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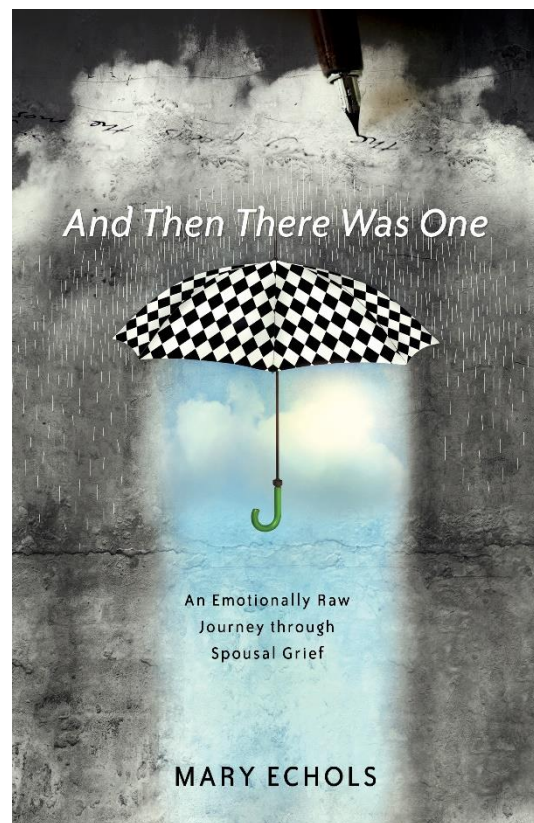
# AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

AN EMOTIONALLY RAW JOURNEY THROUGH SPOUSAL GRIEF

MARY ECHOLS

“This is my journey, an extremely personal and intimate journey through the land of grief after the death of my husband. These words and this story were never penned with the intention of being read by others. They were written for me and only me, but here we are. What lies ahead of you in these pages is an unadulterated and emotionally raw view of my life during my time of grieving. I have decided to share this time of my life with you in hopes that it might ease your journey and that you may know that you are not alone in your walk thru the myriad emotions and everyday challenges that come with loss and grief. Most importantly, I want you to know that at the end of the journey through the dark land of grief there awaits a new sun shining in the uncharted territory of the life that awaits you.”

—Mary Echols



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*Deep River*  
B O O K S

# About the Author

## MARY ECHOLS



**Mary Echols** is mom to a son, daughter, and two step-sons. She is a retired RN who spent many of her working years as a travel nurse, being licensed in seven states and working in hospitals as small as twenty-five beds up to a thousand. After the death of her husband, she went through a very complicated grief that led her to become a certified Christian Life Coach for spousal grief and loss to help others through the grieving process.

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# *What Others Are Saying About* **And Then There Was One**

As a widow of almost 18 months, I very much appreciated having this book to read. Although every circumstance is unique, there seems to be a great deal of similarities as to the grief process. This author nailed so many feelings that I have had, and others that were completely opposite of my experience. One thing is for certain, no one is truly ever ready to let go of their lifelong partner.

In this instance the husband was found very unexpectedly, deceased upon the author coming home. I can hardly imagine what that must be like. I was given the news that my husband had anywhere from 30 days to a year to live. He lived for 13 months. I retired early to spend his last time on earth with him. I KNEW he was dying, and yet, when he did, I was still in a state of shock. When people heard that he had passed, I kept hearing, " Well, you knew this was coming". Yes, I guess I did; we are all closer to our deaths one day at a time. That certainly doesn't mean I was ready. Not for the sights we had shared, not to hear our favorite songs, not to hold onto his pillow and try to smell his special smell, not to sit alone in the church pew every Sunday, not to go to small group ALONE, not to be hit with the mountain of paperwork that one's spouse's death creates, not to eat alone, not to try to comfort his family when I couldn't even comfort his beloved dog. I was sure that I couldn't stay in our home and have to come home every night to him not being here. But, he wanted me to stay here! How can I not do what he wanted?

Time doesn't heal us, but it does change our perception of things. *And Then There Was One* was a great help to me. It helped me know that the feelings I have are not good or bad, but Normal. I highly recommend this book, especially to those who are early in their grief. I wish I had had it sooner!

-- **Christina Duncan, widow**

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# Suggested Interview Questions

For Mary Echols, author of

*And Then There Was One*

*An Emotionally Raw Journey Through Spiritual Grief*

**Q: You say this is a book about grieving but not about grief. Will you explain that?**

**A:** For me, the difference is this: books about grief explain the grieving process by telling the reader about the clinical aspect, the 5 stages of grief, what each stage looks like, and how to navigate them. For many, this clinical approach is all they need to move on, so it works well for them. For those of us who the clinical approach is only so helpful, my book provides a clear, emotionally raw, look into the grieving experience.

**Q: But, that approach didn't work for you?**

**A:** No, it didn't. As a retired RN, I had the clinical knowledge about grief, but I didn't have the experience of grieving. After my husband died, I found all my schooling hadn't prepared me for actual grieving. I knew what I was going through was normal, but it wasn't the stages of grief that were the problem, it was the little things I did that made me wonder if I was okay or not. I questioned things on a day to day basis and many things I felt too uncomfortable to share with others.

**Q: What kind of things were you too uncomfortable to share?**

**A:** In the beginning, the big one was what to do about the sheets. His side of the bed smelled like him and I couldn't take those sheets off the bed and I was afraid of others' reactions when I told them I couldn't change the sheets. I would wash his clothes with mine because I couldn't stand looking at just mine in the laundry

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basket and I would open his dresser drawers and smell his clothes and so many more small things that made me question if I was normal.

**Q: Where did you go for answers?**

**A:** I went to bookstores looking for anything to validate my feelings. I looked through more books than you can imagine, and nowhere could I find a book that talked about what I was going through. Everything was geared to teaching what grief looked like but not the actual emotions and subsequent behaviors. I wanted to read about someone else's journey. I wanted to know if anyone else had done the things I was doing.

**Q: Is that what prompted you to write your journal?**

**A:** I was struggling emotionally and needed validation for my feelings, since I couldn't find the validation I needed, I began to write everything down as a way of coping. Putting it on paper gave me a sense of control and a way to look at how I was doing. I found journaling to be a way of surviving as I could pour out my emotions and behaviors and not have to worry about what anyone else thought.

**Q: What prompted you to share your journal?**

**A:** I have a friend who is a writer and, after I had shared some thoughts and she then read my journal, she began to nudge me to share what I had written with a publisher. She believed that my journal was not only what I looked for and couldn't find but also what someone else may be looking for. After years of persistent nudging, she sent me one last push and the website for Deep River Books and they also felt it needed to be shared.

**Q: How has your journal impacted your life?**

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**A:** Initially, it gave me a window into my grieving and I could look at where I had been, where I was, and where I was going but the major thing was to see how my faith had grown. It gave me the ability to see how Jesus picked me up that first day and carried me until I was strong enough to be put down. I still marvel at His presence and how my faith strengthened as I leaned on Him for my daily needs.

**Q: What words do you have for those going through the grieving process now?**

**A:** I would tell any griever that you only have two choices with grief, you can wallow in it the rest of your life or you can face it and walk through it. I would tell a griever that what you are going through is personal and each person brings his/her own perspective to grieving because of family, cultural, religious, and personal experience and no one else is capable of walking your walk. Do what feels right for you and not what anyone else thinks you should do. Feelings are neither right or wrong they are just feelings but if those feelings are taking you down a depressed path you are having trouble navigating, you might need to reach out to someone who can help you through that and as intense as your grief is and as difficult as the road may be, there is an end to it and a life to enjoy on the other side of grief.

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