

WEDDING & BRIDAL

Supplement

JUNE 20, 2015



Here Comes the Bride!

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Many women spend a lifetime dreaming about their wedding—the happiest and best moment of their life! However, there can be unexpected glitches, even for couples who plan carefully for the big day. Our special wedding supplement can help ensure that your wedding dreams will be as perfect as you have always imagined. From the Chronicle to you—much love and happiness on your special day! ☺

► COVER STORY, S3

Brides Beware When Purchasing Wedding Gowns

By Dennis Galolo

For women, their bridal gown is perhaps the most important dress they will ever wear. Brides-to-be spend hours poring over magazines and attending bridal expos, only to find that their dream wedding dress is way out of their price range—so they resort to the internet and are drawn to websites claiming to sell authentic, branded wedding gowns at a deep discount.

It's often difficult to detect the validity of an online retailer, since many of them utilize the same photographs that are found on official retailers' websites. For brides who risk purchasing

cheaper designer knock-offs online from unauthorized manufacturers, all too many of them end up with poorly-made gowns that do not even come close to resembling the designer dress advertised online.

According to the American Bridal and Prom Industry Association (ABPIA), Chinese web sites ship at least 600,000 knock off dresses each year into the U.S. ABPIA estimates \$300 million in lost revenue each year for the American special occasion industry. These unscrupulous web sites scam consumers by using the original designers copyrighted photos and trademarked names to mislead shoppers into thinking they are buying an authen-

tic design at an unbelievably discounted price.

In the world of fashion, counterfeit and copying have long been problematic and only increased with more customers making online purchases. Policing the actions of these China-based websites, located half a world away, is very difficult if not impossible. Legislation targeting design piracy has been enacted in Europe, India and Japan but little, if any, such protections have been made in the U.S. In 2010, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-New York) introduced the Innovative Design Protection and Piracy Prevention Act which would have provided very limited intellectual property protection to the most original design.

Fortunately, progress, albeit slowly, is being made. The ABPIA recently sued a number of online retailers



that sold counterfeit wedding gowns. A judge sided with the group, froze online payments and ordered more than 1,000 such websites to shut down. Brides who take a chance and order their gowns online all

too often learn that you simply can't fake fashion. The old adage rings true—"if the deal is too good to be true, it probably is." Our advice to brides? Better think twice before hitting "send" on that payment button. ☺

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ONLINE SCAMS TURN BRIDE'S DREAM DRESSES INTO NIGHTMARE KNOCKOFFS

By Edna Bautista, Ed.D., C.W.S.

Finding a cheaper way to buy a dream wedding dress can turn into a pricey nightmare. With the average cost of a gown (excluding the veil or headpiece and accessories) being \$1,053, according to the Association of Bridal Consultants, it's no wonder budget-conscious brides seek other sources than storefronts for their once-in-a-lifetime wedding wear.

There are literally hundreds of dubious websites that post stolen pictures of wedding gowns from the real designers' websites and claim that those custom-tailored dresses can be bought at deep discounts. Hopeful yet naïve brides fill out an online form, providing their measurements, mailing address and payment information, and then are disappointed when they receive a poor quality product, many of which are made in China under unethical work conditions.

Most times, the measurements are off and brides need to spend more money to get alterations done locally for their gowns to fit correctly. Also, the fabric and material are cheap and of low quality (for example, silk is substituted with polyester and plastic beads are used in place of crystals). The knockoff dress is stuffed into a small package and arrives extremely wrinkled, smelly, damaged, dirty and unfinished. The counterfeit couture does not even look like the one advertised on the website! And when brides try to contact customer service, they have difficulty getting refunds and are told that there is a no-return policy. Both money and time are wasted.

Crackdown on Counterfeit Couture

Dress designers and gown manufacturers also suffer from online scams.

"The domestic prom and bridal dress industry is increasingly under threat from Chinese dress manufacturers and websites that sell counterfeit goods directly to U.S. consumers. These operators frequently use marketing imagery

pirated from U.S. designers to advertise their products and portray them as authentic," said U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., who expressed his concern in a letter he wrote to the Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center in October 2014.

The issue goes beyond creative licenses and copyright infringements.

"Furthermore, when shipping the items to U.S. consumers, the Chinese firms often mark the package as a 'gift', skirting customs inspection and avoiding the payment of applicable import duties," he added.

Sen. Menendez, then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had proposed legislation to curb the flow of counterfeit wedding and prom dresses entering the United States. It is estimated that 700,000 fraudulent fashions come into the country every year, which costs U.S. shops over \$1 billion annually.

On May 14, 2015, the U.S. Senate passed the Trade Facilitation and Enforcement Act, which included the provision that he authored to help stem the tide of foreign counterfeit goods flooding the market and hurting businesses and consumers.

"My provision directs customs and border protection agents to stop and scrutinize packages that foreign counterfeiting operations are falsely labeling as 'gifts' to avoid inspection," he said.

While the legislation applies to the business trade, brides are advised to go through proper and legal channels to protect themselves from becoming victims of on-

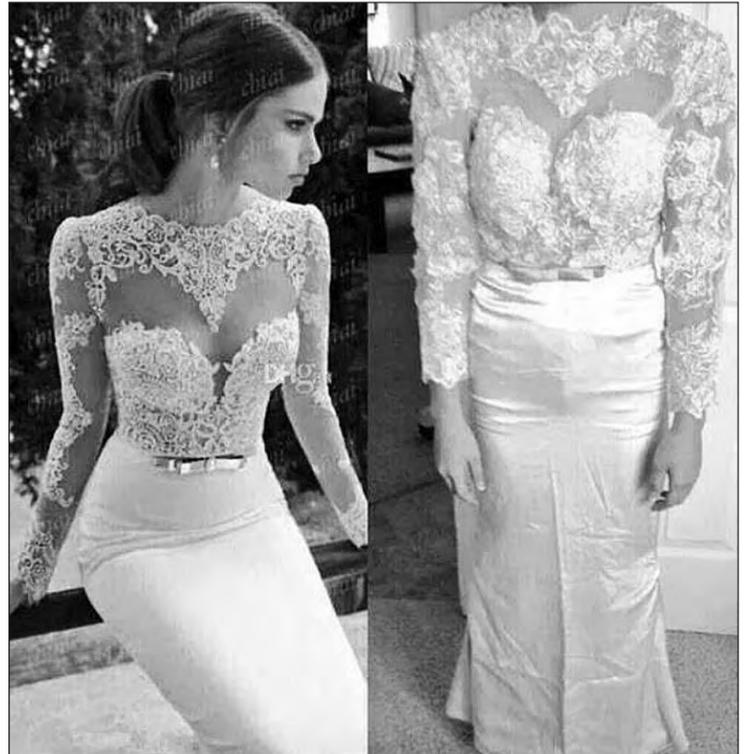
line scams.

Brides, Beware!

It has been said: "Caveat emptor (Latin for "Let the buyer beware."), "If it's too good to be true, it probably is!" and "You get what you pay for."

Here are some suggestions that brides can consider before purchasing a discounted dress online.

- Check whether the Internet company and local bridal shop have partnered with the real designer or manufacturer as an authorized dealer to sell wedding dresses on- and offline. Look for a logo that links back to the true source of the maker of the gowns.
- Be wary of websites, even though some look legitimate. Some photos have been cropped to remove the real designer's copyright symbol and watermark—a sign that the pictures are being used without permission from the original owner's website. Note any grammatical and spelling errors, which indicate bad English translations from a foreign company. Read the terms and conditions carefully, especially about any return, refund and exchange policies. Reputable websites should provide contact information, convenient customer service and feedback options.
- Search Sitejabber.com, a federally funded forum for consumer commentary about websites, for a record of scammers.



A dream dress ordered online can become a nightmare! See other photos of disastrous wedding and prom gown knockoffs at the Bridal Beware website at <http://bridalbeware.com/15-wedding-dresses-ordered-online-that-look-nothing-like-the-real-thing/>

Worse offenders of counterfeit couture and wedding gown knockoff websites are also listed at the Discount Dress Shop website at <http://www.discountdressshop.com/knock-off-dress-websites-to-avoid.html>.

