

# A time for fears, tears, and dreams

Wed June 25

It was two hours before the ceremony was to begin, and almost everyone was in the church basement eating munchkins, getting dressed, or frantically searching for something to do.

I walked upstairs to the sanctuary to take a picture.

Don sat in the front row of the pews staring nervously at the altar while his best man tried to calm him down by playing the piano. He was already fully dressed in his black tuxedo and cummerbund, and he was fidgeting with his bow tie.

"This is it!" I said before I snapped a picture.

He grimaced and wiped away the beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

I went back downstairs to change and see if Brenda needed any help.

"Here, hold this," I was told, and someone thrust the hanger holding Brenda's wedding gown into my hand.

She stood there nervously re-ironing the gown's train.

It was Brenda's wedding. She'd waited and worked a long time for this, and she wanted everything to be perfect.

Before long, all the bridesmaids were dressed, and it was time for her to tie the bows on the red sashes she had made for our white, tea-length dresses.

She tied each bow, painstakingly modeling one exactly after the other until all six of them were done.

Then it was her turn.

Her face beamed as the white gown was lifted off its hanger, and held for her to step into, rather than pull over her head. She didn't want to mess up her freshly styled hair.

She struggled with the sleeves, squirmed into the long skirt, and held her breath as the gown's back was zipped up.

Someone held her shoes and she carefully stepped into them, glanced at the mirror, and threw the gown's train out behind her.

"Donald's really nervous about this," his sister Nancy said as she stepped into the room.

"He is?" Brenda asked earnestly, a shadow passing across her face. "He's not thinking of leaving me at the altar, is he?"

"Of course not," Nancy laughed. "He'll be there — he's just got the jitters."

She beamed again, turned, and threw the train out once more so she could watch the air catch the material, and slowly settle.

"I love when it puffs out like that," she giggled.

Forty-five minutes later the pic-



The Blank Page

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tures had been taken, people were being seated, and we could hear the music playing upstairs.

"Let's line up now," Brenda said, and we all took our positions, and began to walk slowly up. She didn't want anyone to see us until we stepped into the sanctuary.

We stood outside the glass door, and the soloist began to sing.

Brenda stood clinging to her father's trembling arm, occasionally wiping her eyes and nose with a lace handkerchief.

By the middle of the song she was bawling uncontrollably.

"Brenda, you have to swallow your tears!" her father said, shaking her lightly. "You can do it, I've had to do it before, top."

I turned around so as not to miss a cue, and followed the first bridesmaid over to the end of the

center aisle where our ushers were waiting to take our arms.

The solo ended, and the march began.

Brenda sniffled, wiped her eyes, and tried to compose herself. By the time she started down the aisle, her eyes were dry.

"I rubbed my nose a few times, and I think she thought I was going to lose it," her father said later. "So she squeezed my arm. That didn't help at all!"

From where I stood on the other side of the altar, I watched Don's face.

As the bridesmaids filed in, he looked scared, nervous, even terrified.

But when Brenda appeared, his face lit up. When she reached him at the altar, the two of them grinned at each other. I thought they might even start giggling.

The maid of honor, Brenda's 16-year-old sister Debbie, began to cry, and the ceremony began.

It whizzed by. They said their vows, and I turned on cue when they stepped up to the communion altar — Brenda's train flowing behind her.

Debbie continued to sniffle, and then Joanna, another bridesmaid and a recent bride herself, grabbed for a Kleenex.

Before I knew it, Mr. and Mrs.

Donald Floyd Hicks had been announced, and I was marching down the aisle after them.

I stood in the receiving line greeting people I had never seen before.

"What beautiful bows!" everyone remarked. "How did you tie them so exactly alike?"

In a few hours, everything was over, Brenda and Don were launched on their honeymoon, and the church was returning to normal.

We changed out of our dresses and into shorts, then we helped clear the flowers away.

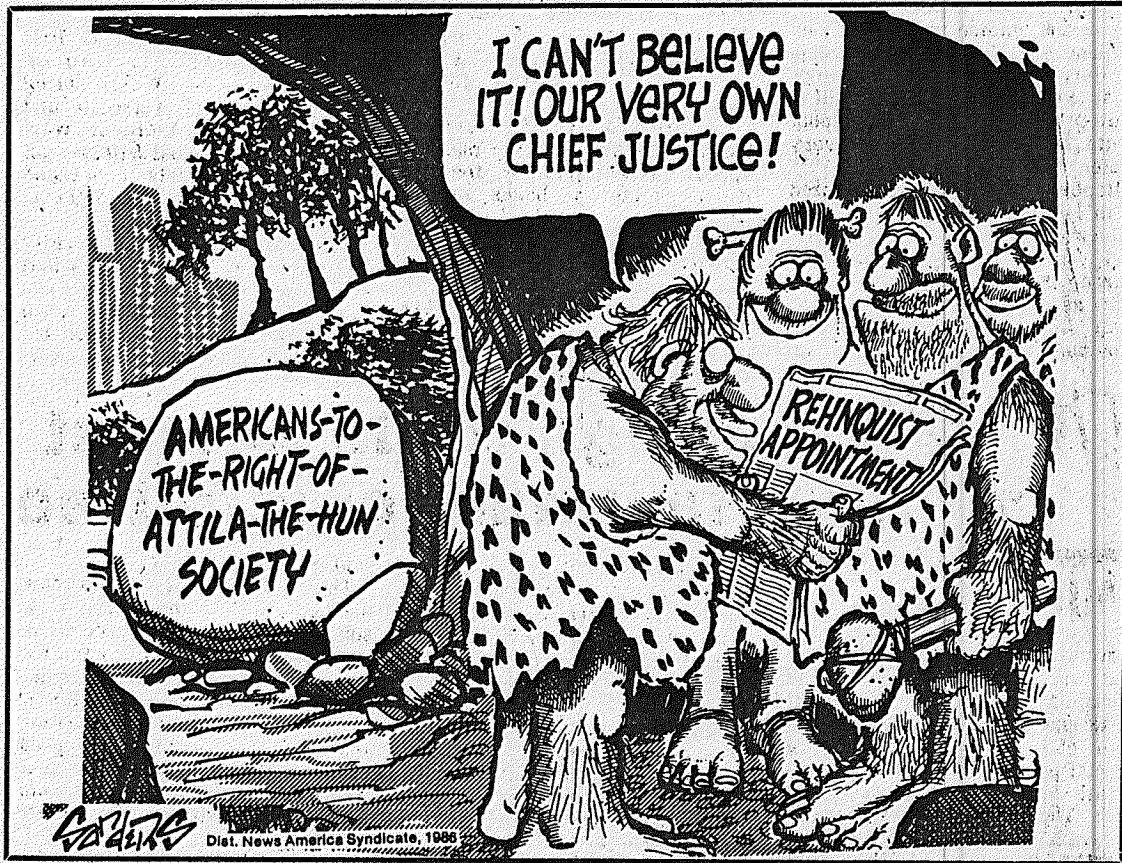
During the service the next morning there was little sign of the ceremony. The rented aisle candles were removed, and the reception hall was empty.

I could hardly believe it had really happened — that it was already over. It seemed like a fairy tale dream when I thought about it.

But when I went to grab a hymnal from the pew rack in front of me, I found a white offering envelope jammed between the rack and the pew back.

"HICKS" was scrawled across the top in a little girl's dreamy scribble.

I laughed, and grabbed it to show to Brenda later.



# A second judicial shoe expected

WASHINGTON — Within mon- Republican-controlled, of a poten- man" is in the White House. In-