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*The
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Issue*



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IT'S WEDDING SEASON

It is officially wedding season folks! This is our third annual wedding themed issue, and we decided to dedicate a full issue to this topic each year because ... well, who doesn't love a good wedding? There's nothing but joy and happiness associated with weddings. Additionally, the wedding business is a huge business, and, perhaps more importantly, our little corner of the world caters to a lot of weddings. They in turn bring a nice little chunk of change to our local economy. We have countless venues and vendors, and there are some spectacular fairy tale weddings that take place all around us.

The reason that we publish this wedding issue in February is because the height of "engagement season" is between October and Valentine's Day. Did you know that? Well, as a result and as you can imagine, February is then the start of planning season. So what better time than now to feature all things wedding-related?

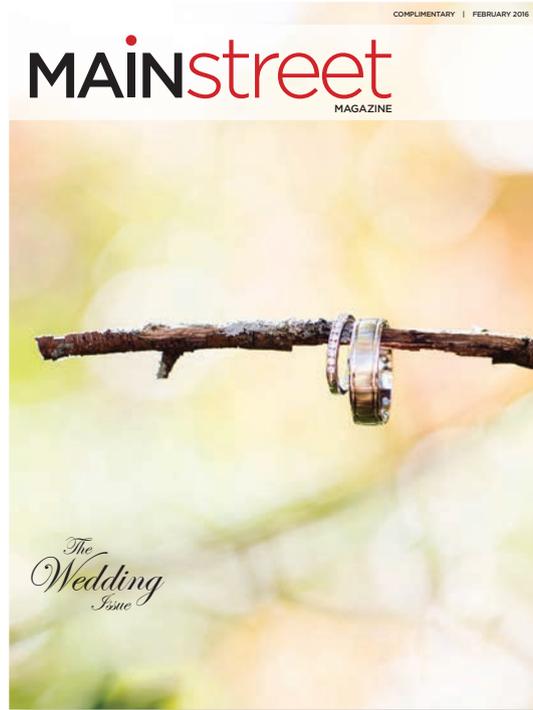
If you've been married for a million years, or are someone who doesn't believe in weddings – that's OK! Even though there's a very blatant and overlying wedding theme to most stories, as with all of our stories, they feature local people and businesses. For example, Mary O'Neill took a different approach to this month's theme and penned an article titled "Sparring Partners." What is the point of getting married if you can't communicate with your partner? Mary touches upon this point, and gives some helpful pointers about how to deal with conflict, and whether or not you're married is beside the point. Everyone needs to know how to deal with conflict.

Christine Bates took a bit of a sweet and romantic approach to her entrepreneur feature this month by featuring a local chocolate-maker. Be prepared, after you read the article, you're going to want to jump in your car and go buy some! Christine also examined the real estate of churches; renting them for weddings or buying decommissioned churches as real estate. This is an interesting story, for sure!

Meanwhile, CB Wismar shares with us an artist feature on the jewelry-makers McTeigue and McClelland, as well as shares some of his tales from when he was a minister in California in the 1970s. Life is often stranger than fiction!

These are just a few of our featured stories this month. But there is most certainly something for everyone here; whether you need help resolving conflict, need wine recommendations, need wedding advice, or if you just need a good laugh!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



FEBRUARY 2016

One of the essential elements for every wedding ceremony, no matter how small or large, are the wedding rings. The rings are a symbol of a promise – a promise to one another, for forever. The rings depicted were purchased at Elizabeth's Jewelry.

Cover photo by Gígja Einarsdóttir

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By CB Wismar
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McTeigue & McClelland

Martin and Lewis. Huntley and Brinkley. Simon and Garfunkel. Brooks and Dunn. Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. How do great partnerships begin?

Some partnerships are forged by others for business or artistic reasons. Remember Peter, Paul, and Mary? Some simply happen organically and grow on their own. Some blossom quickly, then wither and die. And some begin in New York City elevators and grow into a lasting creative relationship that yields art that “is fresh, elegant, and beautifully made.”

Enter McTeigue and McClelland. McII. Walter and Tim.

Friends since that serendipitous meeting in the elevator at 608 Fifth Avenue in 1984 ... across 14 years of talking and scheming and having lunch while they continued working in the New York jewelry business. It includes a break for Walter to try his hand in the dairy farming business in Hillsdale, NY (it lasted three months), still having the occasional lunch, then moving families to Great Barrington and establishing McTeigue and McClelland in 1998. Some partnerships take a long time to mature.

Pure art

To call the jewelry created in the landmark house at the intersections of Routes 41 and 7 in Great Barrington “elegant” may be an understatement. Nothing set in the handmade wooden showcases on the first floor or emerging from the hands of five extraordinarily skilled Master Jewelers in the second floor studio is like anything one has ever seen. This is pure art – created in the mind, sketched, drawn, tested, and finally, finely, crafted in minutest detail so that the beauty of the stones and the intricacy of the settings create pieces that belie “fanatical attention to detail that reveals itself in every piece.” We can thank Marcie Imberman of Kentshire Galleries for that assessment.

Art, not ice cubes

Jewelry offered in “big box” retailers is made, as Walter and Tim have laughingly reported, “like ice cubes.” The metal is cast – heated and poured into molds that are used over and over again. The gems are mass-acquired, collected in bins at the world’s diamond markets and shipped to the manufacturing facilities. The fabrication is done by technologists, not Master Jewelers, and the products are shipped in bulk to stores in Omaha and Toledo and Boise and ... everywhere in between.

Jewelry created by McTeigue &

McClelland is very different from the jingle-supported television ad environment that makes every man a hero and every woman a princess after opening the magical jewelry box.

This is art of the highest order. Each piece – rings, necklaces, earrings, brooches – has been made by hand, using painstaking ancient processes enhanced by the careful application of contemporary technologies. Benvenuto Cellini’s “niello” formula from the 16th Century meets techniques created by Ancient Egyptian jewelry makers and techniques developed in Victorian England that are sharpened with the contemporary capability to do laser welding. “In some ways, it may seem old fashioned, but some of the older skills used in creating jewelry are still the better ways,” offers Tim McClelland.

No less than the International Jewelry Head of Christie’s, Francois Curiel, summed up the results that carry the imprint McII 1895: “How refreshing to discover a new designer whose eye is so creative and fine. The jewels are feminine, light, exquisitely made, and quite different from anything I have seen in a long time.”

Back to the elevator, meet Walter McTeigue

Walter McTeigue is a fourth generation jeweler with a keen sense of

selecting and evaluating gems. With a family history that dates back to the 1895 formation of Walter P. McTeigue & Company, he inherited the family passions and fostered an innate skill to select brilliant stones and unique settings. “When we’d come across an exceptional stone, my first stop would always be a jeweler at 608 Fifth Avenue. He had a very select clientele – titans of the oil business.”

McTeigue & Company, as it was then known, was always behind the scenes, sourcing incredible stones and creating remarkable jewelry that graced the display cases of Tiffany & Co., Shreve, Crump and Low, C. D. Peacock, Black, Starr and Frost, and a carefully selected group of jewelers who catered to a very high-end clientele. Theirs were individual pieces, made for a very select audience.

Walter exudes a casual confidence that is often associated with Ivy League educations and summers on Martha’s Vineyard. Neither of those correlations is based in actual fact, but that’s the “vibe” when he strides into the room. Crisp shirts, well cut blazers, a firm handshake and an easy smile, that’s Walter McTeigue.

Enter Tim McClelland

Across the elevator cab from this “preppy” gemstone expert stood a taller gentleman in a trench coat



Opposite page: The Great Barrington showroom. Above: Cane Cuff Bracelet, 18k Bloomed Gold. Below: Pierced Flora Noir Diamond, 18k gold and silver. All photos courtesy of McTeigue & McClelland.

that was, by his own admission, a few sizes too large. “I thought he was a homeless delivery man” admits Walter about his long time friend and business partner Tim McClelland.

“I had seen him a couple times before,” recalls Tim, “and I always thought he had great looking clothes.” To occupy the time during the slow ascent, they struck up a conversation, and by the time the elevator deposited them on the same floor, and into the same office, they had exchanged business cards with the usual “let’s stay in touch.” They each considered themselves “outsiders” in the trade, even though Walter had three generations of jewelers behind him and Tim came from an artistic family that had encouraged his creative expression.

Unlike so many suggestions that evaporate as soon as the moment is over, the mutual agreement to stay in touch stuck. They had much to talk about since they were both in the jewelry business. Tim is a Boston University educated Master Jeweler who served an apprenticeship at the Brahmin Boston jewelry stronghold of Shreve, Crump and Low.

Living in New York as a freelance jewelry designer, he was making a name for himself based on the fresh, engaging designs that he created for some of the world’s most prestigious jewelry houses. He was, and still is, a voracious researcher and experimenter who draws from

millennia of techniques and styles to forge his own unique approaches to elegant jewelry.

There were lunches and conversations. There were ideas shared back and forth. There was the great patience that friendship and personal discovery bring to a relationship. Then, after Walter had spent two years at New York’s Harry Winston, Inc. as Estate Jewelry Buyer and Director of Purchasing, he decided to follow his muse to upstate New York and become a dairy farmer. It took only three months before the 18 hour day and seven day week schedule provided the reflective hours that led Walter to admit, “I really loved the jewelry business.”

With the skills he had carefully honed in both selecting the finest gemstones and determining the value of estate jewelry, he left the afternoon milking behind and went on the road, buying and selling estate jewelry, all the while keeping in touch with his friend Tim, who continued to create pieces in the extraordinarily competitive world of the New York jewelry business.

Meanwhile, 14 years later

When, in 1998, Tiffany & Co. retired the McTeigue & Company name that it had purchased eight years before, the intersection of time, talent, and imagination and more than a little history came together in a modest building on Route 7 in Great Barrington. With 1,225 square feet of space, McTeigue & McClelland opened

for business, creating jewelry which they sold, along with estate jewelry, at retail to the customers who found their ways to Great Barrington, and at wholesale to prestige up-market jewelers in Boston and New York. Walter’s expertise in finding the best gems and sought-after estate jewelry and Tim’s ability to create exceptional, truly one-of-a-kind pieces had found a home.

With talent and imagination and fortitude came success. Tim recalls the first major sale that the partnership made; some important estate jewelry sold to an individual who remains a good customer some 18 years on. That sale was something of a modest epiphany. “I realized that this could work,” remembers Tim. “I knew we had something and that we could be successful.”

With success, the familiar soft yellow colored building that was home for 17 years became woefully overcrowded and to alleviate the cramped conditions, the firm transitioned to their current location. (See related article on page 21).

Along the way, as a true sign of success, the decision was made to stop selling their work through other jewelers. The only place to

Continued on next page ...

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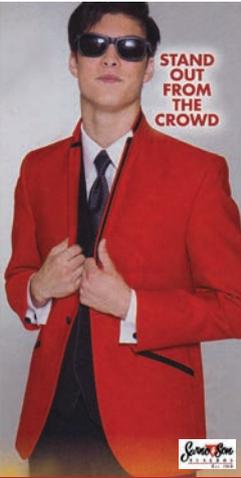
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acquire these works of art is at McTeigue & McClelland in Great Barrington, MA. Out in the rolling hills of the Berkshires. Away from the crush and complications of the city. It may seem remote, but, as we have been so often reminded by the famous line from *Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, they will come.” And, they do ... from London and Tokyo and Moscow and Singapore and New York and Boston.

Yes, there is a New York office open by appointment only. It is in the same building where the two met in that fateful elevator ride. Life is often a circle.

Creativity and context

To fully appreciate the genius of the McII collaboration, one must step into their very welcoming building and spend time pouring over the display cases. Staffed by team members who are both knowledgeable and exceptionally polite, the experience of seeing cases of the work is reminiscent of being a “kid in a candy store.” Look here, and here, and over there, and at that piece. There is something unique about each piece – in a way that does justice to the “one of a kind” implications of the word.

“Most jewelers are just trying to knock off Tiffany,” volunteers Walter. “Gemology and jewelry making have been art for millennia. Today designs are mass produced

and the romance has been pushed aside.” That’s a critical point to understand, since jewelry is so closely welded to romance.

Tim’s take on the process belies his own fanciful imagination and the painstaking care that goes into the creation of each piece. “We want to get to the wonder of the piece.”

Wonder. That is a state not achieved by stamping out piece after piece that “is good enough” for general consumption and expecting to sell units in great numbers, not as enduring pieces of art.

“We have a saying that drives our sense of design and the way we create the pieces we offer: ‘What would Lalique do?’” McTeigue and McClelland both smile knowingly when they call up the spirit of French jewelry and art glass maker whose pieces are distinctive because of their slavish attention to detail. There are no short cuts, no “good enough’s” when it comes to creating these fine pieces. Channeling the spirit of Lalique is a whimsical yet poignant way of keeping the purity of the art front and center and the ticking of the clock in abeyance.

Both style and substance

“It takes us about 10 weeks to fully create a piece,” offers Tim, whose studio is connected to the room that is home for four exceptionally talented masters. With no experi-



Above: Walter McTeigue (left) and Tim McClelland in their showroom. Below: Cushion Cut Sapphire Classic Flora Ring. Photos courtesy of McTeigue & McClelland.

ence in the jewelry business, one can quickly deduce that it does not take 10 weeks to pour molten metal into a mold, set a stone, polish the piece and place it in a box for sale. What could take that long?

Techniques employed in the McTeigue & McClelland studio bridge centuries, cultures, and philosophies. Forging and die-striking the gold or platinum compresses the precious metal to make it denser and therefore stronger and harder. A steady hand and a clear eye are required, along with a true understanding of metallurgy and physics. When the metal is literally forced into the desired shape, it will withstand the incursions that would cause damage and marring in lesser pieces.

The comprehensive fusion of skills does not end there. Jewelers at McII must have mastery of piercing and threading as well as engraving, carving, and the careful work of “chasing.” In the latter exercise, platinum and gold are shaped and moved using hammers and hardened steel punches. What a sculptor might do with clay, a jeweler does with precious metal.

Even a casual exploration of the jewelers’ art reveals the individuality of each piece. These are not “like” anything else. They are distinctly and proudly McTeigue & McClelland.

Make no mistake, the pricing for these exquisite pieces of art is not for the faint of heart. Walter researches and acquires only the best stones. Tim’s designs take hours of painstaking work to complete. The result of this long-standing partnership, however, is a collection that is intended to abide for a lifetime ... and beyond. These pieces are timeless; meant to be worn and enjoyed, then passed on to succeeding generations.

Energized and young at heart, both Walter and Tim are blessed with what the ancients would respectfully call “old souls.” What they have created with Old World techniques and contemporary imagination are pieces that are truly timeless. After all, great partnerships last forever. ●

To learn more about McTeigue & McClelland, you can visit them at 454 Main St., in Great Barrington, MA, or online at www.mc2jewels.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist’s statement, and a link to your work to arts@mainstreetmag.com.



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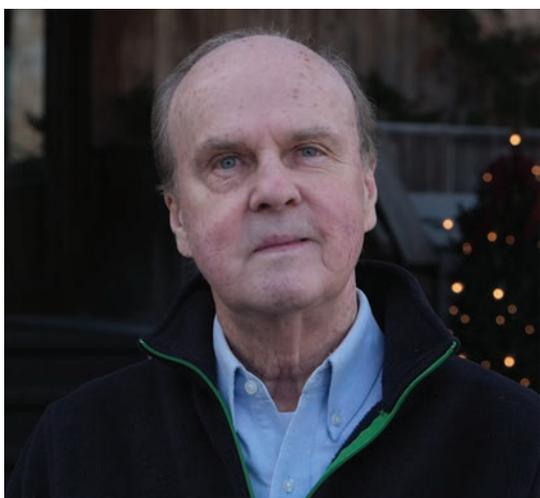
Chances are that when you call Madsen Overhead Doors in Spencertown, NY that **Ashley Steuerwald** will greet you and then direct your call. She has worked there as secretary and office manager for a decade. When she is not conducting her office duties, she likes to spend time with family and friends, and going on vacation – particularly to the beach. Ashley says that she has lived in the area her whole life and she looks forward to doing a lot of skiing and snowboarding at Catamount every year. But something tells me that Ashley is most excited about her destination wedding this year! “I’m getting married in April in the Dominican Republic, on the beach with all my friends and family!” Sounds beautiful, Ashley! Congratulations and best wishes from everyone at Main Street Magazine.



