

The Way It Is

William Stafford

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

It was my amazing privilege to be married to a man whose thread was Jesus, and whose thread was grace, and who never let go of that thread. He was the kindest, wisest, most resourceful man I have ever known. People have often commented when I mention how long we've been married, "Wow, 45 years, that's quite an accomplishment." I always reply, "Well, for him maybe. (I'm kind of a handful.) But for me it was pretty easy."

Merlin opened up my world in so many ways, kept me (and many others) sane in the face of chaos, was able to cobble up a solution to pretty much any practical problem. His faith often sustained me when my own seemed in tatters. He was the best imaginable man to raise children with; it's safe to say he was the fun parent and the calm parent at the same time.

He thought of others first in a way that he did not even seem to have to cultivate—it just seemed to be the way he was wired. He was not perfect, could occasionally lose his cool, and I'm sure I even heard him swear 2 or 3 times in his life. We didn't see eye to eye on everything. But he was my anchor in this world; now that he's not here, I hope my life will still do him honor, and I mean to follow the thread he followed without letting go.