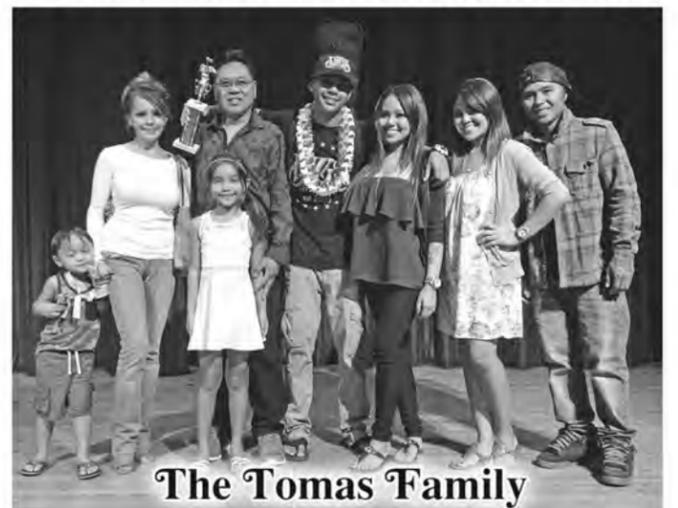
If the risks outweigh the benefits of buying online, brides can shop offline and still get their dream dress at a

discount.

The traditional method of physically going to a local bridal shop may be worth the price for peace of mind. There they can receive personal attention from a consultant who is trained to help brides find dresses (1) within their budgets (2) in the styles they like and (3) that flatter their figures. Accessories and alteration services are also

(continued on S4)

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COVER STORY

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

ONLINE SCAMS... (from page S3)

conveniently offered at most shops.

Brides can get good deals on dresses when stores have sales to move last season's inventory quickly and must clear racks to accommodate the arrival of newer fashions.

Sometimes special pricing on sample, model or display wedding gowns can be found at trunk shows and bridal fairs.

Used wedding dresses are big bargains from consignment shops and thrift stores. They can be cleaned thoroughly and redesigned and renewed into a cheap yet creatively chic gown.

For a one-of-a-kind dress design, hiring local tailors and dressmakers is another option. Whereas a bride might provide approximate or incorrect sizing

information when ordering online, a seamster/seamstress can take her measurements in person and make adjustments for a perfectly fitted wedding gown. A bride can choose and feel the fabric and material, check on progress and pay a comparative amount for a store-bought dress that still may need alterations. Before contracting sewing services, however, look at their portfolio photos and actual samples to see the quality of their work. Just like researching about wedding gown websites, ask for references, read reviews and check the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) for their reputation.

Fraudulent Fashion...For Better Or For Worse?

Not all brides have horror



Senator Robert Menendez pushes for legislation to crackdown on counterfeit couture shipped to the United States.

Photo used with permission from the Office of Sen. Menendez | <http://www.menendez.senate.gov>.

stories, though. Some had a better experience ordering their dresses online.

Lisa L., formerly of Kailua, admitted that she took a risk and bought two wedding gowns—a full tulle skirted

frock and an alternate slip-style sheath—from a Chinese website in 2008. She knew they wouldn't be exact replicas of the designer dresses she saw online. But she was satisfied with her purchases, espe-

cially with the \$150 total price tag.

"The bodice didn't fit right on the first dress so I had to make a few [sewing] adjustments myself. The second dress was brown instead of champagne [color] and it was a bit too tight so I ended up not wearing it on my wedding. It was cheap enough that I didn't need a second change of clothes after all. The wrinkles on both dresses needed to be steamed out, like all other wedding gowns. But my first dress photographed nicely and I don't think anyone could really notice the flaws unless they looked very closely," she recalled. "I guess I was one of the few lucky brides who got a decent dress online. Sorry to hear that others had a worse experience." ☹

WEDDING GUIDE

WHO'S PAYING FOR THE WEDDING?

(I ♥ WEDDINGS SERIES #1)

RAISING CHILDREN WITH HIGH FQ By Rose Fres Fausto

In some countries, the father of the bride pays for the wedding. That's the theme of a movie with the same title, which somehow popularized the use of wedding coordinators in the 1990s. Incidentally, the origi-

nal 1950s movie had Elizabeth Taylor as the daughter. Somehow, the financial burden is on the family of the bride. In some cultures the family of the bride still pays for the dowry.

Do you know that among Saint Nicolas' acts of generosity and Christmas traditions



such as putting socks by the fireplace and fantasy stories about Santa Claus passing through the chimney had something to do with dowry? Saint Nicholas was a 4th century saint who was a bishop of Myra, part of the modern day Turkey. It was told that he helped a poor man with three daughters who didn't have money to pay for their dowry. At that time, it was a big misfortune if you could not pay for your daughters' dowry because if they remain unmarried in a society that didn't have real earning jobs for women, they would most likely become prostitutes! To help the poor man, Nicholas gave purses of gold coins the night before each daughter came of age. He wanted to remain anonymous and he did it by throwing the

purses through doors and windows. The father wanted to find out who his benefactor was so on the night before his third daughter came of age, he planned to watch his doors and windows. Learning about this plan, Nicholas decided to drop the third bag down the chimney instead. Earlier that evening, the daughter had washed her stockings and hung them over the embers to dry. So Nicholas bag of gold fell into the stocking!

In the Philippines it's the family of the groom who usually shoulders the cost of the wedding. When we had one boy after another until they became three, our friends would tell us, "Even if you save on the cost of 18th birthday celebrations (which by the way are running wild these days costing as much as weddings!), you will have to pay for three weddings!"

To that we answered, "Oh, but the boys know that their Papa paid for our wedding and they should too." The big difference is, by the time your daughter turns 18, she would still be a student with no in-

come yet. But by the time your son gets married, he should already be earning well and ready to have a family.

My husband is the youngest in their family and his parents and an older brother thought that they would be paying for our wedding. When he announced that he was paying for our wedding, they were surprised.

Even amidst the rising cost of weddings these days, I still encourage parents to allow their children to pay for their own weddings. There are great benefits in doing this. Here are some of them.

1. They learn right at the start of their new life that they should only party as much as they can afford. Budget constraint is the best way to temper your ballooning wedding expenses. The invention of all these new wedding features and social media pressure are more than enough to lure a couple to burn their lifetime savings on one night of pageantry. So if the willing mom and dad are their back-up funders, the the cost may go haywire. The sad part here is if the parents are dipping into their retirement funds. So it's a

(continued on S6)

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From the Engagement to the Day-After Brunch, A Wedding Can Be One Perpetual Party

By Dr. Edna Bautista, C.W.S.

The aisle is a long journey throughout the wedding events timeline, as there are plenty of parties in between the engagement and the reception...and even a few functions thereafter! Each step is part of the rite of passage celebrating the bride and groom's transition from single to married.

Engagement Party

Pre-wedding parties begin with a public announcement that a proposal has been made and accepted. Originally, betrothals were an ancient business agreement between families looking to expand their properties (via daughters and their dowries). Romantic love was not required between the bride and groom.

Engagement parties evolved into high society celebrations and formal dinners, which are traditionally hosted by the bride's parents. Guests include the families of the bride and groom and their closest friends. The bride's father announces that his daughter soon will wed, introduces his future son-in-law and welcomes the other family as their kin.

Nowadays, other people, including the bride and groom, may host the engagement party. Whether simple or elaborate, the event is a time to celebrate and acknowledge the couple's official engagement status and gives both families and friends an opportunity to gather together and get to know each other better, especially since some of them might be working together during the wedding planning process. Congratulatory speeches and toasts are given to wish the couple a happy future together. Gifts are not customary but guests often give a small token to mark the occasion or money to help fund the wedding.

Bridal Shower

The bridal shower originated from ancient dowry practices in which the bride has a collection of items, such as bed linens, kitchen wares, clothes, etc., to bring into her new home. If the poor woman did not have an adequate amount of things, the groom and his family may reject her and her family's offerings. To avoid shame, the bride's friends generously gave her gifts to help her start off her marriage with household necessities.

By the turn of the 19th century, female friends would get together over brunch or lunch and make the gift-giving event more fun by playing games and wrapping presents in pretty parasols. When opened, the gifts would fall as if they were a shower of well wishes. Thus, the organizer of the bridal shower became the duty of her closest friend—the maid/matron of honor.