Chris Dixon is a Westbrook, CT native and relocated to the Northwest Corner in 2014. He is an artist who paints representational landscapes in the Plein Air open air tradition, and needless to say, Chris takes advantage of the landscape, hills, stone walls, and structures of the surrounding area. He is a graduate of the Museum School of Fine Arts in Boston, and recently took first prize in a show at the Eric Sloane Museum in Kent. His work can be seen throughout New England and Chris’s studio is conveniently located in a carriage house on his property in Lakeville, which he is renovating. He likes to read, especially anything history-related, and for relaxation enjoys his two dogs. Chris has recently started playing the drums again, but worries about disrupting the neighborhood. His work can be seen online at jtdixonart.com



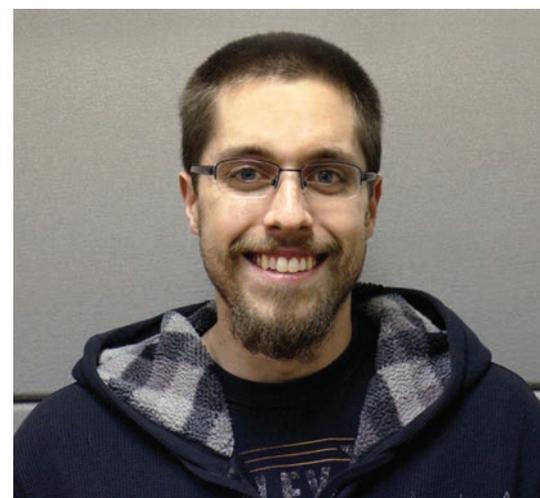
Dawn Prince is a Canaan resident and is the friendly front-end supervisor at LaBonne’s Market where she has been employed for 23 years. Her duties include delegating the staff, taking customer orders, bookkeeping, and cashiering when needed. She says that she is never bored and really enjoys interacting with the clients, many of whom she is familiar with. Dawn says that she likes the small town feel of the community and feels very much a part of the area. She spends some of her free time with the Salisbury Crafters where she can relax and create glasswork, knit, and bead. Her free time is also spent outdoors kayaking, skiing, and running, and she recently completed a half marathon. Dawn has two children (who are also employed by LaBonne’s), a granddaughter, Maddie, and a dog, Holly, who is a constant companion.



Winston Foote has been the concierge at The Interlaken in Lakeville for nearly 20 years where he enjoys greeting, advising, and making certain that each guest has the best possible visit. Previously he was with T.W.A. and was the co-owner of a Travel Company in Boston for 22 years. Winston says that it always surprises him when people he doesn’t know take the time to chat. A resident of the Northwest Corner, Winston enjoys the beauty of the countryside which he finds amazing, gives generously to his favorite causes (animals, in particular), and is a terrific host. He also enjoys anything and everything airline related. He finds pleasure in seeing the joy on the faces involved in the wedding events that are hosted by The Interlaken. He also says that it’s the people in Lakeville and Salisbury who make life here so satisfying, whether hard working or generous and relaxed, which pretty well describes Winston himself.



Tia Nielsen is a multi-working, devoted wife, mother of three, a NYS Realtor for Beach & Bartolo Realtors, and most recently accepted a position at Taconic Hills CSD working with Special Education children K-2 – wow! Talk about having a full plate! “I am thrilled to be part of their new program. It has been by far the most rewarding experience.” Tia’s love story began when her husband Adam proposed above Bash Bish falls while on a hike as they embraced a Catskill Mountain sunset. Married for eight years, she describes their wedding as simple and intimate. “I wore my mother’s wedding dress, immediate family were present, with breathtaking fall foliage all around. It was perfect!” Her advice to those planning a wedding is to keep your stress level down and in most cases this means, “less is more.”



Mark Schneeberger has been a High Voltage employee for eight years and is a supervisor for the winding department; making transformer coils that are the heart of all the company’s units. Mark’s family and friends mean everything to him, be it sitting around a campfire laughing, reminiscing about old times, getting together Saturday nights to watch a UFC fight, or rooting for their favorite football team. Mark says growing up in Ancramdale has been a blessing. “There is nothing better than being in the ‘country’.” He enjoys the occasional trip to the city, in fact this is where he recently became engaged to his fiancé Megan. They haven’t set a date yet, but he’s looking forward to the moment that he sees his beautiful bride walk down the aisle.



Landscape painter
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THORNCREST FARM
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CHOCOLATES IN
GOSHEN, CT

COWS. marriage. chocolate.

By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

Valentine's Day combined with Main Street's February wedding issue gave us the excuse to visit Thorncrest Farm & Milk House Chocolate in Goshen, CT where we interviewed Clint and Kimberly Thorn, inspected the cow barn, and sampled creamy chocolates made with the milk of the "girls." As they say, "The Magic is in the milk" and the chocolate truffles are magic, voted best chocolate in the State of Connecticut in 2015.

Clint and Kimberly Thorn, the enlightened owners of Thorncrest Farm, met in agro science class at Wamogo High School, and after graduation headed in different directions for college. Kimberly, whose interest was in racehorse breeding, was working on a horse farm in County Kildare, Ireland when Clint came to visit. Everyday they would walk a few miles down the country road and have lunch at a small home restaurant that served soups, and homemade bread and pastries made from local sources. They dreamed of doing something similar someday and then backpacked around Europe for two and a half months, "Drinking wine and eating chocolate" according to Clint.

By accident the couple stumbled into a small chocolate shop in



Above: You can pick from an ever changing variety of freshly made chocolate truffles at Milk House Chocolates. Photo by Christine Bates. Below: Kimberly Thorn comes out from the kitchen to wait on customers at the chocolate shop. Photo by Peter Greenough.

Rouen, France, where all the chocolate was made from the milk of local cows. In each city they visited thereafter they searched out the local chocolate shop and sampled the product. Sometimes they liked it and sometimes not. They came back to Connecticut to Clint's family farm, and got married in 1988.

Chocolate's secret

Kimberly is a chocolate autodidact, or as she says, "a secret learner."

She began teaching herself the secrets of chocolate making while Clint was busy breeding Holsteins that produced rich, delicious milk. They were seeking a perfect match between chocolate and their milk – a "wholesome marriage."

Kimberly started sampling coco nips from Venezuela, Ivory Coast, the Dominican Republic, and Madagascar and devised a secret three-day mixing process. She developed her own recipes combining

chocolate from a specific plantation with the milk of a specific cow.

The milk from Creed, a Holstein, goes into milk chocolates filled with eggnog and amaretto creams. Mist, provides the milk for the dark chocolate double espresso truffles.

These chocolates are the only single cow origin chocolates available anywhere. Kimberly came up with the idea and together with Clint developed special feed for each cow depending on the flavor desired. Her personal favorite flavor is the dark chocolate bonbon with Cointreau cream.

It begins with cows

There are 22 cows in the barn next to the small chocolate shop – twenty Holsteins, and two Jerseys. These cows are hand milked, and are fed organic grass/hay grown in Thorncrest's fields. In over twenty years the Thorns have never used a commercial fertilizer, herbicide, or pesticide.

The barn, built four years ago,

was designed to minimize stress on the animals and incorporates many Shaker innovations. Natural ventilation eliminates the noise of fans. There are no stanchions in the spacious stalls and no overhead milking lines. The quality of all of Thorncrest's dairy products from the chocolates to milk, yoghurt and butter begins with a humane cow-healthy environment.

Clint purchased the farm's first cow in 1980 and started breeding for flavorful milk instead of volume. Thorncrest milk is gathered individually from each cow in a separate pail and gently pasteurized. Any milk that is not used in making chocolate is available as fresh yoghurt, butter, and milk in the shop.

Clint is proud to say, "Producing milk is not just about placing milk into a bottle, it's about cow comfort and care." While commercial dairy Holstein's stop making milk after

Continued on next page ...





Above: Twenty-two stress free cows are cared for in the specially designed barn next to the chocolate shop. Photo by Peter Greenough. Top right: The barn for 22 cows and adjoining chocolate shop was built four years ago to house the operations of Milk House Chocolate. Photo by Christine Bates.



Above: Thorncrest Chocolates puts together special selections for weddings and Valentine's Day. Photo by Christine Bates.

five years, Thorncrest's happy cows are still producing at age 13. After they become too old to milk, they continue to live at the farm. "These cows have names. They know us. How could we ever sell them to a slaughter house?"

Chocolate philosophy

Kimberly's business philosophy is a simple one. Provide a wholesome, delicious, fresh local product for those who appreciate fine chocolate. To her the farm is a "chocolate

garden." But word has gotten out – Thorncrest has customers from California to Switzerland who order from the Thorncrest website and pay to

have chocolates delivered to them via UPS. Except at Christmas time and Valentine's Day, the tiny store is open only from Thursday to Sunday (see end of article for details).

"I was scared to death when we opened our doors," admitted Kim-

berly, "but word of month" worked. People just came. At Christmas time customers waited patiently in a line outside in the cold because the shop only holds about five people.

The chocolate making process

Every week Kimberly makes 25 to 30 different flavors for the store in small batches of 50 to 100. Each flavor is a proprietary recipe created through trial and error by Kimberly.

Crème Fraîche Parfait, a combination of crème fraîche and raspberries rolled in chocolate, is the hardest to make.

Kimberly does all the chocolate making herself in the adjoining chocolate laboratory. She starts with chocolate nibs and makes a chocolate liquor, the "Conch" which takes two or three days. The fresh milk is pasteurized through a low heat process followed by separating the cream and making butter. Next comes making the creamy ganache fillings and then assembling the individual chocolates. Each piece will cost \$1.85 at the farm store and \$2.75 if shipped. The state of Connecticut adds sales taxes because Connecticut considers chocolate a luxury item, not a food item.

"My goal is to make a journey for the palette and create enjoyment of the origin," according to Kimberly. "Have three chocolates for dessert

after dinner. Maybe a dark chocolate ginger crème, a Mt. Ives mint chocolate, and a Dark Side."

Chocolates and special events

Kimberly exclaimed: "Weddings are my favorite. Couples come in and taste chocolates and decide together what they want to include as wedding favors. We custom design the box, the ribbons, and the message. It's such a joyful time. One wedding had a sunflower theme and we had sunflower chocolates."

Thorncrest also provides chocolates for all sorts of other special events – birthdays, dinner parties, anniversaries.

Every year Kimberly creates the chocolates for a wine and chocolate benefit for Goshen Good Neighbors. "We match chocolates for seven wines, one beer, and a glass of champagne."

Kimberly and Clint are strong supporters of the greater community of North West Connecticut and every year donate small boxes of chocolates for each table at the Housatonic Valley Association auction. "We are happy to be involved. We are all connected and need to protect our rural environment."

The future?

Thorncrest's business philosophy is the opposite of recently exposed Mast Brother's Chocolate in Brooklyn. They aren't interested in expanding and selling nationally to Whole Foods, adding retail outlets, sophisticated packaging and marketing, or building a luxury brand. They just want to continue to produce a local, excellent agricultural product that "keeps the girls at home" while offering something very special. ●

To reach Thorncrest Farm & Milk House Chocolates you can visit them at 280 Town Hill Road in Goshen, CT, or online at www.milkhousechocolates.net. They are open Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10:00 to 5:00 and Sundays 10:00 to 4:00. In February they are open from Tuesday, February 9 to Valentine's Day, from 10:00 to 5:00.

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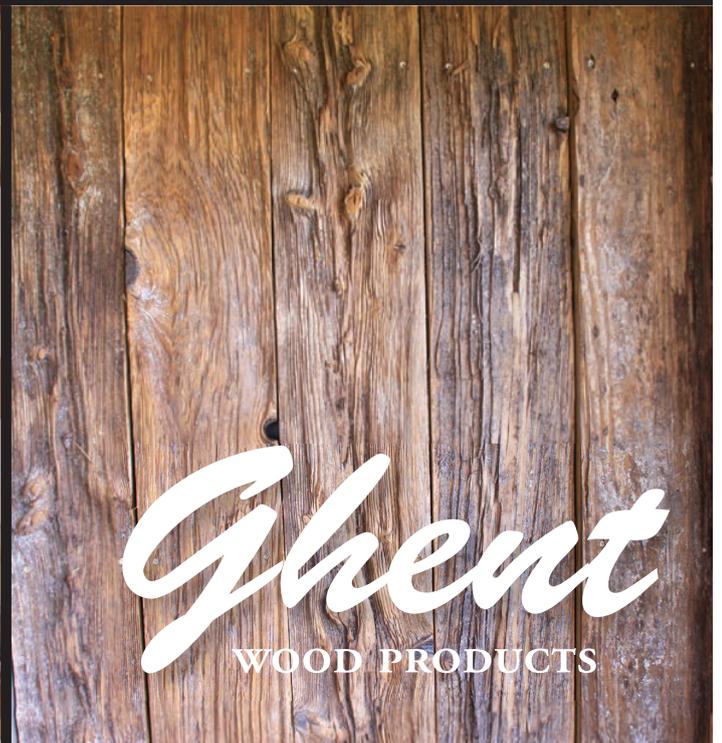
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LOCAL
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A New York State of wine

By Memoree Joelle
info@mainstreetmag.com

New York is home to a bounty of farms and farmer's markets, cheese-makers and bakers. Local produce on our plates has come to be expected, but what about what's in our glasses?

We live in an area with several top-notch wineries, so I'm surprised when some people still shun locally produced wines. For those who are familiar with what the Hudson Valley, Finger Lakes region, and Long Island have to offer in the wine category (lots of beer and spirits options, too) and opt for locally sourced libations (as well you should) this list is for you.

And if you're still on the fence about wines from New York, I encourage you to taste before you judge. For many, choosing what wine to serve on any occasion, let alone at your wedding, can be intimidating, so I'm keeping this list simple. With everything else to take care of around the big day, the question of what to drink should be easy.

What it comes down to

Ultimately, it comes down to two questions. 1. What do you like, and

2. What is your budget? A good wine store or winery will help you figure out how much to buy, and help make suggestions with food pairings.

Buying directly from a winery rather than a retailer gives you the advantage of tasting many wines at once while learning about them directly from the producer. Locally, you can taste and tour Millbrook Winery, Hudson-Chatham Winery, Clinton Vineyards, and a string of others up and down the Hudson River. If you don't find what you like here, you can explore Long Island (mainly the North Fork) and the Finger Lakes.

Here are some of the wines that have struck my fancy over the last few years, and are definitely wedding-worthy.

In the red

From premium to casual picnic wines, there is plenty to choose from in New York. Millbrook Winery's Hunt Country Red is an affordable, crowd-pleasing red blend. They change up the grapes a bit with each vintage, but previous years have included blends of Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc. What they're known for, however, is their Cabernet Franc. That grape grows very

well here, so if you want a red that's a bit more memorable, it's worth the few extra dollars.

The winery also makes custom wine labels, so your wedding bottles can be as unique as you'd like. Visit www.millbrookwine.com.

