

# Spare me weddings and their many problems

If I never go to another wedding in my life, I'll feel that I have accomplished something. That's rather a negative approach, but it's how I feel about weddings.

It's not the wedding itself. They are harmless enough affairs, and give some people a chance to weep as copiously as they do at funerals. It's the getting ready for it.

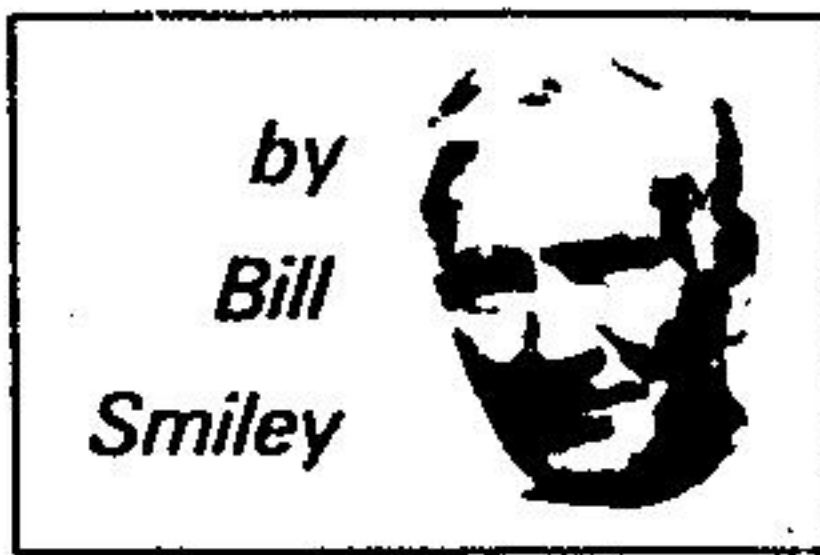
Long before the event, there are lengthy discussions about the wedding gift. In the good old days you could buy the happy couple an electric iron, or a toaster, or a pair of sheets: something running around 25 bucks.

Many a lucky couple wound up with four irons, six toasters, four roasting pans, and enough sheets to outfit a small hotel.

Not any more. The gift has to have class or glamor, it must be unusual, or striking. When you get into those adjectives, you're looking at \$30 for a small ornament to \$150 for something bizarre enough so that nobody else will duplicate it.

As a result, today's young couples sometimes emerge from the deluge of gifts with enough artsy stuff to set up a store, but without a frying pan, a casserole dish, or sheets and blankets. Art has become more important than utility.

The buying of the gift is put off and put off, because it's a terrible time of decision-making for the women of the couple invited to the nuptials. At last, just before the wedding, there is a desperate foray to the shops, a sinking feeling that there



by  
Bill  
Smiley

isn't a decent gift in town, and a last-minute snatch at something nobody would give to the Salvation Army.

Then there's the problem of what to wear. For the men, it's simple—put on your best suit, a clean shirt, a conservative tie, and shine your shoes.

For the woman, it's agony. What's the weather going to be like? I've seen women freezing to death in summer dresses at a June wedding and sweltering under a fur neck-piece at an October wedding.

Can I wear this dress? No, So-and-Sos will be there, and they saw me wearing it at the last wedding. But it's almost brand new, and I have the bag and shoes to match perfectly.

How about this one? No, it's a year out of style. This one? No, it's too dressy; I don't want to outshine the bride.

Now if I just had something to match those ivory shoes and purse, I'd be all set. But the only dress that will go with them has a red splotch on the shirt, where that boor spilled wine on me at the wine and cheese party.

Eventually, Momma goes out and buys a new dress to go with the shoes and purse. There goes another hundred bucks, or near enough.

When the wedding is out of town, things are even more complicated, and the debate rages on. Will Momma get dressed up at home, and drive a hundred miles to the wedding during which journey her costume becomes wrinkled and shabby-looking, and her make-up steadily deteriorates, until she arrives at the church looking like "an absolute hag?"

Out of the question. Should we get a hotel room near the site of the circus, so she can spend an hour getting ready before the service? Expensive, and hard to get. They're always booked to capacity when you call at the last minute. Besides, father can't stay overnight. He has to be at work in the morning, and doesn't relish getting up at five to drive home, change his duds, and get into harness.

How do we deliver the present? Too late to mail it; can't deliver it to the house because there won't be time. Can't lug it to the church, because sitting at a wedding service with an eight-foot square box is just not done. Just as awkward to take it to the reception. Can't leave it in the car. It might be stolen.

By this time husband feels like sending a wire saying we're both down with a small case of leprosy, and taking an axe to the wedding gift.

But the show must go on. Weddings are sacred occasions, and once you've accepted the invitation, it's like joining the

Foreign Legion. You can't opt out without dying in your boots.

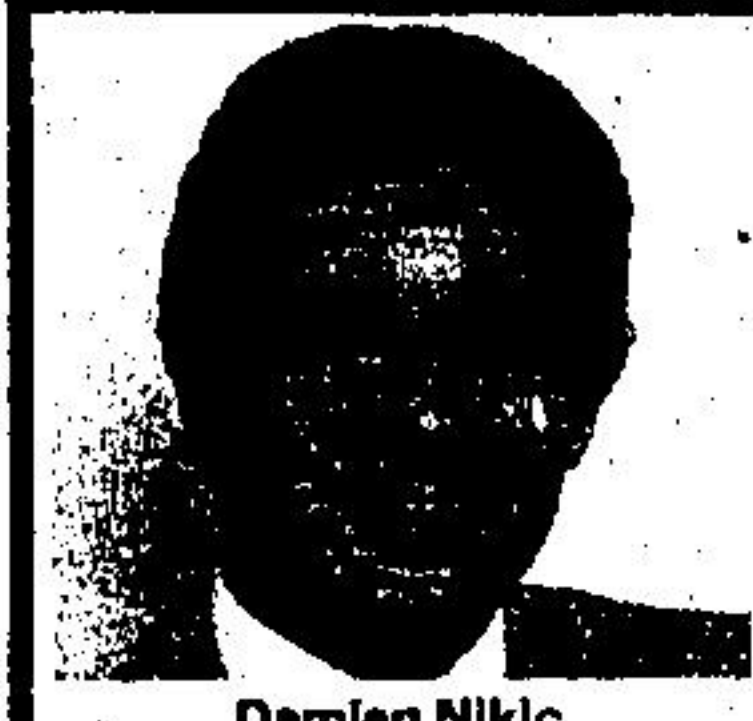
Somehow, things usually get sorted out, and the couple heading for the wedding drive off, the car full of very bad vibes for some time. The wife has forgotten her earrings, and they have to turn around and drive five miles home to get them. Or she's scuffed her shoe. Or it's either damp or windy and her hair-do is coming down. Husbands seethe like one of the lower levels of Dante's Inferno.

I can bear the wedding service, and even get a kick out of it, remembering how spartan ours was. But then comes the blasted reception, usually about 15 miles from the church, following a map that was not designed by a great cartographer. I've known people who wound up 30 miles away from the reception, because they took a wrong (or right) turn.

Why don't young people just go off and get married at the manse, with a couple of witnesses?

It would save their parents a great emotional and financial stress, and they'd be just as married. Everyone who is invited could send a cheque, and save them a lot of emotional and financial stress, and the near-breakup of marriages that have lasted for over three decades.

I'd welcome answers to this problem.



Damian Nikic

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