Mothers of wealthier brides would host "trousseau teas" at their homes. Ladies would come for teatime and tasty treats and spend the afternoon admiring the fancy clothes, fine china and beautiful linens displayed in the "hope chest" that has been prepared for the young wife-to-be. Bridal teas were an opportunity for rich families to show off some prized possessions, as their daughters were "worth" it.

Bridal showers have become elaborate events today. Traditional tea parties are still popular in some areas. But themes are selected to guide gift-giving ideas (cooking, travel, gardening, fashion, lingerie, hobbies, etc. or anything that reflects the bride's interests). Female guests gather at someone's home, backyard, garden, beach or eatery to honor the bride.

Grooms now are also getting showered with gifts along



with their brides in a joint event. A "co-ed" wedding shower for the couple is another opportunity for their families and closest friends to gather and give gifts to feather their newlywed nest. Even if the couple has been cohabiting, they probably have combined and mismatched "his and her" items and appreciate presents that are "ours" to begin their married life.

Bachelor/Bachelorette Party

While bridal and wedding showers are gift-giving occasions for helping to stock a couple's home, bachelor and bachelorette parties are soirees that say "so long to singlehood".

Bachelor parties (also known as "stag parties") have earned the reputation for raunchiness, with strippers, drinking, gambling and debauchery—activities wives would not permit once the bachelor becomes a husband. Because of the potential for hangovers, such parties are scheduled a week or two instead of the night before the wedding. Organized by the best man or brother(s), the groom goes out and has a good time with the guys—and that can include tamer gatherings, such as fishing weekends, sporting events, camping trips or other activities that he enjoys. At this time, the groom shows his appreciation to his buddies by giving them small presents, such as cufflinks, personalized beer mugs/flasks, pocket knives or watches, engraved

pens, tickets to movies or sporting events or a travel bag.

Bachelorette parties (also known as "stagette, doe or hen parties") are the female equivalent of bachelor parties, since the sexual revolution of the 1960s gave rise to gender equality events. Women can get just as wild at bachelorette parties where there might be drinking, dancing, male strippers and other risqué activities. The bride and her gang of girlfriends sometimes wear tiaras, feather boas and sashes to distinguish themselves while out on a night on the town.

Bridesmaids Brunch

A much milder alternative to the bachelorette party is the bridesmaids' brunch (or luncheon). Unlike a bridal shower

where guests give presents for the couple's home, this event is a simple "gathering of the girls", who are the bride's attendants, at which the bride gives a token of her appreciation, such as jewelry that the women can wear on the wedding day or other special gift, for supporting her throughout her single life and being there for her in her married life.

An extension of the bridesmaids' brunch/luncheon might include all-day shopping sprees, spa and beauty treatments, cooking or craft classes or weekend travel—activities that the bride's 'maids instead of her mate might enjoy doing together.

Rehearsal Dinner

A night or two before the wedding, the couple's family and entourage go to the church or ceremony site to rehearse the order of the day, practice their duties and positions in the processional/recessional, etc. A dinner follows at a nearby restaurant or home and is traditionally hosted by the groom's family, a sort of reciprocation for everything that the bride's family has done for the wedding preparations and for the hospitality they have shown to their son and family. As is cus-

(continued on S6)



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10 YEARS OF PHL WEDDING SUMMIT

MANILA, Philippines - Set to be the best mid-year bridal fair is Themes & Motifs' forthcoming Philippine Wedding Summit (PWS), now on its 10th year, on June 20 to 21 at the ground floor of SMX Convention Centre, Mall of Asia Complex.

Brides, grooms, their entourage and wedding suppliers may get free admission by pre-registering online and printing tickets through www.themesmotifs.com (The Wedding Ideas & Promos Portal) or getting free tickets from the Themes & Motifs showroom in Makati Shangri-La. Free tickets are

also available from participating exhibitors of the PWS' 10th anniversary. Big wonderful surprises await visitors.

A grand food tasting event will be presented by the revitalized team of top wedding banquet provider Hizon's Catering with its new culinary experts and creative stylemeister concocting the delectable wedding menus, coupled with the most tasteful of banquet set-ups to make any wedding unforgettable and every guest smiling with satisfied delight. They will join industry stalwarts Nice Print Photo, Marriott Hotel Manila and Goldenhills Jewelry in welcoming soon-to-wed couples to the event. Visitors can ex-



Philippine actor Joross Gamboa with wife Katz Saga

pect loads of surprises and cool promos at the different booths.

Marriott Hotel Manila will showcase its new grand ballroom, the biggest event hall of its kind in the Philippines.

Celebrity wedding photographer, Nice Print Photo, and wedding jeweler Goldenhills Jewelry, on the other hand, both Themes & Motifs' loyal major sponsors, will once again offer new promos for

their clients booking during the PWS' 10th anniversary. Nice Print Photo will have special discounts, plus a grand display of never-before-seen celebrity wedding photos while Goldenhills Jewelry will offer huge discounts on wedding and engagement rings on top of raffle prizes worth more than P150,000.

Master stylist Henry Pascual, official event stylist, will weave his magic and create event styling masterpiece to be showcased at the event.

Free career enhancement seminars will also be held for wedding suppliers. For details on the topics and speakers, visit www.themesmotifs.com. (www.philstar.com)

WHO'S PAYING... (from page S4)

win-win for both parents and children to allow the couple to pay for their own wedding.

2. He who pays rules! If your parents are the ones paying for your wedding, you can't stop them from making decisions on the wedding. And remember the wedding is mainly the bride's show. What if the future mom-in-law (who's paying) does not share the same taste with the bride? Tadan! Umpisa pa lang problema na agad! If this is not a compelling reason for you to pay for your own wedding, I don't know what is.

3. Wedding size control. Paying for your own wedding will put some brakes on the number of guests you (and the two sets of parents) can invite. However, for the wedding couple, don't forget that your par-

ents feel that this is also their party, so maybe you can come up with a compromise. In our case back in 1989, the additional guests of our parents (who were not in our list) but whom our parents really wanted to invite were also invited, but they shouldered the additional cost per head of their guests. Now if you really want a rather intimate affair (well, in the Philippines 100 guests is already intimate), book your venue right away. Get one that has a maximum capacity of what is acceptable to you.

4. You increase the chances of cash gifts. The most practical wedding gift is really cash. In 1989 maybe the budget of a lot of our guests was the cost of a punch bowl set! We received a lot of these and do you know after two and

a half decades we still have them? If they know that you are paying for your wedding (especially your close relatives), they are inclined to give you cash to help you recover for the huge spending. Moreover, like what happened to us, those who were expecting to help pay for the wedding gave us significant amounts, which were really a big help to a newly married couple. Now you may ask, what if you ask for those cash gifts right away so they can help you with your wedding expenses. I say no to that because I want you to stay within what you can afford. In fact, it's good to keep the couple guessing as to how much their parents will give them so that they will not spend what they have not yet received. I promise you, it feels so good to

still be liquid right after the wedding.

5. Paying for your wedding gives you a sense of pride. You will always bring this sense of pride even as you get older. You will tell your story to your own kids and you can rightfully preach them how to live within their means right from the very start.

It may not be easy to say no to your parents' offer to pay for your wedding, especially if you already had this grand wedding in your dreams back when you were still young. Well, most of the things we work hard for are the sweetest to have. But please, do not delay unnecessarily just because you can't afford Jason Magbanua to do your video. There is a right time for getting married, and it's usually not

just about the money. If money for a grand wedding is the only thing that's delaying you, think again. Adjust adjust adjust! Pick the one thing that really matters to you and that's what you spend on. The rest, you will be surprised, you can actually do without.

The boyfriend-girlfriend relationship also has its own gestation. It's very similar to nature's way of allowing a fruit to ripen. You can't have it too early that it may still be sour. Nor can you have it too late that it's already overripe or even rotten. You have to say I Do at the sweet spot: Not too young to be clueless of who you are. Not too old to be too set in your own ways, making it hard to allow another individual into your life. (www.philstar.com)

FROM THE ENGAGEMENT... (from page S5)

tomary during the dinner, toasts and short speeches of congratulations and best wishes are given in honor of the couple.