On the topic of lovely labels, Hudson-Chatham Winery is known in part for the beautiful, Hudson River School art movement inspired labels on their Hudson River Valley Red. They change the label on this wine every year, each one reflecting the art that was inspired by the beauty of the Hudson Valley. In the winery's own words, "Hudson River Valley Red is an homage to the men and women who celebrated this great valley and who celebrated the beauty of the landscape and the glory of nature. Hudson River Valley Red is a blend of numerous grapes from the Hudson Valley, including: DeChaunac, Leon Millot, Baco Noir, and Chambourcin. It is a light red, perfect at room temperature or serve it chilled. It is a dry red wine, with 0% residual sugar. The wine features a fruit forward promise that delivers – plum, strawberry, and bright raspberry come across

Continued on next page ...

the nose first and then the palate. It is a nice, affordable blend, light in color and with a nice juicy ending, and little tannin. It's a perfect pizza, burger, picnic red."

Hudson-Chatham produces beautiful food-friendly wines in the traditional style of Burgundy, including several single vineyard wines. I fell in love with their Baco Noir, a hybrid they're most popular for. All of the wines in their line-up are elegant, lower alcohol, food-friendly wines, reflective of the Hudson Valley terroir. Visit one of their two tasting room locations in Ghent or Tannersville to try before you buy.

I happen to think it's a perfect wedding day pour, as well. Visit www.hudsonchatham.com.

Sustainable winery

The North Fork of Long Island is where more robust, Bordeaux style reds are made. The climate there is best for producing ripe grapes for big, hearty, fruit-forward reds, so if that's up your alley, you'll want to check out Lenz Winery, made fame-



Above: A selection from Dr. Konstantin Frank. Photo courtesy of Dr. Frank.

ish for their Old Vines Merlot, and Bedell Cellars, whose high-end, hand-crafted and much sought-after wines sell out quickly. They are a sustainable winery, and an exquisite location for a wedding, I must add. If you can, don't miss out on trying the "Taste" red blend, which will knock your garter off. Visit www.bedellcellars.com.

"It's A Nice Day for a White Wedding"

A staple at any wedding, white wines don't turn your teeth red, and are great either with food or just on

or summer months, you may want to consider pouring a rosé wine, and who could resist that lovely pink color in the glass? Croteaux Vineyards, on the east end of Long Island, is devoted exclusively to rosé, and they make a variety of styles. These are elegant rosés that are beautiful to look at as well as sip on, made in the original dry, French style. Visit www.croteaux.com.

Sparkling wines and a dessert wine

You likely already know this, but Champagne is made in Champagne (a region of France). If it isn't from there, it's called sparkling. That doesn't mean, however, that there aren't sparkling wines made in the traditional method that are every bit as good as their French counterparts. My top pick for sparkling comes from the Finger Lakes, made by Dr. Konstantin Frank. Their sparkling is made in the traditional *methode champenoise*, using only Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier. You won't be able to tell the difference between these and a French Champagne. Besides, the founder of this winery, Dr. Frank, is heralded as the "father of vinifera" in New York. Tasting is believing. Visit www.drfrankwines.com.

Sparkling Pointe Vineyards on

Long Island's north Fork exclusively makes sparkling wines, and they are devoted to their craft. A tad pricey, but worth it, they make only 7,000 cases a year, so don't drag your cold feet if you want these well-crafted bubblys. Visit www.sparklingpointe.com.

Finally, something sweet. The Finger Lakes is where to look for Riesling, and also for the region's unique "ice wines," which are sweet wines made by allowing the grapes to remain on the vine as the weather turns frigid. Again, I highly recommend the Dr. Frank wines, and in addition to the dryer styles, they offer a late harvest Riesling that is sweet, but not cloyingly so. Perfect to pair with your wedding cake, it won't give you a headache the next day. Cheers! •

To read more about New York State wines, visit the webpage of the New York wine and Grape Foundation, www.newyorkwines.org.



Above: Bottles of rosé from the Croteaux Vineyards. Photo courtesy of Croteaux Vineyards.

their own. Over ten years ago, I became a fan of Wolffer Estate Winery and their impeccably balanced Chardonnay, which has just the perfect amount of oak. I haven't had a wine from there I didn't like, in fact, and it seems that Wine Spectator agrees. Visit www.wolffer.com.

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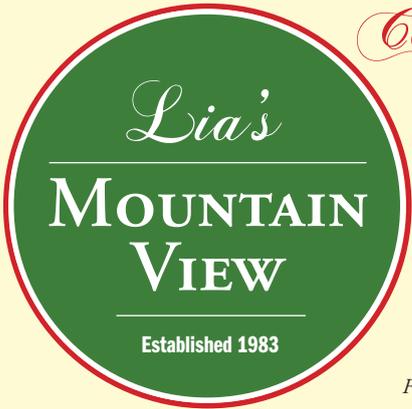
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GETTING MARRIED IN A CHURCH
OR BUYING A CHURCH

By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

Walking down the aisle, ringing bells, and throwing rice remain wedding traditions even as church attendance continues to decline. In this month's real estate story, Main Street discovers what is involved in getting married in a church, and also looks at churches available for sale – in case you'd like to buy your own.

Today less than 40% of all weddings in the United States include a church ceremony. Saying wedding vows at the altar is not like getting married in a Las Vegas wedding chapel – it requires research and at least six months advance planning in most churches. The approach, requirements, and fees vary enormously from church to church.

Possibly the least traditional church venue in the area is the former home of Alice's Restaurant, the Arlo Guthrie Center in Great Barrington, MA (see photo above) that was decommissioned as an Episcopal Church in 1964. The center permits couples to devise their own ceremony and doesn't require advance religious counseling. The space attracts eclectic couples who want to be married in a church without the strictures of traditional religion. Apache prayers, and guitars are welcome. Catering facilities are also available on site, although a couple must apply for their own event specific liquor license to serve alcohol.

Smithfield in Shekomeko

The recently renovated, historic Greek Revival Smithfield Presbyterian Church in Shekomeko is another church that welcomes everyone. Reverend Douglas Grandgeorge, who officiates at weddings as far away

as the top of the Empire State Building, encourages all couples to consider the Smithfield Church for a wedding. There's no set charge, although most couples make a donation of \$200 to \$300 to the church. Musicians and the organist are a separate fee. While there haven't been recent weddings at the First Baptist Church in Millerton because of the aging congregation, the minister is willing to marry anyone once he "determines where they stand spiritually." Baptists believe in "free will" giving, so the contribution is whatever the couple wishes.

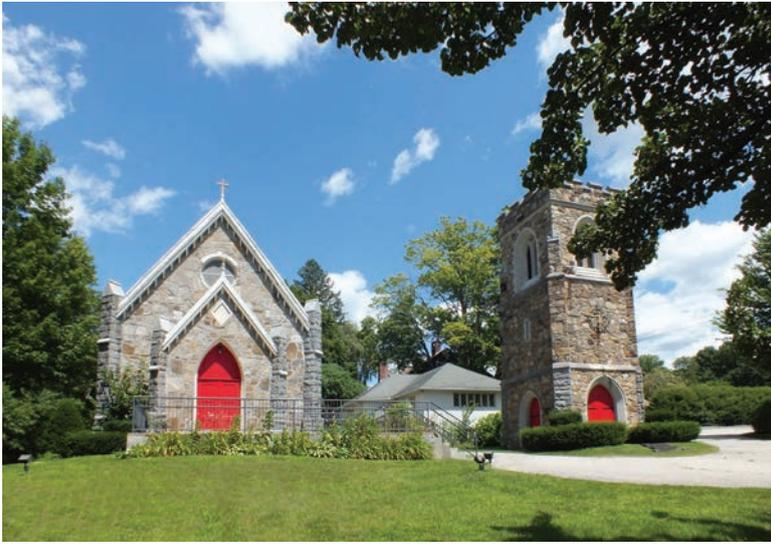
Tradition, counseling, and fees

The reinvigorated Lyall Memorial Federated Church, an attractive stone interdenominational church in Millbrook, has wedding fees clearly displayed on the church website. These include a refundable \$325 deposit, \$750 for the minister, \$150 for the Sexton (custodian), \$300 for the building, and \$200 for the organist. An application and three pre-ceremony counseling sessions with the minister are required.

St. John's Episcopal Church in Salisbury is an example of a more traditional choice. Before agreeing to conduct a wedding, Father David Sellery wants to get to know the couple and understand why they want to be married at St. John's. He will ask prospective couples, "Why does this place make sense? Why St. John's instead of the town hall down the street?" He offers three to four premarital counseling sessions that

Above: Any couple can get married at the Arlo Guthrie Center in Great Barrington and devise their own ceremony. Photo courtesy of the Arlo Guthrie Center.

Continued on next page ...



Above top: Renowned English architect Richard Upjohn designed Christ Church in Canaan. The church, separate belfry and parish house are for sale for \$345,000. Photo courtesy of Juliet Moore of Elyse Harney Real Estate. Above: Already converted into a three-bedroom home is this 1871 church in Mill River Village in the Town of New Marlborough, MA on the market for \$699,000. Photo courtesy of Steve Weisz of William Pitt Sotheby's International.

constructively touch on practical matrimonial issues like finances, children, and even careers.

There is flexibility on fees, depending on the couple's financial means. Expect honorariums for the priest, sexton, and organist, and a \$500 fee for the church. Father Sellery does not permit couples to create their own vows and sticks with the traditional Episcopal service from *The Book of Common Prayer*.

There are no flash cameras allowed during the ceremony and no rice thrown outside. "At least three to six months and as much as a year are helpful to plan around the church calendar, concerts, and vacations."

Catholicism in Amenia

For couples where at least one person is Catholic, The Immaculate Conception Church in Amenia is another option. Father Kent Wilson presides over the parish and expects to conduct two informational interviews and then three pre-cana evening conferences with the prospective bride and groom.

"Weddings are so expensive, we try not to charge very much." Immaculate Conception's standard fee is \$200 for the use of church and the service, and \$200 for the organist. The right to utilize the building for a rehearsal is typically included at all churches.

Want to buy your own church?

It's estimated that over 4,000 churches close every year in the United States, and that there are half as many churches now as there were a 100 years ago. New York State data indicates that 16 churches were sold in Columbia and Dutchess County since 2007 at an average sale price of about \$550,000. And churches will continue to be decommissioned and sold unless they are surrounded by a cemetery, like St. Patrick's in Millerton which is closed, but available for funerals.

The Presbyterian Church in Ame-

nia on Route 22 recently closed, and according to Reverend Grandgeorge, the priority will be to find a use that benefits the community. "If we sell it to a ping pong parlor the price will be much different than an activity that will benefit the people of Amenia."

Church repurposing

Just as the cost of weddings varies enormously so does the listing price of churches for sale. There are three types of church structures on the market: recently decommissioned churches, former churches that have been made into residences, and former churches that have already been adapted for commercial use as restaurants, gyms, antique stores, and art galleries.

Christ Church in Canaan

The most magnificent house of worship for sale at the moment (in this writer's opinion) is Christ Church in North Canaan, CT, which was closed in 2012 because of a dwindling congregation. Designed by noted Victorian Gothic architect Richard Upjohn, the 1845 stone church has hard wood floors, a slate roof and stained glass windows. (See photo, and refer to November 2015 *Main Street* for a more complete history and description).

Included for the asking price of \$345,000 are the 2,600 square foot church, a freestanding clarion, and a two-story 2,500 square foot parish hall overlooking Canaan's historic railroad depot. That's less than \$70 a square foot! The church is being sold as a commercial building and the stained-glass windows, pews, and altar furnishings are included only if valued by the buyer. Otherwise the Diocese retains the right to remove them and save them for another church.

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This church is a home

The church in Mill River Village in the Town of New Marlborough, MA was converted to a family home in the late 1970's. The residence sits on a knoll overlooking the small village and enjoys low property taxes, according to listing broker Steve Weisz of William Pitt Sotheby's International. Weisz immediately responded to the unique space.

"It's a perfect classic New England clapboard church that was built in 1871. Creative people look at the house – ballet dancers, musicians, and artists. The biggest challenge in selling a church home is lack of comparable structures for the purpose of pricing, getting a mortgage, etc. There really is nothing like it."

Originally put on the market for \$950,000 in 2014, the elegant home is now listed at \$699,000. As with any unique building, it takes time to find the right buyer.

Churches as commercial spaces

The restoration of the former Christian Science Church in Great Barrington by custom jewelers McTeigue & McClelland is an imaginative repurposing of what was built as a house in 1851, and then occupied by the Christian Science Church for 90 years. The church had received offers from big box stores to tear the building down, but decided to sell it to McTeigue and McClelland to preserve the historic stone building



which stands prominently at the south entrance to Great Barrington. It took over a year to bring the building up to code with firewalls, sprinklers, and handicap access, and to create a large airy showroom, offices and workshop (see photo above and related article on page 6). Brides and grooms from all over the world now visit the showroom to select engagement rings and wedding bands.

The former 1836 church next to Peck's Supermarket in Pine Plains, NY became a Grange Hall in 1932 and then Balsamo Antiques in 1997 (see photo). The 1,728 square foot building has a half bath and is zoned as a commercial multiple use small structure. When owner Steve Abeles and his partner bought the building, there was a hole in the roof and the inside had been gutted. The pair insulated the walls, added a second floor and staircase, and opened for business. "Originally it was a hobby for us to sell merchandise, but the business took off and we quit our jobs in fashion and had a new career." Marilee Taubman, the listing broker with Sotheby's International Realty in Millbrook, imagines the building as a live/work space and has listed the property as either commercial or residential.

Churches are an important part of every community's religious, cultural, and architectural heritage. They need to be honored and preserved. Often that means finding new uses for them so they remind us of our past and continue to be part of our daily lives. ●



Above top: The former 1852 Christian Science Church in Great Barrington was originally a home and after a year of renovation is now the workroom and showcase of jewelers McTeigue & McClelland. Photo courtesy of McTeigue and McClelland. Above: What's the next life for the former church, Grange Hall and antique store in Pine Plains – now on the market for \$379,000? Photos courtesy of Balsamo and Peter Greenough. Left: The New Marlboro church at night.

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weddings trends



By Melissa Batchelor Warnke
info@mainstreetmag.com

There are, as ever, a million trends on the wedding market right now. But the biggest, most meaningful trend out there may be a move away from trends altogether and back to basics. Back to basics means you can leave your wedding cake pops in 2013 and forget the fabric butterflies fluttering out of your hand-embroidered envelopes.

Weddings will always be stressful, because they involve money and more than one person. But they no longer need to be painstakingly planned, with corsets, tears, and a guest list that involves all the people who ever did a favor for the family.

The new look is about meaningful ease, not maximum effort. 2015's most beautiful, glamorous celebrity bride was perhaps Whitney Port, who wore a waterfall hemline, greenery in her uncomplicated bun, divine shoes, and understated jewelry. Port could be expected to dress beautifully; she rose to fame, after all, on a television show that had her working for a stylist and at *Teen Vogue*. But her look was completely

unique: playful but resistant of a faux-bohemian look (my least favorite trend of past years is watching type-A brides impersonate flower children on their big days), clean, thoughtful, and memorable. May we all dress so well.

2016 is just starting, but the predictions are in and the winter weddings are underway. Here's what you can expect to see in three different categories: the basic, the cool, the insane. I trolled Pinterest so you don't have to.

Basic

Naked cakes. Apparently getting back to basics means we're not even frosting our cakes anymore. Cupcakes are out, so showy with their little tin coats. The naked cake is the ultimate "I woke up like this" piece for 2016. Basically take a normal cake, run a knife around the edges to pull all the external frosting off, then marvel at how on-trend you are.

Bedhead. Basic bedhead is actually pretty hard to pull off – depending on your natural hair texture and patience, it can have you blow-drying, twisting, spraying, curling, and straightening. But it's just so fabulous, especially with a precious or form-fitting dress. The fun is in the contrast.

Angel Sanchez' layered ball

gown wedding dress (Spring 2016). I am not researching how expensive this is because ignorance is bliss, but holy God the flat paneling.

