

VillageNeighbors

APRIL 2017

Meet Herb Knoll

AUTHOR OF

*The Widower's Journey:
Helping Men Rebuild After Their Loss*

AND MEMBERS OF THE WIDOWERS SUPPORT NETWORK

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Also:

CHEF FOR A DAY!

WHERE IN THE VILLAGES?



Best Version Media

Photo by Wendy Milstein

Cover Feature



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Nine years in the making, Herb's book of comfort "***The Widower's Journey: Helping Men Rebuild After Their Loss***" has evolved into THE resource for widowers. Herb started by appealing to widowers – those who recently lost a spouse, those who have been widowers for many years, those who have since remarried – to come together and share their story with other widowers, hoping in their stories he might find common ground that could help many others. And he did.

The Widower's Journey presents the profiles of a diverse group of widowers, highlighting the many real-life situations and challenges they faced and the lessons they learned in the process. But as Herb got deeper into his research, he realized that just documenting those lessons wasn't going to be enough to make a good resource for widowers. So he gathered a team of subject matter experts from across America to add to the content, including two doctors of sociology, a clinical psychologist, a certified financial planner who himself lost his wife when she was only 28, a Catholic priest, a Rabbi, two Christian ministers and three attorneys. With their input, *The Widower's Journey* is now a complete volume of information, with action steps that widowers can use as they deal with the challenges they face on a daily basis.



At the time we first spoke, Herb was not quite ready to meet with me. But in January of this year, Herb gathered together seven of his contributing widowers, (there are over forty in total), who came from as far away as Washington State, to meet with me and share their stories of grief and coping. As you can imagine, I had to wonder what I was getting myself into. Was I going to be able to ask the appropriate questions...give the appropriate responses...not dissolve into tears?

As it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. Fortified with coffee from the shop next door, we sat on the veranda of the sales office on the square in Sumter Landing and spent two hours in non-stop, open, honest conversation.



MEET MEMBERS OF THE WIDOWERS SUPPORT NETWORK

You've been introduced to Herb. Now meet the other members of the group who came together to share their stories. It was a privilege to meet them.

GREGG ELLIOTT:

Age: 78, Catholic Priest, Summerville, FL

Before being ordained as a Roman Catholic priest, Father Gregg Elliott was married to his beautiful wife Janette for 32 ½ years. A career Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, Father Elliott became a Roman Catholic Deacon in 1983, while he was still in the military. Following Janette's passing, he turned to his religious calling for support and after attending seminary school, Father Elliott was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 2000. He offers a very unique perspective about the life one lives as a widower. Some of you may remember Father Elliott, as prior to his retirement, he served at St. Timothy's Catholic Church in The Villages.

JEFFREY R. GOWER:

Age: 59, Stock Broker, Summerfield, FL

Susan, Jeff's wife of almost 10 years, was 57 when she passed in 2005. "Susan colored my world and everyone's around her", says Jeff. Susan was passionate about the performing arts and actively involved in a number of organizations. "Her drive and passion for life and excellence was matched by few. Her greatest accomplishment was her gutsy survival of ovarian cancer for over four years and the example that she set for those around her. Through it all, she encouraged everybody to take advantage of the gift of today, the Present; and how to be thankful for even the smallest of blessings."

NORRIS GEORGE JERGENSON:

Age: 75, Director of Materials, The Villages, FL

Darleen, Norris' wife of 50 years, was a caring, unselfish, lovely lady. "I did not deserve her," laughs Norris. "Darleen was my best friend who took care of me." Norris is now remarried and enjoying life with his new bride.

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AARON SEIDEN:

Age: 91, Social Security Government Official, Baltimore, MD

At the tender age of 18, Aaron stormed Omaha Beach as part of the allied invasion at Normandy, and went on to fight at the Battle of the Bulge. "I was wounded twice, and really never thought I would survive," said Aaron. "You can imagine how I was ready to find a loving woman to share my life with once I got home to the USA. In March 1948, a neighbor asked me if I wanted to date his cousin, Lorraine Rothstein. Our first date was on April 3, 1948...we were married five months later on September 14, 1948." Lorraine passed from heart failure in 1986. Aaron remarried in 1989. "I'm 91 and my wife is 94," he quipped. "She tells everyone she robbed the cradle!"

