

# THE NEW WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHERS HANDBOOK

**JULY 2005 - First Edition – This is Part One of Four Parts  
and they will follow in due time.**

## BRIDEZILLA

“The Devil Wore Black and White...” written in 1975 by Al Jacobson

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the WEDDING Handbook for new photographers. Together we will embark on a new path. I will be your guide. After shooting 400 or more weddings I am a survivor. Hopefully you will made it through your first. Many don't. This book will hopefully give you the savvy to survive. It's a lot different being the second shooter, the pressures not on you. It's easier doing it for nothing for a friend, again the pressures not on you. So why the high failure rate in this business... it's the pressure, it's a lot different when it's on you.

And it's unpredictable. That's the rub, you can't see a disaster. The trick in this business is always being on your toes. Like flying a Learjet, you have to be forty miles ahead of what you are doing.

I will generously share all that knowledge I have gained through the years with you in a few hundred thousand words and hopefully you will have it all absorbed by tomorrow night when you go out on your own. This is all about you and I, I made the mistakes, and you avoid them. That's what teaching is all about. I aim to toughen you. This is BOOT Camp, Part one of four.

I will try to guide you through the Wedding Process. The latest cool word in our lexicon is PROCESS. As a wedding photographer you are part of a process. The word processional comes from the word process. The processional for the Bride is the grand entrance of all the participants in the ceremony. It's generally when the mother of the Brides heart is the second loudest in the church. The loudest will be yours. Fear does that. The mothers fear is losing a daughter who now has a new advisor, her husband. Your fear is from all the things that can change as soon as the music starts.

Al Jacobson

# WEDDINGS ARE FUN....

Weddings are fun occasions to attend and participate in as a guest. All that food, drink, the friendly people, the fun, music, games and plenty of “love is in the air”.

Then the alarm goes off and you wake up. “Today I have to shoot and record a Wedding”. Shooting a wedding can be quite a challenge to the new photographer and very intimidating if you haven’t actually had training in this area. Add to that, it can be financially self destructive if you don’t get it right. We do live in a sewer, that’s spelled SUE-ER society.

And I guarantee you, little has to do with being able to take pictures. Most of the automated cameras today can take pictures. But when your weddings look like snapshots, ultimately you have failed the test. The attitude of “winging it” can be very self destructive because St. Murphy-Lawes, the patron Saint of Photographers is generally not on your side.

But “no fear” and “winging it” are all too common these days with the advent of digital. Putting your hand in fire if you didn’t know what fire was, would be very common occurrence. But as soon as a few of those Neanderthals got a few burned hands, a lesson was learned, and the caveman had it down pat. That’s why he made the women do the cooking. No more burnt hands. So he went on to Saber-tooth tigers and Mastodons. More learning lessons...from the survivors.

This site is dedicated for beginning Wedding Photographers, those who have been asked or have been chosen to do a Wedding. This is not “putting down” newcomers to the game. On the contraire, there are many tips here for the newcomer. It’s a big undertaking and you might as well know what you are getting into.

It’s also for Brides and Grooms who also might be less knowledgeable on how to select a photographer. Sometimes they run in the same circles and when they meet, it’s called a “impending crash”. When they agree to do it, it’s called “an impending disaster”.

The Bride is challenging the Photographer to do a very difficult job without regard for his or her qualifications, knowledge or experience on the one single most important day in a lifetime.

The photographer might be accepting the challenge without a clue as to what really is needed both in equipment, style, qualifications and experience. Sort of like a tap dancer crossing a minefield and wondering if he wore the right shoes. Ninety percent of the new photographers I see on the wedding forums asking for advice are wondering more about the shoes and haven’t got a clue about what’s happening at a wedding.

If you desire to become a professional in this arena the key is experience and self- confidence. Experience is gained by reading, observing, attending, inquiring, and eventually working with an established professional.

### **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JACOBS....**

Never shoot a wedding without a backup. If this is just a one shot experience, I wish you the best of luck. On that note, ever wonder why most big game rifles in Africa are what we call “doubles”? First the doubles gun is two chambers, separate triggers, in essence, redundancy and simplicity. No clips or stack feed hang-ups to shut this baby down. Secondly it’s a doubles gun, a miss is backed up by the second shot. This prevents, providing the user is qualified to shoot it, from being eaten or mangled by what YOU intended to eat or mangle. Thus, I made this site to make you think and give you some clues as to what to do so that you can pull it off. It’s no fun being a mere burp in a Lions belly.

### **QUALITIES of a GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER**

What does it take to be good in this field? Here is just a partial list...

**CONFIDENCE - YOUR TRAINING** - is common sense and that comes from good preparation. You won’t have time to think while you are shooting. I call it left brain-right brain thinking. Everything about a wedding is timed and you have to learn to work in these profiles. While the right half of the brain is automatically doing things repetitively, the left half is searching for the picture.

**INTUITION- THE HUNTER** - Wedding photography is almost as, if not more intuitive than sports photography. In some cases more so. Sports are played on a designated field within certain boundaries. There are no boundaries at a Wedding. The individuals in sports all adhere (sometimes) to a given set of rules, work for a team, management driven and can be disciplined. At a wedding, emotions and alcohol generally fan the flames. Both work within time constraints. In sports it’s enforced, at a wedding it’s called “chaos”.

**PREPARATION - The BOYSCOUT** - On the other hand much of what goes on is repetitive, generally following carefully chosen small scenarios that we have all become familiar with. Till something falls out of sequence or changes. All I’m telling you is you must know where you are, to know where you are going. You must carefully ascertain your own strengths and weaknesses. Saying no or bowing out is a good choice and a smart one for some.

**BUSINESS AWARENESS** - You need business savvy, since the modern wedding involves money, sometimes lots of it, we have to protect ourselves and our clients. You have stepped over

the line from amateur to professional when you write the first receipt. It's the difference between a successful hobby and a successful business. To all of us our hobbies are almost always successful. A successful business requires work. Work is sometimes defined as doing what you have to do and not what you want to do when you have to do it. If you take the time to think this out and be honest with yourself, you make the call and if you decide to go at it, I wish you well.

**PRO'S and AMATEURS:** There are two types of shooters. They are Professional and Amateur. In every sport there is a definitive line between PRO and Amateur and in the legal aspect of the Photography business accepting money is the line. Even as an amateur if you are shooting for film and print expense only, you have entered into a legal agreement. The rest of the accepted definition of PRO is explained below. It is by no means a legal version. That is why there is an institution in the States called the "small claims court". I will almost guarantee that if the claimant makes it to court the photographer or business owner will lose. In a juried environment, it will get worse. She could be the BRIDE FROM HELL but one tear in a courtroom and you lose.

**SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A PRO?** Professionalism is the demeanor of a person, his or her moral and legal responsibility to perform services as required. One that derives the bulk of his or her income through his or her photographic pursuits and may be described as totally eschewed in the game. That means qualified, licensed, and skilled. This has nothing to do with full time or part time shooting. But it's obvious the larger or more expensive clientele and weddings require a lot more personal attention. Getting there with too-little too late is as bad as not getting there at all."

**ACCREDITATION:** Accredited does not mean you have room on your credit card. It means certain tasks you have performed place you on a level with your peers. You can gain accreditation by joining national associations with stringent mail in photos for critique. They have juried critiques, required attendance at meetings, classes etc., and their recommendation for membership by their members and boards. There are several national legitimate organizations. And there are the others.

**The MAIL ORDER ACCREDITATION:** Bridal Services, Welcome Wagons, Camera Clubs and BBB's There are organizations who welcome members providing they remember to send in their dues on time. This gets you the membership card, stickers for your car, and secret decoder ring. Many believe in joining other organizations such as the Better Business Bureau, or Chamber of Commerce make them accredited. Join them to be helpful to your community.

Some think you are professional by your choice of equipment brand. Those are the ones proudly displaying Nikon and Canon Professional Services logos on their business cards. You might as

well put HANES on the card too. After all, it means you selected one of the best brands of underwear in the country and all that other stuff is a cover-up anyway.

FINANCIALLY AWARE - Common sense tell us it's about levels. It's critical to a PRO. In most of the Western hemisphere, Saturday is the preferred wedding day. There are only 52 of them in a year. If you are a budget shooter and only charge \$200.00 a wedding and offer a CD-Rom, you have created a \$10,000 dollar a year business. If you do \$2000.00 dollar weddings you have a \$100,000 dollar a year business. \$3000.00 dollars a Wedding and you are at 150,000 dollars a year.

#### TECHNIQUE - GEARHEADS PAY ATTENTION!

There will be lots more on this subject but briefly a few points.

1- If you haven't a clue as to what happens to bridal dresses with high Rayon or shiny Silk content or don't know how to meter a black tuxedo, learn quick.

2- Equipment Interface, knowing it inside out, almost by reflex. Simply put you don't have the time to drag out the book at a Wedding. No time outs in this game.

3- Is your gear suitable for the job at hand. That 50mm lens won't work from the back of a 200 foot Catholic Church. Didn't think of that? Neither will a 300 if it's a F5.6, has no image stabilization, and no FLASH allowed as is the case with most Catholic Churches.

4- Do you have backups? Failures are not uncommon and there are things you can do to prevent double trouble. St. Murphy is the patron Saint of all Photographers. He wrote many Laws. Like, if it can break, sooner or later IT WILL BREAK.

5- Too much confidence. Many, too many novices think they can make it on very limited equipment. A picture can be taken with almost any camera, lens and film. Wrong. Snapshots can be taken with any simple camera. Too often I hear or see in newsgroups "I'm shooting my first wedding in a week and what do I need". I have a Blah-blah-blah! with a blah-blah blah and a four AA battery flash...and I love the guys in the newsgroups who encourage the newbie to self destruct.

6- Borrow or rent a spare camera if needed for redundancy. You'd hate to have to finish the Wedding with a disposable. All flashes are not equal. Few manufacturers units hit over a guide of 120 realistically. Many pros shoot with guides of 160-200-400 watt seconds. Rent a decent flash unit. Ever wonder why PRO's spend as much on their lighting gear as they do on their cameras? It's the quality of light the equipment produces.

LESS BRAINS MORE BRAVADO - The battle cry of the skate boarder, the extreme trick bike and those water-bikes, the wave runners is "I can". My wife is a policy writer person in an insurance company that specializes in extreme events, carnivals, rides parachute events and other unorthodox occasions. Disasters can be all too common.

The newcomer hasn't had a disaster yet to learn off of. For some reason they will be persistent and think they can pull it off. Cameras are notorious for shutters, failing, batteries coming apart; strobes failing or have runaway problems. Even the pro stuff.

It's happened to me several times and I am a nut about preparation. -BUT- the killer is usually a lack of experience and how to react when things go bad. Stepping into an elaborate wedding is like a snow bunny tackling K2, the tricky slope at Hunter Mountain. Hey snow is snow and youth has no fear.

PRE-INSTRUCTION - For the new photographer learning about weddings read as much as you can, and it couldn't be easier than going to the web. Here are some sources for your browser. "Wedding planning", "wedding photographers", "wedding groups",

Another source of Wedding consulting stems from the bloggers of mirth who habit the Newsgroups like alt.wedding on the news boards, A must read is a collection of stories is at <http://www.etiquettehell.com>

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS and a LITTLE SHEER LUNACY!

Many traditions, customs, and other acts appearing to be totally irrelevant bordering stupidity to you are very important and critical for the impression the Bride wants to make on her day. This is a huge and emotional time with extensive preparation and tasking for anyone to bear. Bears are no problem; it's the reptiles you have to look out for. More later.

So to get a feel for this apparent idiocy you will find humor at alt.wedding. After reading it your Bride will seem normal. Those making daily appearance as experts at some of these sites are one step from the Looney hotel. Complete with tears and a few borderline major breakdowns. At times these groups are funnier than anything you will ever read.

This one site is so hip you will need the secret decoder ring so you will know who they are talking about. The Professional Brides at this site, I call them "professionals" because though they were married four plus years ago they are reliving their wedding ceremony years after it's over, day after day, week after week, ad nauseam. They keep telling their "story" to the future Brides who crank in thinking if it's in print on the web it's real.

It definitely is the highlight of their lives. I wrote one back and asked if she lived in a cabin in the woods all her life? She said this was her first trip into town and married and living in the big city.

Better they should be paying attention to their husbands instead of banging the keyboard because they live in a fantasy world. Here as a public service are the most commonly used codes in the Newsgroup Bridal Pages. We broke the codes into groups;

<p><b>GROOMSIDE</b>  G = Groom  BM = Best Man  FH = Future Husband  FIL = Father-in-Law  FFIL = Future Father-in-Law BRIDESIDE</p>	<p><b>BRIDESIDE</b>  B = Bride  MIL = Mother-in-Law  BMD = Bridesmaid  FG = Flower Girl  MOH = Maid/Matron of Honor</p>
<p><b>BROADSIDE</b>  MOB = Mother Of the Bride  FMIL = Future Mother-in-Law  FSIL = Future Sister/Son-in-Law  TLOTH = The Lady Of The Hour  SLOTH = Tree Climbing Animal aka MOB</p>	<p><b>The BACKSIDE</b>  HC = The Happy Couple  UHC = Unhappy Couple  SO = Significant Other  SOL = Significant Other's Lover  BRIDEZILLA = Devil in a White Dress</p>

## WEDDING DIRECTORS -

FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Here are clues for those who are going to be working with a Wedding Director, and have no desire to get shot. Basically, Wedding Directors fall into three categories. I'll explain the different types. Just hit the Google Browser with the words "Wedding Director". Stand back. Do not turn your printer on, you don't have enough paper or toner for it all.



It's brimming with oodles of etiquette needed to produce the perfect Wedding. According to the consultants way which is "the proper way". That's what consultants do, they make proper money from guiding you to do the proper thing as they see it according to the Gospel of St. Bullshitsky. He has been known to hang in circles with Saint Murphy-Lawes.

Type one: The paid professional, who is kind, helpful, reassuring, mom-like, cultured, forgiving, benevolent and a coalition builder. If you hit type one, it is in your favor. Explain you might be a little nervous or new at photographing weddings and ask...no... beg, for her help when you need to slow things down. She'll help you.

Type two: The other kind, may be a bossy, possessive, tyrannical, card carrying member of the party. She was probably voted woman of the year by the "Gestapo". Be prepared, get to know thy adversary. She's totally involved in running the show. She's CYA inhibited since the Bride didn't hire her recommended photographer, who gives her a kickback called a referral fee. Basically unless you are with type one, you might be "persona non grata".

Type three: Is no Wedding Director at all but a blood relative who obviously is a Matriarch in the family. This can go in any direction just like a smoker in a lighter fluid factory or a hand grenade at a Volleyball match.

