and I acknowledge I was there. If I’m honest, I may still “go there”—I know that place, familiar territory.

But I am healing. By Grace I am healing. And I am sleeping in the center of the bed. 