OTTO W SOUDER:

Age: 91, Banker, Summerfield, FL

"I have had two great loves in my life. Dolly Garvin Souder was my woman: caring, loving, patient and giving. She gave her all to her marriage, our relationship and her family. I was her man. Dolly was a beautiful lady with a heart and spirit that made our journey full of life's gifts. We were married for 60 years." Otto remarried and resides in Summerfield, FL.

JOHN VON DER HAAR:

Age: 71, Palm Coast, FL

"Mary and I met while working for the same company," said John. "When we decided to retire early, we were fortunate to be able to move onto our boat. We enjoyed it so much; we lived on board for six years. Mary and I traveled the east coast, gulf coast and the Bahamas. Mary always found it easy to make new friends; each lasting a lifetime. We were married for a little over forty years. I miss her and the excitement she added to my life." Mary was 63 when she passed in 2013.

BRUCE (BUD) SAVAGE:

Age: 86, The Villages, FL

A native of Maine, Bud lost his wife, Margaret in 2011. Bud has since been fortunate enough to rediscover love when he attended a class reunion and bumped into Kitty, who attended grade school with him in Old Town, Maine. Bud and Kitty are so dedicated to supporting those who grieve, together they serve as instructors for the GriefShare workshops at New Covenant United Methodist Church located in The Villages.

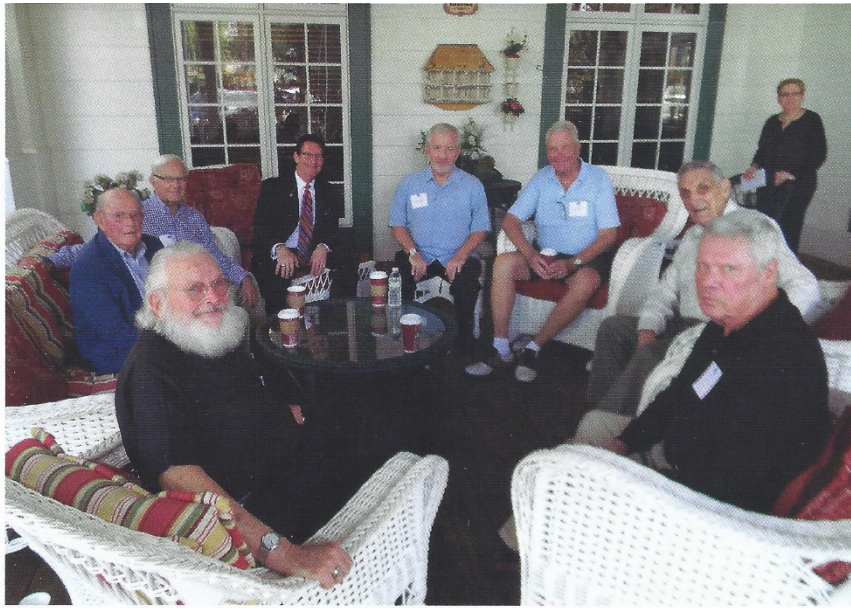
SHARING

After all the introductions were made, Herb spoke to the group. "First I want to thank you all for your participation in this project. With the contributions you have made, along with that of our subject matter experts, I am pleased to report our book, *The Widower's Journey* is even a more powerful and substantive guide than I had originally hoped it would be. While researching and writing *The Widower's Journey* took longer than I had anticipated, as a widower myself, I needed the nine years to experience that which widowers face following the loss of their brides," said Herb. "I needed to live out those nine years... and I needed time to find all of you."

Some of the men heard Herb speak at their church, others saw an article Herb published, and others found Herb when looking for their own answers to the question, "How do I be a widower?"

It's not an easy question to answer. There are many challenges to deal with: grief, raising children, careers, relationships with family and in-laws, dating, remarrying,

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and introducing a new spouse into the family, just to name a few. As Herb interviewed this group of widowers, he began to identify the risks and challenges widowers face and the methods and best practices they used in dealing with them. He was not surprised to find two common concerns among the men.