**THIS IS FOR THE BRIDE:** Most of the good ones are all Certified Wedding Consultants. For the professionals, it means they paid their dues to an accredited organization, on time, paid for their tax license, and might even have liability insurance to cover themselves.

Some major hotels and Banquet halls today require that licensing and insurance for them to participate there Even they know a fraud or incompetent can ruin THEIR reputation. But you want to know their experience, ask for a client list, and any other credentials they might have or specialty. Some of the questions you ask of the Photographer should be asked of the Wedding Director.

It's also business of kickbacks (aka referral fees) and you as the Bride want to know who's who and who's getting what back. Good consultants will tell you up front they receive gratuities for recommendations from the following:

Florists	Photographers	Limo services	Caterers
Valet Parking	Other consultants	Disc Jockeys	Live Bands
Rental halls	Wedding Dress Stores	Bridal Accessories	Tuxedo Rentals

Justice's of the Peace (Conventional Weddings)		Ministers of the Piece (Shotgun Weddings)	
Dove - Butterfly Growers	Custom Veil - Shoe Dyers	Calligrapher's	Soothsayers

For the Bride: I have no problem with this as long as they are up front about it. If they deny it, go find another coordinator who won't lie to you. And you want a list of who is doing what and check them out the same way you did the photographer and the coordinator. When they say they have a friend in the business, they mean friendly referral fees or percentages.

For the Photographer: You might of figured out by now the Directors make more under the table than on top of the table if they play their game right. You also might want to take note that Weddings are of grave financial importance and you better make sure it's not your grave. In a battle with the Director you will lose. In the old days before Paris Hilton, her friends, sisters and Reality TV, weddings followed pretty much a set routine...not anymore my friend, nothing is reality anymore.

# WEDDINGS ARE BIG BUSINESS,

It is a multi-billion dollar industry and it is composed of all types of people, some with integrity and some without; with new gear and some with old gear. Many have plans for the long run and building a solid business, and some with the weekend extra cash in mind and survival. A good portion have increased their knowledge and proficiency base through training seminars and apprenticeship and a few just made it through Popular Photography devoting much of their time to the equipment ads.

I once answered a post that someone had asked “Heavens! What on earth did those poor wedding couples do for thousands of years before the invention of all these rules, customs, traditions, electronic music and photography?”

I replied, It was far simpler in the old days. “They enjoyed themselves.....roasted a pig or a cow, swapped a few head of cattle, fed everybody, and stayed married for the rest of their lives till death did them part and in some cultures never re-married. Then it became a business. Photographers, musicians, hall owners, dress designers, witch doctors, planners, consultants, advisors, relatives, and the clergy put their two cents in one at a time ....total of \$1.68 and ruined things...

In the first scenario the loser was the pig or the cow.....In the second scenario, the loser is the bride and groom, everybody else makes out... so we’ll look at it from the Photography standpoint, the other parts of the WEDDING are complex enough to warrant their own website. The most important part of the equation is not what you think, it’s what you know. Lets see what a Wedding really is....

## PSYCHOLOGY OF A WEDDING

Weddings are truly special events. They are literally the changing of one’s relationships. The new structure is cemented by vows and promises of love and devotion. This not only involves the participants, known as the Bridal Party, but all the members of the two families now bonded (sometimes only temporarily) by matrimony.

If you have been asked to shoot a wedding....consider first a few steps to ascertain you know what you are doing. So figure out how you got there. Something usually starts with the Brides side. She asks you. No one in their right mind offers such responsibility with no gain unless they are nuts. And it is usually accepted by someone who hopes to gain experience or the thrill of being important, or thinks very highly of their own skills.

Ask your self. What divine providence placed you in the center of the universe for this couple taking the vows?

Was it your relationship with the newlyweds to be, or did they approach you because of your photographic prowess or knowledge?

Is it a case of economics?

“Why me” is always a good question. You might be asking yourself that later. Thank THEM for their thinking of you in THEIR hour of need. It’s not your hour of need. This should be a clue and bells should be going off. If you didn’t understand this paragraph, please look up the expression “been had”. So we have to understand where you stand in this equation. Dry land or up to your ears in water....hot water.

DEFINING MOMENTS: If you go ahead with shooting a Wedding, read and consider all of the following. It is an overview of a situation you are about to participate in and explains some of the consequence. I have seen beginners simply doing a friend a favor create a situation they could of easily avoided. Since I teach this game, make that a lot of situations I have seen that should of been avoided. It wasn’t that the photographer wasn’t talented and could with the program mode today get images but he wasn’t up to the situation and was easily overwhelmed.

PROS HAVE TO HANDLE UNIQUE SITUATIONS. You learn from experience. I interviewed one of the top names in the business and asked him what was it like, the first few jobs. He said “it’s one of the few times in my life, I was sweating, had a dry throat and an upset stomach all at the same time”.

Then I got really nervous when I got out of my car at the Church. I know that feeling. I have seen the good, a baby born of the sister of the Bride beginning the big move at the reception, it was a girl less than two hours later, a tad preemie but healthy.

And “the look”, the beam in a woman’s eye on that special day when dreams are fulfilled and plans have come to fruition. It’s an emotional kick in the butt, a great ride for the Bride... when all six horses are in rhythm...

I HAVE SEEN THE OTHER SIDE: The DARK side of the force, there have been heart attacks; grooms passed out cold, more common than you think; Brides emotionally shot and numb minutes before show time, and no shows. Once, the professionally drunk father of the bride passed out cold in the aisle. The Priest who knew him all too well (and his problem) let him lay there till the end of the ceremony. You don’t interrupt this Priests ceremony. He knew his flock.

At that point several folks and my self tried to carry him out of the way. He got a little violent with all those hands on him, took a swing caught me and ripped the front sync socket clear off a Mamiya C330 twin lens.

I made a trigger from a paperclip for the synch. Did the formals, then I finished the wedding in 35MM and a sore scorched finger. The Bride whom I had known well has never spoken to her father since that day. It seems that chronic alcoholism was a family issue. That's sad. He went to the grave never knowing how much he hurt his daughter.

THE UGLY: Occurs when something goes awry and the Brides eyes form slits and some reptilian creature is born. Hence I wrote BRIDEZILLA (originally called the "Devil Wore Black") almost thirty years ago for the many AMATEURS who think wedding photography is easy. It's just that some of us make it look easy BUT WE never leave the house without TUMS or ROLAIDS. Here are some of the legal tips from the Photographer's Standpoint

#### RULES OF ENGAGEMENT and SOME POINTS OF LIGHT

You are their Photographer and the BRIDE is the sole boss at the Wedding, regardless of who is writing the check. Her wishes are the ones that count. The latest legal contracts and agreements for weddings stresses and reinforces that during the time and at the venues of the wedding, I am the sole professional Photographer there. Thus, this reduces legalities to only two people if it comes to that. You and the Bride, other parties don't count. Learn this point well and spell it out.

It's a two way street. As long as I have NO interference, I have NO objections to the other folks shooting pictures. Happy compromise, for all parties. To tell them no one else can take pictures is foolish and in some cases can cost you the job. The giving part -You will make sure the guests get pictures if they work with you. Explain it from a standpoint of cooperation , not one of starting a conflagration or bushfire you have to put out later. You are the insurance agent, not the town bully.

Photographers are starting to charge by time rather than exposures because all weddings drag as adjustments are made and "going over" is part of the game. At no time lose control of what has to be done. You prefer that everyone with cameras please respond to you as to when they can take their pictures as in the case with most weddings there is a schedule to adhere to. This will make things easier especially when a wedding is running behind schedule as almost every one has done for me for the past forty years. Brides are expected to be late and it is well within their rights. Trust me, they will be.

You were hired to do the job and not to have to run interference with Uncle Herbert. Especially after Herbert has had a few. Uncles sometimes do this. That's because Uncles are fathers too.

And it's the Mothers that planned this shindig. The key is you are the one who is responsible and that should be clear to the Bride that you are the only and official photographer for the occasion. It is not meant as a power play, it is meant to protect the Bride's interest. Things happen quickly at Weddings and most good photographers can handle this ever changing situation. (Get it in writing)

## **“The Paparazzi Club”**

I have found by being nice to guests and giving them a moment after my work is done and even a few tips has made me a friend rather than competitor. After each sequence I tell my “helpers”, Ok now all on three, one, two, three. Then after a moment I'll say something like “The Paparazzi will meet outside the church by the steps after they come out and you see me set up”. It has worked every time. It's also a great time for card giving and you would be surprised at the referrals you get. They love you for this.

I have business cards that say “Official Paparazzi” and when we do the informal shots at cake, and limo and tosses, AFTER I shoot, I yell Paparazzi time and they all come forward and let them have a good time. What do I care if they shoot a set, you think the point and shoot at fifteen feet and eight people wide is competition to a Quantum Q2 or a Norman with 400 watt seconds. Half of those point and shoots won't even work at the distance they are at so I push them closer so they do come out.

Sometimes I have taken an advanced amateur who got in the way and made him hold the lights so that took him out of the picture but he learned something and appreciated it.

Why the Official Paparazzi cards? They are my business cards on the other side and you wish you had a dollar for everyone that found me a wedding. Most of the snappers are friends or members of the wedding party and they get married too. What a time to make friends and future clients, not enemies.

## **LEGALITIES:**

It's their pictures and you want permission to use their pictures for your promotional use. You want this clear and in writing if it is important to you for advertising, marketing, trade shows, print competitions, and for promotional use in locations other than your gallery i.e.: the web. (Get it in writing)

If they say no ( which is rare) then abide by it. The sword has two edges and one does not need to abuse this either by pictorializing their entire family for your benefit and violating their

privacy. Written permission agreeing to use is important. The trend today is to give the negatives to the Bride after a short period, like after you are paid in total for services rendered. (More below on this subject) Thus good digital copies of your work is a must as is a good release.

I use and believe in the three part payment for the Wedding; A good contract is fair to both the photographer and the Bride who hired you. The one third deposit to retain the date, second third the day of the Wedding, third part on delivery of the Wedding proofs, CD-ROMs, discs, and/or enlargements. Sometimes (see the sample contract) I want it all up front, just a gut feeling tells me I either have a Bridezilla or sometimes bounced checks tell you that.

Understanding what is and what isn't included up front is the best way of doing business. The prime rule of individual business success for the Wedding Photographer is customer satisfaction. And that is achieved only one way, giving the consumer more than his or her expectations. Business sense, if you got paid enough to do the job, extra shots (one roll or fill up that spare card) might cost you another 15 dollars for prints and proofs or a CD . For the extra fifteen dollars I get all the shots that show up late, or become apparent at the affair. Maybe some special folks at the table, but, the surprises get captured. The Bride gets it all.

As trends change and laws of ownership change, the many Wedding Photographers I know added a little extra to the package to cover the cost of film and processing and now after sixty days or so release the pictures to the client. With digital, a hi-res and lo-res disc is often all that is delivered. Extra cost of the post time on the computer is fair to charge for.

The on-line PROFESSIONAL wedding services (PBASE is not what I'm talking about) do a great job and the pro people I know using them love the convenience. Another argument is that most of the "cheaters" shoot down to Ritz and make copies on the Kodak machine or scan them. Again with much of the industry going to digital, the abundance of digital at weddings and many households with scanners the whole issue becomes a moot point. In addition people at most of the kiosks turn the other way when copying anyways so get it in writing and get it up front are the mottos.

If you are a business act like one. (get it in writing) Example: For those in Florida...Sales Tax. Keep all books and records. Especially if this is just a casual business. The sales tax people visited us one year in the store and requested all film sales to PROS or those with sales tax exemption records. IF you keep the negatives and charged sales tax on your wedding fees, yet you claim tax exempt when you buy film, you are in trouble. Florida has incorporated a sales tax law that if film is part of an agreement and you are paid for that film as part of the cost, you better turn in the sales tax if it was included in your billing. It's cheaper to pay seven percent tax on the film cost and be done with it, than screw with the sales tax people. They are bears and boy

did they turn over the soil. Many “casual” shooters who claimed small business but didn’t adhere to the record keeping turned over more dirt as they dug. They were fined.



# BRIDEZILLA

Note: I wrote the original version of Bridezilla almost thirty years ago as the “The Devil wore White”. In it’s many incantations and changes (it’s a heck of a lot more liberal today than when originally written) it has appeared as the “Bride Wore Black” and now appears as ‘Bridezilla’. I don’t know who really coined the phrase “Bridezilla” but I do thank and acknowledge them. Research on the term Bridezilla did produce some information and data following the article. This is must reading for those who think Wedding Photography is a walk in the park.

## BRIDEZILLA

A Wedding is a sacred feminine driven emotional roller coaster of a ride. Wedding planning is defined as six or eight months during which minute but deadly drops of feminine correctness have flowed from a group of related females, each striving to help produce a socially correct show for another group of individuals called friends and relatives. If this was live, we would now cue the music “That’s Entertainment”

This distinguished group has planned and tested their ideas and patience, searched for: the Minister, the Church, the Dress, the Bridesmaid’s Outfits, the Groom’s Outfits, the Rings, the Reception Hall, and the Caterer. In addition there were discussions on the Limousine, Flowers, Free Giveaways, Souvenirs and probably Color-Coordinated Condoms. Fact is, with a sixty-percent failure rate in marriages who could argue they are more than the crew of the HMS misguided Social Custom? Many of these guidelines for this event have been created based on religious training, community expectations, and ethnicity. Make any slight change and it will spark a little interfamily feuding mixed with petty jealousies. This tends to rise to the surface, one thing goes wrong and YOU will see the water rise very quickly. And the Mother-in-Law owns the only Fireboat in the harbor.

Also such critical decisions as to whether to release: Butterflies, 40% who die in transit, Doves, 60% who will never do a Wedding again preferring to work a dove field during hunting season and take their own chances, Bats. Some disserving cult groups who were into Gothic did bats who might be inclined to find a few small belfries. Regardless as the day grows nearer, the die is cast. At this point in time, committees have been formed. Various roles have been assumed and assigned. They are in order of importance:

## THE PRODUCER:

The Mother of the Bride. The Supreme Commander. Eisenhower wished he had this much

control. A long time matriarchal phrase discovered some time during the forty years walking the desert till Moses finally found a home. His wife liked the neighborhood.

**THE DIRECTOR:**

Usually a favorite Aunt with a lot of money. Always is helpful and gracious because the kid getting married is her favorite...this week. Next year when another of the nieces gets married she will be the new favorite and so forth.

**FUTURE MOTHER-IN-LAW:**

No title, you see she hasn't really been accepted into the tribal club yet. But sooner or later her .02 cents will be made known, just let something go wrong. She's sometimes seen as the one with the ring of chicken heads worn proudly around her neck with a hatchet in her right hand. Remember this point well!

