

# Confessions of a Father of the Bride

Steve Sorensen © 2004  
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## By the way...

It was the worst of days.

My experience may not be common to all fathers of brides, but this father's daughter was married recently, and it wasn't an easy day for him. As June 5 approached, I often said that although I had the briefest job, surely it was the hardest job.

Sometimes, the mind's retrospective on significant events tends to be vague. Auto-pilot takes over, and events bypass that place where they lodge in memory. Not true of this event.

I clearly remember waiting in the church parlor for Jill to enter for pre-wedding photographs. Her attendants were busily talking, nervously laughing, and fully enjoying the occasion. When the princess bride walked in, my vision blurred and my throat tightened. I looked away.

That was the saddest part. From the moment I glimpsed her in the beautiful white gown until the vows were complete, I could not look at her without a flood of emotion. I wanted to see, to stare at this stunning creature, this radiant beauty, this miracle of my flesh, but I could not look.

I wanted to think of the past, those days when I tossed her little body into the air and caught her, those times when I jabbed my nose into her chubby cheek and she laughed uncontrollably, those times when I danced her on my lap to the "Happy Days" theme song, those all-too-fleeting carefree years of joy, accomplishment and anticipation. I

couldn't. Not without crying.

Boiling up in my mind were words of apology. I wanted to express my regrets for not having been a better father, for making her suffer the indignities of parental mistrust, for not sharing more of my time with her, for not saying "yes" when I believed I had to say "no." I dwelt on my failures. I wanted to accept blame for this angel being anything less than perfect. But I couldn't say a word.

I wanted to smile, to rejoice with those who were rejoicing at this dazzling occasion, but I could not. I was unable to carry on a conversation without my throat tightening and my eyes gushing. To my own mother I could only muster a barely audible request not to talk to me. Nor could I appreciate my wife's months of planning to perfection every detail of this significant moment.

As we started down that long aisle, I was grim, committed to holding back my tears during this high and holy ceremony. She was beaming, but on the first step she began to cry. Whether her tears were prompted by my robotic demeanor or her own bursting joy, I don't know. Perhaps her own thoughts were in some way parallel to mine. But my only thought was, "I can't make it." Lucky for me she regained control within a few steps. As we got halfway down the aisle, I wished it could be miles long, but too soon the

walk to the altar was over.

As the minister said, "Who gives this woman to be wedded to this man," I wanted to say, "She is no woman. She is my little girl, the infant queen of my selfish heart." Instead, I spoke my scripted line, turned and embraced her, and whispered my eternal love to her. Then I offered my hand to the young man who stood ready to take my place, and gave my blessing and congratulations. It wasn't easy. But it was right.

And suddenly it became the best of days. The rightness of everything enabled me finally to smile. I felt like I hadn't smiled in months. I was now happy to greet guests and

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glad to be providing a reception for them. And although I had been dreading our dance to a song she had chosen that was more than 5 minutes long, in the end it seemed like 5 seconds. The party progressed, and to some it was a mere cliché. They were "painting the town" and "raising the roof." What I saw was the matrimonial miracle being celebrated again, as it has been countless times in numberless cultures, and for good reason. It is truly something special. This sacred human act is a hallowed witness to hope and promise, confident



in the face of the threats so evident and so relentless in our troubled world.

Since graduating from college Jill has been living on her own in Chicago, independent of her mother and father. Having her so far away has been hard. But when trouble has come, we have still been the first she has called. Now, we'll still feel her joys and sorrows, but there is another who will be on-call. As it has done for me, love will compel him to do his best for her. Unlike me, he will be beside her.

She and I have a heavenly Father who chose her for me and me for her. Neither of us could have made any other choice. Now, in God's providence, she is matched to a man of her choice, one better equipped to share his life with her, and she has chosen well. Life goes on, and the best of days are ahead.

*Steve Sorensen lives in Russell with his wife and Greta. He isn't the sentimental sap that this column makes him seem, but he thought it fitting for the month of June. He has been a puppet, a pauper, a preacher, a poet, a pawn, and he knows a king. He pounds on the keyboard because he thinks that a word is worth a thousand pictures. He's seen it done, but hasn't yet succeeded in writing that word himself. Maybe next time. Greta, by the way, is a miniature dachshund, just to clear up the pictures that word created.*