

## Dances with My Father

*By Diane Parker*

"Dance With My Father," the last song Luther Vandross wrote and sang before he died at the age of 54, reminds me fondly of the times I danced with my father.

Dad was my step-father ... a handsome man with azure blue eyes and blond hair who stood at 6' 3". He was a vibrant, gentle man, always, always smiling. The kindest man I ever knew. I was a very lucky little girl growing up with such a great dad.

Back when I was a child, before life removed all innocence, my father would lift me high and dance with me and spin me around until I tired of laughing. He would carry me around and I knew for sure I was loved.

I was ten years old when my parents took me to my first formal dance which was at a pavilion. The Jimmy Dorsey band was playing. I watched my parents dance ... like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, I thought.

My dad asked me to dance with him. Imagine a ten-year-old dancing with a 6' 3" man! She could barely reach her arms around his waist. He and I started out on the dance floor with him having to bend over. Finally he said to me, "Stand on my feet." I stepped up on the top of his shoes and he started swinging me around the dance floor holding onto me tightly. I had never been so thrilled or felt so grownup as that dance with him.

If I could get another chance, another walk, another dance with him, I'd play a song that would never end. How I'd love to dance with my father again.

Years passed. I grew up and left home. Dad's hair turned gray and thinned. His health was fading and he began to shrink in height. But I always saw the blond, tall, beautiful knight in shining armor that was my dad.

He had danced me around the floor at my wedding. Through the years dad and I danced a lot of times. A long time ago, he could jitterbug, waltz, two-step, even tried one time the Chubby Checker twist, which he said, wasn't his thing. Come to think of it, it wasn't mine either.

I missed watching my parents dance together, like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, but most of all I missed dancing with my dad. I missed his arm around my waist, my hand in his, my arm around his neck. I missed his smiling face. He was so easy to dance with.

If I could steal one final glance, one final step, one final dance, I'd play a song that would never end. 'Cause I'd like to dance with my father again.