**WEDDING DIRECTOR:**

An expensive hired gun to help sort all this out so that hopefully the blood and spillage will be reduced to a minimum.

**CATERER:** (Herb's Kosher Deli, Swedish Smorgasbord and Sushi Bar.

A winner or loser. Depends on whether the words Chicken Soup got confused with Chicken Wings in Hot Sauce. It's all about expectations and expectorations. Let the food go bad and BRIDEZILLA will let the Rath out and we don't mean Rath bacon.

**THE SOLOIST** (Because no one with talent wants to do a duo)

The short dumpy girl from high school who barely made the chorus will be singing "The Wedding Song" or possibly some cool Rap Music thingy.

**THE DJ** – The true Affliction`ado of Music.

This is another trigger for the Bridezilla. Her carefully chosen song list got ignored when the DJ's pass at one of the Bridesmaids got successful. And he found out she was into RAP music.

**THE PHOTOGRAPHER:** The only participant not part of the tribe. Yet you hold the deepest newfound responsibility. Think of yourself as being amongst Helen of Troy, Athena, Diana, Eva Braun, Oprah, and Genghis Kahn's Ex. During this preparation process, the concerted input has come from generations of social foo-pahs called weddings, and whoever says, "mistakes can be repeated" should change it to "mistakes will be repeated, just a little differently". Remember, YOU are the only independent member of the cast.

**MEANWHILE.....**

The Testosterone crew, the Groom, Best Man and other innocents have responded with fun, games, bachelor parties at every strip joint in town, lots of beer and the battle cry of the male genre “Just tell me where to stand”.

Adding on the wedding day “ Please fix my tie, just tell me when do I have to be there, and where’s the beer!” In addition, the soon to be King has been told by his advisors. “Just wait, she’ll change, they all do” and they trek off for another beer. Don’t look for them for support if it hits the fan.

The END RUN.....

Now it gets interesting, as the day grows closer, the emotional level rises, fueled by...You guessed it, that cycle of chemical imbalances. This leads to insecurity. Questions like “What, or who did we forget?” Misgivings about what was ordered. The Bride just put on two pounds and the dress is too tight. All complicated by a factor of the three, four...or five little inputs that come in from the other advisory board members. It continues to build.....

Aha, the day of the Wedding! Everything has come to a head and everyone is scurrying around with last minute details. Then it happens...EVERYONE VANISHES! The coalition has been dissolved. The production starts and no one is in charge anymore. All the producers and directors are now involved with hair, nails, dressing, dumping the kids, dressing the kids, weak bladders, bad fitting but colorful shoes and they are now the ACTORS in this play. They have their own parts to perform. There’s no one in command! In a moment of time all the planning is forsaken and the real rites of passage begin.

ALL ARE GONE EXCEPT YOU, “THE PHOTGRAPHER”

Think of it as an old Mickey Rooney movie. It’s a Broadway musical and the music conductor quits opening night. The kid, usually played by Mickey Rooney, comes flying out of the audience, saying “Let ME lead the orchestra, I took Clarinet in High School”. This only works in Hollywood. In real life you will become the next CHICKEN HEAD worn around the mother-in-laws neck ! You would be better off being a loser on Survivor. You are the one left standing. And you are expected to walk everyone through the whole mess.

THE BOTTOM LINE

That’s what a good professional Wedding Photographer provides. He is practiced, confident, prepared, and knowledgeable. He is battle hardened. He has been here before.. Are you up to it or are you biting off more than you can swallow? Remember you might be missing a neck!

Errata: [www.etiquettehell.com](http://www.etiquettehell.com)

Back in 1999, Modern Bride magazine launched a full-page comic strip called Bridezilla, which chronicled “The beast called bride-to-be”

Bridezilla (bryd.ZIL.uh) n. A bride-to-be who, while planning her wedding, becomes exceptionally selfish, greedy, and obnoxious. The tricky thing about Bridezillas is that their transition from sweethearts to creatures from hell cannot be foreseen, not even by the future husbands.

Today’s word is a combination of Bride and Godzilla, the mutant dinosaur created by U.S. hydrogen bomb testing in the Pacific that, in numerous films in the 50s and 60s, would wade onto land and destroy everything in its path. The bridal version of this monster is created by the maniacal need to have “the perfect day” and she’ll walk over anyone and everything to get it. They are perfectly normal women — until they get a ring,” says Ms Spaemme. “They run around screaming: ‘It is my day! Bow down and kiss my feet!’ They demand attention, gifts and money and treat family and friends like servants.” Steffi Kammerer, “Drama, chaos, greed and a white dress,” The Dallas Morning News, August 27, 2002

# TOOLS

You need some tools to start with. I'm referring to the tools of business, not the tools you do business with. There is a difference. One will let you down, one will bring you down.

As a Wedding Photographer you are expected to be both an artist, technician, business person and a compassionate human being. To this I add, Psychiatrist, (aka The Runaway Bride) Master of Ceremonies, Arbitrator and sometimes a Religious Sponsor (like Jessie Jackson was for Michael).

You will also have purchased or rented suitable backup gear and be all knowing of photographic equipment especially digital gear, their idiosyncrasies, and purpose. You will be strong in portraiture or studio work so you know about lighting and facial size, proportion, angles and layouts. You will know the layout, lighting, paths of the Church, the Synagogue or Mosque, its rules, the Officiate, and memorized the reception beforehand.

As trends change and as the consumer becomes aware of different trends and vogues, you have to increase your schooling with classes and seminars. You will be expected to be early, stick with schedules, and stay late because we knew the Bride will never ever be on time. With all that expected of you, what's the essence of the mentality to succeed in this game...

Preparation - Training - Business Sense - and most important of all the ability to laugh it off...A sense of humor is a good start.

Guides and lists help keep things on track... A wedding is like that train ride I spoke about. As long as you stay on track things go well but a train that jumps track is an accident. Few trains ever jump back on track and it'd chaos from there.

Your wedding photographs may have to reflect a diversification of interests and taste. The entire wedding market has not totally embraced PJ efforts and there are still many out there who are traditionalists.

Big Southern Weddings especially. Because every couple is different, just as their family profiles are different, there is a chance without some form of list you might be shooting out in the cold. The initial interview with the Bride and advisors is vital to the clarification of the entire process.

I'm not referring to the weather either. A whole bunch of shots of insignificant people at the affair means lost revenue. Here is what some consider the "must-have" shots. By giving the Bride a chance to go over the list you save stress on yourself by ensuring that you will get the shots the Bride and you want. Get these in the bag and then go PJ or the hunter mode. So in these lists we combined traditional and PJ and a few off the wall scenarios.

Traditions change, we know people are different. Doves might be the thing to do at a very traditional wedding but Bats might be the right thing at a "Goth" ceremony. Pets are also being invited more and more to Weddings with some startling interludes. One was recently shown on Americas Funniest Videos. Twenty years after the Wedding is long forgotten they'll still be talking about what the pooches were doing. Ethnicities may warrant a change in plans. Same sex Weddings, or companionship vows may warrant a few changes.

In England as mentioned I have seen on several websites, groomsmen doing some really obscene pranks. "Mooning" and genital exposure in one series posted to the web. In one of my other articles I explain how the photographer "handled the situation". Shrinkage in Photoshop really offset the prank and made the guy look like an idiot.

I left room at the bottom of each for you to add your own. Some suggestions might seem to be a little odd. The funny part is I have seen some of them happen. I also will offer this in editable PDF format allowing you to change the sequence and make your own list. Download it, copy it, have a couple laughs, save a copy for the Wedding Director after you clean up the few laughs in there. The Funny version first. List two is the more serious version.

## **PRIOR TO CEREMONY**

- Girls getting dressed, doing hair and makeup (knocking on door is optional so you can really get some good stuff)
- Bride alone in mirror, singing "mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?"
- Mirror cracking.
- Mother helping Bride adjusting dress and fighting back the daughter's tears.
- Bride not happy about those two pounds.
- Shoe Shots (PJ) Bow Shots, Bra shots, T-back shots.  
Special Hair Shots when hairspray ignites.
- Mother adjusting bride's veil seeing if two layers helps
- Bride pinning boutonniere on father's lapel.
- Bride giving bouquets to bridesmaids.
- Collective shot of Bridesmaids, use super wide lens if all of them are size 18 or better.

- Bride pinning corsage on mother, holding back the tears of joy getting out of the same house with that woman.
- Limo to the Church, hurry, they only rented it for one hour and that was three hours ago.

## **LIMOSINE TO THE CHURCH AND ARRIVAL**

- Get bridal party member tripping on dress, falling flat on face (after all it's PJ)
- Shots of limo at wrong door, send limo to right door.
- Now get the right shots of limo arriving.
- Get shots of driver wanting check for four hours OT because the girls were late.
- Front Steps to the Church with all the folks arriving who didn't read the note to use the side door.
- People Arriving (PJ) Just shoot them all.
- Back room with everybody nervous and waiting. good time for some more of those PJ terrific based shots of Jockey shorts and Shoe laces of really stupid looking cheap vinyl patent leather rental shoes.
- Last minute adjustments
- Head Count, all there, get shot of processional order
- Check the Grooms room for last minute shots (PJ)
- Have a "couple shots with the boys", you know they smuggled something in.
- Relax, they'll get the groom sober before he goes out there.

## **POST FORMAL SHOTS**

- Exterior view of the ceremony site
- First kiss as husband and wife
- Bride and father, bride and mother
- Groom and father, groom and mother
- Bride and groomsmen
- Groom and bridesmaids
- Bride and maid/matron of honor
- Groom and best man hugging.
- The Grandparents and other important relatives being ignored as usual.
- Bride and groom lighting unity candle and she reminding him how much fun the hot wax thingy was...
- Candid of clergy congratulating bride and groom looking for the check.

- Ceremony portraits with no flash because it's a Catholic Church and they are too close to the alter resulting in yellow portraiture.
- Step Parents - very hot subject.
- Step Children, adopted children, missing children.
- Any pets at ceremony (becoming popular) and a few embarrassing situations.
- Former Step Parents (third time around ?)

## **THE RECEPTION SHOTS:**

- Bride tossing bouquet
- Someone catching the bouquet, tripping over the chairs, falling on butt knocking two other women down.
- Groom tossing lunch from too much booze
- Groom tossing garter, former girlfriend catching the garter, Bride tossing a right hook.
- Newlywed's first dance, groom steps on Brides dress.
- Father's last dance with daughter, in tears....of joy.
- Flower girl dancing with ring bearer
- Topless dancer from Bachelor party dancing on table
- Guests dancing getting really nasty
- Bride's father with pockets turned inside out, he was mugged behind building..
- Close-ups of hands, rings, fake Rolexes
- Band or DJ's for the impending lawsuit because they played too much RAP.
- DJ trying to cop a little from the cute bridesmaid during his tenth break.
- Guests throwing rice, bubbles, balloons, condoms, firecrackers, grenades (popular in some countries)
- Releasing Doves, Butterflies, Bats, Flatulence and really dumb toasts.
- Cake Cutting Ceremony
- Bride with cake alone, and Groom with cheap Grooms cake alone
- Cake table, Cutting the cake, Groom smearing cake on Bride
- Bride clobbering Groom....Groom with idiot look on face
- Groom admitting his friends said "she'd, change but didn't think this soon".
- Best man toasting bride and groom.
- Groom slugging best man for comments about her hooters.
- Bride and groom silhouetted against stained glass window of Church as rock comes flying through from ex-wife.

## **OUTSIDE**



- Best man and Groomsmen decorating the car and attaching the rear axle to a fireplug with a chain.
- Best man and Groomsmen being told it was the wrong car.
- Couple kissing good-bye and getting into car, limo or carriage driving away
- Rear axle ripping out of the car as the fireplug goes off and angry Priest wanting to know who did this to his car.
- Exterior of wedding location with fireplug sending showers of water in the air, Guests falling all over the lawn, waving goodbye, a few birdies.  
Police and fire departments responding

Additional really stupid things that happen:

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(YOUR COMPANY NAME HERE)

# PROOF CHECKLIST

## PRE-WEDDING PREPARATION

- ✓ Dress hanging up
- ✓ Dress hanging with arrangement of shoes, veil, garter, rings, necklace, etc.
- ✓ Individual shots of shoes, veil, garter, rings, necklace, etc.
- ✓ Candid of bride getting ready (hair, make up, etc)
- ✓ Bride putting the garter on
- ✓ Bride's veil
- ✓ Bride pinning on mother's corsage and father's boutonnière.
- ✓ Attendants helping bride with final preparations
- ✓ Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.
- ✓ Bridesmaids primping
- ✓ Bride and mother in the mirror
- ✓ Brides maids in the mirror
- ✓ Bride in dress
- ✓ Bride with mother, father, both parents
- ✓ Bride with honor attendant, each maid
- ✓ Gift table
- ✓ Bride leaving house, with father get in car
- ✓ Groom alone, then pinning on mother's corsage and father's boutonnière.
- ✓ Best man adjusting groom's boutonnière.
- ✓ Groom looking in the mirror
- ✓ Groom with best man and individual groomsman

## ARRIVAL

- ✓ Bride and father getting out of the car and going into church
- ✓ Bride and Groom on opposite sides of a door, unable to see each other before the ceremony
- ✓ Guests arriving/waiting at ceremony location then signing guest book and at gift table
- ✓ Ushers escorting guest
- ✓ Candle lighters
- ✓ Musicians or singers
- ✓ Bride and father waiting to enter
- ✓ Ceremony location from outside

## **CEREMONY**

- ✓ Wide angle shot of the whole interior of the church
- ✓ Groom entering
- ✓ Groom and groomsmen waiting at the alter
- ✓ Grooms parents being seated
- ✓ Brides mother being seated
- ✓ Maid of honor down aisle
- ✓ Brides maids entering
- ✓ Flower girl, ring bearer
- ✓ Bride and father
- ✓ Groom meeting bride
- ✓ Soloist, organist
- ✓ Altar or canopy during ceremony
- ✓ Father giving away the Bride
- ✓ Lighting of the unity candle
- ✓ Readings, singings or prayers
- ✓ Exchanging Vows
- ✓ Exchanging Rings
- ✓ Sipping of tea or wine hand intertwined
- ✓ Seven circles (Jewish Traditional) .
- ✓ Groom lifting the Bride's veil
- ✓ The First Kiss
- ✓ Breaking the glass (Jewish Traditional).
- ✓ Bride, Groom down aisle
- ✓ Bride, Groom outside on steps
- ✓ Receiving line
- ✓ Bride alone in chapel
- ✓ Bride, Groom alone in chapel
- ✓ Bride and Groom leaving and guests throwing rice, seed, bubbles, rose petals, etc
- ✓ Bride and groom leaving under an arch of swords (military).
- ✓ Bride, Bride Groom getting in car or carriage
- ✓ Bride, Groom in back seat
- ✓ Bride, Groom in back seat, kissing