Cool

Mixing DJs and live music. Get a band if it's in the budget, but give them a break or two and during the break, pipe in music they can't play (i.e. if you have a brass band, blast the Bob Dylan). I went to one wedding where they did this and, during break, played Jamie Foxxx's 2008 hit "Blame It on the Alcohol." Neither the bride nor the groom drank alcohol, which made it all the funnier, but the bride split her gown dancing in the middle of the circle that gathered around them, once again proving that devil-may-care attitude is the best accessory.

Bun cages. A sparkly tiara that encircles your entire updo. Like a fabulous, hard-edged hairnet with diamonds on it.

Two-piece wedding dresses, for instance a crop top and a skirt. Perhaps this sets off alarms in your head (Tacky! Trendy! Will be over before the photos print!) as it initially did in mine, but I don't care anymore: wear that crop top girl, wear it loud and proud.

Carol Hannah's floor-length fringe dress (Spring 2016). Basically the only exception I will make for

pure bohemian wedding style. A plated neckline with floor-length fringe dripping over a slightly lighter body makes for a memorable look that moves in fantastic ways as you walk.

Gunne sax dresses. My friend from Montana says these dresses – prairie, draped, detailed, a bit Victorian – are back in the West and, so long as it's not too Oklahoma, I say yes.

Insane

Using a drone to take aerial photos of your wedding. Once reserved for torturing unwilling celebrities on their weddings, the drone can now accompany you down the aisle snapping away on those angles that no human can reach. For the bride that has everything but perspective.

Sheer. *The New York Times* says the see-through wedding dress is in, and it may be, but also: Grandma.

Sleeveless lace turtlenecks. Lace turtlenecks or high collars are a nice wedding look, but if you opt for this, the dress should have sleeves a la Kate Middleton. Otherwise they are insane. •

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Picnic weddings

By Claire Copley
info@mainstreetmag.com

Weddings are incredibly personal. Or not. Some people want a small gathering of friends and family while others go for the extravaganza. As we all know, these days the extravaganza is increasingly costly. So I thought I would take a step back and try to offer some stylish alternatives for the simple outdoor wedding. After all, starting a marriage in debt is less than ideal.

All you need are the basics, right?

The basics of a wedding are: the venue, food and drink, décor, flowers and clothes. And, of course, a happy bride and groom. If you could eliminate the expense for a venue, and the pricey decorators bill, you are halfway towards an affordable wedding.

Here in the Hudson Valley we are surrounded by gorgeous landscape. Some of the most beautiful spots are owned and/or managed by the state, including parks and historic sites. Many of these can provide basic “facilities” like picnic areas, lodges, pavilions and gazebos, or rustic halls with restrooms. They can all provide fabulous vistas and endless possibilities. All it takes is a little imagination to conceive and realize a very special outdoor wedding for very little money.

Outdoor weddings have a natural visual and romantic appeal. See if you can find a spot that will provide wildflowers and shrubs in bloom. Some of us are lucky enough to have yards or sites on our property that feel special enough for this very important purpose. For the rest of us, I would encourage you to look at your local parks, nature conservancies, and historic sites and gardens.

Think outside the box

Consider a Do-it-Yourself (DIY) picnic wedding. At a picnic everyone gets a lunch made for them, and a blanket on which to wile away a long summer afternoon. You might want to include pillows or choose a spot where there are picnic tables. Hay bales with table cloths over them make great seating and can be left for the parks service to use. A few folding chairs will accommodate those who need them. A picnic spot should have a wonderful view, and some available shade. A spot near the water can help with the heat. I’ve seen wedding programs printed on individual fans as wedding favors, and guest bags that contain sunscreen and bug repellent as well as water. A few hours on the internet can inspire you with wonderful ideas.

Think “nature”

While there may be many spots close to home, you can also consult the internet site <http://parks.ny.gov>, where you can get a complete list of State Parks, State Forests, and State Wildlife Areas. Check also the National Parks site for National Historic Sites, Parks, Wildlife Refuges and National Recreation Areas. Local sites will tell you about county and town offerings. These sites offer a range of spots, each with its own magic. Remember that some of the most beautiful land in our state is in government hands for preservation and public purposes.

Whether or not you will be allowed to use these spots depends on how many people in your group, facilities needed, and the schedule. It seems to follow that keeping the wedding simple

would work best. Access can be a problem unless you are using designated areas, but taking your wedding “off the grid” is not only doable, but can be a wonderful experience for all concerned. No trucks, no band, nothing that you cannot carry in and out. While there are always applicable fees, at the very least for parking and entrance to the park, they are sure to be more reasonable than renting a wedding venue.

Every picnic needs...

Essential to a picnic is a picnic lunch. When you send out invitations (which can be done online for a nominal fee), ask invitees about dietary restrictions and keep this in mind when you are ordering (or making) the lunches for your guests. Many restaurants, caterers, and bakeries will make delicious boxed lunches and you can place them in baskets filled with essentials including silverware, cloth napkins, and glasses. You can also include flowers and decorative items. Of course these lunches must avoid anything that can get soggy (like sandwiches containing tomatoes) or anything with mayonnaise, as mayo can turn easily in the sun and you certainly don’t want to poison your guests.

The distance from the parking lot is the only restriction on what you can bring in to use.

Continued on next page ...

It's time to decorate

Decorations can be strung from trees, small tables for drinks and cake, and miscellaneous decor items will be pretty much it. Table cloths can be used to tie the scene together and soften those splintery picnic tables. Lovely picnic baskets are available for very little in the flower district in New York City or from other sources. Each basket can be placed with a blanket at the bottom of the trail and guests can pick up theirs before walking to your site. Temporary trail markers can be made to match the wedding scheme as can name cards on each basket. Tagging everything will help the process go smoothly. The cake, tables and tablecloths, champagne and lemonade will likely have to be brought up by Sherpa (a person to carry your gear) so don't forget to recruit some.



A heads up, rules and regulations

Don't forget to warn your guests about appropriate dress at the site you choose. If the walk from the parking lot is a long one you may have to make arrangements for some of your older guests. You can ask your guests to bring instruments, if you want music, or simply bring an iPod with a remote speaker. Be considerate of your fellow park goers though, and don't play it too loud. Make sure this is legal at the venue you choose. Many parks don't mind music so much if the site is on a lake or river as the music can be pointed out to sea (as it were).

Parks and historic sites all seem to have their own rules about what they will allow and where they will allow it. In New York State, alcohol is usually allowed but you may have to sign a waiver. Some might require a permit for your special event and will charge a nominal fee. Having a permit is never a bad idea as it gives you rights to your spot that you otherwise might not

have. If Mother Nature is having a bad day, it may translate into a rain-soaked ceremony site. So it pays to always have a Plan B. The safest strategy is to secure a permit that will allow you to use an existing gazebo or band shell, if one is close at hand.

Do your homework

Investigate the facilities at the parks in which you are interested. The websites provide telephone numbers for administrative services. After you have chosen a few spots, call and see what you can work out. Many parks will work with you so your wedding can be exactly as you want it.

One bride blogged: "I love the NY State Parks because they have no catering restrictions and liquor/alcohol restrictions. You just sign a waiver. They are a lot more flexible than the town parks we looked at. The downside is paying for parking for all the guests to get in (but the rental fee is miniscule, so that was okay with us). We can have our ceremony where we want with minimal restrictions, and they don't want sound amplified through the park, so they want everything directed toward the water and indoors/under tent if possible. But they've worked with us."

Before settling on a ceremony site, visit it several times during the same season, day of the week, and time of day as

you plan to marry. Take note of pedestrian traffic and the position of the sun – this will determine where you place your officiate, bridal party, and guests. (For example, you don't want people squinting into late-afternoon rays). Once you've determined the perfect place, contact the park's

administrative office and find out if weddings are allowed there. After you get the OK, ask about regulations and if you have to reserve the site. You'll most likely need at least one permit, which is usually issued by your local parks department. It will state whether you will be allowed to bring in chairs, play music, and have guests throw birdseed. Read the fine print to see if there's a cleanup stipulation – many parks charge fines for garbage left behind. Permits are usually issued free of charge, but you'll probably have to pay a small location fee. "National parks charge anywhere between fifty and two hundred dollars," says Roger di Silvestro, senior director of communications for the National Parks Conservation Association, in Washington, D.C. "State, city, and town parks each have their own fees, which will vary from place to place."

On the subject of entrance fees: parks frequently charge a per car fee to enter. You can pay for your guests by telling the ranger at the booth that anyone showing their invitation to the wedding should be billed to your card. Or you can let your guests pay for themselves. At any rate, try to encourage carpooling.

In addition to pavilions and picnic tables, some parks have vacation cottages that they rent out (Lake Taghkanic State Park and others). These would provide you with private bathroom facilities and a kitchen, in addition to a place to dress, change, and lie down when exhausted. Other parks have buildings that can provide rain back up and a respite.

A well designed picnic on a beautiful day in a beautiful spot with friends can be an unforgettable way to spend the first hours of a marriage. Your guests can carry out their baskets and blankets and the clean up will be minimal (those Sherpas will come in handy here). To celebrate a marriage is to celebrate nature, so why not do nature proud? •



Photo source: istockphoto.com contributor Madhatter101



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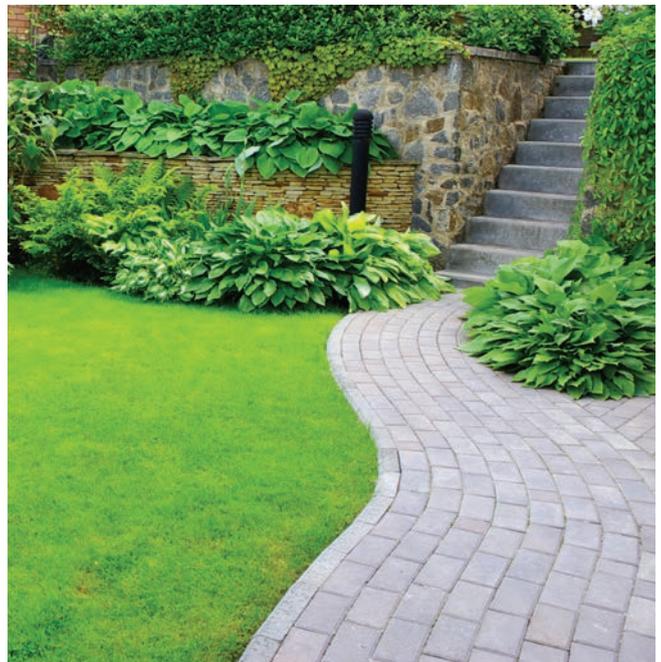
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THE Big Day!

By Sarah Ellen Rindsberg
info@mainstreetmag.com

Unique and personal. These are the key elements that every bride and groom insist on having in their wedding. Whether it's baby artichokes, balloons, or fireworks, every couple finds their own unique way to express their joy.

"We wanted it to be a reflection of ourselves," Rebecca Harrison said. True to her word, on September 5, 2015, she processed in a Sarah Seven dress, sans veil and jewelry, adding her personal touch underneath – kitchen clogs. Rebecca is the General Manager of Court Street Grocers in Carroll Gardens, and her husband Lee is the Manager/Roaster for Joe Coffee in Red Hook, both in the borough of Brooklyn.

The culinary theme continued in the form of fragrant herbs. Men in the wedding party sported bunches of rosemary and thyme on their lapels. Rebecca's bouquet contained the same ingredients.

The "raw space" at Basilica Hudson charmed Rebecca immediately when she first visited the venue. In keeping with her desire to have everything "as natural and rustic as possible," she began collecting material: birds' nests, a wasp's nest, and branches. "My vision for decorating was to bring the outside in," she says.



Above: Harrison wedding. Photo: JD Urban.



Above: The Andersen/Burke wedding.
Photo: David Hechler.

Chris Grigas at Kamilla's Floral Boutique in Millerton was happy to oblige. He transformed her vision into reality in the form of a giant chandelier. There were no flower arrangements on the tables, instead they dangled from above. Queen Anne's lace and greenery were woven into the tapestry. Baby artichokes added a delicious touch.

Saying his own "I do's"

"I never thought I'd be having a wedding," Matthew Andersen recalls. The import of this statement is twofold – although he is an expert in planning weddings (having done so for thirty years), until the Defense of Marriage Act was overturned, he never thought he would have the opportunity to apply his expertise to his own ceremony. As societal norms evolved, he and his partner, Tom Burke, decided to seal their bond.

Due to Andersen's profession, expectations were high. Four wedding planners/friends were among the discerning guests. "There was a certain level of anxiety, making sure I got it all right." He did, with flying colors, red white and blue, to be exact.

The date was July 5, 2014 so the all-American theme prevailed, albeit with a slight variation. Traditional hues were present, but not in the usual grouping. Cherry red and white dominated the ceremony, while blue and khaki were displayed at the dinner – burlap and linen tablecloths – and in the partners' outfits – khaki suits and blue shirts. Women were asked to dress in white since no one would have the monopoly on bridal white, and men to follow suit with the couple's attire. "Very designed and curated," is how Andersen describes his big day.

Everyone contributed ideas for the day including attendees. In the invitations, a request was made for all to submit a word which embodied their wish for the couple. Nieces and nephews comprised the wedding party and their thoughts were printed on the white balloons they carried as they marched



Above: The Bitter Wedding.
Photo: Sara Wight Photography.

down the aisle. At a signal from the minister, a flurry of white ascended to the sky.

Fireworks all around

Growing up in Sharon, Christie Bitter (née Schnurr) had a favorite route for running, along Hosier Road. As an adult she returned to this route again and again, appreciating the beauty. On one of her husband Billy's first visits to the area he saw the vista and concurred.

When it came time to choose a place for the nuptials, LionRock Farm (on Hosier Road) was the perfect option given the couple's mutual admiration for this particular slice of the countryside. When Christie toured the site with her mother, a brilliant idea came to mind: "This is the perfect landscape for fireworks." Upon investigation, two obstacles stood in the way: the necessary permits and hazardous conditions. And so, she forged ahead, focussing on other details.

August 29, 2015 turned out to be luminous in a variety of ways. The sun glowed in the early evening as guests were greeted with lemonade and champagne followed by cocktails in the sunken garden. After a sumptuous dinner under the tent, it was time to cut the cake. After the obligatory photo was snapped, another request was relayed on the photographer's behalf: a shot of the bride and groom with the full moon in the background would be the icing on the cake. Eager to oblige, the happy couple stepped into the adjacent field. Suddenly, the sky was ablaze in color as fireworks soared.

"I was absolutely in awe," Christie recalls. "I wonder if my parents know this is happening." They did indeed, her mother having surmounted every obstacle: securing permits, sequestering the firetruck, and ferrying food to the firefighters, all unbeknownst to the bride.

Oh, happy days! ●

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PRODUCTIVELY
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MARITAL CONFLICT

Sparring Partners

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.
info@mainstreetmag.com

The months and days leading up to a wedding are filled with stress and negotiations. Agreeing on the guest list, bridal party, and cake filling take center stage. Sure there are arguments, but that's only due to the pressure of creating your perfect wedding day.

During the engagement you discover that he lacks interest in large joint decisions. *Isn't it cute how he feigns paralysis like a deer in headlights when choosing the venue?* And she agonizes endlessly over small ones. *Isn't she adorable when she spends hours choosing a picture frame for the wedding portrait?* Surely, these traits you find endearing and quirky now will always be so. Any frustrations with each other that surface when planning your special day will recede into the distance like the morning mist. What remains will be the marital bliss that defines your union.

Same spat, different day

Let's fast forward five or ten years into the future. Decisions are coming fast and furious. Buy a house. Start a family. Map out your dual careers. All these issues bring out the same emotional patterns you faced early on. Only now it's infuriating when he retreats into a soporific trance while discussing mortgage rates. And her adorable method of narrowing choices triggers a spike in blood pressure and a shot of cortisol as she ruminates over a doormat.

Unless the individuals in the relationship become aware of their own emotional histories, the impact of those histories on the relationship, and how to effectively navigate the ensuing conflicts, these early patterns will persist and become entrenched. All the while they become less cute and more corrosive as the years roll on.



