By Himself: The Older Man’s Experience of Widowhood
by
Deborah K. van den Hoonoard

St. Thomas University is hosting a faculty book launch on Thursday, April 15 at 3:00pm in the lower concourse of Sir James Dunn Hall. Dr. Deborah K. van den Hoonoard, Canada Research Chair in Qualitative Research and Analysis and professor of Gerontology at St. Thomas, received a SSHRC grant to do the research for By Himself: The Older Man’s Experience of Widowhood.

Popular books, movies and television present widowers as lost and unable to cope or care for themselves. In contrast, By Himself is an examination of real older widowers and shows how their daily lives change as well as their relationships with women, children, and friends.

To write the book, van den Hoonoard interviewed 26 widowers over the age of 60 who had lost their wives over the last 10 years. She spoke to men in both Atlantic Canada and retirement communities in Florida. The interviews asked the men to describe their experiences as a widower in their own words.

“Rather than count how often the widowers see their children or friends, By Himself concentrates on how widowers talk about their relationships with children and friends and their understanding of the meaning behind those relationships,” says van den Hoonoard.

There are over 300,000 widowers in Canada, but we know very little about their lives. Van den Hoonoard explains that By Himself sheds light on the issues that are important to the men who find themselves in this situation. Dr. van den Hoonoard also studied widows in her 2001 book, The Widowed Self: The Older Woman’s Journey through Widowhood.