

# TWO WOMEN.

# ONE MISSION.

**Married couples vow to stay together until “death do us part.” But when one of them is at a healthcare facility, they have to sleep apart. Thanks to the efforts of two devoted wives who lost their husbands, that situation is beginning to change at Mercy with the addition of some double hospital beds.**

**Barb Rhame’s husband, Bob,** died in September 2010 at Mercy Medical Center. As he struggled with pancreatic cancer, being physically close was significant for both of them. This was difficult with the medical equipment and the small single bed.

When their college-age children arrived, they, too, felt the need to be closer to Bob. Leaning over from a chair wasn’t enough and while they managed with the twin bed, it was not easy and certainly wasn’t very comfortable.

“Bob’s illness was sudden and put him in a

new setting being totally dependent on others. We were all afraid and one can feel alone, even though there are people all around. We wanted him to know that we were there and that he was never alone. Holding each other brought comfort and strength for all of us,” says Barb.

Barb first heard about double hospital beds from Mercy nurse Sue Rowbotham, who mentioned her dream was to have double beds available for patients. Sue is the nurse manager for Neurosurgery – Oncology – Medical Services.

“It didn’t occur to me that there was such a thing, but after lying next to Bob in that small bed, I would have wished for that as well,” says Barb. “I know that we all wanted to be close and hold on to each other.”

After Bob’s death, Barb decided to put his memorial funds toward making Sue’s dream a reality and Mercy now has two rooms featuring double beds. Each specially equipped medical bed cost about \$5,500. The staff has lovingly called the beds “Bob’s Beds” and a plaque on the footboard reads: *So that you can be close and share your strength and comfort.*

“You think about all of the things you could do with contributions; a bed seems a bit odd, but the need to be close is universal,” says Barb. “Sue could see this. In a place where the medical part is critical, so too is the human element.”

**Marilyn Cash Gooding** understands completely. She watched her husband, Ken, turn restlessly in his single bed at the Dennis and Donna Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy as he passed through the final stages of brain cancer. Marilyn resorted to sleeping in a

recliner alongside his twin-size medical bed. While Ken had the familiar comfort of her loving hand, he continually expressed a need for closer contact. And Marilyn wanted that, too.

“Mercy is all about making you comfortable. Everything else was there – the food, the great hospital staff.... But sleeping together at night was like the missing part of the puzzle,” explains Marilyn. “He needed my arms around him while he was dying.”

The Goodings were the first couple to share one of Bob’s Beds following Ken’s brain biopsy at Mercy. “That night we just hung onto each other. We were overwhelmed, but we had each other,” Marilyn remembers.

Two months later, when the Goodings were ready for the special care provided at Hospice House, they saw only twin beds in each room. After having previously shared one of the double hospital beds, they knew what they were missing.

When Ken passed away in February 2011, Marilyn knew what she wanted to do with the memorial money – start a fund for double beds at Hospice House.

To read more about Marilyn and Ken’s loving relationship and their hospice experience, please go to [www.mercycare.org/letter](http://www.mercycare.org/letter) to read a letter Marilyn wrote as an appeal for contributions toward double beds at Hospice House.