## **FORMALS**

- ✓ Bride alone (full length)
- ✓ Bride with her parents
- ✓ Bride with Maid of Honor

- ✓ Bride with bridesmaids individually
- ✓ Bride with bridesmaids as a group
- ✓ Bride with bridesmaids and flower girl
- ✓ Bride with groomsmen
- ✓ Groom alone (full length)
- ✓ Groom with his parents
- ✓ Groom with best man
- ✓ Groom with groomsmen individually
- ✓ Groom with groomsmen as a group
- ✓ Groom with groomsmen and ring bearer
- ✓ Groom with bridesmaids
- ✓ Groom with mother
- ✓ Bride, Groom together
- ✓ Bride, Groom with parents
- ✓ Bride, Groom in a silly pose
- ✓ Bride, Groom with officiate
- ✓ Bride, Groom with her parents
- ✓ Bride, Groom with his parents
- ✓ Bride, Groom with the wedding party, women and men split
- ✓ Bride, Groom with the wedding party, attendants mixed together
- ✓ Bride with Maid of Honor and Groom with Best Man
- ✓ Bride, Groom with her grandparents
- ✓ Bride, Groom with his grandparents
- ✓ Bride, Groom with her immediate family
- ✓ Bride, Groom with his immediate family
- ✓ Bride, Groom and both immediate families
- ✓ Bride, Groom with flower girl and ring bearer
- ✓ Bride's parents
- ✓ Groom's parents
- ✓ Bride with children from family or wedding party
- ✓ Groom with children from family or wedding party
- ✓ Bride, Groom with children from family or wedding party
- ✓ Close up of Bride's and Groom's hands/rings over her bouquet
- ✓ Bride, Groom finally sitting and relaxing
- ✓ Bride, Groom finally sitting and kissing
- ✓ Bride and groom with witnesses and officiate signing the marriage certificate
- ✓ Flower girl and ring bearer

## **RECEPTION**

- ✓ Bride, Groom arriving
- ✓ Bride, Groom at car
- ✓ Bride, Groom going into reception
- ✓ The receiving line (posed)
- ✓ The receiving line (candid)
- ✓ Bride, Groom being introduced
- ✓ Bride, Groom dancing
- ✓ Bride, father dancing
- ✓ Groom, mother dancing
- ✓ Parents dancing
- ✓ Best man and Maid of Honor dancing
- ✓ Complete bridal party dancing
- ✓ Guests dancing
- ✓ Bride and groom lifted on chairs (Jewish)
- ✓ The musicians
- ✓ Emcee
- ✓ Bride, Groom talking to guests
- ✓ Buffet Table
- ✓ The guest book
- ✓ Ice Sculpture
- ✓ Gift Table
- ✓ Centerpiece
- ✓ Other special decorations
- ✓ Reception site from outside
- ✓ Cake
- ✓ Head table
- ✓ Parent's table
- ✓ Blessing before meal
- ✓ Toast, best man
- ✓ Other toasts
- ✓ Cutting the cake
- ✓ Bride, Groom feeding each other the cake
- ✓ Parents table
- ✓ All of the bridesmaids surrounding and kissing the new groom at once
- ✓ Head table
- ✓ Bride, Groom with parents
- ✓ Bride, Groom with special guests
- ✓ Throwing bouquet
- ✓ Catching the bouquet

- ✓ Taking the garter off
- ✓ Throwing the garter
- ✓ Catching the garter
- ✓ Decorating the car
- ✓ Going away clothes
- ✓ Bride, Groom saying good-bye
- ✓ Guests throwing rice/seeds
- ✓ Bride, Groom getting in car
- ✓ Rear of car speeding off
- ✓ Guests waving
- ✓ Bride's exhausted father with empty outturned pockets

**Additional Pictures Requested:**

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# CULTURAL CRISIS

We live in a world of cultural difference and nothing shows that premise better than the Wedding ceremony which you, you lucky devil, have been retained to perform at. Here are a couple of clues as to what to look out for. And I mean no harm or inference to anyone, just telling it like it is or in my case was. One has to respect the difference and cultural beliefs people have. Some ethnicities prohibit the taking of photographs that show elbows, faces or feet. ( After I wrote this, I started to think a loser is a photographer doing weddings in certain countries) It would be as stupid as trying to get great pre-dressing PJ shots at a Taliban wedding and you'll be in the soup literally or in the oil whatever boils quicker...so respect of cultural beliefs is important.

**MIX-MATCHED STYLES** - Number one on the hit parade is shooting the wrong wedding style. Be prepared that your style applies to the Wedding Couples beliefs. People are culturally different and PJ may not be the best choice for a specific wedding. You might be best to mix it up a little so you cover your bases. I have learned this from my diversified experience shooting weddings of ethnic and social differences. In addition, I must stop and give thanks to the many professionals and associates who shared a few horror stories with me over a brew or two.

**YOUNGER COUPLES** - Some younger couples like moderate trendy PJ to almost a “shock jock” approach to the Wedding. Notice I said “some”. You better expect anything, sometimes blowing tradition out the door. Expect anything from a moon to topless exhibitions to falling on ones face dead drunk. One female shooter, new at the game living in the UK, had “penis exposure” from one of the groomsmen in three of her shots. Sure a click or two in Photoshop cured the extended problem, but she had a better idea. She used the “shrink image button”, and popped a print. I'll bet that made a few circles around town!

Another example: So after you shoot a thousand B&W - photojournalistic artistic renderings or PJ shots, the mother-in-law wants the 30x40 color shot of her firstborn to hang over the fireplace of their new house. Try selling her the black and white artistic shot of the Brides bra strap while she was getting dressed.

You are not alone: My buddies and cohorts in the business shared a few other horror tales with me. Fred Miranda's website at <http://www.fredmiranda.com/> has a pretty good wedding forum. It's inhabited by a few pro's and many, many beginners, some pretending to know more than they do. A fast check on licenses, which is commonly on all government websites for that city or state sites tell you whether they are legal or not.

There are many other sites devoted to Wedding photographers -BUT- like most of the web, take things with a grain of salt, two shots of vodka and a twist of lemon. Ego's run prolific in this

business and everyone's a pro. Just look at some sites and you'll realize a few are more conversation than talent.

Type in Wedding Forums on Google and a lifetime of reading is before you. Type in a few names of the shooters from the odd groups on Google and it's like reading the tabloids. A few have a pretty shady past.

YOU have to serve the client, not force your beliefs or issues. If their style is not the best style for you, get someone else to do it and a referral fee is better than nothing or a goof up. Again I am NOT picking on any age groups, religious groups or ethnicities, just a few tips for political correctness. Older established families and higher more elaborate level Weddings go far more often to the conservative side with shooter covering the basics and then: the PJ style thrown into the mix for complete coverage and a better bottom line.

### **TRADITIONAL JEWISH WEDDINGS**

We have an expression! How do you get eight opinions from seven people? Simple, book a Jewish Wedding! Now I can say that because I am Jewish. Find out ahead of time "Who is the boss"! Not the mock boss, the real boss. Five bucks says it's not the father. It's Mom. Get all of that out of the way fast before you sign contracts.

Simply ask "who is the boss here that I am contracting with?". Coming from a typical Matriarchal Jewish family, I can tell you they are pretty open in conversation about Weddings. It will get passed around the table and input is allowed, encouraged and insisted.

That's why I say get it done up front. Weddings are no places to negotiate. Other strongly family oriented groups present the same situation. Now this is why in Lesson one I insist "That you explain that the boss at the Wedding is the Bride and she has the final word. Legally, spiritually, emotionally, she is the one you will do business with".

If not and you have clearly not designated this, I wish you well. (Get it in writing) If hell breaks loose and something goes wrong she will go crying to ....her mother. You will be the next in line if there is no Wedding Planner. That's why you have to read BRIDEZILLA and follow these lessons.

Once the plans are down pat and signed for and all grey and dark areas are covered, be ready for a good ride. They can be very photographic. Some of the customs such as the vows under a small open tent and the breaking of the glass are very symbolic and offer some good chances of a winning shot. Then at the reception be prepared to move quickly as the traditional circle dances and the rest of the wedding party and guests get into the act. It grows and builds. You will be busy trying to catch the action.



Just so you understand, I'm not picking on Jewish Weddings. Again, I am Jewish and naturally have shot many.

That's why my wife and I eloped, my brother did the same. It's seems a **TRADITION** in our family to elope. Many years ago at 9:00 am I told my wife we were getting married today and it was over at 11:00 am. All these years she has never regretted having the big wedding day, I always ask her. "No way", she says. She is a veteran of many of the weddings we have shot and attended over the past twenty seven great years. She has been my right arm and best friend ever since and I have never regretted it. With all the stress and strain of my businesses, she is an Oasis in the Desert, an Island in the Ocean. She is the good thing about marriage, it lasts more than just one day. I'm old school, you married and meant it, good and bad, richer or poorer... In good health or bad... Life is way too short. Ok before you all start crying, on to the next one.

### **ISLAMIC WEDDINGS CAN LAST LONG**

Four years ago I assisted an associate as he was doing a rather large and long Islamic wedding in this area. Full video and a ton of pictures. 10 hours long and the party had just started. The longest affair I ever attended. Now I read up before getting into something I was very naive about. I'm also a lot older and the time wears you out. I was exhausted.

Nevertheless it was an incredibly unique affair and one of the ushers was gracious and very literately explained every part of the services. It was a great learning experience about someone else's culture and traditions. I didn't have a clue as to how long they can run. I know now. Talk about the heartbreak of "de feet". so, time wise... (Get it in writing)

Unexpectedly we really undercut ourselves physically, we needed a third helper just to get a break and fast charge batteries, not so much for the stills, because I make High Capacity packs for Digitals, but the bigger Video Cameras suck juice like a Hoover.

I will start to use car batteries on a handcart soon for video, they eat any battery pack.

That's why my new contracts were written with time clauses and helper clauses. But I have been told, this is not always the case with Islamic Weddings. This particular one was long because of the stature of the individuals in the community. All I'm saying is get it settled up front as to how long you are needed and explain "overtime".

**Update:** This wasn't the longest Wedding. While updating things I was with one of the nicest Wedding and event Shooters in the Tampa Bay area. He booked a Wedding with the two prominent families from India and it took three days to shoot and this was common for their group. So long Weddings can be fun if you are prepared to negotiate the obvious differences and

understand “their process” so you know what you are getting into. Hint: It’s a lot easier if they have a Wedding Planner familiar with their culture and you make friends. Even if it means buying her lunch, heck dinner before you sign on. Notice I said “her”. In many cultures this is a “her” job. The fellows rarely participate in this planning and don’t wish to be bothered.

### **CATHOLIC WEDDINGS CAN BE RESTRICTIVE**

I figure you have enough sense to sort this one out. Start moving equipment, make noise during the Mass, pop a flash or get too close to the altar and be prepared to get thrown out. Based on today’s headlines, don’t even make jokes about it. It’s too sensitive a subject.

The most Holy physical part of the Catholic Church is usually the Alter so be careful setting up shots so as not to infringe on it’s space, that’s a NO-NO. Don’t climb on the Alter to get the Brides and Grooms faces during the ceremony. Stage the shot after from a lesser angle avoiding the Alter with fast and long glass.

If it is a full Mass and Wedding, be prepared with long, fast glass and definitely VR or IS lenses from a distance or from the balcony. Remember to color correct (white balance) before hand if you are digitally inclined. With slower film you’ll need faster glass and fast film. Arrange all the formals for before time or after the ceremony. That’s when a helper and pre-planning mean the most. Remote triggers for additional flashes, and maybe the helper shooting topside from the balcony. It’s a heck of a lot easier if you want the Alter for the backdrops either before or after with a helper.

Attitudes differ amongst Priests. Some are fantastic and easy to work with, showing much patience and once in a while you’ll think you walked into one of the disciples having a bad a day because his Canonization hadn’t been approved. Lately though since the bad publicity, I find they are a little more flexible since congregation numbers and funding is down.

### **LUTHERAN, PREOTESTANT, METHODIST, EPICOPALIAN, LATTER DAY, MORMON, and a few others....**

Look in the phone book, note there are hundreds of Churches all with diverse themes and the game is wide open as to rules and regulations. Even churches of the same denomination differ. There is no guide just as there appears to be a problem in finding the one true religion. So here is what YOU have to do.

I would usually try to find out if another Wedding was taking place in the church a couple weeks ahead of the one you are shooting and casually drop in and observe. Just dress nicely, sit in a back pew and follow everybody around casually using your light meter or even better a small digital, no flash to get EXIF information.

There is a wealth of knowledge to gather here. Some are casual, some are very strict with ground rules. Pentecostal weddings can be very straight laced too and then go all out. Scout out the church beforehand. I can't emphasize this enough.

Trying to fix things during a Wedding doesn't work. They won't wait while you adjust or learn to use your light meter or strobe. And remember to write it down, take notes, about time of day and any ambient light coming through the windows, plus additional light settings of the back area. so you know before hand what you are up against.

### **SHOTGUN WEDDINGS**

People never cease to amaze me. There is nothing prettier than a six month pregnant bride and the two families looking at each other with blood in their eyes. A very colorful combination. I had the pleasure of shooting one of these when I was working for a Wedding Mill in NYC.

It was the Northern version of the Southern style shotgun wedding. The difference? The guns were worn under the tuxedos whereas in the south they used holsters. Or just slung them over the horses.

From the minute I walked in the hall, I knew I could be dead. In fact one half of the room told me that if I spent too much time on the other side of the hall I would be dead. I felt I was living West Side Story while traversing the North-South Korean DMZ.

Then the brain kicked in, why not shoot two weddings here? I just shot twenty four rolls of 120 films, carefully marked them, family A and family B. I was exhausted. These were 120 shot on Rollie, Mamiya, Yashica Twin Lens cameras and #5 bulbs. I had scorched fingers for a week.

The boss made separate albums for both sides and I got paid double commissions from the shooting and the additional prints. I was really proud of myself. And the "sellers" really worked them, each side wanted to know what the other ordered and then they increased their order week after week.. In the end run it was double the work and triple the commissions.

### **RACIALLY MIXED WEDDINGS**

Racially mixed weddings sometimes have a major problem with skin tones. If you don't know what a Grey Card is, learn quickly. It will really screw up your lighting and make a nightmare out of prints. It's a top conversation in many pro Wedding Sites.

Relying on your cameras "P" mode doesn't work. We call it the "perhaps mode" Perhaps the shots will come out. You must rely on the grey card as using the light skin tones will

underexpose and give you the “AL Jolson Look” and shooting for the dark skin tone will blow the highlights. It’s really bad enough with a black tuxedo and white shiny dress.

