

As Lynne Killian says of husband Bob, “He’s usually very calm. I warned him, but the emotion hit him harder than he thought it would.” Susan Wit echoed that sentiment. “Even though you’ve been thinking about it and planning it nonstop for a year, it still overwhelms you. That surprised Bob.” Bob Thompson describes the day: “I went downstairs in the church and saw Jenny for the first time in her wedding dress. She ran into my arms. That surprised me – the beauty of this child I raised.”

That overpowering emotion is one reason Ippensen believes the rehearsal dinner is so important. She’s seen a number of fathers who have a hard time giving their daughters away. She saw one father who absolutely could not say “her mother and I” in answer to the traditional question, “Who gives this woman in marriage?” during the ceremony rehearsal. Ultimately, he had to make do with a nod. “The rehearsal is a great opportunity for two families to come together, give their well wishes and to prepare for the emotion of the following day,” Ippensen says.



*Bill Laws and daughter Sara*


On the wedding day, there is one brief moment when it’s just the father and daughter together — the moment before the doors open and the father walks his daughter down the aisle. Ippensen feels privileged to witness that moment. It is often the first time the father has seen his daughter in her wedding dress. He’s in awe and will tell his daughter she looks beautiful and that he loves her. But what is unsaid is the most powerful.

“They lock arms and dad will tap his daughter’s arm in a knowing way just before the doors swing open. And that single reassuring tap says more than any words. It is their one moment together and it’s always a very peaceful moment,” Ippensen says.

Nicole Smith recalls what her father said to her in that moment in May 2006 before she walked down the aisle to join husband Lamar in wedded bliss. He looked over and said, “You know, you don’t have to go through with this.” It wasn’t said in disapproval. It was an abbreviated way of saying that even after all the time, expense and effort, he would support her through a change of heart. “It was a very generous sentiment,” Smith says, adding, “I went through with it, by the way.” After all his duties are complete — the welcome toast, the first dance — the father finally relaxes and has a good time, Ippensen says.

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