Focus on communication, not the invitation

If you really want to give your marriage the best chance of success, focus less on the wedding day details and more on getting your communication and argument styles in synch. This worthwhile effort will enhance your ability to see common pitfalls that indicate when a marriage is veering off track.

Sara Cousins is a Lakeville-based licensed clinical social worker. In practice since 1994, she specializes in individuals, couples, and families and has extensive experience assisting couples in all stages of their lives together.

Cousins advises that, "Before marriage it's a good idea to understand your expectations of yourself, your spouse, and your relationship. By bringing awareness to those expectations and the desired roles in the relationship, you can work on how to communicate about them."

In addition, Cousins cautions that we often believe that the roles we play before marriage will be different once vows are exchanged. This is rarely the case. The patterns we set in the

formative stages of the relationship often remain and only change with a conscious commitment to do so.

Unpacking your emotional baggage

Cousins also counsels that it is helpful to a relationship to understand your individual emotional history and patterns. "Ask yourself: 'Is this *my* issue or *our* issue?'" Often, individuals in relationship don't appreciate the difference, which is crucial to understanding how two people, with their own histories and stories, interact in relationship with each other." Is the fight over buying a new TV really about his spending habits or her fear stemming from the years of financial insecurity she experienced as a child?

Clarity on the source of the disagreement leads to clarity on how to solve it. "Communication alone will not solve the problem if there is a lack of understanding about what is causing it. Another good question couples can ask each other is: 'How can we come together in a loving way to talk about our old individual hurts and fears.'"

Diversify your portfolio

Cousins emphasizes that a challenge is created in early years of marriage when each person falls into roles that play to their strengths. This might seem like a good practice. Yet Cousins stresses that partners should mix up the functions they naturally gravitate toward so they don't end up in a rut or setting a default pattern. If you are the budget keeper, let him balance the check book. If you are the chief cook, relinquish the apron and let her cook dinner.

Changing up the marital tasks limit resentments and prevents the cementing of roles in a way that causes relationships to stagnate. Couples should create opportunities to grow individually in areas that challenge them. In Cousins's experience, "Fixed roles breed resentment. No one should feel like they are indispensable in any aspect of the relationship."

Continued on next page ...



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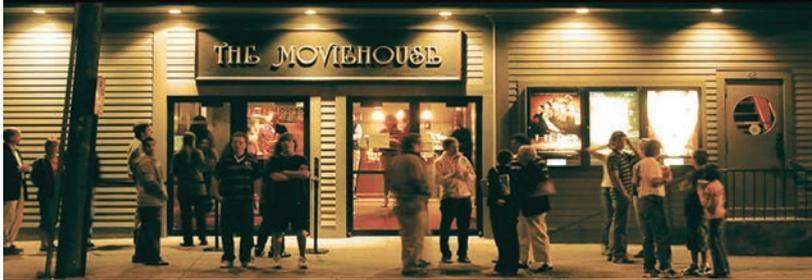
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That will be then, this is now

Cousins also observes that couples in their 20s and 30s often assess where they are now, and project that version of the relationship into the future. Choosing whether or not to start a family, raising young children, forging careers, living near in-laws for the support system, moving away for a spouse's career, or deciding to have one partner stay at home are all areas that can cause friction.

"Partners in a relationship may imagine that the sacrifice they are making now will always be that way. So if one person in the relationship steps off the career track to stay home with kids, that person might imagine they will always be changing diapers and doing endless piles of dirty laundry. It's easy to forget the law of impermanence. Things change. Kids grow. Careers restart. The important thing to do is own the choice you have made in this moment. Remind yourselves why you chose that path and keep the larger picture in mind."

Rules of engagement

According to Cousins, conflict in a relationship is a good thing, when done properly. "Arguing is not an indicator that something is amiss. It's how you argue that can be problematic."

She points to the research of Dr. John Gottman to help understand this distinction. He is an appealing authority on the subject of relationships because he bases his advice on extensive studies and data, not just on touchy-feely emotions. The science underlying his counsel will appeal to the partner who needs to crunch numbers to arrive at a solution as well as the one who thrives on talking about feelings.

Gottman studied over 2,000 couples spanning more than 20 years. He professes he can predict with 94 percent accuracy which couples will stay together and which ones will not. His book, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, is often core reading to help

couples establish a common ground from which to discuss their issues.

Gottman asserts that love and respect are hallmarks of a healthy relationship. Arguments and disagreements, when conducted with these virtues, are healthy and create opportunities for growth as couples strive to reconcile them. He identifies three main models for resolving conflict that most couples use. To argue effectively and constructively, partners need to understand which model they gravitate toward, and how it meets the needs of the individuals and the marriage.

It's not the style of resolving conflict that is the issue for Gottman. It's what can happen when these conflicts are approached, not from love and respect, but from what he calls the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." These are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and withdrawal.

• **Criticism** is different from complaint. With criticism sentences frequently begin with "you," are global in nature, contain blame, and attack the person. "*You never plan anything for my birthday.*" Complaints often begin with "I" and are a specific statement of anger or displeasure. They attack the situation. "*I feel hurt when you forget my birthday. It's really important to me to celebrate the occa-*

sion with a special event."

• **Contempt** is the intention to insult or psychologically abuse. This is marked by insults and name calling, hostile humor, mockery, and body language. When said with an eye roll and curled lip, "*You blockhead, you forgot my birthday again. Should I tattoo it to your forehead?*" indicates contempt.

• **Defensiveness** gets in the way of communication and creates a feeling of victimization. When this happens partners deny responsibility and make excuses. "*Yeah, well you always forget the day I caught my first largemouth bass, so we're even.*"

• **Withdrawal** or stonewalling means retreating into silence, distance, disapproval, and disengagement. Interestingly, this is a behavior practiced more commonly by men and more frequently causes a physiological stress reaction in women. In this case, complaints about the forgotten birthday are met with wordless indifference.

For Gottman, all of these behaviors are normal in relationships at times. It's when they become habitual and frequently result in withdrawal or stonewalling that a couple really needs to regroup and start the heavy lifting of repairing a damaged relationship.

5:1 Ratio

All is not lost for couples in the grip of the Four Horsemen. From his research Gottman has derived a deceptively simple formula for a

healthy relationship. He has found that couples who maintain a 5:1 ratio of positive interactions to negative ones have a dramatically greater chance of long-term success than those who don't. Positive interactions include those that show interest, affection, appreciation, concern, care, empathy, acceptance, humor, and joy. Work done on rebalancing that ratio will likely yield a positive effect on a relationship.

Awareness and choice

Cousins offers several tips to couples as they embark on their married lives. This advice requires intention and awareness of individual feelings and thoughts and their impact on the newly created marital entity.

• **Own your feelings.** Be aware of the emotions you are bringing to a conflict. Do they stem from your own experiences and old hurts? Are you transferring them to or layering them over the relationship? Being clear on the cause of your afflictive emotions helps arrive at a workable solution for the individual and the couple.

• **Silence can be golden.** Just because you have a thought doesn't

Continued on next page ...



Photo source: istock-photo.com contributor oneinchpunch

Resources:

- Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* by John Gottman, Ph.D. www.gottman.com
- Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. www.harvilleandhelen.com
- Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love* by Dr. Sue Johnson www.dr.suejohnson.com
- Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence* by Esther Perel, www.estherperel.com
- Women's Support Services www.wssdv.org
- Foundation for Community Health www.fchealth.org/index.php/resources/links_and_sources

Questions to ask when choosing a counselor:

- Are you licensed? How many years have you been in practice?
- I have been having problems with my marriage/relationship. What experience do you have helping people with those issues? Is this one of your areas of expertise?
- What kinds of treatments do you use? Are they effective in helping individuals and couples address their issues?
- What are your fees? (Fees are usually based on a 45-minute to 50-minute session). Do you have a sliding-scale fee policy?
- What types of health care coverage do you accept?

Adapted from www.apa.org

mean you have to share it. Discern what wincing words are better left unsaid. Stop, think, and choose what to say, whether to say it, and how it should be said. Cousins recommends, “Strike when the iron is cold. Let the heat of the moment pass and use reason to sort out what you want to say and what purpose it will serve.”

• **Being vs. feeling.** You are not your emotions. You feel your emotions. They come and go and are composed of many strands. Take the time to tease out those strands and choose the ones you respond to.

For example, your spouse arrives late to your anniversary dinner. You think to yourself, “I *am* angry.” Recast that thought into, “I *feel* angry right now.” This restatement loosens the grip of anger and re-categorizes it from being part of your identity to part of your transitory emotional landscape.

This landscape is composed of many features. Your anger is blended with relief that he is okay, gratitude that she showed up only 20 minutes late, flattered that he arrived with a bouquet of flowers, and impatience to order that special of the day before the restaurant runs out. “All of these are

real and authentic,” offers Cousins, “so choose one, preferably positive, and focus on that. Don’t let your emotions become a monolithic block. Make another choice.”

Bigger than the two of you

Some issues are not couples’ issues and require specialized professional help, not marriage therapy. These are serious mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence. While these issues are played out in the relationship, they should be addressed on an individual level with the help of trained professionals.

Tackling these issues in couple’s therapy mistakenly serves to categorize them as shared problems. “When you apply shared solutions to these kinds of individual problems neither the couple nor the individuals benefit,” observes Cousins.

Sex and physical intimacy

Right now, nothing can quench the desire you feel for each other. There is chemistry and sizzling heat. You won’t be one of those couples that loses that spark for each other – until you do. In the past, exploring the sexual aspect of the relationship was not central to couple’s therapy. The primary goal was to explore emotional issues and communication breakdowns. The

physical side would then sort itself out. This approach is now being challenged by therapists placing sex front and center.

“It’s important to think about what sex means to your relationship and giving the romantic and physical aspects of your relationship the priority it deserves,” observes Cousins. For some couples, sex can often be the first thing to go when the relationship begins to stall. For others, it can be the glue that holds them together when other areas of the relationship strain and crack.

Cousins observes that in most couples sex ebbs and flows and takes on different emphasis at different times. “It’s simplistic to say that it is important when you are young and less so as the marriage ages. An empty nest marriage can have more sex than one with the demands of small children and ferrying them to soccer practices.”

She urges couples to think about the importance of sex to each other and talk about it. She also points out that there are happy sexless marriages. Speaking with respect and listening to your partner without judgment is a good template. Keep in mind that the range for what fits into a “normal” sex life is broader than one might think, so explore what feels right for each of you. However, asking for what you want doesn’t mean your partner can or has to give it to you.

Nietzsche’s marriage advice

Cousins is adamant that conflict does not kill a relationship. Rather it is vital to its health. “Couples are also individuals with differing viewpoints, life narratives, expectations, needs, and hopes for the future. Conflict is inevitable but when conducted from a place of individual self awareness, love, and respect it makes the marriage stronger and more enduring. This in turn provides the platform for individual growth as well.” •

We will be reading more from Sara Cousins in the coming months as she explores topics in mental and emotional health.

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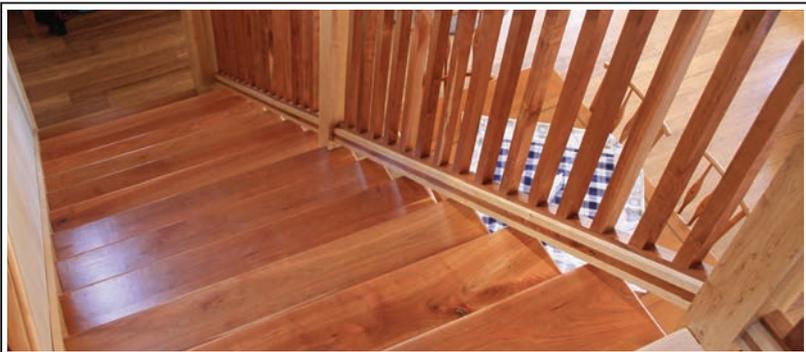


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Your ideal Honeymoon



By *Melissa Batchelor Warnke*
info@mainstreetmag.com

Wherever are you going on your honeymoon? If you married the right person, it doesn't matter all that much, because it's really just the first of many vacations you will go on together, some of which will be wonderful, some of which will be disasters, others of which will be relaxing, others of which will be eventful. So try not to stress.

But since this is one of our national traditions, may I recommend a few options for your getaway? Some of these I've been lucky enough to see for myself, and others I've been fantasizing about for the longest time. Happy travels!

Positano, Italy

Positano is the hamburger of honeymoon destinations. You just know it's going to be good because it's always good. It has to be; the ingredients are all there. It's a cute as hell colorful village built into a cliff with great beaches and restaurants and if you don't like it, that's on you.

Oaxaca City, Mexico

I haven't been to Oaxaca yet, but I've heard that it's one of the most magical spots in a magical country, with terrific markets, museums, and tons of archeological sites. This is a spot for the culture buffs and foodies alike. If you go to Oaxaca, bring me. I will watch your children, bags, Chihuahua, whatever.

Hershey, PA, USA

Hershey Park is a divine amusement park themed around Hershey treats, which means that all of the rides, events, and showcases involve chocolate! And if you stay at The Hotel Hershey, which you really should, you can get one of the Chocolate Day Spa packages which involve a Whipped Cocoa Bath, a Chocolate Fondue Wrap, a Cocoa Massage, a Chocolate Bean Polish, and much more. This is the location for a pair with a one-track mind, that track being chocolate.

Maligne Canyon, Jasper, Alberta, Canada

Maligne Canyon is a limestone formation in gorgeous Jasper National Park that has a waterfall, tons of wildlife, and a spectacular gorge with bridges that run across it. There is so much to do in Jasper and nearby Banff National Park, which is home to the stunning Lake Louise and its neighboring Railway Station and Restaurant. Then take the Rocky Mountaineer train through Kamloops to Vancouver, and hop over to Vancouver Island. Not to be missed.

San Sebastian, Spain

San Sebastian has everything: pintxos (skewered tapas bites), a gorgeous vista, lovely people, and a laid-back town center to spend a few days in. We never wanted to leave and tried to think about how our salaries could get us a beach place there (spoiler alert: it couldn't, and we're back in the US). But may I suggest going in November? It is cold and kind of sinister feeling and completely lovely and deserted and you will be the only ones riding the ancient merry-go-round overlooking the ocean. This is an option for a vampirish couple or perhaps two poets, or if you want to save money on the

out-of-season hotel and use it to dine at Martin Berasategui as we did, a nearby three-Michelin-starred restaurant where I literally wept at the table because the food was so good. The waiters were so polite they pretended not to notice, or else they'd seen it before.

Isla Solarte, Panama

Isla Solarte is a tiny island off of Panama's mainland, which has a large amount of private land and a little inn for those staying overnight, called Solarte del Caribe. This is a great place to learn how to scuba dive, kayak, and take it easy. This is for our couples that love being lazy, reading in a hammock, and looking at the stars. If you're major adventurers, go to...

Big Sky, Montana, USA

Go skiing, or zip-lining, or hiking, or rafting, or jump off a waterfall, hell, do whatever you want. If you know what a crampon is, this is the location for you.

Noah's Ark, Wisconsin Dells, WI, USA

The largest water park in the United States! How can you not love that? If you have a blended family or kids, this is perfect, and if you are a childless grown adult who loves water parks, I say now's the time to lean into yourself and let your partner know just who you really are: they're already stuck with you for the rest of their lives! Anyhow, this place has 51 slides, a water coaster called the Black Anaconda which shoots you around at 30 mph, two wave pools, and a surf simulator. What else could the heart truly desire? •



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Wedding traditions

IN HISTORY

By Allison Guertin Marchese
info@mainstreetmag.com

What a perfect time to talk about wedding traditions. Having just received a wedding proposal myself (the second time around for this writer), delving into wedding traditions from the days of yore is right up my alley.

Take this woman...

Let's really start at the beginning and explain, for instance, why men "took wives."

