**15441, Kenneth Green**
Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to speak to everyone today on the subject of Father’s Day. I can speak to you from a couple unique perspectives. Both of these come from the experience of a first marriage when I was only 19 years old and being the father of three sons who are 38, 34 and 30 years old. The second perspective comes from a second marriage in my 50’s with only a daughter.

First, I have the perspective of first being a very young father when my sons were born. I was not much more than a child myself at 18 years old. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Yes, I was excited to become a father, but I didn’t know enough about what the years would be bring to be afraid of the challenges ahead of me. I remember bragging to all my guy friends the first time I became a father, as if I had done something new and unusual. It took a while for the seriousness of fatherhood to settle in on me.

When my sons were born I was young in many ways, one of which was in my career. I was just starting out and we struggled financially as most young families do. I didn’t have that struggle when Krystin was born. I’m by no means wealthy, but at least my years of figuring out who I was and who I wanted to become were behind me. I think I’ve been able to spend more time enjoying being a father thus far. But, I’m sure most men could agree with me if they have children many years apart in age.

Second, I have the perspective of being a father of sons and a father of daughters. Being a dad with sons is nothing like being the father of a daughter. With sons you tend to want to rough house and wrestle and play with cars. Am I right? I think I am. Each of my boys represented their own unique challenges. But they shared the sameness of all being sons. Becoming the father of a daughter was a real culture shock for me. I remember when my boys were little I was so proud of having sons to carry on my name, sons to play rough with and sons to do “guy” things with as they grew older. They became my friends as much as my sons.

But, having a daughter is totally different. I remember my boys warned me it would be different since they were grown with families of their own when their little sister was born. They warned me I would be more protective of her. I dismissed their warnings, thinking to myself, she’s my child, it will be pretty much the same. But, it wasn’t the same.

When Krystin was born eight years ago I remember when I first held her in the hospital. She was so tiny. A protective urge came over me that was so overwhelming. This little girl needed me to take care of her in a way that was so different from her older brothers. I can’t explain why it felt different, it was just different. Maybe I’m just old fashioned but I think the women in our lives should be treasured and protected as blessings from God. All children are a blessing, but little girls really are special in their own way.

I watch other fathers and daughters and not all of them have the great relationship I have with my Krystin. I just love the fact that she wants to be around me. I can be grumpy at times being an older father of 56 years old. But, she always lets me know how much she loves me. Fathers and sons don’t talk like that to one another. Maybe we should. My sons know I love them and I know they love me, but guys don’t get all mushy about it. So to see my beautiful little girl show her love to me just makes me melt like butter. Don’t tell her I said that though or she’ll have me “wrapped” around her little finger. Oh, I forgot, she already does.

We enjoy doing things together that I didn’t share with my boys. I go to her dance recitals, going ice skating, going to the movies or bike riding. I’ve always loved to watch westerns but my wife hates them. Thankfully our little girl loves them. Sometimes we’ll just program our television to have a western marathon. We’ll have snacks and soft drinks and watch one western after another. That’s when her mother decides she needs to go on a shopping spree. She doesn’t spend a lot of money; she just doesn’t want to spend her day watching about the wild, wild, west.

She and I have a standing date to go enjoy a meal at the seafood restaurant. She and I love it but her mother hates seafood. I make sure I have regular dates with my wife in her favorite restaurant to make up for her understanding how much Krystin and I love seafood. With the danger to females in the world today, I fear for her because of her vulnerability as a female. As she grows up she will need to learn to be aware of the cautions she must make in her relationships. There is so much for women to watch out for such as domestic Violence and sexual assaults. As she grows up I want for me and her older brothers to set the example of how a man should treat a girl or a woman so that she will not settle for being treated as anything less than the treasure we see in her. Although, I have to say, when she gets to dating age, when she’s about 30, she might have to warn her prospective boyfriends about her overprotective father. I know it is not easy in this world to be a female, so I want her to know that she can depend on me to take care of her.

I worry about her getting older and not wanting her father around as much as she may want to spend time with friends. Where my boys and I did things as “guys”, I won’t have that with my little girl. She’s not a guy and doesn’t like to do much in the way of guy things. As she grows up she’s going to want to shop with her girlfriends, have girl nights out. She may not want our father dates as frequently or at all. I don’t think it will come today. I don’t want my baby to grow up. But, she is growing up and I have change with how she changes and respect her boundaries. I know she will grow up and be smart and independent. But, I always want her to know that I love her and I’m proud of her.

Regardless of the differences of being a father when younger or older, or the differences of being a father to sons or daughters, one thing is certain, being a father is one of the greatest experiences of my life. It is humbling and it is encouraging to know that I can help a new generation grow up. I love spending times with my daughter, whether it is just doing something fun, or whether I am cheering her on in some endeavor of her own. Some changes have been very good for women in society, opening up opportunities for Krystin that didn’t exist for girls when her brothers growing up. She is an intelligent, talented little girl and I want to champion her to do and be whatever she desires in her life. I don’t want her limited just because she is a girl. Yes, I believe in treasuring and protecting the females in my life, but that doesn’t mean I want to limit her.

Being a father has brought me the greatest joy in life, next to being a husband. Having your children look up to you with expectancy and admiration makes you want to become a better person than you are. It makes you want to become your best self. And, becoming a father again in middle age makes me feel young again. I heard it said once that you are only as old as the company you keep. So, having Krystin at this stage of life is like its own fountain of youth. I get to do some things again, only do them better now that I am older and wiser. I’d like to think I have learned a few things over the years and that I make better decisions this time around as a result of growing in maturity and not just in years.

If I can give any advice to fathers today it is this. Take the time to enjoy your children. Champion them as they grow up and try new things. Set your best example for them so that they will grow up to be good men and women. And, men, take special notice of your relationship with your daughters because you are truly their first example of what to expect in a man. Every male friend, boyfriend and possible mate will be compared to you. If you set a great example then you can pretty much guarantee she will not be fooled into a relationship with a man who won’t treat her right.

Happy Father’s Day Dads