

**Danville News Column**  
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**“A Daughter’s Wedding”**  
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**Word Count: 750**

It’s all a blur. Weddings resemble pond water after the splash. Did it really happen? I guess it did. My wallet is slimmer than when we left for the ceremony in Baltimore. We brought home with us the steamer we had to purchase to steam out the wrinkles from a variety of dresses. My wife still boasts her pedicure. We have several garments to get dry-cleaned after some heady dancing. We saw the couple take off for their mini-moon (the longer honeymoon will happen later, though it is fair to say they’ve been on their honeymoon for a few years now and we hope that the delight and discovery will continue – you’re married only one day at time). Last, we now have an official and legal son-in-law to contend with.

Evidently, given these ripples left behind, something happened.

For the uninitiated, let me suggest program notes for those preparing for their own fleeting splash.

First, if boyfriends or girlfriends accompany siblings, get family photos with and without them. You never know.

Second, if you expect to catch up with long lost friends and family, forget it. They rush in, set up camp, and then rush out. The reception itself is ‘dim sum’ visitation. You only taste appetizers of chats, tears, laughter. You flit from table to table, sitting down for moment, enjoying a nibble of friendship and memories, then buzz away. As a sidebar: a friend who has hosted three of his children’s weddings advised me how the only friends you really need to invite are those who stick around till the end of the party.

Third, for all you fathers-of-the-bride, please understand there basically is one rule for you to follow come weddings: don’t say or do anything stupid. Fathers-of-the bride, please realize that when it comes to weddings women go nuts, so simply recite after me: “You look beautiful.” Practice that line. Don’t say anything else. Then give a hug. Except for offering calm encouragement, you are superfluous, which can be a kindness given your desire to get out of target range. Hours before the wedding, I found safe haven perched on a stool munching a sandwich. You tire of smiling. Frankly, you’re uncertain if you want to smile. Someone is stealing your daughter. It happened twenty-four years before when I was forced to put my six year old daughter on that evil yellow school bus that carried her away from me.

There arrives that out-of-the-body experience when dad releases a daughter to this other man. I did it twice last weekend. We came around the corner of the machine shop where we held the wedding (a very elegant machine shop), she in her white gown and me in grey pin-stripe. We approached the preacher, the groom, the wedding party. Then came

the obligatory letting go as he took her hand. Oh well, it wasn't as if I had much choice in the matter. I remember how, nearly forty years ago, it took a trip to London with my wife's parents for her father to get a measure of me and reluctantly accept me. I wasn't exactly what he expected for his daughter. Tom worked as a hard-hat engineer for Port Authority in New Jersey. What he expected was for his daughter to be courted by a Lehigh engineering student who played football. Surprise. What he got was a long-haired Hobart College English major who, when he wasn't protesting in Washington DC, played soccer. Surprise indeed. Dads don't get to choose. Fortunately, that trip to London and a few pubs gradually warmed him to me.

Two years ago our family toured Scotland for ten days. My daughter's boyfriend traveled along, which gave me time to get a measure of him. Nick passed muster. Not that it mattered. I confessed to the wedding guests when I welcomed all to the reception, what I learnt was that far more important than my measure of him was my daughter's judgment. We trust her judgment. We raised her to judge well.

Following my welcome speech came time for the traditional father-daughter dance. We had our special moment during the first half of Louis Armstrong playing 'La Vie en Rose,' but when the crowd was invited to join the dance floor, I knew I again had to take her to him and let her finish the dance with him. Me? I would finish the dance with my bride. We will finish this dance together.

What a blur. Whether a weekend or forty years.