There are a couple techniques even including double negatives but good Photoshop techniques can save the day. It seems this is a problem to some but really it’s nothing more than the fact you are exceeding the dynamic range and you have to expose somewhere in the middle. That’s what the grey card will do for you.

### **SAME SEX WEDDINGS**

Here are some of the problems that may arise. Who is the alpha? Really there shouldn’t be. It’s a union of two people. But be prepared and body language will be the clues as to how you handle the situation. But regardless of your beliefs, let the other half live and if you are not comfortable, don’t accept the work. Several of the confirmations I have done went absolutely great and the players went out of their way to make everybody comfortable. You are there to record, not judge. I will tell you though, if there is a lot of booze, just keep a camera ready for a cat fight or two, but that’s true in most weddings.

### **BAHA’I WEDDINGS**

Baha’i marriage is union and cordial affection between two parties. They must, however, exercise the utmost care and become acquainted with each other’s character. This eternal bond should be to foster harmony, fellowship and unity and to attain everlasting life - Baha’i Writings. Wow, pretty heavy, especially the everlasting part....

Rules: The Baha’i House of Worship is reserved for private prayer and meditation, or for public services of worship. Weddings may not be held within the House of Worship itself.

However, weddings may be conducted outdoors in the Temple grounds, with bridal couples often arranging to say prayers in the Temple either before or after their wedding ceremony.

Weddings held in the grounds must be Baha’i weddings, whether or not the bridal couple are Baha’i. The marriage must be celebrated by a legally authorized marriage celebrant. Learn the words flash fill, and daylight white balance. You will be shooting lots of white clothing in broad daylight. You will most likely find it very serene and generally I have to watch myself or I will fall asleep at them, the softness, ease, spirituality, the gardens and a warm sun.....serene divineness.....snore....

### **BAS or BAR MITZVAHS, CONFIRMATIONS, FORMAL EVENTS**

You TREAT THEM EXACTLY AS WEDDINGS! Especially Bar-Mitzvahs, you'll have a larger percentage of kids around. And you'll have a little more chaos as they are not as structured sometimes. The other thing you will learn as you read on is something I mentioned before. Find out whose running the gig and who is ultimately responsible.

### **The Bar Mitzvah I Screwed Up**

I knew the person I thought was the host, so I never bothered with a contract. No substantial deposit, just \$100 for film, she said "she was treating FOR THE FILM. It was her sister's grandson. I was not dealing with the boss, violation of rule one.

One of the guest sisters attending was on an unsupervised weekend leave from an Institution. She got enamored with the camera and upset every picture she could get into. Funny faces, devil fingers, the birdie. I asked the mother to see if she could calm her a little and I got a speech. Not her job. Rule two, the designated persona.

Uncle Samuel brought his Minolta and almost knocked me over. Then the rest of the Paparazzi showed up. It ran long, kids got restless and they headed for the banquet. Even the Rabbi was trying to bail. And the real party for the adults was on the second (next) day which I was never told about. Violation of Rules 2-7, no contract, no outsiders, Paparazzi under my control etc.

After the weekend was over, I did the work in our lab, and told her the proofs were ready. I wanted this thing done. Gut feeling. All of a sudden she has nothing to do with this entire affair. OK I reach the fly-in sister. She tells me to forget it as (you guessed it) Uncle Samuel had done such a good job! The two had not coordinated and my services were no longer required. (Rules 2,3,4,5,6)

Here I am, ticked off looking at 6-36 exposure rolls of 35. I called my attorney, basically he tells me I got borscht! It usually boils down to what's in writing. Or as he said it, "NO WRITE, NO RIGHT! He felt it was not worth pursuing. He instructs me to send them a registered letter telling them all the negatives and proofs will be destroyed within 48 hours if I am not paid since they voided the verbal agreement. He calls the witch as a last resort, and she tells him where to go. I am not generally a vengeful person, but this one got to me and a week later I cut up the negatives and proofs.

But if ever there was Divine Intervention, G-d sends it through synch cords and Uncle Samuel had his Minolta on a shutter speed too high for the flash. Blew the synch speed rule! He had pictures, but only one-half of each of them.

I get a call a couple weeks later from Dad, sorry, nothing I could do. He turns out to be a real

nice guy. I lost, they lost. It was a treasured moment with their child that went unrecorded that was the bad part, it bothered me. I wrote this off as an experience and that's why I'm telling you how you must approach this thing as a business and forsake the amateur attitude if you are serious about making this a career.

Had I been professional and not lost my temper, I would have put a REAL HEALTHY price tag on the pictures. One of those D2X price tags. I have a heart under all this humor.... I called the father back and told him to get his kid and we were going to a few places and I shot some really good stuff on the beach, at a pitch and putt, batting cages and handed him 72 shots of Dad and Son that hopefully the way the father would of really wanted it.

### **UNCONVENTIONAL WEDDINGS**

Nudist Camps, Cultural; Centers, Retreats, Wiccan, Druidic rites and Satanic worship. Some I will shoot, some I won't even go there, I usually forward those requests to someone I hate.

<http://altreligion.about.com/index.htm>

### **CORPORATE EVENTS, BOARD MEETINGS ETC.**

Get it in writing, get a deposit, do it by the book...enough said. That's it for the more popular and conventional Weddings.

## **PRICING**

Pricing in this business is like the car business, read on, this is a stretch. No two used cars are alike and no two weddings, people, venue, structure, size etc. are the same thing. No two photographers are the same. But the photographers seem to think it's all about pricing. What a wrong impression. Very foolish thinking.

Ask most folks (in the states) what they think of buying a car and they will tell you they would rather go to the dentist. Ask those same folks buying a car "what do they want in a price" and the answers will surprise you.

Prime answer: A FAIR ONE from a reputable, reliable dealer.... They said things like "I didn't want to pay more than what the others paid for it."

Highly competitive businesses are like that. The winners in the long run in the Wedding Photography business are those who treat it professionally and run their business for the long run. The bad shooters, low-ball ad sellers, bump and runners sure made it tougher for the real people interested in a long time career and a business they enjoy doing.

Listen this is a business with no policing, guidelines, requirements, rules of engagement (pun) and various levels of workmanship and interpretation. And it really doesn't matter what part of the world you are from. Whether you live in Australia, the US, Europe, or Sweden the problem is basically the same all over. It's so diverse.

It is a business of full timers, part-timers, professionals and amateurs. It has members who play by the book and those who never have nor will read the book. It has those, who are good savvy wise business people who have legitimate registered businesses with taxes, licenses, and regulations adhered to. And some folks who run it from the trunk of their car and pay no sales tax though they collected it from the bridal couple.

It has those with major investments in time, finances, facilities and training and those certainly participating with nothing more than a camera and a small knowledge of photography.

It will on occasion disappoint the best of detectives. The most lacking thing in the industry is the lack of professionalism, no organization though they have tried has addressed this since there are no legal standards or licensing. Probably there never will be since anyone can call themselves anything they want.

I think it's somewhat important to know what your competitors charge, but it's not the basis of your business. Some times there is no other way to find out than to ask them. If you tell them over the phone or in an email, you're a photographer looking at pricing most likely he won't tell you, so I don't see any other option than to ask like this. Invite them to lunch to discuss their craft. Learn what they do better is more important than what they charge. When you do it better, the world finds you.

Website: Are better used or spent using the space to show quality and create an interest rather than going for the close before the door is opened.

Fewer and fewer photographers are posting prices because of the confusion over the different pricing methods. Currently, some quote in packages, by hourly, or day booking, shot count, including ancillary help charges, and the final product delivered.

It's apples to peaches with car parts, and a zillion other things thrown in. So stop worrying what the other guy is charging. What is he doing that he is charging for and what you are doing to make it a better product.

Do you give an explanation of plans custom suited for the clients needs. Answer questions with a question." What were you specifically interested in having done, ask questions about location

etc. The responses and being a good listener will tell you where she or he has been shopping. Ask what special services did they have in mind?

It's all about value received: Mainly does the value received equal (=) the dollars ( yen, gold coins, marks, francs, chickens and goats) charged for the services.

This is secondary in the couples mind believe it or not. The primary goal for them is good quality work. By surveys we have conducted at Bridal shows. We asked them and they were there from all walks of life and financial health.

So it was:

- 1- Good quality work expressing the love, warmth, solemnity, beauty, of the most important day in someone else's life.
- 2- The second concern was the three R's reputation, respect and reliability.
- 3- Last was price.

Close to the Neilson answer's for buying a car.....

So while everyone is worried about what the other guy is charging, few mention what they will do to improve their first impression on the first contact with the customer, future client, potential consumer. Good business practice tells you your ads are for getting the interest or herding the business your way where an accurate assessment of what needs to be done ...can be done in the proper atmosphere. May I suggest a studio, office, showroom, place of business.

**THIS CONCLUDES PART ONE**



This is partially a review, in a slightly different format...

## THE WEDDING TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt have a working knowledge of thy craft. As a business person, artist, photographer, and a compassionate human being. To this I add, Psychiatrist and Priest.
2. Thou shalt know thy equipment, their idiosyncrasies, purpose and best usage. Of and be comfortable with several formats and processes.
3. Ye shall make sure there are sufficient fresh quantities of film or flash cards.
4. Ye shall not stick bad portraiture before me. Learn something about the basics of portraiture or studio work so you know about lighting and facial size, proportion, angles and layouts.
5. Ye shall read the Boy Scout handbook and “be prepared”. Learning about a new piece of equipment at the wedding is paramount for disaster. Having suitable backup gear is crucial.
6. Thou shalt knoweth thy turf. Know the layout, lighting, paths of the Church, the Synagogue or Mosque, its rules, the Officiate, and the reception location beforehand. Thou shalt not passeth up good opportunities because of frugality.
7. Extra shots of unique moments mean extra shekels from the occasion. You can’t turn the time back for that once in a lifetime shot either for you or the bride.
8. Thou shalt not stick thy head in the sand.  
As trends change and as the consumer becomes aware of different trends and vogues, you have to increase your options too. Schooling and seminars and increase your portfolio.
9. Thou shalt spread thy table before me. Contracts signed, payments made, no grey areas, no bushing or bumps. The rules laid down, the cooperation in place, the times and scheduled appointments met.
10. Thou shalt invest in a good Timex. Be early, stick with schedules, even though we know the Bride will be late. Timing! This holds true for the delivery of the proofs. Be a day early and you are a hero. Be a day late and you will be judged a lot tougher especially when the mother-in-law drags out her 10X Schneider Loupe.
11. Thou shalt learn to say NO and to have fun!

Wooops.... that’s eleven Commandments! Oh, I suppose I could come up with fifty more, there are more, but these are the crucial ones. The most important question is your commitment. Only

you can answer that. Like I once said “doing things on a lark, can make you dinner for a hawk!”.

There are times one must bow out of a situation, that's why I wrote Bridezilla and I must admit I have been caught several times when I asked my self "Why me"? Because of me, that's why. You can't solve the entire world's problems and have a life for yourself.

If weddings are not fun for you, review the suggestions, read more on the subject, make a plan to change things and then work your plan. If things don't improve and become fun, get out of it. As bad as weddings can get, they are still more fun than shooting funerals.

## THE VILLAGE IDIOT

Normally I'm very patient with people but sometimes the Village Idiot walking on his knuckles makes it to a E-machine and gets to me. So I get an email asking why I would put a checklist on my site for a Bride to ask questions with if the intent of my site is to help new shooters.

My first remark to this nimrod was "are you that naive?" I added "Knowing the type, size, shape, techniques and burial characteristics of landmines laid by an enemy can prevent one's lower extremities from being blown off providing your mine detector worked that day". I call those idiots EMU's. Nothing like burying your head in the sand, only it's a minefield.

If that doesn't explain a Wedding, I haven't got a better explanation.

Furthermore: The questions you see here are all over the Bridal Sections of the Web. Almost every Wedding site, magazine, book, has a way to select a photographer. I am merely echoing what's out there. If you don't have the qualifications a smart Bride is looking for, at least you'll know what they are looking for. Possibly even realizing, you are not in their league. It's a checklist, for what you should be doing.

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## How to Choose a Photographer

What "to ask" should eliminate many problems. The questions here start and really pertain to medium to high end, multi contingent, or structured, moderate to EXPENSIVE, weddings. Not to say a small private affair with a Justice of the Peace doesn't warrant the same careful attention. But being realistic, the \$200 package shooter isn't about to meet the qualifications or demands you would expect from a \$5000 plus affair with assistants and video.

The shooting teams size, capacity, training. Wedding director coordination, planning, appropriate equipment, experience, familiarity, enter into this size affair.

Both size weddings however do require a backup if the primary photographer doesn't make bail, can't start his car, does a financial disappearance act, goes out of business, or fails to show for any other reason.

So take a few of the questions from the selection and see what **your** budget and qualifications are. I think if you used all the questions below you would scare a large percentage of non-ranked Photographers away.

## Simple Questions

- How many years in the business and what are his/her qualifications, certifications, organizations associated with, seminars attended and what other formal training has he had?
- Is this a full time occupation, just a weekend part time job and what do you do the rest of the week?
- Does he or she have a studio or registered place of business with a tax number and the proper business certificate.
- "Have you handled many events of my type and size before"?
- What are the reasons you think we should hire you?
- Will you personally be the photographer for our wedding? Will the person you are talking to be the actual shooter. Some pro's have associates during peak seasons to cover duplicate dates. You want to meet that person and discuss those same topics with the actual photographer. If the party uses his wife as the assistant, generally it's nice to have a woman around the chaos and she can go where the photographer can't.
- Do you carry business insurance? Another excellent question to ask. It tells you a lot about the individual. Many larger hotels with catering and Wedding facilities have a list of photographers with proper insurance and liability coverage. They require it in some instances. It protects them if something goes wrong.
- Find out whom you are dealing with through the better business bureau. Will you be in for a surprise in some cases.
- What's your style, Traditional or Photojournalist. I'm looking for a "photojournalistic photographer"! What is your definition of "photojournalism"? After looking at his or her portfolio did you feel comfortable with what you saw. Here's the problem. No one ever shows you the bad stuff. Only the carefully culled great stuff or what they consider great stuff. Is there a boring repetition in their work?

Another clue about PJ shooters if they show you "their craft". (Words right out of Hollywood) and they have to explain the pictures to you, you have a problem. "Wannabe Syndrome. Ever wonder why it's called "Arts and Crafts". Anyone can make crafts, few can make art.