1. *My family and friends are concerned that my grief is giving way to depression.*

Herb's subject matter experts all agree that grief and depression are different. "Grieving is not unhealthy. But if you are exhibiting manifestations of depression during the grieving process, it might be wise to seek the opinion of a trusted friend, a counselor or a mental health professional. If your grief becomes disabling, if your anxiety becomes overwhelming and paralyzing, and certainly if your behavior becomes destructive to yourself or others, then seek professional help. The message here is to look for support. Look for fellowship and companionship. Share your feelings, spread them out in a safe environment, whether in therapy or a men's support group. It helps."

2. *How can I cope with the loneliness?*

Several of the men expressed their concerns about how lonely they felt...how empty the house seemed. And for those widowers who were caregivers, there was a sudden void, time that needed to be filled in a different way. "Leave the lights and the radio on while you're gone. It might cost a little in electricity but it will be worth it rather than enter a dark and silent home. Keep a photo and other belongings of your wife in a place of honor. When you really miss her, take a break and turn the sadness and loneliness into a memorial to her."

The loss of a spouse is a life-changing event and impacts every facet of living until you adjust to your new situation. This is true whether you are a widow or a widower. But unlike the number of books published to aid widows when their spouses pass away, few books have been written for men who become widowers. Men tend to suffer alone. As Herb says, "As little boys, we were all told that boys don't cry. As a result, as adult males, widowers hold everything in. And that's how the trouble begins."

Each widower will travel on a different road while on their journey. *The Widower's Journey* is the ideal guide to help widowers discover their better tomorrow.

Herb is the founder of The Widowers Support Network, which meets in The Villages monthly. (Widowers from other communities in the area are welcome.) Those wishing to participate in the free sessions, or who are looking to order autographed copies of the book, *The Widower's Journey* should contact Herb at 615-579-8136. You can also write Herb at: herb@WidowersSupportNetwork.com. *The Widower's Journey* will be released on Amazon and on Kindle beginning April 2017. You can also find support by visiting www.WidowersSupportNetwork.com or at the Widowers Support Network page on Facebook. ■



My article, "Valentine's Day Healing Heart" appeared in these three magazines.



I appeared on WBBZ TV in Buffalo when my book was released.



Herb Knoll started a charity to support people who are ill.

» MY STORY

Use your skills to help others

FORMER BANK EXECUTIVE HERB KNOLL (61) of The Villages, Florida, started Michelle's Angels to keep his wife's spirit alive.

What inspired the charity? My late wife, Michelle, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2004 and passed away in 2008. During her treatments, she worried about others who didn't have the resources we did, and she worked tirelessly to help them.

How did networking to help others become the charity's theme? At the time, I was a bank executive. The thing I knew best was how to market and use my database. So I reached out to everyone I knew for help for Michelle, such as medical advice. Soon the world was responding to her in-box, and those contacts helped us find and arrange for her best medical treatment. We realized that could be harnessed to help others.

So what's your mission? We use networking via our Web site to provide love, hope and assistance to those who suffer quietly. Our emotional support can be through e-mails,

phone calls and home visits. Our network also provides many medical referrals.

But that hasn't been easy? Following Michelle's passing in 2008, we formalized the board and filed for incorporation as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. That's when we started to realize the bureaucratic challenges. In order to accept donations, a not-for-profit must register with each state in which it receives donations. In some cases, it must renew its registration annually and pay a renewal fee. The paperwork can be both tedious and expensive for a small not-for-profit.

What have you gained from the experience? I've learned that I can take business skills and apply them to human needs. As a career bank executive I sat on many boards: cultural boards, business boards and many philanthropic boards. Nothing, though, has given me this kind of satisfaction. I've discovered that I've been able to affect people's lives in ways I never thought I could. In retrospect, I wish I had spent my life contributing to human services. **AS TOLD TO ROBERT FRICK**





Kiplinger's PERSONAL FINANCE

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MARCH 2011
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This article appeared in Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine.

Doing Good Works, Not Paperwork

A former bank executive started Michelle's Angels to keep his wife's spirit alive. But now he's running into government red tape. **AS TOLD TO ROBERT FRICK**

WHAT INSPIRED THE CHARITY?

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WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES?

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a small not-for-profit.

CAN'T YOU HIRE SOMEONE TO HANDLE THE PAPERWORK?

There are companies that can do it for you, but the cost is prohibitive for a small not-for-profit. We try to keep administrative costs to a minimum.

SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

Especially in times like

these, with so many people hurting, small not-for-profits can be the first responders to a crisis or a need. The federal government and the states need to help those in a position to help others. There should be a not-for-profit national registry or a single, uniform state application and low fees—or no fees for small charities. ■



■ HERB KNOLL, 60, OFTEN WORKS WITH MUSICIANS TO RAISE MONEY FOR THOSE IN NEED. YOU CAN HEAR SOME ORIGINAL SONGS FREE AT MICHELLESANGELS.COM.

JENSEN JARSON

Moving On After Losing Your Wife

Submitted by Village Resident and Author Herb Knoll.
The new book is written by widowers and for widowers.



The upcoming new book WIDOWER will provide widowers with an opportunity to honor their deceased wives while helping other widowers adjust to their new lives.

“She’s gone.” These were the words spoken to me immediately upon the passing of my wife Michelle Renee Knoll in 2008. Suddenly, the reality hit me. I was going to live the balance of my life as a widower.

I was 57 years old and a successful bank executive, yet I found the uncertainty of becoming a widower to be daunting. The prospect of living alone with no one to share my life with flooded my body with emptiness. I quickly discovered how I was dealing with not only the loss of a spouse, but also the loss of the life I knew. I wanted to call for a “timeout in life” until I had time to gather my thoughts and emotions... but none would be allowed. Adjusting quickly to having become a widower was my task to man-

Mister... I do not have a damn thing for you.
-Barnes & Noble

age.

Sure, my family and friends were there for me, my colleagues at work did their best to support me, but it seemed as everyone became a bit guarded when interacting with me. The facts are people are more at ease comforting women versus men. Men are expected to shake-off any loss they have experienced and get back in the game

WIDOWER provides widowers with an opportunity to honor their deceased wives while helping other widowers adjust to their new lives.

of life and career.

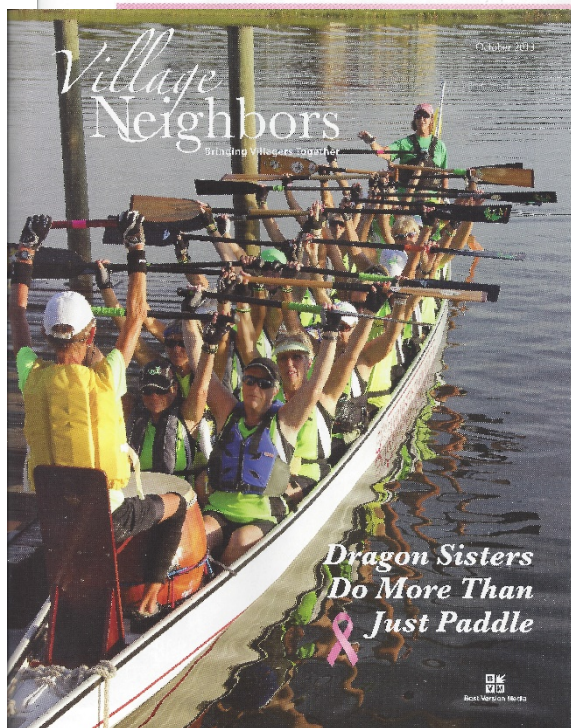
I decided to seek help. To my surprise, my church had no programming to aid me. Perhaps Barnes & Noble might have something for me. “Do you have any books for a new widower?” I asked the clerk. The clerk typed my inquiry into his computer terminal following which he looked up at me and said, “Mister...I do not have a damn thing for you.” the clerk added.

“As you can see, there are a lot of books here for widows but not a single title for widowers.” It was then that I committed myself to writing WIDOWER.

WIDOWER will present, in an easy-to-read format, stories about a select group of widower featuring their real-life situations and challenge as well as the lessons they learned after becoming a widower. WIDOWER will also feature exclusive expert advice offered by its Subject Matter Advisors who, like the widowers they intend to comfort are themselves widowers.

SHARE YOUR STORY! HELP OTHER WIDOWERS!

Widowers can honor their deceased wives while comforting other widowers by becoming a contributor to the book WIDOWER. No need write anything... just share your story with me. Using your words, I'll respectfully capture your story so others can learn from your experience. To learn more... see **WIDOWER THE BOOK.com**. You can also call or write me at my home office in The Villages, Florida at herb@widowerthebook.com - 615.579.8136.



This article appeared in Village Neighbors Magazine when I was researching my book.