Wedding Reception + After Party

After a solemn ceremony, the reception is a time for feasting and fun. Whether formal or informal, large or small, this joyful occasion is supposedly the culmination of all previous parties related to the wedding. But some couples and their

friends want to extend the festivities a few hours longer, while still dressed in their best, and go to a bar, club or late-night eatery, and dance until dawn.

Day-After Wedding Brunch

Survivors of months-long nuptial planning and partying can celebrate the day after the wedding with an optional brunch (or luncheon). The bride's family usually hosts this event as a final farewell to their

just-married daughter, although another close relative or friend may do so. It is a casual affair where the entourage and remaining out-of-town guests may gather once more in honor of the couple, share their memories and digital photos of the night before and relax now that the festivities are over. If they newlyweds have not already gone on their honeymoon, they make their first appearance as husband and wife to open some of their gifts and personally

thank everyone for helping them throughout the wedding process.

Post-Honeymoon Party

The day-after wedding brunch could be delayed until after the couple returns from their honeymoon. Their families and friends (entourage) gather at the newlyweds' home where the new husband and wife host a casual get-together and share stories and pictures of their trip. Sometimes they

give souvenirs from their travel as an appreciation to those who have supported them in their wedding.

Others may host the post-honeymoon party on the couple's behalf as a way of welcoming them back home and congratulating them on their newly married status.

Suffering from post-"party" depression yet? There's always an anniversary or vow renewal to look forward to celebrating! ☺

MARRIAGE HIGHLIGHTS

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

50 Years and Counting—Secrets to a Lasting Marriage

By Chona Montesines-Sonido

Gold is the traditional gift for couples celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. But for three couples who have celebrated 50 years of wedded bliss, all the gold in the world could not replace the many unforgettable moments they have shared during these past five decades and longer.

Five decades is a long time for anything, much less to love someone, especially after the children and grandchildren have arrived, as well as experiencing the many peaks and valleys of life. But through it all, these couples have remained committed to each other, thanks in part to their family's support and the grace of God.

60 Years and Counting

Emilio and Lucia Bumanglag celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last May 12, 2015 during a joyous celebration at the Filipino Community Center. Lucia met Emilio during her senior year in high school. After graduation, she accepted his marriage proposal.

The Bumanglags have been blessed with five children—all girls (one has since died)—and seven grandchildren. They worked hard to raise their children the right way, which means loving God and valuing their education.

To keep the romance alive, the couple watches movies together, goes out to dinner several times a month, watches sports games particularly if their grandchildren are playing and spends quality family time at the beach and barbecues. At the same time, the Bumanglags also recognize the importance of giving each other enough personal space. Emilio goes out with his friends twice a month for a refreshing breather from home.

"It's good to have a little space once in a while," Lucia

says. "It helps to strengthen our relationship because we've learned to develop trust and respect for each other."

Looking back at their six decades of marriage, they are most proud of the success of their children and grandchildren and how all of their efforts to raise them in the right way have paid off.

"To see how they have grown into responsible adults with successful careers and also raising their own families makes us extremely proud," says Lucia. "We can now take a breath and rest after all the time we have spent nurturing and providing for their needs."

A Chance Meeting

William and Pat Tangonan met during elementary school in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte. He had moved to Bacarra to stay with an aunt and enrolled at the same school she attended. The two met one day while William and his cousin was riding a carabao. Pat threw stones at the animal, causing the boys to fall off.

Their cousins played the roles of "matchmakers" until Pat finally accepted him as her boyfriend. The couple lived together for nearly 10 years and had one child until William left for Hawaii in the early 1970s. He returned a few months later to marry her and brought her back with him to Hawaii.

Fifty years later, the Tangonans have raised four children (two boys and two girls) and six grandchildren (three boys and three girls). Early in their marriage, the couple traveled as much as possible, visiting the U.S. mainland, Europe and the Middle East.

To keep the romance alive, the couple spends evenings relaxing together. They also enjoy watching the same movies and television shows.

"We know that we'll be forever married to each other," says Pat. On a scale of 1 to 10,

she gave herself a 10 score for knowing her spouse and his tendencies. "We trust and we love each other very much. We know each other's likes and dislikes and each other's weaknesses. Being married for all these years has given us the advantage of knowing what the other is thinking or feeling."

In their 50 years of marriage, the Tangonans are proudest of having raised four children who are all professionals.

"We raised them to have faith and hold fast to certain values," Pat says. "They've passed the same values like respect to our grandchildren. When I look at my grandchildren, I see my own children and find comfort in knowing that they were raised properly, which is important especially in today's society."

Love Letters

A third couple which has celebrated nearly 50 years of wedded bliss is Domingo and Elisa Bautista, who attended and graduated from the same high school in the Philippines. They went their separate ways—Domingo joining the U.S. Navy and Elisa teaching at a nearby elementary school.

On his first visit to the Philippines, Domingo frequented the school where Elisa taught and started getting to know her family. When he returned to the U.S., he continued to write her.

"He continued to express his love through his letters while in the U.S. and finally I fell in love with him," says Elisa. "His perseverance and humility were qualities I was looking for. He possesses all those and more."

The Bautistas will celebrate their 50th anniversary on October 9th. They have two children and no grandchildren but a son-in-law.

To keep the romance alive, the couple emphasizes doing everyday little surprises, such as acts of kindness and affection. They also believe in giving each other enough personal space.



Emilio and Lucia Bumanglag with their daughters



William and Pat Tangonan

"Space is very important," says Elisa. "It gives us both a breather but also makes us realize how much we love being in the company of each other."

Looking back on the past nearly 50 years of being together, the Bautistas are proudest of their two chil-

dren's success as well as their individual accomplishments in their individual careers, especially when considering their humble beginnings in the Philippines.

"We are still doing well in our respective jobs and are

(continued on S10)

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B'ellagance Bridal & Gowns: Helping Brides Find the Perfect Wedding Dress

By Carlota Ader and Dennis Galolo

When it comes to weddings, perhaps the most crucial and daunting task for brides is finding that perfect gown to wear while walking down the aisle. The process can be overwhelming, especially when considering the design, cost and numerous other factors.

Brides who go with B'ellagance Bridal and Gowns will find that they are in good hands, thanks to owner Bella Tomas. Her bridal shop, located in Aiea at the Harbor Center, offers a full range of services for brides and bridesmaids, including bridal, pageant and prom gowns; alterations and accessories.

Tomas carries a complete line of gowns from popular vendors like Casablanca, Kenneth Winston, Jordan, Alfredo Angelo and many others. As the 1994 Mrs. Hawaii and former beauty pageant consultant, Tomas also offers a wealth of experience as well as a discerning eye for her clients.

For Tomas, who was born in Ilocos Norte in the Philip-

pines and moved to Hawaii at age 13, running her own wedding gown business was not exactly what she had in mind when she was a little girl. She instead dreamed of a glamorous career as a flight attendant.

Tomas' introduction to the wedding gown business came shortly after winning the 1994 Mrs. Hawaii Pageant and having the opportunity to represent Hawaii on the national stage. The pageants opened doors of opportunity.

"Afterwards, my friends advised me to use my pageant experience to open my own bridal shop and convinced me that it was a profitable venture," Tomas says.

A few years later in May 2001, B'ellagance Bridal and Gowns opened its doors for business. She initially focused on pageant gowns and then included gowns for proms and other formal events. She also specialized in children's formals, as well as Cinderella and Disney princess-type of outfits.

Tomas started small and over the years built up her business and a loyal customer base. Today, she has established her own brand and iden-



B'ellagance Bridal and Gown Shop in Aiea

tity in the highly-competitive local wedding business.

Say Yes to the Dress

Gowns at B'ellagance range between \$200 to \$2,500 but average about \$800. Tomas sells about 10 gowns a month. Business tends to pick up during the months of February through April when it is prom season.

Tomas recalls the very first wedding gown she sold, which was to the mother of a well-known local entertainer. The cost was about \$400.

She may make recommendations based on her wealth of pageant experience but her style is to ultimately let her clients decide.

"Although I know this business very well, a bride needs to feel comfortable making the final decision," Tomas says. "We don't push our recommendations like other places may do."