- How comfortable are you with this person? You will have intimate and stressful moments with this person.
- How does this person fit in with the picture? Simple, does he have a tux for a formal wedding?
- Can you afford this person? Nothing more to be said here except what are his terms. Read what my terms are, they are fair to both parties. What if any Value added options?
- Is he willing to put everything in writing? When will you see your proofs, how long? Is he providing the albums, how much for this, extras, incidentals, time constraints, travel fees and the list goes on. Does he have packages, or shoot by the picture, picture purchased, etc. When will you see the proofs. After it is in writing ask for a copy and you'll study it overnight. Get someone who understands legalese to decipher it. Hidden Costs ? Are there extra fees for staying late, traveling, tolls, parking, and so forth.
- Their Lab, just who are they? Pro Wedding labs have a higher bar as to quality and professional work. They may also use different papers and textures than they find down at the local drug store, Sam's Wal-mart and K-Mart. Their machinery is calibrated to Wedding work where there are more whites and blacks than regular labs who deal with blues and greens of water and grass. The cheapest cop-out is the computer CD-Rom. If you are paying for the photographer shooting CD-Rom disc alone, what exactly will you get, L0-res, HI-res, NEF, RAW, DNG, or any other proprietary formats like PSD from Adobe. If you do not understand what this is all about, get someone on your side who does. Also who did or does the correction or Digital Workflow the newer equipment sometimes requires.
- Some photographers take too long to deliver. This could be GOOD or BAD. There is no reason for this other than poor time management or they sent it to a cheaper out -of -state lab -OR- one of the better busier commercial labs that specialize in Weddings only and knows skin tones and cropping. That's why you ASK who does their work.
- References: Get names and addresses from the photographer and check them out personally. Sisters, brothers and friends don't count. Ask for a few business references that he deals with too. Tells you whether he pays his bills on time. (Bet you never heard of that angle). See if his name is on the public records somewhere. Surprising what this turns up.
- **What format does he shoot in. You have three choices.**
  - Medium format camera systems that produce negatives three times larger than a 35mm. Names like Hasselblad, Bronica and Mamiya are medium format Professional Level Cameras. Larger negatives produce larger prints with more resolution and clarity. Medium format negatives provide better tonal quality and allow retouching.

- 35MM is a smaller format or size and is used by the majority of shooters who prefer volume and fast work. Used primarily by value conscious shooters and value conscious Brides who do not anticipate large prints over 11x14. The cameras are smaller; the flashes are smaller, but OK for most weddings.
- Digital is the latest and greatest and can easily duplicate the 35MM format and some higher end cameras have even entered the medium format realm. Read more in my introduction to digital in another section.  
Unfortunately Digital also means you might be getting a CD ROM for the do it yourself prints. Unless this is a specifically budget wise decision, you are heading in the wrong direction.
- If you go digital you must insist on high resolution files, 300 DPI or the CD-ROM will be only good for viewing on a monitor and CD-ROM as an option is OK but should not be the primary package.

You would think this would drive the costs of weddings down. In a sense it should. Digital saves you the cost of film and processing –BUT- the gear costs four times as much. It has also increased the competition in this arena with the promise of taking good pictures is as easy as pie. So now you have Tom, Dick and Harry now posing as "professionals" and popping low cost CD-ROMS and goodby.

Digital in the hands of an artistic practiced wedding professional is art. Digital in the hands of a hack is still “JUNK”. “The camera doth not maketh the pictures”.

The single most ridiculous question I ever hear in a photo-related question forum starts off with; “What camera did you use, what was the shutter speed and F stop, or what lens was that. It really is a clue to someone being a newbie in the club. It’s simple, all those variables don’t mean a thing as soon as the light, the poses, the backgrounds, the players, the location and a hundred other things change. Put the same gear in that persons hands and you can have a disaster. Just common sense.

Back to the prints. The point here is that quality prints from DIGITAL are printed at .300 Dots per Inch. CD-ROMs for viewing are represented at .72 dots per inch. It is literally four times less resolution. You want to see the work at the printing resolution and that's where the quality is based, not the cartoon show some of these guys deliver, because when you go to print them a .72 DPI photo is ghastly when enlarged.

The real important questions about format are. What are your criteria for choosing what you would shoot with at my Wedding? What would you photograph at my wedding? How do you know how many pictures to take? What makes your photographs better or different than anybody else's? Have you photographed in this hall, Church, Mosque, Synagogue before.

- Does he have backup equipment? Let them tell you they never have problems and don't need backups and you walk out. Simple. He's not what you are looking for.
- Food for the crew. Who eats or doesn't, when and where do they sit etc. This is numero uno on the after the Wedding Report card. Get this settled way in advance. The Wedding is no place to negotiate. This seems to be a bigger problem than you think especially with large weddings and caterers who count by the head.
- Which leads to the following, how many people will cover the event? Is your crew there to work or are they trainees getting practice? I attended one wedding where four trainees were just a pain in the ass, all sat down to a fine meal, and the photographer tried to sell the Wedding couple his associates work and bump the bill. The Bride with a little Chutzpah told him the judge would straighten the whole thing out. She won. It's good to be the niece of an attorney.

# Photo Journalism.

Whereas Digital Photography has changed the "mechanical technique" of shooting Wedding Photography, Photo Journalism tries to change the style of Wedding Photography. So it appears there are two processes we can discuss and there are two approaches to the Wedding stylization.

First the style of photography: Traditional Coverage and Photojournalistic Coverage.

The Traditional Style includes all of the wedding images found in a traditional wedding album. The usual Bride and Groom, wedding party, attendants, ushers, children, family and extended family as well as the traditional happenings at your wedding. These include but are not limited to the music and dancing, garter throwing, cake cutting, limo shots, soft romantic scenes around the reception, staircase pictures and so forth.

The Photojournalistic style relates more to the portrayal and emotional look of the Wedding. It is more storytelling than anything else. Basically free pictures of the affair which means many of the pictures will be just as they happened, no posing or setting up of the participants. It also can be very romantically portrayed using techniques in lighting and blurs, effects created by Photoshop.

In essence, the first type may be carefully orchestrated to produce a traditional Wedding Album following the boundaries set forth by millions of Weddings beforehand. The PJ style provides a more freeware version of the wedding and may get more personal. It is the photographers job to establish the clients wants and needs. I like it down the middle. Get the money shots in the bag, then play reporter. You'll sell twice as many pictures with a minimum of effort.

The Second Part of the Equation is Digital Vs Film : Not really, it's more like manipulation Vs. no manipulation. PJ brought to the table a new OLD approach to wedding photography. Black and White has returned. Combine natural, soft and a little artistic impression and you hold the viewer's eye for quite a while, sufficient enough to allow black and white and it's inherent detail to capture their attention. So digital brought us the process of B&W as another tool but Digital brought us something more important. Instant confirmation of the picture and then it's manipulation in the computer. That was probably the most attractive part of digital.

Again PJ is a STYLE and B&W is a another way to deliver the goods, or technique. It's not just clicking on a plug-in in Photoshop and making Black and White pictures as I have done with the Bridal (See Below) Bad shots are still bad shots but they might have some hope in them after manipulation.

## **PJ denotes a STYLE.**

And requires a lot more talent of the photographer to see and capture intimate and unique moments that tell the story. After all WP is telling a story. The old standard was to take about 120 carefully composed and candid shots at the wedding. You got to know them by heart and in the proper sequence. Most photographers actually had this down to a science using 2 1/4 equipment. Literally down to the last remaining frame on the roll. PJ when combined with unlimited digital changes things.

First let me separate true PJ's from the wannabes. When you see the work of Gary Fong or a Dennis Reggie you see the top of the pecking order in PJ. When you see some of the "PJ" stuff I have seen in the lab, it is the bottom of the termite mound. That's the place where they store the eggs and such.

Really, really, bad and not a credit to the profession. Most looked like they had just tried to copy some of the work that the PRO's had done but were missing a part of the equation. Perhaps it was "balance, the composition, exposure, the subject matter, the angle, and the beauty of the subject". In other words, it was a good idea minus the talent and discipline".

PJ was credited earlier to a single photograph taken by Dennis Reggie in 1996 of the late John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Carolyn Besette Kennedy. That photo, published around the world showed him kissing her hand. The other significance was the fact as news it was shown in black and white, thus opening the door for B&W back into weddings. Nothing wrong with B&W with a decent shot to begin with. Its the poor composition that kills many of the B&W we see that gets turned in for printing. The Wedding couples may assume that B&W means PJ. If you are the shooter and want to mix a few B&W into the traditional shots, nothings wrong with this and you'll see a bright smile on the brides face.

## **The idea behind PJ is to create the story**

And it happens in views and angles and lighting from the way and in the way the events occur with the photographer remaining as indisposed as possible. The claim is in the story telling for a product that is more spontaneous and to those "in the know" more artistic. That is till the parents and other relatives look at the wedding album. It also claims the rebirth of the real candid. That argument still is going on.

And the shooting is prolific. It seems that somehow good PJ requires more input. I hear that it creates a need to take hundreds and hundreds of pictures". It might be relying on the odds to make a good chance picture rather than the talent to see a good picture and capture it. It really depends if a shooter has an eye. Back to good composition 101.

Thus it appears this is another part of the selling game. What it does do is bump the price of wedding and in some areas have doubled the price. As with any process there are those who can perform and do it right and those that don't and hope to get by.

Unfortunately the uninformed bride and consultants measure the cost of a wedding photographer by how may shots he or she will take. When I hear these guys telling me 1500 plus shots are needed to cover a wedding, I cringe.

**Photojournalism, is almost impromptu photography.** It's critics call it a fad and trendy. Many couples are content with the style that this informality generates as they themselves see things differently. They just may be informal people. Like any art form, things may be pushed too far and the work becomes weird. Add a no-talent shooter and the weird becomes absurd. Uneven horizons, obtuse angles and lack of focus add to the effects some claim as artistic. I guess I don't



drink enough to be that artistic.

**I read that the WPPI said a majority of photographers offer this form of WP.** I believe there is a calling and a market for it but with the exception of a few it has been the call of the wild....I think a good blend of the traditional and the PJ approach can make a good package. You cover all the bases that way. It's still open for conversation.

Another group defines Wedding Photojournalism as the documentation of an event without input, coaching, interfering or influencing the outcome of the photographs. We used to call this "candid or the casual shots" taken during the wedding in deference to the posed or setup shots. It will take another hundred years to sort out the small nit points of this last statement. Ask five photographers who do weddings "What is Photojournalistic Wedding Photography and be prepared for six answers". In other words already there are different interpretations of what PJ is.

**Bottom Line:** Photo Journalism is a salient and important part of the Wedding Photographers process just like traditional wedding photography is. When done properly in the hands of a professional with creativity and artisticness it adds excitement and a fresh look to story telling. In the hands of an incompetent, it is a travesty.

**TIP: With digital today we can go far beyond just B&W** as a form of expression. Here is a simple two-stroke shot in Photoshop from one of the wedding shots as shown above. Sometimes a wedding shot shows too much. Abstraction, a technique used can sometimes be very powerful in communicating a message.

Purpose: I make it for the Bride and Groom to send little cards to those who didn't attend but would appreciate hearing the good news. Like former friends and acquaintances. Technique: In Photoshop using duplicate layers keep increasing the contrast reducing the colors in hue saturation till you get what you like.

Using a beige 80 lb. rough stock we print these four up on simple 8.5 x 11 paper. They can then fold them and write a small handwritten message inside. Cost was negligible and certainly appreciated by some of those who got the note. In some stationery stores small envelopes with matching cardstock is available for this project

## WEB DESIGN FOR WEDDINGS

Keep your basic design clean especially if you are a PJ style shooter It's so important when you want to convey a message about your style... on the other hand I would add a few standard traditional formal poses just to say to a prospective client , "I can do that too". Keeps the elders, grandparents, and mantles filled with pictures.

The enhanced color shifted shots are fine but in this competitive arena, one has to touch all the bases"...Wedding trends are like clothes, just cause you put on weight don't throw the other stuff away, sooner or later you lose the weight and things come back in style.



(Your Name and LOGO Here)  
WEDDING CONTRACT

Date of the Wedding: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Photos Needed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Photos Needed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

The Leading Players:

Bride's Full Name:

Grooms Full Name:

Current Home Address:

Point Of Contacts Name:

Day Phone:

Evening Phone:

Cell phone:

Pager:

Brides Parents Name:

Grooms Parents Name:

BRIDE SIGNS HERE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPHER SIGNS HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

## THE CAST AND CREW

<b>TITLE and Name</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
<b>Wedding Coordinator:</b>	
<b>Best Man</b>	
<b>Maid of Honor</b>	
<b>Officiate:</b>	
<b>Caterer:</b>	
<b>Limousine:</b>	
<b>Location Manager:</b>	
<b>Music:</b>	
<b>Flowers:</b>	

## The Rehearsal Schedule

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Start Time:</b>
<b>Shooting: (Yes/No)</b>	
<b>Church Name and Address:</b>	
<b>Directions:</b>	
<b>The Rehearsal Party LOCATION:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Start Time:</b>
<b>Shooting (Yes/No)</b>	<b>End Time:</b>

## The Wedding Schedule

<b>Day/Date of the Wedding:</b> _____
<b>Bride Arrives at Church: Date / Time</b> _____
<b>Ceremony starts at:</b> _____
<b>Ceremony Finishes at: (Approx)</b> _____

**BRIDE SIGNS HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPHER SIGNS HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_

<h2>The Reception</h2>
<b>Reception Start Time:</b> <b>Reception End Time:</b>
<b>Reception Business Name:</b> <b>Reception address:</b> <b>Directions:</b>
<b>Dress Code</b>

**BRIDE SIGNS HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPHER SIGNS HERE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_



# YOUR NAME AND LOGO - SAMPLE CONTRACT (Tools of the trade)

## **Terms and Conditions of this Contract:**

**ENTIRE AGREEMENT:** This agreement contains the entire understanding between *(YOUR NAME HERE)* and the above named Bride and Groom. It supersedes all prior and simultaneous agreements between the parties in both verbal and written communication.

The only way to add or change this agreement is to do so in writing, signed by all the parties. If the parties wish to waive or alter one provision of this agreement, that does not mean that any other provision is also waived.

**RESERVATION / DEPOSIT:** A signed contract and reservation fee are required to reserve the specified coverage. The financial terms of this agreement are explained further on. Failure to provide a reservation fee nulls and voids this contract.

