

# Much Ado About I Do's

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO  
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From the beginning of time, a wedding was held to celebrate life and happiness. After creating the world and everything in it, God conducted the first marriage uniting the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. Several centuries later, when Jesus Christ came to earth, He once again honored the importance of marriage when He performed His first miracle during a wedding feast at Cana. And the last chapter in the Bible records that eternity in the Kingdom of God will begin with yet another wedding, called the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.



AJPress Photo by Mikko Santos

## History of Weddings

Yes, throughout history, love - and weddings - has made the world go around! But the wedding ceremony as it has evolved through the centuries has become so much more intricate than the simple affair that it was in the olden times.

In Jewish communities during Bible times until the time of the Roman Empire, weddings were generally simple affairs. For lower income families, the bride's father would simply deliver her to the groom, and the two agreed that they were wed, and would keep the vow of marriage by mutual consent. Wedding celebrations of well-to-do families consisted of a procession from the house of the bride to the bridegroom's home. Both parties were beautifully dressed and ornamented; with the bride wearing a long veil which she took off only in the nuptial chamber. After the procession, the marriage contract was read at the home of the groom, and blessings were pronounced by parents and friends. Then the marriage couple went to their private room, offered prayers, and sexually consummated their relationship. A week-long feast follows at the bridegroom's house. So joyous for the entire community was a wedding and the inauguration of a new family that a newly married groom was free from conscription into the army for one year, 'to be happy with his wife whom he has taken' (Deut. 24:5).

Prior to the time of Constantine around 4th century AD, wedding ceremonies were performed in the homes. Those homes sometimes may have been the same homes in which the Christians of that city or town gathered for worship, since all "churches" during the first three centuries of Christianity were house churches. It wasn't until later centuries when church edifices were built. Also, it was not required for religious leaders to give validity to marriages until 1545 when the Council of Trent recognized matrimony as one of the seven sacraments with a decree that a Roman Catholic marriage would be recognized only if the marriage ceremony was officiated by a priest with two witnesses. The religious wedding ceremony then began to be held in church buildings. It was also around this time that the traditional wedding vows were first published in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Couples said, "I do" when asked if they promised to "love and cherish" each other "till death do us part."

By the 1600s, the role of recording marriages and setting the rule for marriage passed from religious churches to state governments in many European countries. Thus began the system in countries where for a marriage to be recognized, dual requirements of state registration and church consecration were needed.

From simple affairs with just a few relatives and friends attending the wedding, the ceremony has evolved into big, festive celebrations that have required the services of a lot of people and which takes as much as a year in planning and preparation.

## The Making of the Grand Wedding

As life began to be more prosperous, the upper class could afford more of a wedding as we see them today. The house-based wedding was replaced by ceremonies in hotels, restaurants, social halls and gardens. Commercialism started to creep in and influence the way weddings were held.

The first wedding registry was invented in the 1920's by a department store owner in America who realized if the bride could tell her guests exactly what she wanted, she could avoid a lot of mismatched items and the hassle of returning unwanted items.

Around that time, DeBeers, the company that mines and sells diamonds, invented the "tradition" of the diamond wedding ring through a massive marketing campaign.

Over the centuries, brides continued to dress in a manner befitting their social status—always in the height of fashion, with the richest, boldest materials money could buy. While the poorest of brides wore their best church dress on their wedding day, the wealthier brides wore the most expensive gowns.

White wedding gowns did not become a popular option until 1840, after the marriage of Queen Victoria who had worn a white gown for the event so as to incorporate some lace she owned. The official wedding portrait photograph was widely published, and many other brides opted for a similar dress in honor of the Queen's choice. The tradition continues today in the form of a white wedding, though prior to the Victorian era, a bride was married in any color except black (the color of mourning) or red (which was connected with prostitutes). Later, many people assumed that the color white was intended to symbolize virginity, though this had not been the original intention. Today, the white dress is understood merely as the most traditional and popular choice for weddings, not necessarily a statement of virginity.

It is also around the same Victorian era that the bridal party or entourage first started.

In this Anglo-Saxon tradition, friends of the groom were given the role of guardians or body guards of the bride. It was their duty to make certain that the bride made it safely to the wedding and later the groom's home. She should arrive at both places with her dowry and herself intact. This is how the term bride's knights originated. It evolved into best men, bridesmen and later into groomsmen.

The maid or matron of honor was once referred to as a senior maid. It was her responsibility to attend to the bride for several days before the wedding occurred. The senior maid was also by the bride's side on her wedding day, ensuring that she looked as beautiful as possible. Other attendants, referred to as bridesmaids, assisted the bride in decorating for the wedding, and they typically helped her dress for the wedding, too.

In many cases, both bridesmaids and groomsmen dressed very similar to the bridal couple. It was believed that this would confuse any evil spirits or even jealous suitors who might attend the wedding with the intent of doing harm to the bride or groom. This tradition of the bridal party dressed similarly continues today in a more modern form. Bridesmaids are typically chosen because of their close friendship and bonds of loyalty to the bride.

Some other members of the bridal party were children. The role of a flower girl was to entertain the wedding guests. The sight of a tiny girl carrying flowers with the wedding party helped create a more relaxed and pleasant celebration of the couple's union. Young boys had specific roles too in wedding party history. They usually were used to hold the bride's train, and they typically dressed as pages with velvet jackets and short pants. Young boys were also used to carry the wedding ring, and this continues as a tradition today.