"When a bride finally finds the perfect wedding gown, you can see it in her eyes. It's a tremendous feeling not only for her, but for me as well."

For Tomas and her two full-time employees, the secret to success is honesty and offering a personalized touch for customers.

"It's all about integrity, hard work, perseverance and a willingness to put in a lot of time," she says. "If you have all of those, I think you can be successful in any business that you choose."

Not surprisingly, Tomas has received a 4.8 out of 5 star customer rating on her Facebook page. Comments left by customers include the following:

"Wonderful, friendly-family experience!! She even waited half a half hour after closing for my boy's tuxedo fitting, pick up and drop off. Prices are way less and same ones you would find at Sears. Will be back again!! Also have pretty dresses for the ladies."

"I want to thank Bella for helping me with my Alfredo Angelo wedding dress. She has a great selection and is very sweet and hospitable."

Career Woman

Juggling her career with the needs of her family and husband hasn't been easy for Tomas, who is a 1975 graduate of Roosevelt High School. She later attended Kapiolani Community College where she studied computer data processing.

Over the years, Tomas has

managed to successfully balance B'ellagance Bridal & Gowns with the demands of family life. She is still happily married to husband Rueben with whom she raised four children. They now have two grandchildren.

Tomas credits her faith in God which helps to keep her grounded.

"With God in my life, I am able to balance my life and face whatever challenges that come our way," she says. "I always also try to maintain a positive attitude."

Looking back, she also has no regrets about her career choice.

"I would be very happy to do this for another 20 years and to retire as a wedding gown consultant," she says. "I have no regrets. If I had to do this for another 20 years I would be very happy. In the beginning, I wondered if it was something that I wanted to do this for the rest of my life. But now, I have no regrets."

For aspiring young entrepreneurs, Tomas advises them to simply go for it.

"Follow your dreams and don't give up," she says. "Always be ready and willing to take on new challenges." ☺

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FORMAL GOWN AND ALOHA ATTIRE

By Chona Montesines-Sonido

The Philippine Medical Association of Hawaii (PMAH) and its members held their CME during the Memorial Day Weekend from May 23-24, 2015 at the Turtle Bay Resort on Oahu's beautiful North Shore. The event included dinner and entertainment on May 23, which showcased doctors and family members in fashion show/ musical

production.

Pictured here are several gowns that were presented during the fashion show, which can also be worn as evening attire for women or sisters of a bride's wedding party. Also pictured are formal Hawaiian attire for both men and women. The gowns and evening wear are also appropriate to wear at a Hawaiian wedding ceremony.



WEDDING PULSE

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

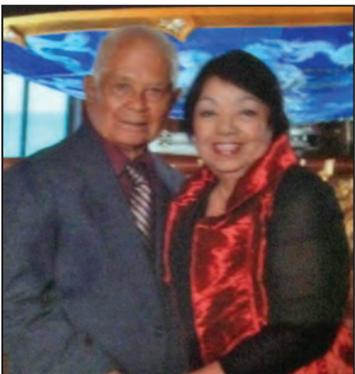
WHERE DID YOU SPEND YOUR HONEYMOON AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO SPEND IT THERE? **By Carlota Ader**



◀ We spent our honeymoon in 1986 on Kauai. We stayed at a beachside cottage that was very private and quiet. Kauai is the land of beautiful flowers where lovers can really spend their precious moments together.
– **Rolly and Josie Advincula**



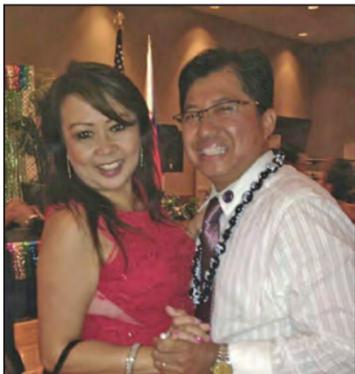
◀ We spent our honeymoon in Baguio City. National University was giving free accommodation at the Pines Hotel to engineering students or graduates who were getting married so I took advantage of that opportunity. We also went around the city since I don't always go there. We really enjoyed the gift from my alma mater.
– **Orlando and Edel Matias**



◀ We had our honeymoon at The Aristocrat in Baguio City. This was a wedding gift from our godparents and because we are very close from Baguio City, it gave us a chance to see Baguio and explore the scenery of the beautiful city. We haven't seen Baguio City for a long time.
– **Jeremiah and Priscilla Galanto**



◀ We spent our honeymoon in Tagaytay City because the weather is nice just like Baguio City. It's cool, refreshing and overlooks Taal Volcano.
– **Donnie and Mercy Mullins**



◀ Our first honeymoon was at the Turtle Bay Hilton on February 22, 1985. We decided to honeymoon at the Hilton because there was a "Fun Run Event" that we joined. It was called Chocolates & Champaign. It was sweet! We have been happily married for 30 years and blessed with one son and three daughters. And now, we have 2 grandsons and one on the way.
– **Froebel and Mercedes Garcia**



◀ We went to Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh) for our honeymoon a year after our wedding. We chose this location to honor his heritage, since we were married in Hawaii with my cultural traditions. This coming July 13, we will be married for 19 years.
– **Rick Parkinson and Edna Bautista**

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MARRIAGE HIGHLIGHTS... (from page S7)

glad that our work is fulfilling and meaningful," Elisa says. "We're looking forward to more years of good health and happy times with our family and friends. God has blessed us richly with His love and we're grateful for the life that we have."

Good Advice

All three couples agree that a happy, lasting marriage did not happen over night or by accident. It takes a lot of hard work.

For the Bautistas, patience is key.

"Patience helps you to overlook each other's weaknesses and enjoy each other's strengths," says Elisa Bautista. "Conflict is inevitable but it helps us to deal with important issues in our relationship."

She also mentioned the



Now and Then: Domingo and Elisa Bautista

need for a deep and abiding faith, mutual love and respect, sense of humor and undying commitment to each other.

What has helped the Bumanglags to weather the challenges of married life is good communication and the ability to understand each other's needs.

"Even at our age, we still ask each other if we need any-

thing when we go to the store," says Lucia Bumanglag. "If one of us has a problem, we discuss it. We don't hide things from each other and instead try to find a solution.

"If we are mad at each other for some silly reason, we try to resolve it before we go to bed at night so we can

(continued on S11)

Do's and Don't's for Wedding Guests

By Dr. Edna Bautista, C.W.S.

Being invited to a wedding is an honor since the couple and/or hosts consider you as someone important enough to share in an especially significant event and experience the marriage celebration with them. Whether you are part of the couple's close inner circle, a relative, friend, schoolmate, co-worker or an acquaintance through the family, there are certain social guidelines to follow in your role as a wedding guest. Below are basic do's and don't's.

The Invitation

- Do RSVP right away when you receive the wedding invitation so you don't forget to respond later. Do check your schedule, if you are able to attend. Then decide whether to accept with pleasure or decline with regrets, well before the deadline. The couple/hosts need to estimate early on how many guests are coming and give a final headcount to the caterer.
- Do let the couple/hosts know as soon as possible if your schedule has changed and you cannot attend the wedding after you sent your RSVP stating that you are going to the event. Then changes can be made to the headcount or people on the "alternate guest list" may be invited to take your place.
- Don't assume you can bring another wedding guest or your children. Do look at how many seats are re-



served for you on the response card or how the invitation envelope was addressed for clues. If it mentions you and "a guest", you are welcome to bring a date. If it includes the names of your children written under yours and your spouse's, you and your family can enjoy the wedding festivities all together.

- Don't feel offended if you weren't invited to the wedding. Perhaps the couple is having an intimate or small affair or simply cannot afford a big celebration. Do congratulate them nonetheless.

Gift-Giving Guidelines

- Don't feel obligated to give a gift. Couples shouldn't expect that from anyone, as their guests' presence is actually a present in itself! But it is now customary to give the couple something meaningful—a congratulatory card or a gift—to mark

the occasion. According to etiquette, guests have until the couple's first anniversary to give a gift, but it's best sooner than later although better later than never.