**PRE-EVENT CONSULTATION:** The parties agree to a pre-event consultation before the event date in order to:

- Finalize the actual shooting times, locations, changes, extensions.
- It is further agreed and recommended that at this time any other participants such as the Videographer's be present so all may participate in the structure of the affair. This avoids misunderstandings further down the road. Both the Videographer and the Photographer have a job to do and this is an opportunity to structure the best possible working environment and cooperative atmosphere.
- The Bride and Groom will designate an individual to identify people of whom specific photographs are desired.
- I *(YOUR NAME HERE)* am not responsible for missing shots of those on the VIP list if there is no one to assist in identifying these people, if you failed to produce a list, if the list was stolen, if they didn't show, if they are negative about being photographed, or they can't be located.
- If applicable, the bride and or groom agree to set aside enough time before the ceremony to allow *(YOUR NAME HERE)* to complete pre-wedding ceremony photographs.
- In addition: To allow *(YOUR NAME HERE)* 30 minutes of time after the wedding ceremony to gather people for photographs that could not be obtained during or before the wedding.
- If the bride or groom is late to the point of achieving the desired images from being taken, the *(YOUR NAME HERE)* the photographer, shall not be held liable for lack of time to take desired photographs

**COOPERATIVE SPIRIT:** Both parties agree that the cooperation and communication for the best possible result within the definition of this assignment is the paramount consideration. Thus decisions are restricted to the Bride and the Photographer. Simply



put: I am the sole PHOTOGRAPHER \_ (*YOUR NAME HERE*)\_ for the time allocated and any other terms agreed to in this document. The BRIDE is the sole decision maker at the Wedding, regardless of who is writing the check, advisory boards, in-laws, passers-by, inebriated authority figures and former politicians.

**DESIGNATED APPOINTEE:** Individuals failure to appear or cooperate during photography sessions or for missed images due to details not planned or due to unusual circumstance We recommend that a designated appointee be assigned the duties to assist the photographer to point out important individuals for informal or candid photographs.

**DIGITAL COPYRIGHTS, ARTISTIC PROPERTY:** Final payment for services rendered determines the release of the disc and photographs of the Wedding to the Bride and Groom. No photography may be reproduced in any manner without the explicitly written permission (*YOUR NAME HERE*)\_ which is authorized by final payment. Upon final payment by the Bride and Groom:

- The digital CD-ROM or prints then become the property of the Wedding couple for their personal use and for the purpose of reproduction of said imagery for dispersal to relatives and friends. Images may be used on personal web sites. An acknowledgement to the Photographer is requested and appreciated.

**LIMITATIONS / NEGOTIATED TIME / ADDITIONAL TIME:** The photography schedule and selected locations, equipment, participation pre-discussed is designed to accomplish the goals and wishes of the Bride and Groom in a manner enjoyed by all parties. It is not uncommon for weddings to go longer. Thus overtime is computed at \$75.00 per hour. The Bride and Groom are thereof notified shooting commences at the scheduled start time and ends at the agreed time. If the event goes longer and the Bride wishes an extension, a verbal acknowledgement and signature in the designated area of this contract is sufficient.

**START / STOP TIMES:** The agreed hourly photographic rate starts at the notated time on this contract. Literally the clock starts running at the time indicated. Allowances are made for unusual or catastrophic weather, personal injury, or acts of G-d. Tardiness is not considered an act of G-d. It is usually an act of man. In most horrific events G-d has been right on time.

**CHURCH, RECEPTION, CATERING HALL RULES:** The photographer is limited by the guidelines of ceremony official or reception site management. The Bride and Groom agrees to accept the technical results of their imposition on the photographer. Negotiation with the officials for moderation, changes, adjustments of certain guidelines is responsibility of the Bride and the Photographer (*YOUR NAME HERE*) is to be notified of any changes.

**TRAVEL FEE CALCULATION:** Travel fees are calculated on the normal expected travel time to get to and from the main wedding site from \_ (*YOUR NAME HERE*)\_ office or residence whichever is closer on the wedding date. There is no travel time if the wedding is within 25 miles. Travel time is computed at 20 dollars per hour. Note: at

\$2.00 plus per gallon with gas usage at highway speeds at four gallons per hour, this is reasonable travel time expense.

**INITIAL SITE VISIT:** We do not charge for visits to Pre-Event consultation, rehearsals or location planning and evaluation unless it is out of the local area. see Travel Time. We also would like your permission to do a little pre-shooting so that the participants get used to the camera and photographer. In the past, we have found this an excellent time to iron a few things out, put people at rest, and it usually produces some interesting if not hilarious spur of the moment photography which can be added to the rest of the pictures.

**EXHIBITION:** The bride and groom allow the photographer *(YOUR NAME HERE)* to exhibit selected images resulting from this assignment as an example of my work, for entrance into photographic competitions and to use as sample for other Bridal Photographic opportunities.

**MODEL RELEASE.** The bride and Groom grants to *(YOUR NAME HERE)* its legal representatives and assigns, the irrevocable and unrestricted right to use and publish photographs of the parties or in which the parties or their family may be included, for editorial, trade, advertising and any other purpose and in any manner and medium; to alter the same without restriction; and to copyright the same.

### **GOOD IMAGERY**

In order to ensure that we get good pictures, we sometime go a little further during the formals since they are an essential part of the program. We have to take extra step for what we deem necessary to achieve these goals and that requires the Brides cooperation.

We may use use different cameras, stands, poses and may do several shots of the same thing because of lighting situation: As in the case when a side or backlit stained glass window might have a lot of green in it and the brides dress being white suddenly looks green.. That's when the most common phrase in photography is used most often..."Just one more!". The things that can cause a bad or imperfect pictures are;

Blinkers, distractions in the background ( lighting, two bridesmaids fighting, kids messing with the cake, ) which are not initially seen like waiters just pop in; hair, clothes or props in the way and equipment failures, camera, flash, fails to work as expected. At the last count there are 1,243,592 things that can unwillingly occur. That's why..."Just one more!".

This means you will probably get a few doubles in the album or CD-ROM and this goes in turn with the size of the wedding, amount in the bridal party and duration of the wedding. Also we may choose to change equipment to produce a unique photo or artistry at the discretion of the photographer.

We don't hide our errors from the client. This has been a long time argument in the industry. We overshoot so we may cull the errors due to flash, framing, and focusing (

the three F's of the industry) thus mistakes are also seen and received. This occurrence, is simply due to the laws of mechanical, human and situational errors that cannot be overcome. Usually 10 percent of most wedding shots are throw outs by an experienced shooter. Sometimes we hear 1500-2000 shots at a Wedding. Numbers get thrown around because they mean nothing. I have seen 2000 shots that were given to the Bride by a wannabe Garry Fong that I wouldn't paper a Soviet Gulag with. That's one thing with huge flash cards, digital provides. Abundance of GOOD or abundance of JUNK. It's still the eye and artistry of the photographer.

In most cases 10% waste is considered good.

**LIMITS OF LIABILITY:** It is further understood that in the unlikely event that the photographer is injured or becomes too ill to photograph the event,

- If the situation should occur and a suitable replacement is not found, responsibility and liability is limited to the return of all payments received for the event package.
- (*YOUR NAME HERE*) takes the utmost care and with respect to the delivered product. However, if the disc/ CD-ROM / photographs have been lost, stolen, or destroyed for reasons beyond (*YOUR NAME HERE*) control liability is limited to the return of all payments received for the event package.

**SECURITY DEPOSITS:** In the event of cancellation:

- The security deposit paid is non-refundable.
- If another wedding is contracted for that date the deposit may be refunded by (*YOUR NAME HERE*) if the reasons for cancellation are substantial and verified.
- This holds true for **CHANGE OF DATES:** If the agreed date is problematic and another date is available there is no problem. If there is a conflict the deposit is **NOT REFUNDED.**

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**FEES:**

- Prior to the conclusion of the Wedding the photographer (*YOUR NAME HERE*) will be paid in full for services rendered unless other agreements have been made. (*YOUR NAME HERE*) will retain the rights to the imagery, disc, film, Cd-Roms, et al till at a later pre-arranged date the film and prints will be turned over to the Bride and Groom and payment completion rendered.
- The processing of the Cd-Roms, Disc's Scans should be completed approximately two (2) weeks after event.
- Album creation, scanning of photographs and any extra requests, enlargements, or other items produced under the assignment may take longer due to outside firms processing times.
- Any special shipping costs will be paid for by the client.
- Minimum Hourly rate based on four hours
- Flat Fee vs. Hourly Fee vs. Packages:

<b>FLAT FEE</b>	<b>HOURLY FEE</b>	<b>PACKAGES</b>
<i>Post Fee Here</i>	<i>Post rate Here</i>	<i>Post Package Fees Here</i>

- **FLAT RATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **HOURLY RATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total :** \_\_\_\_\_
- **TRAVEL FEE? Yes / No** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Travel Time:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **HELPER FEES:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **2ND ASSISTANT FEE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **OTHER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AS QUOTED:**

- **Flat Fee** \_\_\_\_\_ **Hourly** \_\_\_\_\_ **Travel:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Client:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# THE BUSINESS PLAN

**YOUR PLAN - It is unique as you are.**

1. The Business Plan. Writing a plan helps you visualize. So write down the following as questions and answer them: Example : What are my goals, financial independence etc.

- Goals
- Identify the strategies
- Financial requirements of your business
- Assets and resources
- Establish a clientele
- Workable timetable
- Comparisons in your area for pricing
- How you will market yourself.

## 2. Make yourself LEGAL:

- **STEP ONE: Secure a legal business identity** with tax- and local licensing applicable to your location. Rules differ by state and parishes, counties and cities. Check the rules that apply to a home based photography business they may be different. Also decide if you are going to be a corporation, a sole proprietorship, a partnership etc. You will need a "DBA" if you call yourself a name other than your own. Like "Aristocrat Photography" hopefully not too many parents named their kids "Aristocrat".

Tax rules state that you can only claim business deductions from your home office if the space where you work is used exclusively and regularly for that business. Kitchen tables and screened-in porches don't count. This is where it pays to have a good accountant to help you establish the business.

- **STEP TWO: Open a business banking account.** Don't mix business with pleasure. Separate your business from any personal finances. Most banks require your licenses and corporate papers if applicable to establish an account. Use it to pay all your business bills and expenses. Starting on a credit card? Have a separate card for your business expenses.
- **STEP THREE: Check zoning regulations:** Some neighborhoods and neighbors like the guy next door "who your dog greeted with a message in a pile" may resent you having company over to your house for commercial purposes. Where we live requires a board of seven to handle all the squabbles that arise from neighbors being neighborly.

## 3. GEARING UP:

- **You should really be well equipped** at this point because you will need all your finance to live on and promote the business. Large expenditures in a new company is paramount to going under unless you are well endowed in the bank.

- **Photographer's Checklist:**
  - Cameras and Lenses
  - Tripods
  - Electronic flash units, studio lights and stands
  - Seamless paper and other backgrounds
  
- **Business Person's Checklist:**
  - Office Equipment such as a desk, chairs, lighting and pleasant surroundings
  - Computers and PRINTERS, both for business (laser) and prints (Ink jet or dye - sub)
  - Telephone system with outside call ins for recordings
  - Faxes and Scanner
  - Storage Areas and lockable are for equipment and privacy
  - File cabinets for client files.
  - Stationary and business cards
  - Flyers about yourself and business
  - Contracts and forms with Logo

#### **4- INSURANCE:**

- Protect yourself with liability insurance
- Protect clients going to your in-home studio, or they might wind up owning your house.
- Equipment indemnity, (If your gear is stolen, if your home is broken into, fire-bombed, flooded) Some homeowner's or renter's insurance do not cover these items. But they might have a rider, ask your agent, be forthcoming, a few bucks in the right place can get you back up again.
- Health and disability insurance in the event that you cannot continue working in your business and you quit your day job. Wait till you see what that costs.

#### **CONTACTS:**

- **Professional Organizations**
  - It's important to join the local chamber of commerce,
  - Various photography associations
  - Professional organizations like Rotary, Moose, etc.
  - Today they call it networking, in the past it was a place to get a few beers and look for business, compare notes, swap a few lies, brag about your golf game and collaborate with other photographers in your area. It seems the most important function it serves today is to add a few initials after the name of your business or icons on your business cards.

- Business Associates: Having a good backup in equipment is important, having a good shooter as a backup if you get double booked or sick is essential in avoiding things like lawsuits. etc.
  - Also know thy labs and printers: You'll need a working relationship with your providers, the internet has made the industry very cold. About as cold as being on the internet. You'll need a good lab. Funny, many of the Wal-Mart and Sams club, Costco and Wal-greens shooters don't hang around long or are destined to the low budget arena. A lab you can make or break you. You are looking for quality, timely delivery, and get first strike or "right the first time".
- **More-on Photographic Magazine Club Professional Organizations.**

Winston Churchill, the great cigar chomping Brit once said: "I would never join a club that would have me as a member"!

And regardless of what they are called, basically organizations are clubs. We all want to be part of something. It all goes back to our primal days when we shared the same cave. It's "belongs-manship". We all want to be recognized and accepted as peers and occasionally dodge the rain and a few roaming saber-toothed tigers.

It's tough today to sort the good from the huge amount of professional organizations that simply merit the individual for such great achievement in the magazines chosen field for accomplishments such as "dues payment".

The simple act of "checking the box for automatic checking or credit card deductions" for dues payment brings accolades of thank you notes and emails plus pats on the back. The usual stickers for your car, business cards with identifying logos and the monthly magazine mostly filled with pages of ads from other guys trying to sell you something.

(If this sounds like the NAPP, that's close enough, but it does have at least one good tip a month)

Some organizations allow special privileges for "lifetime achievement". You paid your lifetime dues up front. Some even have names mentioned at lavish yearly gatherings of the lemmings called conventions. Conventions are like vitamins to club membership. You have peers, bonding, booze, demonstrations and vendors. Lots of vendors. And great speakers.

One prominent speaker with decades of recognized personal achievement turned in a horrifically dumb act of bravado. Actors do that, they steal the moment. Our Hollywood superstar claimed he'll give up his flintlock when they pry it from his "cold dead hands, that's cool". Great advice....I could see some moron facing ten ATF team guys telling them, I dare you.

Six months ago I covered the PRES for a special event with six thousand guests in a

relatively small indoor area. With the proper press and SS venue badges issued by the real authorities, I have open coverage. I ran behind the stage to get to the other side and smack into a TEAM, the A team. Let me tell you, they could pry any damn thing they wanted from me. My G-d, they are fast to respond to stimuli like a guy turning a corner in dimmed light with a 300mm at the ready. I haven't stared at that much hardware since Nam.

And some organizations make it tougher to join because they realize so many have the wrong reasons for joining. The sportshooters.com now have a voucher and letterhead system. Some of the better Wedding groups jury your work and don't just give things away. (few fail most of those tests at the lower levels, .you have to work to get to the top.)

#### Groups and Insurance:

To join a group, just to get insurance for theft makes no sense if you don't have liability coverage. It tells me you are gear related, your toys are the circle of your thoughts. A better mantra is "I'm building a business, related with the proper total coverage's" is part of a good business plan.

A wedding photographer who thinks "if he fails to get image and the Bride gets nothing. He just smiles and say I'm sorry, here's your money back and thinks that's the end of it is foolish". Two guys in Florida found out different. With written contracts and all signed very nicely, thank you. They lost. One was in Broward , one in Tampa. Large payouts. In both cases a little tear shedding and it was all over. Off course the drunken photographer was neatly captured on video and cameras by the guests.

