



FATHER OF THE BRIDE

By Monroe S. Miller

It doesn't seem possible — the little girl who was born 26 years ago while I was in Uncle Sam's Army 10,000 miles from home is now Mrs. Tony Kaster. She's the modern woman who, although married, will always be Amy Miller. I don't approve of that, but I sure approve of my new son-in-law.

There's some kind of old saying about daughters marrying men who share some things in common with their fathers. I am sure all women would deny it, but it has given me a few chuckles when I think about Tony and how he likes the outdoors, enjoys planting trees, studies plants and wildlife, and is studying soil science in some of his graduate school courses. Such subjects turned Amy's nose up when she was young — "how can you get a degree in 'soil'?" — and now she is doing her best to understand them.

Tony is a graduate student in hydrology, studying subjects like geology, soil genesis, soil morphology and the like. We'll have lots to talk about for another reason, too. He and his dad have a small, 40-acre farm with a one-room school situated in one corner. Just a few weeks before he married my daughter there was a collegiate soils judging contest on their land, per the request of one of his professors. Amy will never get away from the subject of soil science!

The role of the father of the bride doesn't last very long, a little more than a day. I'd peg its start at about rehearsal time, moving through the dinner and ending when the father walks his daughter down the church aisle to meet her betrothed. I suppose you could argue it doesn't end until the reception does. Either way, it comes down to something more than a day.

Although the lifespan of the father of the bride is short, it sure is special. All kinds of emotions are packed into those few hours, and it takes a certain durability to sustain yourself. I felt tons

of happiness, some emptiness, lots of peace, some small tension, pure joy for the beginning of a new family, and a little sadness knowing a chapter in Cheryl's and my family ended.

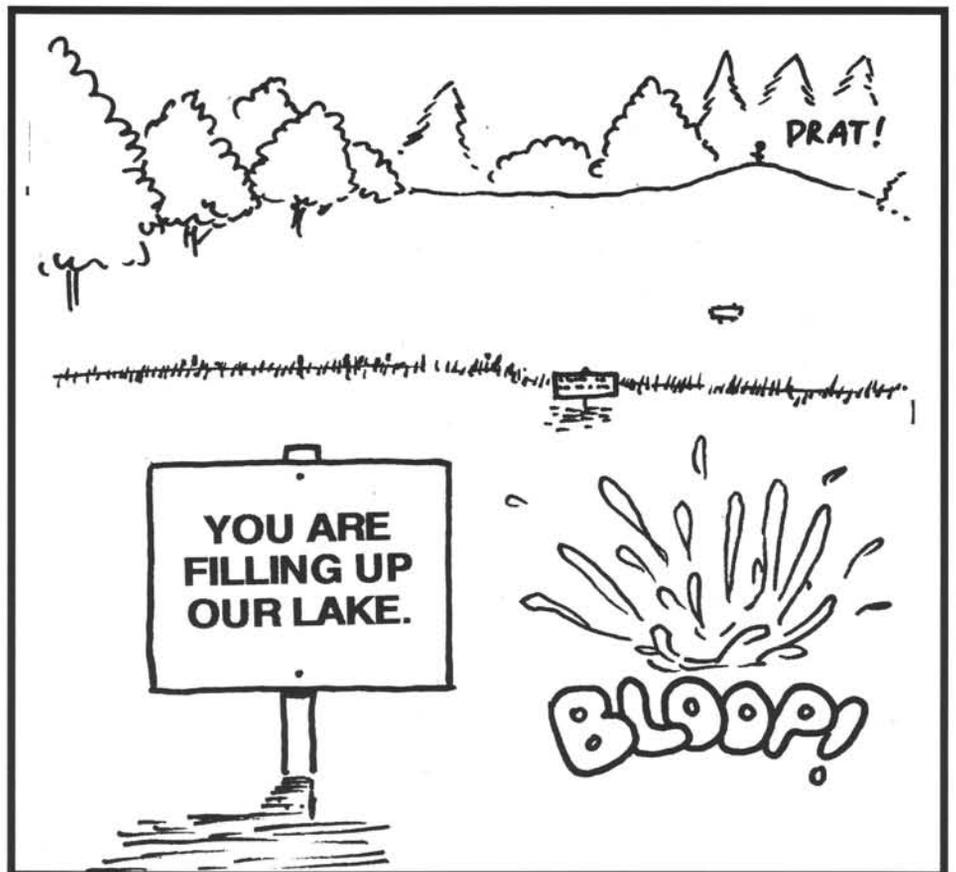
It takes a long time to raise a daughter, and such a short time to see her married. You have to be alert to it all so you have a full memory to cherish. Among those things this typical father of the bride will remember most are "the budget". It is quite a balancing act between being a total curmudgeon (satisfied with only the very basics) and the extravagance that could come so easily. Our family wanted simplicity and dignity and class. The bride and her mother exercised reasonable restraint and extremely good taste. This father of the bride then paid the bills!

I'll remember how fun it has been to get to know the father of the groom. I'd like him for a neighbor — he is a straight shooter and a little eccentric at the same time. He's a great guy and I suspect we will be pretty good friends for the rest of our time on earth.

I'll remember the chaos of the bride and the bridesmaids during the hours preceding the wedding - blue jeans, hair appointments, fingernail jobs and all the other girl stuff we guys will never understand.

On this day, the wedding day, I wore my first tuxedo and figured I looked more like a Lutheran bishop than the father of the bride. My brother brought reality up when he said I looked like a penguin! Who could forget it?

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I won't soon forget how gorgeous all three of my daughters looked at the alter — Holly was maid of honor and Christie was a bridesmaid. It was funny seeing 16-year old Chris teetering on high heels for the first time. And I was thrilled to overhear someone comment that my wife "didn't look like she was old enough to be a mother of a bride." Nobody made a similar comment about me!

Weddings are an expanded family reunion of sorts. Family members we haven't seen for too long were there. We met the family of the groom and learned about them. And it is hard to think of a time when you are sur-

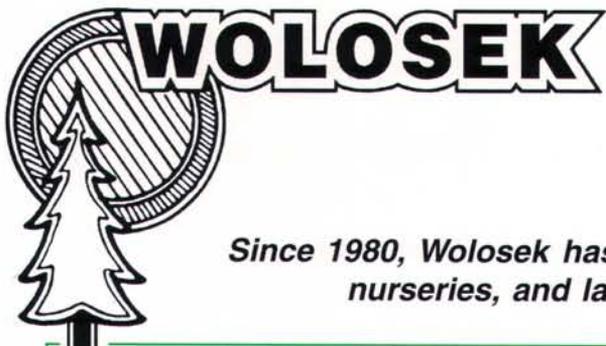
rounded by almost all of your close friends at once.

The music in our church was beautiful, the day was warm and sunny and, significant to all of us, the reception was held at Blackhawk Country Club. Like many other golf course superintendents, the club and course have been a central part of all our lives. Each of the three girls have memories of the place — from picking up tournament flags at dusk to driving a golf cart in the shop yard — and two of them have worked there in the summer and part-time in the rest of the year. So we felt privileged to be there this day. There also is the singular matter that the clubhouse staff does a wonderful job with

wedding receptions.

For the daughter married this past September, Cheryl and I will always remember riding our bikes with her in a child's seat on the back of mine from the UW-Madison graduate student housing at Eagle Heights to the 18th green at Blackhawk. More than a few times on these trips I expressed envy of those who worked at this beautiful place. We are proof that dreams do come true.

The tenure of the father of the bride is indeed short, but the memories will last a lifetime. And if you are a lucky man like me, with all girls in his family, I can look forward to that honor two more times. What a sweet thought. 🌱



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