- Do find out where the couple is registered for gifts and purchase something for them that your budget allows. If giving money, it is safer to put a personal check than cash or a gift card in the envelope.
- Do consider dropping off the wedding gift at the couple's residence rather than bringing it to the reception. Although the pile of presents on the gift table is a showy symbol of bountifulness in the marriage, all the boxes, bags and cards still need to be transported somewhere afterwards for the couple to open later on and things may get lost or damaged in the move.
- Do feel free to follow-up a few months after the wedding if you have not re-

ceived a thank-you card yet from the couple to make sure they got your gift. Maybe they are still adjusting to married life after the honeymoon and have not finished writing their notes of gratitude to their generous guests.

Dress Code

- Don't wear white unless guests and the entourage are requested to follow a color theme. White is reserved specifically for the bride so she can be the bright focus on her big day.
- Do reconsider wearing that LBD (little black dress). Although it is now chic and acceptable to wear at weddings, imagine if all the other ladies attending wore black, which would make this joyous occasion look more like a funeral. Do choose an outfit in a happy hue.
- Don't wear anything too ostentatious. Be a classy—not trashy—and appropriately dressed wedding guest. If undecided what to wear, know that cultural clothing (barong tagalogs and Filipiniana attire or aloha shirts and Hawaiian

dresses) is always in style on our isles!

Ceremony

- Do attend the ceremony! Don't miss witnessing the couple profess their marriage vows. This is the whole reason for the ceremony; the reception is just half of the wedding.
- Don't be late, even if you think it's fashionable or because everyone else follows island time. Arrive early, be seated and wait patiently for the ceremony to begin. If you happen to be tardy because of traffic or other circumstances beyond your control, wait until after the procession and then find a seat quietly in the back.
- Don't disturb the bride, groom and their entourage in their private suites as they are busy getting dressed and preparing for the procession. You can greet the newlyweds later at the reception.
- Do silence your cell phone so the ringtone doesn't disrupt the dignity and solemnity of the ceremony.
- Do be courteous and respectful of religious traditions if the ceremony takes

(continued on S12)

MARRIAGE HIGHLIGHTS... (from page S7)

wake up fresh and happy in the morning."

For the Tangonans, giving each other enough personal space has been especially important.

"Sometimes, my husband will go home to his relatives in the Philippines and so do I on separate occasions," says Pat Tangonan. "The bonding

with our friends and relatives is sometimes needed. They say 'absence make the heart grow fonder.' When we get together after, even at our age now, it really makes our love grow. We trust each other, no matter the distance between us."

The Tangonans also agree that communication is impor-

tant, along with understanding, honesty and respect.

"We always talk before making any big decision," says Pat Tangonan. "Both parties should have equal say whether you disagree or not. We have to emulate these things for our children because these are good family values that we need to pass on to them." ☺

Wishing My Beloved Husband,
William, a Happy and
Memorable Father's Day!



Your Loving Wife,
Pat Tangonan

The Financial Challenge Intricacy of Weddings

MANNERS MATTER By Honey Jarque Loop | The Freeman

During the planning of a wedding, with all its excitement, details and often times stress, the subject of money can be delicate and sensitive. Whether it is the groom's family, the bride's parents, the couple themselves or a combination of the three who are providing the financing for the celebration, the issue involves much more than just how much to spend on decorations or entertainment.

Before anything, have an open discussion with your fiancé to determine your priorities for the wedding. Chances are you already have some idea of who will pay for your celebration, and creating a list will allow you to guide both your expectations and spending related to wedding funds.

Once the priorities are set, determine what the overall budget will be and who will be contributing. Tradition held specific roles and responsibilities for each of the parties in a wedding. These days many brides and grooms

are a bit older and more financially independent and they create their budget based upon their own unique needs and wishes.

The bride's family typically pays for her gown and accessories, the groom's wedding ring, invitations and all printed materials, floral arrangements and music for the ceremony and reception.

The groom's family is responsible for paying for the groom's attire, the reception and of course the honeymoon. If the groom were to host a luncheon or dinner for his attendants, his family would be responsible for those expenses as well.

It used to be the sweet custom in some places that the groom's family would pay for the bride's bouquet as well as the groom's attendants but today there is just one florist for the whole event who provides all the flowers for the ceremony, bouquets, baskets for flower girls and corsages for mothers and grandmothers. As with all the other wedding expenses today it is perfectly acceptable for each

couple to determine what works best for them.

It is however, a romantic idea to honor the lovely tradition that the groom's lapel flower is a blossom plucked from the bride's bouquet.

Hiring a wedding coordinator can be good for your budget as they can sometimes negotiate on your behalf and share their expertise regarding overall budgets and specific costs for things like venue rental, band, etc. A good planner can give you an educated estimate of what the whole event might cost.

Tipping is one of those subjects that tend to confuse everyone. Whom to tip and how much varies greatly according to the situation. The first thing you want to look at is the type of service that is being provided and whether a gratuity or service charge is already included.

A note of heartfelt thanks is one of the best gifts you can give any of your wedding providers. Just as with any thank-you note, try to recount a few specific things that made the day really special, and mention the names of any individuals who were particularly helpful.

(www.philstar.com) ☺



HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES ON WHOM TO TIP:

Banquet managers, captains, bartenders and wait staff

- You can calculate this at anywhere between 5 to 10 percent of the beverage bill.

Band, ceremony musicians and deejay.

- This varies as some bands include gratuity in their pricing. If you love the band or musicians you can tip individually or prepare one large amount and give it to the bandleader for distribution.

Hair and make-up professionals.

- A small gratuity is always appropriate for these beauty artists, whether you visit the salon or have them come to you on the big day.

NO NEED TO TIP:

Photographers, videographers, bakers and florists.

- These pros charge flat fees for their goods and services and don't generally expect tips. Of course you can tip them if you like and certainly they will appreciate it, but a heartfelt note of thanks and possibly a small gift is just fine.

Wedding coordinator.

- This will depend upon your arrangement. No gratuity is expected but gifts are appropriate if you feel your planner has gone above and beyond standard duties to make your day special.

DO'S & DON'T'S... (from page S11)

place in a house of worship. If unsure of the customs and practices, listen for instructions from the officiant, if you are eligible to participate, or follow the leads of other guests. "When in doubt, just do without" to prevent yourself from being in an embarrassing situation.

- Don't use flash photography as it is distracting and can ruin the shots of the official photographer and videographer. Do be discreet and stay in your seat if you must take photos. Don't be upset if you aren't allowed to take pictures at all; respect the rules.
- Do wait until after the bride and groom and their entourage have finished

their recessional march before leaving your seat. You might have to clear the area while they take formal photos. So don't feel slighted if you are ushered out and told to greet the newlyweds at the reception.

Reception

- Don't take up too much of the couple's time when you congratulate them at the reception. Do be considerate of other guests who also want to offer their best wishes to the newlyweds.
- Do sign the guest book so the couple/hosts know you came to celebrate on the wedding day and can send a thank-you note

later for your card/gift.

- Do mingle with other guests on your table, not just the people you already know. Don't dominate conversations. Do give everyone a chance to share how they know the bride and/or groom.
- Do be on your best behavior. Don't get drunk and disorderly.
- Do participate in the reception festivities—from the bouquet toss and garter throw, if you're single, to any cultural games and dancing, if you're comfortable about doing so.
- Do keep toasts and speeches short and sweet—and relevant (meaning no inside or dirty jokes), if asked to be

a presenter.

- Do bid farewell to the couple/hosts when leaving, even if you have to excuse yourself before the reception ends. Do thank them for inviting you to be a part of this special day. Congratulate the newlyweds once again and tell them you had a good time!

Other Reminders

- Don't publicly guess how long the marriage will last. Don't ask the couple when they will start having babies. Do keep other unfavorable opinions, comments and complaints about the bride's gown, bridesmaids' dresses, venue, reception food, decorations, music, etc. to yourself.

