

Daddy's Little Girl

by

Bob Haider

On the second Sunday in May Paul and Candice escorted Bonnie to the assembled group of youngsters gathered outside the church to form their procession, where the nuns from the elementary school were busily attending to last minute details of straightening boys' ties, and arranging the bows in the girls' hair.

When Paul and Candice entered the church, they heard the steady drone of dozens of conversations as smiling, anxious parents visited before the service began. Up the main aisle large white bows adorned the pews reserved for the children, as Paul lightly gripped his wife's hand in a gesture Candice understood and she squeezed his hand gently in return.

When the music began, hundreds of heads turned simultaneously toward the back of the church where the children entered, as the craning necks and bobbing heads of each parent attempted to catch a clear glimpse of their child. The procession of children moved up the aisle very deliberately --- the palms of their hands together with their fingers pointed upward --- just as the nuns instructed them. The boys dressed in white shirts, navy blue slacks, and dark blue ties looked like such polite little gentlemen while the darling young girls in their white dresses looked like soft, innocent angels.

Unaware of where their parents might be seated, the children peeked from side to side in an effort to spot them. When they caught sight of their parents, some of the children smiled widely from ear to ear, while others flashed a sheepish, bashful smile and quickly looked away as if embarrassed. When Paul saw Bonnie, a proud smile crossed

## Daddy's Little Girl-2

his face, while Candice took a picture as this moment in time was preserved by dozens of flashes from the congregation of parents.

As the priest would say in his homily, 'today was a bittersweet moment. The parents were so proud of their sons and daughters on a day that would forever be etched in their memories. But for the young boys and girls, it was a day of responsibility. This was a day in the eyes of the church after which they would no longer be considered children, a day that in some ways marked the end of their innocence. They were grownups now.

"It's time, dad," said Bonnie, as she looked toward the front of the church. When there was no response, she turned toward her dad. He appeared distracted and Bonnie reached out and took her father's hand. The touch of Bonnie's hand shook Paul from his daydream and he looked at his daughter lovingly.

"The music's playing, dad," she said softly, "It's time to go."

"Yes, time," he said in a far away voice, "Where did all the time go Bonnie Bee?" he asked, as he gazed affectionately at his daughter. She was once again wearing a lovely white dress only this time she was all grown up.

Bonnie saw the moisture in her father's eyes, and said, "I love him, dad, but I'll always be your little girl."

Paul nodded fondly, patted her hand softly, and said, "I love you, sweetheart."

Then Paul took his daughter by the arm, as they began their slow walk up the aisle toward the altar and toward the wonderful memories that awaited Bonnie.

The End