This practice goes way back to ancient Greece and Roman civilizations when a wife was property, basically a dependent of the husband. Taking a wife typically gave men a way of legitimizing their children and finding someone to care for the kids' needs. Men took wives so they could have someone to cook, clean house, and fulfill other practical and necessary household, farm, or general domestic tasks.

I realize that most women reading this right now are already cringing, because many of these wifely duties and husbandly expectations may still be a bone of contention today. But wait, there's more.

The bridal bargain...

In history, each culture maintained its own quirky wedding traditions. For instance, in the old Filipino culture it was customary that the groom throw a spear at the front steps of his bride-to-be's home to announce that the young woman living there was claimed. Now that's what I call a proper engagement.

Religion also had a lot to do with a wife's role and marriage, dating all the way back to the story of Adam and Eve. In Biblical times, Hebrew husbands were allowed multiple wives as long as he was able to pay the would-be father-in-law a good sum of money and assure the father that he would care for his daughter. There was also a bit of back and forth bartering and bribing that went on.

Since shoes were seen as a badge of authority because they lifted a person off the ground (dif-

ferentiating them from barefoot slaves and serfs), to seal the wedding bargain fathers would give their son-in-laws a pair on the wedding day as symbol of transferring authority.

Along those lines, the groom was also expected to shower the bride's family with gifts. Once the exchange of gifts and money was complete, the marriage was binding. The bride also traditionally arrived with a dowry of goods and sometimes servants and farm animals or land. The girl that was getting married was promised the money back (supposedly an initial payment for her virginity) in the event that the marriage didn't work out.

But generally the couple happily made a contract to be together forever, or not. On occasion the husband had the option of having his wife stoned, if on the wedding night he discovered she was not a virgin.

Some wedding traditions are ghastly and hard to believe. Women throughout world cultures who were married were sadly considered servants to their husbands. This was all legal mind you, and under the law, a wife who did not show proper deference or was disobedient, there were ways for her husband to enforce his authority.

This kind of cultural norm slowed down in the Roman world where the bride was no longer "taken" but was required to give her consent with her own free will, that is to say with her father's approval. Roman marriages were seen as more of a partnership, motivated by economics and social stature. Love did not come into play before the nuptials. Love was expected to come after marriage.

Both Ancient Greeks and Romans believed that marriage meant to be loyal to the family, friends, and home. A tradition that has, of course, endured.

A change with the times

Before the 1500s, couples in Europe were free to marry themselves. It wasn't until 1564 when the Council of Trent declared marriage to be a sacra-

ment, that weddings became the property of priests and churches. Before the church got involved, couples would find their own sacred places to be married in nature, like on a hill or cliff where heaven meets earth.

Believe it or not, the notion that women were still considered chattel and all marriages were arranged marriages persisted for some time. Things started changing around the end of the 18th Century. In around 1771, New York became the first State to require a woman's consent if her husband tried to sell property that she brought to a marriage. The act also required the judge to meet privately with the woman to reassure himself that the signature on the marriage documents wasn't forged or her consent coerced.

The married property acts of the 1880s gave women in England the right to own property, and it's where we get the tradition of the father walking the bride down the aisle, since the Dad was considered the original owner of his daughter. Go figure.

Rings and things...

We can thank Pope Innocent III of 1214, for establishing the "engagement" which created a sensible waiting period for couples who were anticipating the big day.

It was the Archduke Maximilian of Austria who introduced the idea of "putting a ring on it" in 1477, when he gave his bride-to-be, Mary of Burgundy, a custom-made diamond ring fashioned in the shape of an "M."

Regarding the placement of the ring on the third finger of the left hand, we can thank the superstitious Egyptians who believed that the primary vein (*vena amorous*, noted by the Romans) in that finger ran directly to the heart.

Continued on next page ...

A bouquet of garlic?

Though the traditional bridal bouquet in today's weddings is often enhanced with every flower that grows under the sun, it originally was made of herbs like garlic and rosemary rather than blossoms. The idea here was that garlic possessed magical powers to ward off evil spirits.

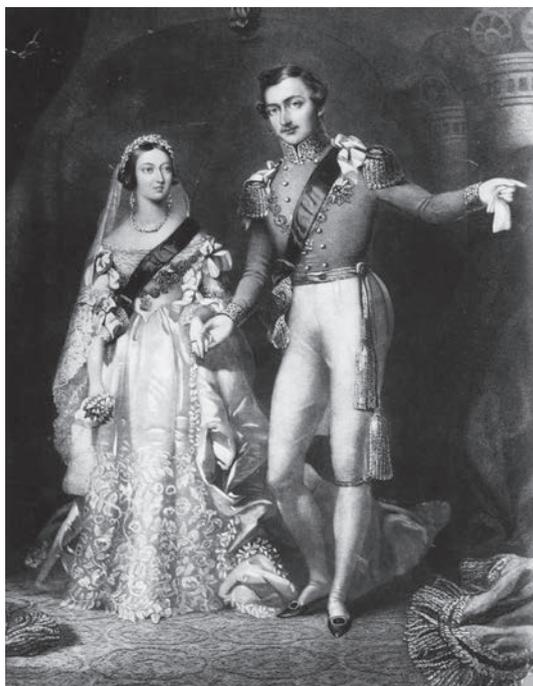
The tradition of the veil is for the bride to bring attention to her youth and her virginity. Veils also offered brides a way to avoid the "Evil Eye." In the past, veils weren't always white. The color selection could be red, blue, yellow. It was the Victorian period that ushered in both the white wedding dress and the white veil to underscore a bride's purity and perhaps her wealth.

The tradition of the dress

The idea that the wedding dress was only worn once came about during the 18th and 19th Century when garments were only washed by hand, on rough washboards. A white dress in those days was considered a true luxury and also impossible to clean thoroughly, so after wearing a white wedding dress once, it was done.

The truth about wedding dress color tradition, is in fact, a story better retold in technicolor. Throughout time and cultures women wore a multitude of dresses in all kinds of colors and patterns. After Queen Victoria wore white in her wedding to Prince Albert, the trend transitioned.

During war time in the United States, however, brides who were called to marry their men when they were on short leave from their military service wore the best dress they had in their closet or they borrowed one from a friend.



Above: 10th February 1840: Queen Victoria (1819 - 1901) and Prince Albert (1819 - 1861) on their return from the marriage service at St James's Palace, London. Original Artwork: Engraved by S Reynolds after F Lock. Photo (in the public domain) and info courtesy of Wikipedia.

My favorite personal story is one of my parents, who were married in the late 1940s soon after my father was discharged from the army in WW II. My mother told me when I was a little girl that during the war silk and satin were hard to find, so they made her wedding dress out of old parachute material. To this day my mother's wedding dress sits in my cedar chest. Call me a romantic. Other women in that time period, facing the same shortages, sometimes used upholstery fabric or old curtains. The groom, on the other hand, often got married wearing his military uniform.

Let's get it on...

Historic traditions surrounding the wedding night vary wildly, and sadly this article is too short to provide the delicious details. But I can offer that the "honeymoon" is steeped in tradition. A few of those stories include the tradition of bridal couples in ancient Rome who would eat honey for the duration of "one moon" after the wedding. (Perhaps to cleanse and rejuvenate). This has led to the custom of using the term "honeymoon" to refer to the beginning of the newlyweds' new life together. Historical references point to the "honey" moon as being the sweetest part of the marriage.

While no one would opt out of a honeymoon, there are a few wedding traditions that are thankfully no longer practiced like kidnapping a woman in the dead of night out of her home or village. And there remain a few strange wedding laws that are still on the books.

Legally bound...

In Salem, Massachusetts, the town in the United States most noted for its Salem Witch Trials, the law still forbids couples to sleep in the nude in a rented room.

In North Carolina it's illegal to "pretend to be married" when registering for a hotel room.

In Montana a couple can be married in a "double proxy marriage" without actually being present.

In New Orleans, Louisiana, it's legal for fortune tellers and tarot reader to perform marriage ceremonies.

In Kentucky, it's illegal to remarry the same man four times. [Four times is just one too many ... ?]

Rhode Island has a marriage law on the books that says a union is to be considered invalid if either party is declared an idiot or a lunatic.

And the good ole "Blue Laws" in Connecticut



Above: A painting of a Jewish wedding by Jozef Israëls dated 1903. Previous page: A painting of Samson's wedding feast by Rembrandt. Photos (in the public domain) and info courtesy of Wikipedia.

dictate that it's illegal for a married man to kiss his wife in public on a Sunday.

We can be Royals...

Across the pond, the historically strange wedding traditions are a bit more obscure. In Great Britain it was considered good luck for the bride to kiss a chimney sweep on her wedding day. He supposedly had special powers, and when he cleaned the chimney he also swept away evil spirits.

A morganatic marriage is a union of a person of royal blood with one of inferior rank. Such a marriage is called a "left-hand marriage" because at the wedding ceremony, the husband holds the bride's hand with his left hand, instead of his right. Though these marriages are recognized by the church, the father cannot confer on their children his rank or property.

A few other historic royal wedding traditions seem to include big cakes. Queen Victoria's wedding cake was three yards wide and weighed 300 pounds. Meanwhile Queen Elizabeth II had 12 wedding cakes. The one she cut at her wedding was nine feet tall and weighed 500 pounds.

No one today should realistically need a 500 pound wedding cake, but who's to say. If you're getting married and you are attached to history and tradition you should go for it. Best bet is to just have balance; something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a sixpence in your shoe. ●

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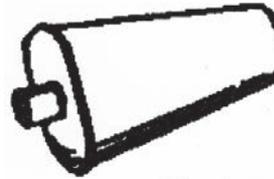
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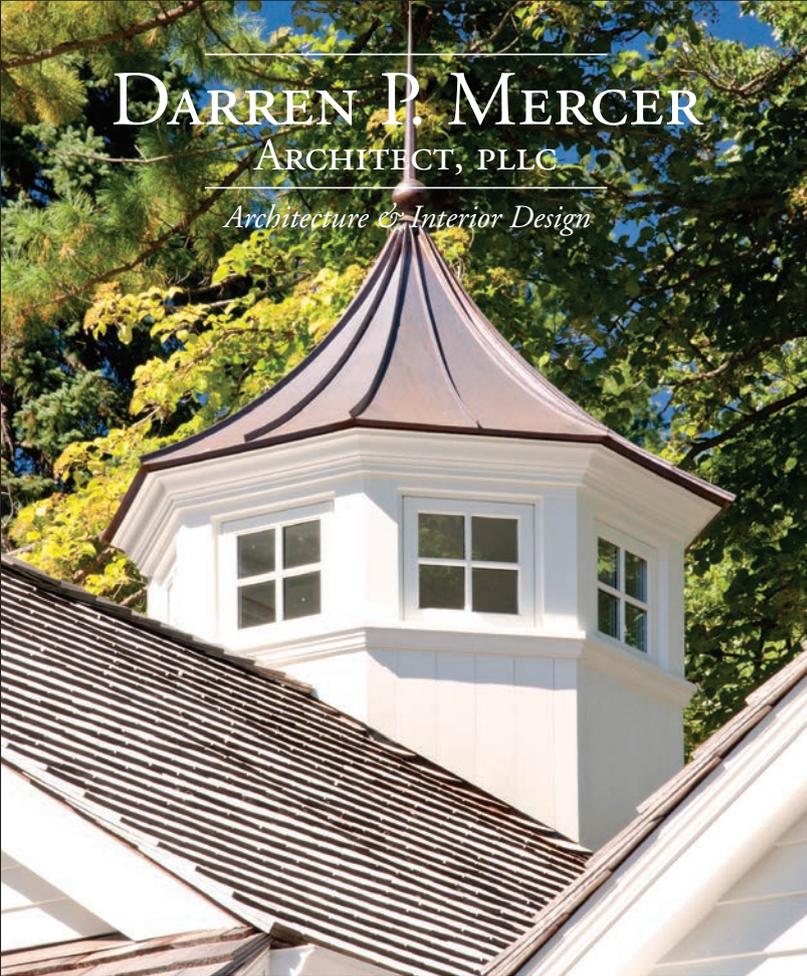
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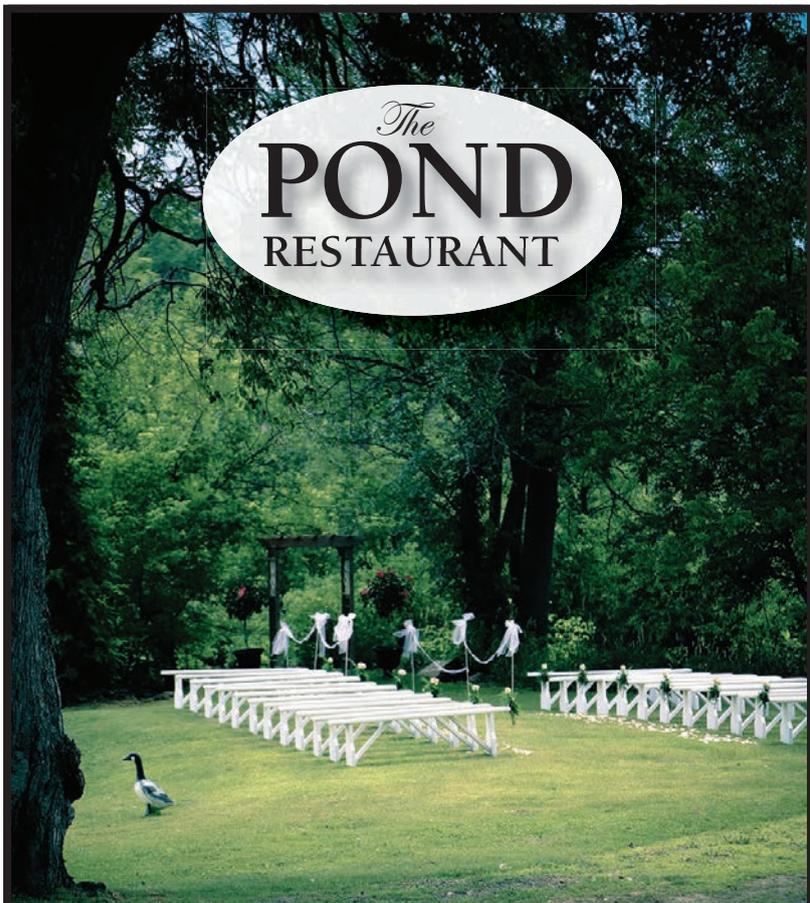
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Left to right: photograph by Rachel Sussman, student dancers, Quink Vocal Ensemble, Hotchkiss Dramatic Association



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I do. I did.

THE BACK PAGES
FROM MY PERSONAL
WEDDING ALBUM

By *CB Wismar*
info@mainstreetmag.com

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to unite this couple in Holy Matrimony...”

The words leapt off the pages of the missal that my Grandfather had used during his long career in pulpit and classroom. Far from its rich past in New York City, it was now cradled in my hands, catching the warm rays of the California sun pouring through the chapel windows ... with a view of Zuma Beach off to the left and the Malibu Hills to the right.

Complete disclosure before we go on. The following moments in time really did happen. To me. This is not a fictional piece, hammered out under an influential buzz provided by several glasses of a decent Merlot. These were the ways of the early 70's ... in Southern California ... in a time and space very different than what transpires in the bucolic hills of western New England.

If there is blame for remembering these proceedings in vivid detail these many years later, it is mine.

If there is muffled laughter, I'm repaid for the effort beyond my wildest imagination.

But, back to the wedding.

The bride and grooms' requests

The bride and groom had only two requests. As the processional music, they wanted Cat Stevens singing *Morning has Broken*, and right before the exchange of rings, they wanted to give each other very personal, very special gifts. Easy enough.

For a newly minted, part-time cleric with a full time job in the film industry and a young family, picking up weekend weddings meant an envelope at the end of the ceremony and a little help with the rent and the groceries. I had a black shirt, a white reversed collar, and could sign my name starting with “Rev.” What more did I need?