- Don't assume that you can post photos from the wedding on social media. Even if the couple is regularly active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., make sure it's okay with them to share their personal and private moments with the whole world (wide web). If they have already set up a special social media account or website for guests to upload wedding photos from their perspectives, then do participate on their behalf. Sometimes, however, digitally documenting the event play-by-play takes away from the present moment. Just enjoy the wedding in real time.
- Do have fun and be a good wedding guest! ☺

WEDDING GUIDE

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

How to Choose a Church for Your Wedding

HEART TO HEART By Ann Montemar-Oriundo

One of the most important decisions you will make for your wedding day will be where to hold your wedding ceremony. Although you will be primarily guided by your religious affiliation, your choice of a church will set the tone for the kind of wedding you desire. Will yours be an intimate wedding or a grand one? What kind of ambiance would you like you and your guests to experience? Such questions should come to mind before you make your choice. Here are some practical considerations before you decide.

Sentimental Value

Don't just choose a church, choose one, if possible, that has some sentimental value or meaning to you. This way, you will feel an extra

thrill from getting married not just in a "venue" but in a place that is special to you.

I've always loved my hometown of Nasugbu, Batangas, for it is where I grew up and lived all my life. I always knew that if ever I got married, it would no doubt be in Nasugbu. And in my town I had always loved Batulao in particular. With its high altitude, cool climes, and panoramic views, it is one of my favorite places there.

In 1997 when I was going to get married, I visited the Caleruega Retreat House in Batulao. One look at its Moorish-inspired Transfiguration Chapel atop a mountain that overlooks Nasugbu's lush greenery, and I knew I just had to get married there. I was even more thrilled when guests, majority of whom had visited Caleruega for the first time,



later told me that it was one place they would long remember because of its beautiful setting and scenery.

Location

A church must be readily accessible not just to you and your would-be groom but to majority of both your families and guests. If possible, the church must be easy to locate, have ample parking space, and is near the venue of your wedding reception. If your church happens to be far away, do include a map/directions to it in your invitation so that your guests won't get lost!

Ambiance

A day wedding has a different ambiance from a night

wedding. And even then, an early morning wedding would still differ from a late morning or afternoon wedding. Similarly, a formal wedding would exude a far different ambiance compared to a less formal one. In all cases, the choice of church will set the tone for the kind of wedding you desire. For example, the San Agustin Church, with its baroque design and ornate chandeliers, is a perfect venue for elegant weddings. In my case, I had wanted an early morning wedding since my theme was "spring", Caleruega's natural environs provided the ambiance I desired. If you want a simple, family-members-only wedding, then a simple chapel would be perfect.

Number Of Guests

This is a major consideration for choosing a church, especially if yours will be a big wedding. In the Philippines it is not uncommon to have as guests not only the couple's friends, but their respective parents' guests as well. More so if the parents are politicians or public figures with a whole battalion of compadres and comadres. Cathedrals or basilicas are suitable for such weddings. Make sure the church you choose can accommodate the number of guests in your list.

Budget

Many churches, especially the big ones, charge a fee for weddings. So check this out and compare it to the budget you're willing to allot for it. Keep in mind, too, that the bigger the church, the more flowers you may require, thus adding to your budget. There are churches which provide flowers for weddings, so you can consider if this will be more convenient for you than buying flowers yourselves. (www.philstar.com)

Bella Ortega Tomas Congratulations & Best Wishes for Another Successful Endeavor



Jenny Alconcel Quezon
United Filipino Council of Hawaii,
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Dwight, GJ & Carlota



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FUNDING, FINDING AND FITTING INTO YOUR WEDDING DRESS

By Kathleen Marie Felix-Santos

When I was four years old, my mom gave me a coloring story-book of Prince Charles and Princess Diana's Royal Wedding. I enjoyed reading and coloring the pages so much and dreamed that one day, I too shall find my own prince and wear a beautiful big princess gown when I get married.

I was a flower girl a number of times at weddings of my aunts and uncles. I would always enjoy being a flower girl. Unlike other little girls who would complain about stuffy gowns and itchy petticoats, I would refuse to remove my gown. So naturally, one of my favorite topics when it comes to wedding planning is dress shopping. It's so easy to get lost in wedding gown trends and labels. Luckily, I have a few tips to make dress shopping a fun experience. Remember, dress shopping isn't only about finding your dream dress. It also involves being able to pay for it and looking your best in it.

Funding your dress

A few years ago, even before our boyfriends proposed, my best friend/Maid-of-Honor, Janna and I would talk about our dream wedding suppliers, including gown designers. Our then boyfriends, Joey and Yaw (Joey is now my husband and Yaw is now Janna's fiancé!) would exchange worried looks and always go "What? You're willing to pay that amount for a dress you're only going to wear once?"

So Janna and I decided that we should start saving for our own dream gowns. Saving for my wedding gown way before getting engaged was one of the best decisions I ever made because when it was time to shop for my dress, it felt good that I was going to be able to call the shots. So my tip is to start saving for your dress early. I know it may sound funny or even assuming because you may not

even be engaged right now, but trust me, you will feel a sense of freedom when your own wedding dress shopping day comes and you know that you have enough money set aside for the gown that you want.

To start your dress fund, set a target amount by doing some research on the price points of the styles or the designer that you like. Remember to add 10% to this amount as wedding costs tend to increase every year. Set an end date and break down the total amount to make the goal less intimidating. I can tell you that reaching your goal amount would take a lot of discipline, creativity, and patience – things that you would also need when planning your wedding and starting your married life.

Finding your dress

When Joey proposed, I got really excited because after years of saving, I would finally get to wear my dream wedding gown! After reserving our church and reception venue, I booked an appointment at a bridal salon. I tried A-line and ball gowns and loved them all! Of course, my favorite was the gown with the biggest skirt. It fit so well! I was finally going to be able to buy my dream gown that I saved for for 3 years. But I was also having second thoughts. The price was really expensive for a single-use dress, never mind that it was a European brand. I knew that with the same amount of money, I could find a local designer who would be able to make not only my dress, but also that of my mom, my mother-in-law, and entourage. This is another reason why I highly recommend saving for your dress early because it makes you more



Top left: Katzi as flower girl. Top right: Katzi with mom Dada. Bottom: The bride and groom with their entourage

conscious of your spending since you will be using money that took you years to save.

Luckily, my chief bridesmaid, Dyan suggested her wedding gown designer – Mila Santiago-De Leon. I was a bridesmaid at Dyan's wedding and I remember really enjoying the designing and fitting experience at Tita Mila's shop. So I met with Tita Mila and we discussed my concerns about my body (huge hips!) and she made suggestions on what she thought would look good on me. Because of the personal touch, I was convinced that I had to go with Tita Mila. I was so happy that the mommies and

my entourage wouldn't have to worry about their gowns either. I showed Tita Mila my pegs for the gowns – sleek and clean so all the female entourage had to do was show up at the shop for their fittings and Tita Mila would come up with a design that best suits their body types. I also read somewhere that dressing your entourage in different styles in the same color fabric makes them feel individually special. Of course, although the wedding is supposed to be the bride's day, I also wanted to honor my friends and sisters-in-law by making them feel beautiful in their gowns. No hideous, embarrassing entourage gowns were allowed at my wedding.

I really enjoyed my dress fittings so I'm sharing with you 3 tips to make finding your dress a painless process:

1. **Bring a trusted advisor.** In my case, I brought my mom. My mom always has my best interest at heart and would tell me honestly if I looked bad in a certain dress. During my

fittings she would make comments and suggestions which helped make my gown prettier.

2. **Research the kindest cut for your frame.** There are a lot of fashion resources online which can help you get an idea of what would fit and flatter you best. Narrowing down your choices ahead of time will make decision-making easier.
3. **Listen to your designer (or shop assistant if you're buying off-the-rack).** Your designer is trained to dress various body types and make recommendations on the fabric, shades, beadwork and lace types based on your wedding venue, time and season. Listen to her! Incidentally, listening is also important in a successful marriage.

Fitting into your dress

While Tita Mila and her team were busy creating my dream wedding gown, I had another thing to think about and that was getting in shape for the big day. Even now at 30, I am still fascinated by British Royalty. So of course, I also look to Kate Middleton for style inspiration. In fact, I even tried the diet she followed to prepare for her own wedding a few years ago. While it showed some results, I wasn't really able to sustain it because it was a high-protein diet. So I just focused on eating healthy. I stopped eating potato chips and fried dishes. I also tried to be more active by walking more. In less than 5 months, I lost 10 pounds and I did it without starving myself. I would always eat 3 full meals a day and have snacks in between but the difference was that I made better food choices. Steamed instead of fried, fish instead of beef, and non-fat yoghurt instead of gelato.

