The ring of evil green lights glimmered through midnight blackness from the ceiling of the hotel room.

I held my breath, not daring to move a muscle. One minute. Two. An hour. An eternity. Finally, I could bear it no more. I gently nudged my husband, Steve, who’d been lost in peaceful slumber. “Mygwtzx… ?” he mumbled, then turned over and drifted off again.

In terror, I elbowed him harder.

“What the—?” Steve half rose from his pillow.

“Shhhh! Quiet! They’ll hear you!”

“Who will hear me?”


Complete silence. Then, “Why would the Communists listen to us sleep?”

“I don’t know. But look at those green lights! I know they’re listening.”

The bedside lamp went on. With spiky hair and incredulous glare, Steve resembled an indignant triceratops roused from his sleep. But he explained calmly that the evil green lights indicated the presence of the hotel’s sprinkler system, and no, they had nothing to do with the Communists, voyeuristic or otherwise. I’d been dreaming.

After 27 years, Steve’s an old hand at dealing with my temporary night psychoses. He’s scared off screaming fighter jets that buzzed through our small midwestern neighborhood (in actuality, snowplows). When nightly thumps and bumps convinced me an army of burglars coveted our obsolete VCR and ancient TV, his courage knew no bounds. When pink-raincoat-clad people carrying a black coffin followed me on a mad chase through ghostly hallways (a combination of too many old Doris Day movies and PBS Mystery programs), he dispelled them with a single thrust of razor-sharp logic.

Although Steve doesn’t remember including this service in his wedding vows (I think it falls somewhere under “for worse”), he’s never once hinted about having me committed.

Surely this unequivocally qualifies him for an Unsung Spouse Award.

Unlike the Oscars, these unique awards aren’t given to the gifted and the beautiful on television before huge audiences of unnaturally thin and gorgeous people in scanty clothing. Instead, only the winner’s spouse and God witness the Unsung Spouse Awards ceremonies, which celebrate the unnoticed and unappreciated heroes and heroines of marriage. Even the spouse doesn’t show up at times! But in unseen timeless reality, thousands of angels raise their wings in salute to these masters of meekness.
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Music and rainbow laser lights explode from every side as God himself applauds and high-fives the champions, which include:

The woman who maintains regular correspondence with her in-laws, as her husband hasn’t yet discovered the inventions of e-mail, telephone, ink pen, or paper.

The man whose wife believes cars run on gasoline fumes. He fills her tank and charges her cellphone batteries so hatchet murderers won’t find her stranded along the freeway at 11 P.M.

The woman who buys, wraps, and delivers Christmas presents for her husband’s employees, his parents, his siblings, his children, and him, yet makes a big deal of his single late-Christmas Eve purchase for her.

The hi-tech Knight in Shining Armor who protects his family from Internet spam, viruses, hackers, porn mongers, and other cyber villains. Even if his wife calls him at work, weeping because she deleted all their financial programs and 20 years’ worth of his golf-score records, he talks her through recovery steps over the phone. He doesn't mention firing her, although the thought occurs to him.

The pastor’s wife who listens with a smile as other churchwomen tell her how wonderful her husband is.

Best of the Bible’s Unsung

Surprisingly, the Unsung Spouse Awards have existed for centuries. If we read between the lines, abundant examples leap from the pages of the Bible, including these unsung spouses from the Old Testament:

Mrs. Noah. She took a yearlong cruise with her husband, sons, and daughters-in-law, caring for Noah’s personal zoo, including lions, tigers, and bears—oh, my!—as well as snakes, mosquitoes, and tarantulas—OH, MY! (Why God found the latter indispensable will be one of my questions when I get to heaven.)

The unnamed wives of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. For years, these women hardly saw their husbands, who spent every spare moment with their father, Noah, building a huge boat in a desert. These women supported their husbands and accompanied their rather strange father-in-law on a long, questionable voyage. Their faith saved their lives and those of future descendants—including ours. No doubt God bestowed a special blessing on these wives, and plans a grand prize for their eternal future—which probably isn’t a free cruise.

Sarah, the Mae West of the Old Testament. Her husband, Abraham, tried to pass her off as his sister to protect his own skin. Twice. She let him live. (Give Abraham credit, though, for living with a 90-year-old pregnant woman.)

Hannah’s husband, Elkanah. He wasn’t Mr. Sensitive in regard to their blended family and her low self-esteem because she lacked children. But when Hannah determined to give their miracle child, Samuel, to God’s service, Elkanah supported her decision, an unusual reaction in a patriarchal system that valued, above all, its sons.

Boaz. A wealthy, powerful man who honored faith and virtue in Ruth. He ultimately married her, though she was a foreigner—an anathema to a respectable Jewish man. Neither he nor his heirs have sued because Ruth’s name is stamped on the Old Testament book rather than his. At least, not yet.

Lappidoth and Shallum, the respective husbands of the judge Deborah and the prophetess Huldah. I can’t recall hearing a sermon preached on either of these men. Yet, despite their lack of
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positive press, they ring true. Lappidoth did not object to his wife’s running off to battle with General Barak, a timid Don Knotts-style soldier who refused to go to war without Deborah’s presence. And we find no evidence Shallum interfered with his wife’s ministry, although she sometimes made politically-incorrect statements.

**Hosea, the patient, forgiving prophet.** He should receive highest honors, as his wife had far more guy friends than girl friends.

And what about these New Testament spouses? The unnamed wives of the disciples, who kept the home fires burning while their husbands followed the young revolutionary named Jesus around Palestine for three years. Likewise, husbands such as Clopas and Cuza, the spouses of Mary and Joanna, dealt with the unrest and downright danger their women faced, not to mention juicy rumors that no doubt surrounded them, as they followed Jesus.

After exploring the Unsung Spouses’ Roll Call of Faith throughout the Bible, my own position as Chief Guardian of the Toilet Paper Spindle seems less demeaning, while my husband’s role as Great (and Only) Changer of Light Bulbs grows in importance. After all, Jesus always noticed seemingly little things about people. Cups of cold water, sparrows, snotty-nosed kids, and blind beggars all interested him. He recognized extravagant love housed in brown-paper packages, such as the lunch of fish and bread the little boy gave up. Like the widow who gave her pennies to God.

Jesus also admires married love that wears baby drool, shovels snow before daylight, heats and reheats dinner, and actually reads the insurance policy. In his eyes, the first are last and the last are first. All who take cold showers—not because of a raging libido, but because someone else hogs the hot water—stand in God’s Unsung Spouse Awards line.

And near the head of that line, receiving a movie star’s adulation, is my husband, Steve, in beige cardigan and sensible shoes—my mighty Defender Against the Communists.

—Rachael Phillips, author of *Billy Sunday* (Barbour Press), lives with her family in Indiana.

“It’s the Little Things That Count,” by Rachael Phillips, MarriagePartnership.com