By MaryBeth Weisenburger

“Do you really need all these black shoes?” my husband asked innocently as we tackled the semi annual closet cleaning project the other day. Before I retorted something like “Yes! Do you really need all of those golf clubs??” I considered the advantages of crossing over to my husband’s way of thinking.

He owns one pair of black shoes. (Well, two if you count the pair that our 21-year-old absconded with and will probably never be seen again). When he wears dark pants, he reaches for his black shoes. It’s an easy, uncomplicated system that rarely results in mix-ups.

I, on the other hand, own approximately 23.5 pairs of black shoes (everyone has at least one shoe that’s MIA, right?). One reason behind this extensive footwear collection, I explain to my confused hubby, is the fact that women need casual (sandals, loafers, clogs), work (pumps, wedges, sling-backs) and dressy (strappy, stiletto, peep-toe) black shoe options, just to name a few. Plus we have to change our styles with the seasons. And then there are those times when we have fat feet and need options in a half size larger. He just stared at me.

To further confuse him, I mention another reason it is imperative to have multiple pairs of black shoes: the women’s clothing industry cannot decide on a uniform shade of black. My friend Denise calls this phenomenon “Fifty Shades of Black” and she has a point. Having a pair of black shoes does not mean they will automatically match your black pants or your black blazer or even your black socks.

You could be dealing with a smoky black hue, a chalky black color or a midnight black. I try to break it down further for my husband by saying, “You know the movie, ‘Men in Black?’ Well, the female version would be titled ‘Women in Charcoal/Ash/Ebony/Sable/Slate/Ink.’”

He nodded slowly and blinked a few times, but he seemed to need still more convincing.

To add to the chaos, I tell him, we women must also deal with Fifty Shades of Blue. I can't tell you how many times I have mixed up my blue and black socks and yes, even my shoes on hazy mornings in dim lighting. I once considered labeling them all BLUE or BLACK with permanent marker, but did not think a person with two college degrees needed to stoop to that level. Even though this same multiple-degreed person sported mismatched clothing and shoes when she arrived at her place of employment.

At this point in my soapbox rant, I realize I am standing alone in the closet, preaching only to the choir of beloved footwear lined up at my feet.

I guess I have befuddled my husband enough that he will never again ask about the army of black shoes in my closet. There are only so many Men Are From Mars/Women Are From Venus lessons he can take.

I can relate, honey. I still don't understand why you need so many golf clubs.

Mary Beth Weisenburger can be reached at marybethw.com or inthesameboat.com, when she's not busy trying to make her black shoes match her black pants.