Aside from achieving my goal weight, I also felt more

(continued on S15)



The details of the wedding gown

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

Building A Family: Scary.Crazy.Beautiful

By Seneca Moraleda-Puguan

Life was very different, then. I used to wake up anytime I want. I didn't care missing breakfast and have fast food for brunch or just have canned foods and pancit canton. I would spend the weekends in a beach, mall or wherever I liked, and go to parties and gimmicks without having to ask permission from anyone. I could buy anything I want, at any cost.

My time, my money, my resources were all mine. Decisions were mine to make.

Then suddenly, things changed...when I got married and settled down.

Now, I need to wake up to prepare breakfast for my husband (which is very challenging for me because I am not a morning person). I have to think what food to prepare for lunch and for dinner (which I am still struggling with but thanks to Google for the recipes). And I can't just go anywhere without letting my husband know.

My time, my money, my resources and my decisions do not belong to me anymore. This began the moment I vowed to my husband that the two of us will become one, the very day I said that I am his and he is mine.

What used to be ME and I became WE and US.

What was MINE is now OURS.

I'd be honest. Entering marriage was a scary thing. I felt that I'm going to lose my-

self. But as I lived every single day of the past one year and four months with my husband, as I served and thought about him more than myself, as I humbled myself and laid my life for my partner...I began to know more about myself.

I am a person capable of being responsible and I am able to love selflessly. Losing myself for the man I chose to spend the rest of my life with made me find myself more, and discover who I am and what I can become. But this is just the beginning.

Very soon, I am about to become a mother. I am now five months pregnant with our first child, and I can't even begin to imagine the challenges and responsibilities that motherhood brings. Scary and crazy as it may seem, I believe it's going to be one of the most exciting seasons in my life.

I have just begun building a family with my husband. Looking at the family I come from and hearing so many stories, I know that it's not easy. I am realizing it everyday. But it's beautiful, one of the most beautiful things that can ever happen in one's life.

I am not an expert when it comes to topics such as this, especially coming from an imperfect and broken family, but let me share with you some realizations I have as a new wife and a mother-to-be.

You can never be too ready when it comes to starting a family.

My husband and I didn't



Seneca (shown with her husband John Marc) is expecting her first child in October 2015

have millions when we decided to get married. In fact, he was just (and still is) a PhD student in Korea, surviving through scholarship. I, on the other hand, was preparing to become a missionary and was being supported by generous partners. But God honored our faith and He provided. He provides every single day. Of course, it's best and ideal to be financially stable or have enough savings before settling down but don't let money hinder you from starting a family. God provides.

I'm quite embarrassed to say this but I didn't know how to cook when I married. I only knew the basics like cooking rice and frying. But with the help of my patient husband and Google, and motivated by my love for him, I am now able to cook different Filipino viands we love like sinigang, tinola, pinakbet and ginisa. I am still struggling and I still have much to learn, but I experience God's grace and help as I fulfill the calling of a wife. Indeed, there's grace in building a family.

My spouse is my priority.

I remember what our pas-

tor said during our wedding ceremony. My husband is my priority, and vice versa. Life's busyness can steal away our time from each other. But knowing that we are each other's priority, we fight for time to spend with

each other. We make sure we get to have romantic dates- a simple dinner, movie night, a walk in the park or just cuddling and talking about each other's day before bedtime. Yes, prioritizing each other is a fight because we have a tendency to be consumed with work and life brings many distractions. With a child on the way, it's going to be a tougher fight!

As a wife, I am called to submit to my husband who is the leader of the family.

The stubborn and independent me wants to do things out of my own will and my selfish desires. But at the end of the day, I have to remember the vow I uttered at the altar, that I will partner with him in everything I do and that we are in this together. I honor him by respecting his decisions knowing that he knows what's

best for us. I am just grateful that I have a husband who always considers my feelings and my desires.

There are so many lessons that I am learning everyday that I want to share but it all boils down to this. God designed marriage and family. He has brought two people with different personalities, preferences, abilities and beliefs together and unites them as one. Knowing that He is the author of love and of relationships, my husband and I make Jesus as the foundation of our marriage and our family. Every aspect of our lives - our finances, our careers, our dreams and our hopes as a couple are all submitted to His lordship. We are able to love each other despite our flaws and imperfections because we are loved by Him. No matter how difficult life is, no matter what challenges we face, and no matter what life brings to test our marriage, with God as the center, we know that we will become stronger as time passes by. He is the third strand in our relationship, and according to the Bible, "a cord of three strands is not easily broken."

Marrying and building a family can be scary, it sure is crazy but it's definitely beautiful. So c'mon, take the plunge. ☺

FUNDING... (from page S14)

energized which was really helpful especially a month before my wedding when I would stay up late planning our program, laying out our missalette, finalizing seat plans and driving through Metro Manila traffic to make it to back-to-back supplier meetings and fittings.

On my wedding day, I felt happy and confident in my wedding dress. I also felt proud

that I was able to achieve my goal weight. My only hope is that I will be able to sustain my healthy diet. Staying fit means I will have more spirit and liveliness to share with my husband and this can bring a new sense of vitality to our relationship. And also, my godmother (both in baptism and wedding), the FQ Mom issued a challenge during her speech at my wedding reception - for me to still fit into my wedding dress 25

years from my wedding day (like she did!) for Joey's and my Silver Wedding Anniversary renewal of vows! Needless to say, Challenge Accepted.

I hope my tips help. In the end, what's important is that you feel comfortable that the dress fits both your body and budget perfectly, making you feel more beautiful than you've ever felt before.

(www.philstar.com) ☺

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WEDDING DESTINATIONS

WEDDING & BRIDAL SUPPLEMENT 2015

WEDDINGS AT THE ECOLOGICAL FRONTIER OF THE PHILIPPINES

MANILA, Philippines - Couples seeking solemnity and intimacy with their guests are likely to select El Nido Resorts as the stage for their nuptials, according to Joey Bernardino, director of sales and marketing. Known as the last ecological frontier of the Philippines, Bacuit Bay offers dramatic rock formations that date back to ancient times, marine sanctuaries globally distinguished by their rich biodiversity, and lush forests teeming with wild life. Three of the four El Nido Resorts – namely Lagen, Miniloc and Pangulasian which are named after the islands that host them – are located here. The fourth resort, Apulit, is in the neighboring municipality of Taytay.

In the past few years, the resorts have been winning prestigious global awards including the World Travel and Tourism Council's Tourism for Tomorrow Awards for the community benefits category. El Nido Resorts' increasing international popularity has been accompanied by more bookings for



El Nido Resorts in Bacuit Bay, Palawan | Pat Dy

destination weddings – with Europeans and Australians leading the list of couples tying the knot there. More local residents, who are not comfortable with the stares of gawkers and passersby who would otherwise be present in other Philippine beach destinations, are also booking their weddings at the exclusive island resorts.

The Lagen oratory chapel, a white sand cove carved out of a limestone cliff set up with benches, and other secluded beaches with memorable views over calm waters have been earmarked as venues for the wedding ceremony. The Lagen oratory is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.

From the chapel and other venues, as many as 200 guests are usually treated to a sunset cruise then ferried to a nearby beach club dotted with sand lanterns for an al fresco evening reception – attractions included in the wedding package. The couple also have the option of having their reception in one of the island clubhouses.

The El Nido Resorts' team has helped many couples plan all the details that add up to a memorable wedding. Part of the wedding package includes a bridal bouquet, two-tier wedding cake, floral set up for the ceremony and even assisting the bride and groom suppliers who operate in this part of



Palawan's limestone cliffs make for a dramatic backdrop to a wedding ceremony. |Richard Oppusunggo



The Lagen oratory chapel. | Pat Dy

Palawan.

“The islands of El Nido Resorts invite you to kick off your shoes, feel the sand and enjoy the moment in this piece of paradise,” says Bernardino. In this island setting, bride and groom and

their guests are set up to relax, bring down their guard and just be themselves. “It’s a great formula for an intimate and enjoyable wedding – which is what the Intals and many other couples have experienced.” (www.philstar.com)

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