After World War I, full-scale formal weddings began to be desired as women wanted "the most important day of their lives" to be the grandest. The flowers, food, invitations, the wedding gowns and ceremony were given much more attention by brides, with the help of their mothers and close friends. *Bride's Magazine* began to be published in 1934 and its rival *Modern Bride* began publishing in 1949. A whole industry catering to the provision of unforgettable weddings was birthed.

As more people were attending more weddings, the trend for unique wedding trends began and continues with ferocity today. New "unique" additions became staple elements of the "perfect wedding" --- the use of the bridal car, the lighting of the candle, the coin bearer, the Bible bearer, the veil, the first kiss, the first dance, the cake sharing, the wine drinking, the release of doves, the photography, getting into the honeymoon getaway car etc.

Everyone wants their wedding to stand out from the other weddings they have attended in the past. Thus, the role of the wedding planner has become an important ingredient in many a wedding today. Wedding planning checklists abound for brides and grooms, designed to help them organize their wedding needs including attire and personal accessories, ceremonial items, stationery, flowers, floral arrangements, accessories, gifts, photo and media, food, beverage and hospitality, and music. The internet offers countless articles about wedding planning, budget, hiring wedding vendors, professionals and service providers- all designed to help couples prepare well for their big day.

With all this much ado about the day when one finally says "I do", it is wise to be reminded of the old saying that goes, "A Wedding is but a day, a Marriage is a lifetime." The author, Barbara De Angelis, said it well when she wrote, "The real act of marriage takes place in the heart, not in the ballroom or church or synagogue. It's a choice you make - not just on your wedding day, but over and over again - and that choice is reflected in the way you treat your husband or wife." ■

## The Wedding Planner

### The Do's and Don't's of Planning for a Wedding

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJPress

But with so much to prepare for, wedding planning could be a bit overwhelming. There's the wedding dress, the tuxedos, the rings, choosing the court, sponsors, invitations, the cake, the ceremony and reception location, pastor, and so many more.

"The hardest part for us is choosing whom to invite," said Basilio who is expecting a guest list of 350 to 400 people. "We have a big family and a lot of friends but we know we can't invite all of our friends."

Toni Rose Parcon of SummeRose Planning and Design advises newly engaged couples that the first step to plan for their wedding is to sit down with each other and discuss how they foresee their wedding.

She said the couple must realistically calculate the budget of their wedding.

"Budget is the most important and crucial aspect of any wedding planning," said Parcon. "It can cause strain in the process if it is not discussed thoroughly."

"Be realistic and be optimistic," added Vikki Grenas of Leave-A-Mark Events. "Be realistic in a sense that everyone wants a fairy tale wedding but in this day and in this economy that might not happen. But be optimistic because your fairy tale wedding can still happen but you just have to work within certain boundaries."

Parcon said that family contributions are helpful.

However, if family members "start to gain creative control, and the couple doesn't nip it in the bud early, it could get ugly."

Religious affiliations and type of wedding ceremony is also something the newly engaged couple need to figure out right away, said Daisy Mae Amparo, an events planning coordinator at the Wilshire Grand Hotel in Los Angeles.

"They have to consider both sides of the family," Amparo said. "The bride's family and the groom's family may be completely different. Yet, they are bound together as a couple. [They have to] seek input from both sides of the family and work out compromises when opinions are very different."

For Basilio, he had to consider his future mother-in-law's religion.

"My parents wanted a traditional Catholic wedding and even though my fiancé Lia's raised a Catholic, her mom is part of the Seventh-day Adventist, a Christian Church."

Basilio said that they compromised on how the ceremony will be conducted. Rather than holding it inside a Catholic Church, the two will wed at an outdoor location at Rancho Capistrano in San Juan Capistrano with a Catholic priest overseeing the ceremony.

#### Mistakes

With so many things to plan for it's easy for couples to get caught up during the planning stages and forget the simple things.

"Some couples forget to provide the readers in the ceremony the material they would be reading," said Grenas.

Others forget to acknowledge their guests especially if those guests came from out of the country or out of town, added Amparo.

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Photo courtesy of Cynthia de Castro

When FilAm Sean Basilio proposed to his girlfriend Lia Zabala of four years last August, he thought planning for their marriage was going to be a cinch.

"In the beginning it wasn't that much of a big deal," said the 26-year-old Basilio.

Seven months later and their wedding date of May 21 fast approaching, he's realizing just how stressful planning for a wedding can be.

"We weren't thinking about it that much before but now towards the end it's getting stressful. We're still trying to find the right vendors, we need a host and we are still looking for an MC," he said.

Weddings are a very important day. It's a long held ritual in every culture. Having the perfect and memorable wedding is a dream for many couples and their parents.

Publisher's Note:

## To Have and Hold

Marriage is a sacred lifetime commitment that is, more often than not, celebrated with much preparation. Every woman dreams of a perfect wedding -- afforded with all the magnificent trimmings possible. The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine brings you this issue -- an ultimate wedding guide to help you plan for this momentous occasion of love and life-long partnership. ■