Meet the Best Man - and his jacket

It had started in the parking lot when I slid my beaten up Healey Sprite next to a hulking pick-up and was greeted by a beaming gentleman in a pair of work pants and a T-shirt stylishly covered by a blazer made with a fabric which contained no natural fibers.

“I'm the Best Man!” he gushed. “Like the jacket? I just got it at Zayre's.” For those not familiar with the retail constellation in the 70's, Zayre's was an early manifesta-

tion of the “discount store.” One of the by-words of the 70's in LA surrounded the “Dollar Barrel” at Zayre's where one could buy, among other things, wine of questionable origin.

But, the jacket. For some reason, aside from its pure polyester nature, there was something wrong – something I could not immediately identify.

Off we were to the chapel and the ceremony. One of the bride's children found, on the third scratchy try, the cut on Cat Stevens' album “Teaser and the Firecat” that signaled the beginning of the proceedings. There was only one inconvenience. Seven people filled out the wedding party: bride, groom, best man, matron of honor, and three kids from prior marriages. *Morning has Broken* runs three minutes and 20 seconds long. The entire length of the aisle in the chapel was 40 feet. We stood in place for aeons waiting for the selected ditty to run its course.

A personal gift like no other

But, then we were off. “Dearly beloved...” I was hitting my stride and getting through the prescribed scripture readings and bargaining

ahead to the vows. “I do's” and “I wills” quickly accomplished, it came time for the exchange of “personal gifts.” I held my breath.

“Darling, I love you so much, I'm going to give you the rear tires off of my Comet to put on your Falcon.” The bride was visibly moved. But through her tears, she managed to look into her groom's eyes and announce: “And, because I love you, I'm giving you the autographed picture of Parnelli Jones that's on my side of the bed.”

For those not yet of “a certain age,” Parnelli Jones was a successful race car driver and owner who won the Indianapolis 500 in 1963 as a driver and twice more as a car owner. Just a bit of trivia.

Gifts exchanged, we moved on to the rings ... and to my Waterloo. My habit was to offer the open missal to the Best Man and have him put the rings onto the book so there would be no fumbling and dropping.

As he performed this simple task, the Best Man reached his hand toward me and I had the sudden revelation of what was wrong with the jacket. There were no buttons

Continued on next page ...

and no button holes. None on the sleeves. None on the front of the jacket. There were, instead, only black marker dots where the buttons should have been attached and lines for the prospective holes.

Holding it together

I could not laugh. I was, after all, the presiding minister. I had to stifle the reaction that had built through Cat Stevens's endless processional and the swapping of tires and racer photos. I bit my lip. I bit my tongue, hoping the pain would keep me solemn and on point. I turned toward the bride and groom for relief and realized, for the first time, that the bride's dress was not a dress at all. It was two beach towels sewn together. I bit down harder.

Rings. Prayer. Blessing. Recessional. My tongue was bleeding. I was taking short gasps of breath through my nose and trying to hold a smile while the newly minted "Mr. and Mrs." enjoyed every moment of their selected recessional song, the four minutes and four seconds of *Peacetrain* that seemed to go on for just a few minutes under a lifetime.

On the drive back down the Pacific Coast Highway, I vowed to never take another pick-up wedding. The \$25 envelope couldn't be worth it.

Never say "never"

Weeks later, the note from the parish secretary was quite cryptic. It was an address and directions to a spot high in the Malibu Mountains above Trancas Canyon that overlooked the chapel and the Pacific Ocean. I was to be there at 1:00pm on Saturday. Park at the bottom of the hill and walk the final 200 yards to the clearing. No need to prepare. Simply witness the ceremony.

Remember this was the early 70's in LA. Strange was the new normal, soon to be replaced with "weird."

Struggling out of the Sprite, I saw



a steady stream of wedding guests picking their ways carefully up the rock strewn side of the hill. From somewhere above us, the sound of a guitar and a flute indicated that there would be live music. It was only when I summited the peak that I realized that the musicians were dressed in costumes from the local Renaissance Faire and that the guitar was actually a lute ... the flute, a recorder.

The guests stood in a large circle at the top of the hill, the stump of a tree the central focal point. I took my place in the circle, smiling, nodding and feeling like I had been transported to a planet of unknown name. It was only when the music stopped that the entire setting was time-shifted into something out of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*.

A sword and a door ... at a wedding?

Into the center of the circle strode the groom. Tall, athletic, and dressed in black jeans, a tuxedo shirt open to the waist, a cummerbund ... and a sword. He turned and looked down the hill and we, as one, turned with him. Struggling up

the last 20 yards were four gentlemen carrying on their shoulders a door. It was easily identified as such, since the door knob was still in place, as were the hinges.

Atop the door was the bride, dressed in a shimmering, slip-like white dress which, in the piercing afternoon sun, revealed that any form of underwear had been eliminated from her day's wardrobe selections.

Once in the circle, the door was tipped forward and the bride, perhaps less gracefully than she had imagined, tumbled onto the ground, regained her footing and walked, barefoot, to meet her groom.

And with a swift wave, they were married

He said something to her. I could not hear it from where I stood. She said something to him. Again, it was unintelligible.

With a flourish, he drew the sword from his cummerbund, waved it high in the air and with a forceful swing, planted it in the innocent stump. They joined hands. She hitched up the dress. Together they leapt over the sword. The crowd cheered. The recordist and

lutist took the cue and started playing some Medieval ditty.

Married.

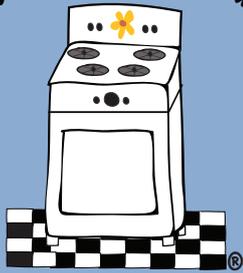
I may have stumbled a time or two on the way down the hill, but twisted ankles and scuffed shoes were only minor irritations. I was a man on a mission. By statute, I had to get the marriage license, sign it and return it to the County Clerk. At least I would a) see if they actually had a license, b) find out their names, and c) ask them what they had said to each other so I could pronounce them "Husband and wife."

As Meatloaf later sang: "Two out of three ain't bad."

Rolling down the Coast Highway, wind fluffing my hair, radio tuned to the dominant "rock" station in the market, I solemnly promised myself to never, *never* take another pick up wedding.

But, three weeks later, there was a cryptic note from the parish secretary ... ●

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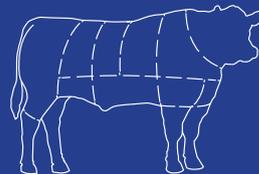
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How not to turn into a bride groom zilla

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

Your wedding day can be one of the most important days of your life. It can also be one of the most stressful. In planning my wedding, I quickly realized that stress is what causes brides (and grooms) to turn into “bridezilla” – and it’s not a pretty sight. This “syndrome” is not just reserved for the brides, but the grooms can just as easily “catch” it!

I learned a thing or two in creating and orchestrating my recent wedding. If any one of my experiences can help you avoid a meltdown, it’ll be worth it to read this! Here are a few helpful tips to aid any bride and or groom from loosing their cool (and their marbles) when it comes to planning their wedding, and to ease the nerves on the actual day ... if you survive.

Let’s be realistic

Some of you may have dreamed about- and envisioned your perfect wedding day since you were a little girl/boy. Your dream wedding was probably something from the pages of a fairy tale. But before proceeding further, let me stop you right now in that day-dream: something is guaranteed to go wrong! Let’s not beat around the bush. That’s just the truth of the matter. That’s not to say that your wedding won’t be perfect and beautiful, but there are about one million moving parts and dozens of people to orchestrate. You can’t control it all, because someone is sure to get lost on the way to the ceremony and show up late, and someone is guaranteed to get too inebriated and create some sort of spectacle, amusing or not. So just prepare yourself, because the odds are stacked against you. So realize- and accept that on day one! And if you don’t ... well, you’re likely to morph into bridezilla!

And as a side note, when it comes to the things that will go wrong on the big day, here’s an important piece of information: no one but the bride and or groom will notice! So don’t stress too much about it, just deal with each issue as it arises. This too you will get through.

The financial part of a wedding

Let’s start with the obvious: weddings can be expensive. Unless you’re going to the justice of the peace, no matter how you slice it, when you attach the word “wedding” to any part of your planning all of a sudden the price seemingly doubles. Just remem-

ber that there are ways to do things affordably and avoid spending frivolously – of course there are! But expect that things are going to cost more than you first anticipate.

To help avoid this shock and the consequent tears and fights that are sure to follow (because this is a very emotional time and tensions are high), the first thing that I recommend for any bride and groom is for the two of you to sit down before you even Google one venue, vendor, or photographer. Sit down and write the amount that you are able and willing to spend on your wedding at the top of the page. From there, and below that figure, write down what you will need: rings, a wedding dress, a suit, venue, flowers, decorations, music, food, cake, photographer, hair/nails/makeup, the marriage license, and even the honeymoon ... and so the list goes on – and on.

Once you have that list written out and you realize the scope of what you’ll need to do (and you start hyperventilating just a little bit because you feel overwhelmed), now it’s time to search Google, The Knot, and Pinterest. At this juncture you will need to know on what day you’d like to get married because a lot of venues and vendors book months and years in advance. You will therefore very quickly narrow down your choices due to availability options. The next step is then to research and call venues and vendors and start getting approximate price quotes from them. Write these fees down on your spreadsheet, for the price estimates will also help you to narrow down who and what fall into your budget. And remember, the fancier you go and the more “stuff” you want, the more expensive things get. Yes, it really is that simple.

On the other hand, if you are somewhat flexible and can swing it, or don’t have an extremely strict budget, before heading any further I would recommend that you call a wedding planner! A wedding planner is worth their weight in gold. No joke! They will take care of all of the headaches and are there on the big day to tell people what they should be doing, at what time, and how they should be doing it – remember, you can’t be doing this because both the bride and groom will be getting ready and are the last to show up.

Or if you like to do things yourself, consider hiring a wedding planner for the-day-of to make sure that the one million parts that you envisioned and created all come together just right. Again, you can’t be there the two hours or so before the ceremony starts, but you *will* need someone to be there and orchestrate things.



Photo source: istockphoto.com contributor Voyagerix

Plan to your heart’s content

You can plan as much and thoroughly as you like. But don’t get stuck in your head too much. Be open to taking the advice of the professionals around you, remember that they’ve done this a time or two. Try to be somewhat flexible, while still remaining true to your vision. I say this because chances are that you won’t be able to get everything just like you want it. This can either be due to circumstances, availability, or perhaps your vision will change.

When it came to the planning for my wedding, I felt completely overwhelmed at the onset because the options were really endless. When you have too many options, there is a certain level of panic that can set in. I felt this firsthand. I knew somewhat what my vision was, but at the same time there are so many moving parts that it can become completely overwhelming (and this is where you’re so emotional that it doesn’t take much for the tears to start flowing). This is where the spreadsheets and writing things down to keep track of everything really helps.

I found Pinterest to be helpful because I was able to create a file for each category and have a “visual” spreadsheet of what I wanted to do, and in turn I was able to show this to my florist, caterer, etc. Plus, I got some really great and creative ideas thanks to Pinterest. But be careful, as great as sites like Pinterest and The Knot can be, you can find so much data that you can get overwhelmed.

Your spreadsheets can help to keep track of what you’ve done, what’s next, then how things might change, AND who’s doing what. Planning a wedding is not just a one-person operation, and please don’t take it upon yourself to do it all by yourself. You will drive yourself mad. If you’ve got a spouse who’s just not that “into” it (aka the planning), that’s fine. But talk with them about what needs to be done, include them in some of the decisions,

and ask what they'd like to contribute. For example, maybe the groom would like to take over choosing the wine, liquor, and the bar. He needs to have some responsibility and a job so that he'll be thinking about something other than just his bachelor party!

You're not going to make everyone happy

This day is only truly about two people (or should be). The bride and groom are creating the wedding that they want. But with that being said, sometimes parents, traditions, religion, and well-meaning family and friends can get themselves involved. This is where things can become tense.

If your parents are paying for part or all of the wedding, then you should talk with them about what they are expecting and what you would like. My recommendation is to be upfront and honest about this so that you don't find yourself a week before the wedding and realize that there was a major misunderstanding, because you didn't do something that your future mother-in-law expected you to do. And as a result of this misunderstanding, half of the family is upset and the bride and groom find themselves halfway towards a breakdown, ready to burst into tears. To avoid a scenario like this, clear the air in the early stages of planning, and know who's expecting what, and work from there.

On the other hand, if you are paying for your own wedding, and let's take it as a given that you've figured out all of the other aspects, remember that this is *your* day ("your" meaning the bride and groom's). This brings me to the well-meaning family members and friends. People will offer you their opinions and suggestions (whether you asked for them or not), and some can even get incredible pushy about it. This is where you need to make sure that you stand your ground so that your wedding doesn't get hijacked by accident (which will probably end in tears). This is one of the few days of your life that you've got an excuse to be completely selfish! This day is all about you and your significant other, and no one else – this is your party and you shouldn't have to cry, even if you want to.

With all of that being said, just remember that you're probably not going to make everyone happy. But it's not your job to make them happy! It's your job to make you and your spouse happy, because this is *your* day.



Photo source: istockphoto.com contributor: bianaru

Things will go wrong!

One of the first things that I wrote is that something is sure to go wrong. That's just the nature of an event like this. So don't stress about it! Your planning and organization and delegation skills will help to ensure that as little as possible goes wrong. And here is where a wedding planner is a key player: they deal with all of the headaches and mishaps. Again, they're worth their weight in gold!

If you don't have a wedding planner, choose one or two people that you trust and who are reliable, and ask them to help orchestrate in your absence. Having someone to tell people where to go before the ceremony/reception is important. Your caterer and the wait staff can sometimes help with this, but every situation, venue, and staff are different.

But what are you going to do when your makeup and hair stylists have arrived, but your photographer went to the wrong house and is half an hour away? What are you going to do when your ceremony is set to start in 10 minutes and the band hasn't showed up and you've got 200 people sitting and waiting for the ceremony to start? Yes, that can happen because both of those things happened at my wedding! You stay cool and you improvise, that's what you do. You have no other option.

In fact, I got to such a relaxed mental state and was so cool that it made people uncomfortable! It was almost weird and I have no idea how I managed to remain so cool and not let the nerves get the best of me. When my now-husband called and told me to wait until he called again before heading to the ceremony location, because the singer was in Millbrook instead of Claverack, I had a conversation with myself that went something like this: "The guy is half an hour away, so how am I supposed to make my entrance and walk down the aisle? Well, I guess we'll figure it out! Let's get going." And that is literally what I said to my hus-

band on the phone.

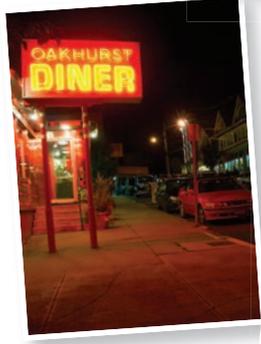
And we did figure it out – or he did. The xylophonist had arrived separately from the rest of the band, so my husband helped set him up at the ceremony site, he played the xylophone, and everyone thought it was so unique and awesome. And the best part? No one but my husband, my father, and I knew about the band being late! The point of the story: things will go wrong, but almost no one will notice. So don't stress it. Stay calm and figure it out.

Choose what's important

From the first day of planning, I said to my now-husband that I wanted one or two really cool and unique things that we were willing to spend the money on. We could skimp on some of the other things, but these few special items were at the heart of our wedding and they were what would set it apart. This was a really fun approach! Plus, as we've already stated, weddings can be expensive, so you're going to have to make decisions about what is important and what you can afford to have. Choosing one, two, or three things that are important, and perhaps unique, can help you to set the tone for your wedding and gives you a starting point.

