

# With This Ring, I Thee... Oh, Forget it!

I was playing golf last week with a friend from Toronto. When we were playing the eighteenth hole, he stated that he couldn't join me for a couple of cold ones in the clubhouse. "Pressure of time", he said. He told me that he had to return to The Big Smoke for...get this...A black tie reception, with abundant horsy doovers, followed by dancing. His financial advisor had given birth and, as a result, had decided to formalize her relationship and get married. This black tie event was in lieu of a standard wedding ceremony and reception.

Jeez. Weddings are bad enough, but here you have to rent a tuxedo. I'm told this is hugely expensive unless you already own one. Who owns a tuxedo? There is no supper. The guest have to fill up on phyllo pastry and cocktail weenies. Talk about heartburn. Then the guests have to dance. This incorporates almost everything I dislike in an event.

Full scale weddings are, of course, meant to put the guests through an ordeal that is shorter than marriage, but just as difficult. Weddings begin with an uncomfortable formal church ceremony. The loving couple usually have to be introduced to the minister as they've had no previous acquaintance, and the first they've ever been to the church since Sunday School was for the wedding rehearsal. This practice run is held so the happy couple can find their way through the unfamiliar mine field of the church.

"What's this?"

"Baptismal font."

"Oh, I thought it was for washing your face and hands. What's it for?"

The couple presumably chooses to marry in a church because that's the only place the minister will do it. The minister conducts the service only because his parishioners are so cheap this is the only way he can earn a few extra bucks to keep the wolf from the manse. The minister gets back at everyone though, because just when you think the interminable service with the schmaltzy vows and songs is over, he keeps everyone waiting for fifteen minutes while they sign stuff. I think this stuff is tax forms, but why must we all wait, squirming, ants in

our pants, bursting bladders, while they do it?

If the service runs the risk of being the least bit moving, there are two or three photographers running about to make certain sure we are distracted. I remember one wedding where the official photographer was the brides brother-in-law-to-be. He was some ripped, and staggered about the church filming the ceremony until he fell over backwards into a deep sleep while trying for a particularly artistic shot. His show was the highlight of the event for me. Sometimes, after the ceremony, the guests are kept away from the food and liquor while the loving couple drive several miles away to a scenic location for more pictures. The guests are expected to fend for themselves during this period. Let's face it, during a wedding the guests are there only so they will bring gifts. After that, it would be better if they didn't attend. The exception to this are friends of the bride and groom. They are young, so they drink, dance, and take pleasure in the whole affair.

I won't go into the agonies of the reception. The receiving line, the interminable amateur speechmaking, the ditzzy disc jockey who plays Glen Miller's "String of Pearls" and "That Old Time Rock & Roll" and (Arrghh) "The Chicken Dance" to keep the old folks happy. There's a limitless list, isn't there?

Don't get me wrong, I'm in favour of marriage, I just hate the ceremony. So listen up, prospective Mr. Groom and Miss Bride. Ask all the friends and acquaintances of your parents for a gift, but ask no one to the wedding except your own friends. Keep your parents friends away and try to keep your parents away. This is none of their business. Who's getting married anyway? If you feel compelled to have kissy-poo vows and a long wonderful service, serve drinks in the vestibule so only masochists need to stay and watch.

Have a great party and don't plan to leave on your honeymoon until at least a day has passed...no, not

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