Aside from all of this, at the end of the day, the only thing that matters is that the couple getting married love each other and that they make a commitment of forever to each other. Don't lose sight of that when you are frantically choosing cocktail napkins! Because when you turn into a bride/groom-zilla who is stressed to the gills, that's when cold feet can creep up on you: you are both stressed and can act out, and the stress can get the better of both of you. Keep your eye on the prize: you love each other, and you have a whole life of love and joy ahead of you! Happy planning. •

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B. Docktor Photography

Bringing an artful eye to every image – people, pets, nature. (518) 329-6239. bdocktorphotography.com

B. Docktor has been a photographer since she was in high school and re-started her photo career in 2006, realizing how much she enjoyed digital photography. B documents precious moments; from weddings to children and family gatherings to beloved pets – she aims to capture the magnificence of the moment, creating art that will be cherished for generations. B lives in Ancram and works all over the Hudson Valley, Berkshires, NYC, and is happy to travel, too. She prefers to capture what's really going on, with as little posing as possible. Aside from having “the eye,” it also takes technical ability, but probably most important is making the session or wedding day really fun. When photographing animals, her specialty is to capture movement, which is next to impossible for most pet owners. Her fine art photography portraying the beauty of our region enlivens area homes and businesses. B makes images that move you, and will help you remember a moment forever. She loves making slideshow videos and personal web apps for people to enjoy their photos. These are wonderful for screen viewing, but there is nothing like beautifully printed photo-art for your walls, or gorgeously made albums. Contact B. Docktor today to capture a moment that will last a lifetime.



Pine Plains Barber Shoppe

2976 E. Church St., Pine Plains, NY. (518) 771-3250. shavingparlor.com

Calling all men, calling all men! Walk back in time as you step into the Pine Plains Barber Shoppe. Established 7/11/15, proprietors Justin Nash and Peter Morfea are passionate about not only giving the best haircut possible, but keeping the old school barber shop atmosphere alive. Sit back and relax while taking in your surroundings; countless traditional barber shop antiques with smooth jazz playing in the background. They have a list of services including traditional hair cuts – both old school and new trends. A straight razor is used on every haircut, unless otherwise requested. But if you really want to pamper yourself, check out the royal treatment package for only \$35! This encompasses most of their services: a wash, haircut, hot towel shave, and a scalp massage. With a walk-in only policy, start feeling better by enjoying a complimentary massage from the massage chairs. Good company and jokes are also on the house. For you fellas getting married, come by with your groomsmen to get a fresh cut and shave before the big day! You'll leave looking and feeling like a million bucks! You are welcome to bring your own drinks, too. There is no other atmosphere that Justin knows of like this, just for men, and is honored to help you clean up.



LionRock Farm

Events and weddings in Sharon, CT. (860) 671-1245. lionrockfarmevents.com

LionRock Farm is a 600 acre property located in Sharon, Connecticut. They offer a wide array of year-round event sites, in buildings and barns, outside in the gardens, in the fields, or under a tent. Most every wish can be accommodated. The venue also offers two guest houses on the property that can accommodate up to 18 for the wedding party or guests. They are conveniently located 100 miles north of New York City and three hours west of Boston in the northwest corner of Connecticut, in the Litchfield Hills, and the very convenient the Metro North train station to NYC is just 15 minutes away. As the gateway to the Berkshires, this location provides a wonderful setting for weddings, farm-weddings and events, be it for the day or the weekend, as there is an abundance of sports, lakes and rivers, trails, skiing, shopping, and fine dining to meet your every need. They are pleased to work with your wedding planners, event consultants, and caterers. You can contact Joanne Scasso, LionRock's site coordinator, so that they can also share their experiences and names of local event service providers that meet your requirements. They look forward to welcoming you at LionRock Farm.



Sweet William's Bakery and Coffee House

Baked goods and amazing coffee. 19 Main Street, Salisbury, CT. (860) 435-8889. sweet-williams.com

Sweet William's Bakery and Coffee House offers an ever-changing variety of delicious baked goods including cookies, scones, muffins, biscuits, croissants, layer cakes, cheesecake, tarts, biscotti, pound cake, pies, candied nuts, cupcakes, and more. And everything is baked on-site and made entirely from scratch. They also have the best coffee around! You just can't beat their expertly crafted lattes, cappuccinos, specialty drinks, and brewed coffee from Barrington Coffee Roasting Company. Having a birthday party or guests for dinner? Let Sweet William's take care of dessert! While they do their best to have a variety of items on-hand, they encourage placing an order in advance. They plan their selection and baking schedule early in the week so it is best to call by Tuesday or Wednesday if you would like to reserve a dessert for the weekend. Want to jazz-up your next meeting? Full pots of coffee are available to go for \$25 (cups and accompaniments included; pots must be returned the same day). Add a dozen fresh “mini-scones” and you'll be everyone's hero. Need a gift for a special occasion? They are happy to create a special box of goodies just for you. It's a delicious way to say “thank you” or let someone know you were thinking of them.

INSURING YOUR WORLD

Since this issue is dedicated to all those who are tying the proverbial knot, we should review the do's and don'ts of what is and isn't covered prior to the wedding! One of the biggest mistakes is when the prospective groom purchases the engagement ring for his soon-to-be bride, that \$10,000 ring must be scheduled on a jewelry floater to insure that the value is properly covered since there are limitations under all homeowners policies that don't exceed \$1,500 in coverage. To make matters more interesting, jointly owned property must have both names listed on the insurance policy since the insuring agreement only recognizes "legally married" couples if only one person is listed as the named insured. Therefore if the groom is the only named insured and the prospective bride is not listed, and the bride loses the ring, coverage WILL be denied.... This also applies to any other property that may be present in a jointly held household, clothes, furniture, artwork, etc. Be sure that both names appear on the policy to avoid problems at the time of loss. This exclusion also applies to liability, should one partner own a dog that lives in a household and that partner is not listed as a named insured, any dog bite claim WILL also be denied! Take time to put your financial affairs in order prior to the wedding to avoid issues before the big day.

Kirk Kneller
Phone 518.329.3131
1676 Route 7A, Copake, N.Y.



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Dollars & sense

Marriage is a joining of more than hearts. Wedding season will soon be upon us, and as couples plan their big days, they should also consider planning their financial futures. "It's no secret that people can become blinded by love, it happened to me," says Andrew Oliver, Millbrook branch manager for the Bank of Millbrook, and newlywed with wife Eboni. "But you need to review your finances with your eyes wide open."

Consider the following issues to start your life together on solid financial footing:

- Will you and your spouse separate or combine your finances? Consider individual money styles, having one joint savings account and then separate accounts that you can use how you'd like.
- Couples that tackle money problems together will inevitably find that their overall relationships are better for it. Calculate your monthly costs and discuss how bills will be paid. Consider setting a date every month to review and discuss finances.
- It's important that spouses are aware of each other's credit situation. Marrying a person with bad credit will not drag yours down, however, it will be factored in when applying for joint financing. Knowing ahead of time will help you to plan more strategically.
- Couples should develop a plan to shoot down existing debt, starting with the balances that carry the highest interest rates. Think twice before every purchase and ask yourself if it's worth not putting that money in your savings.
- Saving as a couple fosters teamwork and is essential in times of financial hardship. Decide how much you want to save as a couple and do it automatically from your paychecks.

Stacey M. Langenthal
Executive Vice President
(845) 677-5321 x102



BANK OF MILLBROOK
The Strength of Relationships

RING DILEMMA

Dilemma: You need to find the perfect ring before getting down on one knee to propose. This can be a daunting task. First, when starting the search, try to notice a preferred metal type. Does our partner typically wear white, yellow, or rose gold? Was a hint given of a preference for platinum because it is a stronger, heavier metal? Second, you should have an idea on what stone will be the star of the ring. Typically it is a diamond, but some people prefer a blue sapphire or a white topaz. Read up on the carat, cut, color, and clarity of a diamond. You will need to decide if you want to pay for a certain size or quality of a diamond. If you choose a certified diamond, make sure you get copies of the certificates. Lastly, the style of the ring you choose to set the stone in is important. Does your partner like a simple classic design, a vintage antique style with pave diamonds, or modern bold design? A few last tips: don't be afraid to look in the estate case for a ring. A used ring or diamond can be purchased for half the cost; more bang for your buck. Some people love the idea of a vintage piece of jewelry and see the value of it, but others would prefer a new piece. If it is too difficult to commit to a style, some people have proposed with just the diamond and the two of you would pick out a mounting together. The other option is to propose with a sample ring and have it custom made. Last tip; try to have some fun...



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Don't serve cake at your wedding

If you don't like cake (which some people actually don't, believe it or not) why should you spend hundreds of dollars or more on something you don't enjoy? You shouldn't, obviously. And you're not alone. It seems a lot of people are looking for an alternative to the traditional 3 or 4 tier cake, which is partly responsible for the "cupcake wedding" phenomena. But cupcakes are still cake. So what else can a cake-hater do? It's simple really, just have whatever you want! Think about that sweet treat you love more than anything (except the person you're marrying of course) and find a bakery who makes the best one ever. Tastings are not limited to just cake, so arrange to try samples of a few other desserts. Maybe it's pecan pie, or strawberry cheesecake, or chocolate chip cookies, or apple cider donuts. Whatever you really enjoy is what you should serve at your wedding. And what happens if you love raspberry cheesecake and your significant other adores pumpkin pie? Get both of course. In fact, why not select a variety of your favorite desserts and let your guests choose the one they would like to try. Use the opportunity to share a little more about you and your new partner with family and friends on your special day. So forget the cake. Have fun with the dessert at your wedding. And don't worry about the photo-op, cheesecake will smear just as nicely on your new spouse's face as a traditional wedding cake would!



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19 Main Street, Salisbury, CT • 860.435.8889 • sweet-williams.com

WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

If you're bored by a project that you take on, then something is wrong. Use the opportunity to connect with your inner self.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Try to phrase things so that they aren't hurtful to others. Remember that you reap what you sow.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Be unafraid to stand up for what is right. Traffic delays could end badly for you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Children can increase the responsibility that's on your plate. Loosen the grip and let things happen.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You're struggling with a thing or two these days, but with the right mind-set they're no problem at all. Be playful.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Those that you cannot forgive will make things difficult for you. But at least you don't irritate yourself!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

You'll get an idea about how to increase your salary. You'll discover the most fun and productive angle and from there life will be your oyster.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

You forgot, for some time, an item on your to-do list. It will come back to you. Examine all aspects of the forgotten matter.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Keep all short term appointments on your social calendar, but don't drive yourself crazy with scheduling down to every minute. It'll all work out.

CAPRICORN

(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You're finally concentrating on the things that will give you something in return. Trust that things will get better, however it will look.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

It'll work out better for you to let your work speak for you, instead of rambling on and on about your work. Meditation, a quick swim, or a few yoga exercises will make all the difference.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Memories from times past will take the lead in your thoughts after a visit from an old acquaintance. Give yourself time to be in touch with family and friends. It matters.

MEN'S RING ADVICE

Picking your future wife's engagement ring was difficult enough, but now you have to pick your wedding ring too? And just like that engagement ring, when it comes to men's wedding bands, there are a number of choices, each with its set of pros and cons. To help you navigate, here are a few choices:

Precious metals: Falling into this category are your standard gold and platinum metals. With the precious metals you're more likely to be able to match your ring with your partner's ring, the rings can be worked on by any Benchmark jeweler, and it comes in different colors (gold, red, white, and yellow). The cons are that these metals are price sensitive to the metals market and they usually start around \$500. White gold will also slowly yellow, but don't worry; you just need to bring the ring in to be dipped and it'll look like new again. Because precious metals can be so expensive, rings made of alternative metals are now trending and are more prevalently available.

Tungsten: These rings are mostly made from steel and are scratch-proof. They can also come in grey and black. The ring, because it is made from steel and if you find yourself in a finger-threatening situation, is made so that it can shatter. This is both a pro and a con. But if you shatter it by accident, it comes with a warranty. This ring is also heavier than most rings, a pro for some, a con for others. Another con is that it is not hypoallergenic. This ring starts at about half price to precious metals, at approximately \$250.

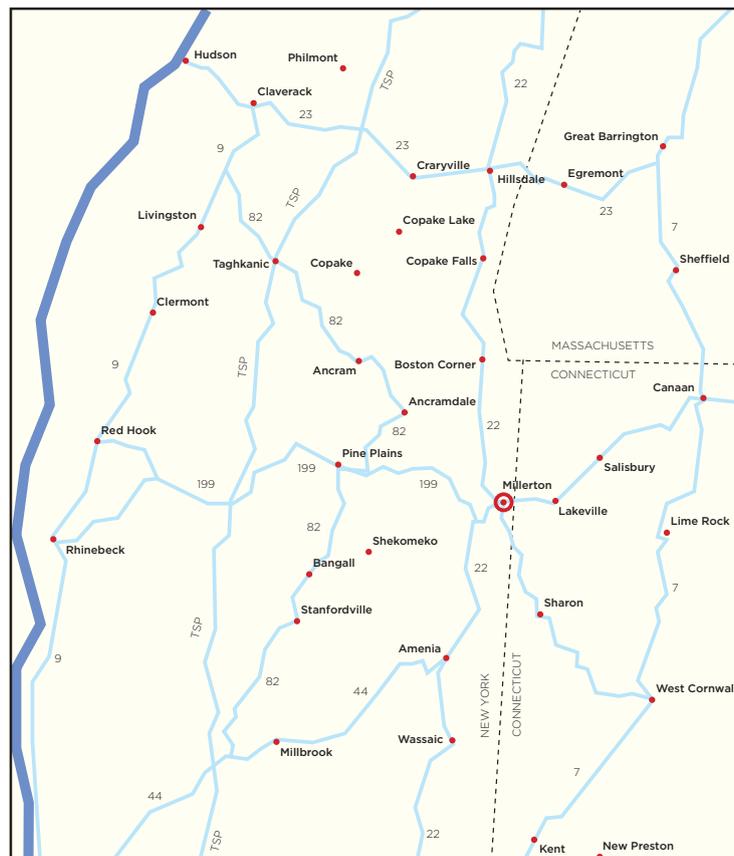
Cobalt: These rings are made from cobalt and other alloys, and are hypoallergenic. They are scratch resistant and won't chip. They are difficult to cut, compared with precious metal rings, which could be a con if you find yourself in a finger-threatening situation. They can be stretched slightly, but cannot be sized more than about a quarter size. They can look like white gold, but also come in black. Their price is a little more expensive than the Tungsten rings.

Titanium: Titanium rings are both light and fairly inexpensive and come in both grey and black. A 100% titanium ring cannot be cut, so remember those finger-threatening situations. But to aid in this, some titanium rings have aluminum added so that they can be cut, but those rings can be scratched (because of the aluminum). Just make sure to ask your jeweler which kind yours is at purchase. These rings cannot be sized, but are hypoallergenic. They are probably the most affordable, starting at around \$150.



For any additional questions, you can always call or stop by Elizabeth's Jewelry located at 110 Rt. 44 in Millerton, NY or (518) 789-4649.

MAIN STREET IS GROWING!



When our first issue came out in March of 2013, the magazine was 32 pages and we printed 3,000 copies. Since then we've grown in page count and quantity. We are now proud to announce that the magazine is growing. We've slowly and carefully increased our circulation, but we've also increased our distribution area. Just recently we expanded our distribution in Great Barrington to increase our presence there, and we also just started going into Hudson and New Preston.

But as you'll see from our complete distribution area on the map, we serve quite an area! The magazine features the tri-corner area: north from Hudson, Claverack and Hillsdale south through Copake and Ancramdale down Route 22 to Amenia and Millbrook, and down Route 82 from Pine Plains to Millbrook in New York; from Great Barrington through South Egremont and through Sheffield and into Canaan CT; further south through Lakeville and Sharon in Connecticut down to Kent and New Preston - and everything in between - with Millerton at it's center.

We thank all of our readers and hope that you enjoy your complimentary issue!



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