A mere 25,000 dollar judgment had a sobering effect on his life..

#### **There are associations you have to join.**

- o Many states, counties, parishes, planets and galaxies require some kind of business permit to conduct a business. They call it a License. Even if you launch it from your home . Now you have zoning restrictions. To check into.
- o Also another club, called the IRS requires additional income being reported when it exceeds a certain amount like 600 dollars.
- o Certain sales tax organizations require a small form to be filled out and if you don't charge sales tax..."WHY NOT" they ask with the Alfred E. Neumann look on their face. Damned if you do charge damned if you don't report it. In some areas the sales tax people are more feared than the IRS people. One enterprising individual aka sales tax trooper took all the cards at a Bridal Fair and ran the names across the county tax records to see who was a legitimate business. Surprise! In Florida again, they went after everyone who filled out a tax exempt card on film and was not paying sales tax. Gotcha!

*"Are you a member of any photo associations be it... wedding specific or just a photographer association? Like PPA or WPJA? Do you find it helpful or useful in anyway. Do you think*



*your clients even care? Or is it just to stay in the "loop?" I've been tinkering about joining some for a few years now. Just wondered if anyone feels like they get their money's worth for joining"....*

**You will get out of it WHAT you put into it.**

What will joining an organization do for you? Look at your own situation. Am you averaging two profitable Weddings a month? Is this your primary source of income. Do I attend on-going seminars or training. Do I have all the proper licenses and permits? Does the IRS know me as a business. Note: It might even be a deduction, dues paid to a association for business practices...

Ask yourself, Do I do mailouts, soliciations, shows of my work at lobby's banks etc Would it benefit me to show I belong to the Better Business Bureau, another fine club to join but only if you get involved at the meetings and organization levels.

One photographer I know shoots all the new businesses that join the BBB and does a portrait of the owner (for nothing). He has an open invite into 1000 businesses to find work. All new fresh blood in town....

To join to impress your clients is not a good answer. You need clients to impress. Someone who has not contracted with you is not a client. He is a referral or prospect. He becomes a client when he pays you and you perform services.

For some of you newbies in the game, working with a PRO will make you a PRO quicker and pay close attention to the business side of the business. Generally that's where most of the failures in this game take place. Taking the best shooter in town to a good lunch might teach you more in one hour than years of magazine reading.

Bottom line....you'll get out of it what you put in....

**Working at Home and Wives: Another Checklist!**

- **You need to tell your wife, spouse, girlfriend, boyfriend, other** and get them committed to your photography business or just get them committed ( Baker Act)
- Make sure your one room apartment can handle all the gear and that there is ample space to get to the restroom.
- Plan, design and then partially set it up making nothing permanent as this will change 100 times before its over.
- **What space do you really need: (STUDIO)**
  - Studios need a studio for starters
  - Process room or darkroom if you still do B&W film (Fine art stuff, silver prints, etc.)
  - Office Space
  - Storage for props.

- Waiting area for customers as well.
  - Storage
  - Changing area
  - Legally might need a restroom, doubles as changing area
  - Parking
- **What space do you really need: (TABLE TOP OR SMALL PRODUCT SHOTS)**
    - A converted garage or other unused space, allow ten weeks to clean out the garage.
    - A small setup in a corner of the room.
- **What space do you really need: (PORTRAITS)**
    - A studio
    - A room with North light unless you live in the south and then it's called South light
    - Soft curtains on the window to diffuse.
    - Most backdrops are about seven feet wide so you need about 8 feet wide and 10-12 feet depth to shoot in to get full length. at least eight feet on the ceiling.
    - Many just close in their garage, finish the wood studs and joists with drywall, paint the whole thing white as snow, put in a wall air conditioner, hang the lights from the rafters and eliminate light stands so you don't trip. Be sure to get the proper PERMITS to change a garage. In our area one fellow took a five thousand dollar fine for 500 dollars worth of work because of no permit. (10 times the amount in some states is the rule) then they got him for no business permits. I was thinking to myself "You can't live two doors down from the code enforcement guy and let your dog....."

### **Photography and business.**

Everyone in this business who has survived (It has a large failure rate) had something in common. The winners were good business people. To make a living in photography you need a little more than a good eye or talent you need business savvy. You need to know about financial, legal, management and marketing aspects of running a photography business. But first you have to get it off the ground and we'll start with pencil and paper.

### **Specialization:**

Ask yourself What kind of photography do you want to do? This is the first question: Write it down and grab your local phone books and see how many in your area do that and is there a market for it.

Photography really has no borders, it's limitless but in some areas very specialized and some type of photography may be non productive work. A gamut of players frequent certain areas of photography, some good, some horrible and some outright frauds. The constituents consist of

part-timers working the wedding circuits or freelancing for the local paper to a few heavy hitters commanding big dollars.

The photographer starting out operating as a home-based business can work on a broad range of subject area, from portraits, weddings, product photography, freelancing or stringing as a photojournalist or a publication photographer.

Professional photography can be broadly divided into two categories: I call it Working on Commission photography and the fill work called "stock photography".

### **Working on Commission photography:**

- Products - Advertising - Fashion
- Portraits
- Weddings
- School functions
- Corporate Events - Promotions - Brand Openings -
- Publications ( In-house ) and other images shot on assignment.

Most photographers spend their entire career shooting on commission. It puts food on the table. Knowing you will get paid for performing after the contract has been satisfactorily completed.

### **Selling Yourself**

For one thing if no one knows what you do, how will they know to come to you. So, you have to market or sell yourself to the public; there is no business without marketing even if it is simply "word of mouth". "Word of mouth" is when some one is marketing for you.

**Marketing is a business** and there's more to it. It not just about placing an ad. It's an understanding of where you are, where you want to be and what to do to make it happen.

- You are building a reputation and following up with clients builds bonds
- Locating potential clients and potential competitors
- Getting the word out about your business in your area
- Sourcing your target market. Who is your market, do I have the capacity, logistics, talent, potential, pricing and marketing practices to go heads up with the competition..

### **Tools-**

- **You'll need a portfolio of your work.** Less good is better than lots of mediocre. It should demonstrate your skills and versatility. Your portfolio will be shown to

prospective clients.

- **Toot your horn if needed:** Announce any significant achievement such as courses or seminars attended.
- **Volunteerism is good.** A topical subject like environmental, school, charity.
- **Teach classes** on a workshop basis for beginners. Even at your local camera store
- **Get out of the house or studio:** Exhibit if you can in local galleries, museums, business establishments, bank lobby's or a waiting room's.
- **Phone Books and the yellow Pages gets mixed reviews** but like anything you can't be without them. i
- **Direct mailing campaign;** client lists may be bought off the web by different demographics.
- **Brochures:** Make one about yourself
  
- **PRICING:**

There's an expression in business, set your pricing too high and you might price yourself out of the market. Set your pricing too low and make an enemy of all your competitors. Neither is really good for business. The W.P.P.I. and the P.P.A. have long forums on the subject and then you have to determine what you are worth.
- **How to Charge:**
  - Daily Fee
  - Hourly Fee
  - Package fees
  - Overtime
  - Event Fees
  - Expenses plus Fees (props rentals, locations hair and makeup stylists, models, wardrobe, optional transportation such as camels and donkeys, hotels, motels and tents and the blessing of the local Witch Doctor)
  - Travel Fees
  - Assistant Fees
- **The key in determining your pricing strategy** is to make sure that your prices meet your minimum profitability objectives. Here's the catch "yet are competitive in your local area".

# THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

## **The Wedding Guys, Film and Digital**

Is film really dead yet? I spoke with several Wedding photographers who are at both ends of the spectrum. That way I could see if the digital revolution or evolution has impacted cross the board.

They range from astute professional business people with studio, secretary, solid bookings, and a small gallery to weekend warriors looking to supplement their income. The high enders supplement weddings with some event work and portraits. None of the weekend warriors had a facility and few had a business license or work permits as their location was their home. This was not their primary income. But I'll guarantee in one circle it was listed for taxes. He had a run in with the IRS, they got him over film purchases not paying sales tax and one thing led to another.

What were the pros using? Surprise, many were still using FILM. 2nd. Surprise: A large percentage are "still" using Medium format, Lumedyne's and Quantum flashes, pole lights, and did I say it before, "making good money". Though all admitted it was getting tougher from all the competition from the low end.

Why did they stick with film? Here are the reasons given in their words...

- Their investment in equipment, training, confidence, and redundancy. "I know and understand the equipment I'm using and have confidence in it, it's proven; I have triple

redundancy and added medium equipment price wise is at an all time low. He said good for the buyer, bad for the seller".

- I use Medium format so I have no restrictions on size. Anything is possible.
- They know their craft, the front end, posing, exposure, design, style, and their client's preferences and spend very little time on the back end. Cropping and basic exposure are done first in the head and transferred to the camera.
- The lab has it fairly easy with their consistency and close working relationships and with products like Fuji 160s and 160c. Newer lab equipment allows fast scans and offers the best of both worlds. The lab does a fine job. I'm out getting more business, not glued to a computer correcting my mistakes. I pay the lab for that and my costs are the same maybe 40 cents a print differential for film and development. The C-41 at \$2.50 a roll and the cost of the film at \$4.00 a roll. With 10 rolls at 60.00 difference on a 3000 dollar job who cares? I just offer the negatives to the Bride at \$100.00 additional.
- Of course the customer is paying for the PRO lab, and the ensuing quality of their work. These guys charge for what they do and by establishing a clientele, offer service, and their clientele is interested in results.
- I get a lot of time off. The lab is doing the post processing.
- The quality of the print is better with film. (Very common answer, they didn't like the "look" of digital.
- I know my clientele. I take care of them. I know I'll get referrals and good clients generally send you more of their peers; It could only happen with a strong clientele and good business practices. I think that's the key and another thing one mentioned was to 'Be true to thyself'. Good profits come from good work and good business practices.
- Then he hit me with a line I wrote in another article. If I have to do one wedding a week and there are 52 opportunities in a year to make an income, I sure want to NET 2500 a week to cover my studio, bills and lifestyle. If I did \$500 dollar weddings, I would be making 24,000 a year. I can't afford low end work. That I understood.

Now, the other side of the story. These were mostly the part-time shooters. They were much diversified as a group because there were some good part timers and well, the other guys. A few still were sticking with film. Most were leaning to digital and here were their reasons;

- Cost of film. In their budget realm, sixty dollars was a lot of money for film per job and if they could put that in their pocket, it paid for their gear.
- Most didn't offer prints but offered a CD-ROM as testament to their work. They never bothered with prints. They shot the affair, did some cursory Photoshop magic though most used cheaper programs and burnt a CD. That was the extent of the lab work. When I asked them about DPI, profiles and saturation of the CD they offered their clientele, a

few offered HI-RES and instructions and a few had blank stares.

- Most were newer shooters and just breaking into the business or a career change and knew they had to be competitive to "make a reputation for themselves". Few had a business plan, the majority did have business cards and a few even had a decent website. Most though did not wish to discuss the word county licenses and taxation.
- Few had enough business to make it full time and couldn't afford to do so. This was the most common reason I got for the part timers. Many held their day jobs because of insurance, workman's comp, retirement etc. Some who made 1000 dollars a month part time would have to pay that for health insurance alone. Add liability and a few other costs an it becomes untenable. So the answer to the question about film brings more to the table than just convenience of digital. There are many factors involved.
- Main reason they shot digital. Age, some had never shot film....

# The Digital Workflow ( Simplified )

**The Digital Workflow** can be described as a recipe for your shooting style, abilities and equipment. The most popular expression used today is "process". You establish the parameters you use and then follow the path. The process entails everything from the media you select to the particular quirks your equipment has.

For example, Nikons expose so as to preserve the shadow detail in processing. Many Nikonians add .3 to .5 in their cameras exposure settings to compensate for this. Simply a step in the process. Processes put together in a greater plan create what we call **workflow**.

## **Media.**

The media you use is important and you should only trust quality media for the safe keeping of your pictures. What makes good media? Quality and consistency, and how you take care of the media.

## **Download**

The transfer of the images from your camera to your computer. Most common methods are USB, Firewire, Card Reader. Which is best for you? And when you do transfer them, in what order, how do you categorize them are parts of the process you originate and "stylize for your self..

## **Organize and Browse**

OK the photos are in the computer. What categories do you further wish to save them in? What software does the best job. There are as many types of software as there are types of cameras.

## **Improve, Enhance , Create**

Enhancing a photo can be as simple as removing a blemish or improving the color of a photo. The incredible software written today allows you Hollywood magic right on your own desktop. It allows you to crop, edit and Color manage your work. It comes at a price. time, a stiff learning curve and proper computer equipment. Your colors have to match on the computer screen to your printer otherwise you are chasing your own tail and wasting paper and ink which is very expensive. Another control of the software is physical size and clarity of the photo, sharpening, sizing and resampling. There are programs and on line companies that allow poster sized prints from your files for those special occasions that warrant a poster.

## **Distribution**

Digital photography allows many means of distribution Including prints, posting to your website for others to see and email, and there are web sites that allow you to post for free or a small nominal charge. You can even have your photos critiqued on line.

## **Media Failure -**

St. Murphy- Lawes mentioned here before is the Patron Saint of all Photographers. Not sometimes but often things go wrong and media cards are no exception. You can recover corrupt or erased files using simple software from Symantec and others.



## **Archiving - Backups**

But the most important thing you can do is preserve the basic files you have captured by saving them to two places. A CD burner is an essential part of the process. I run card to hard-drive to CD burner the minute I return to my desktop or my laptop on the road. My desktop is equipped with a raid card so I actually retain three of the originals. Programs like Photoshop Elements or Photoshop CS with their browsing abilities, allow incredibly flexible ways to index thorough batch processing and archive your collections.

# **EQUIPMENT SHOPPING**

## **The PRO VERSION and Buying An ENTRY LEVEL BURGER**

Another peeve, I love it when I see on the packaging or hear this is the PRO-VERSION! So what? Everything today in the camera store is labeled the PRO-VERSION. Funny none of the stuff is labeled the amateur version. So if all of the stuff is PRO, why bother labeling it? So we needed another word for amateur or for the starter level camera.

We have a winner! We'll call it the "entry level camera". We are being nice. The stripped down economy-box wouldn't sell if we called it the non-pro camera. This "entry-level" term originated from jobs that were menial so instead of "menial hire's", we showed them how to open the door to success with the "entry-level" position.

See how nice it sounds! "Entry Level Floor Maintenance, Entry Level Car Polishing and Detailer or for those who dine at Steak and Shake the "Entry Level Burger Director".

On that note, returning from the PMA convention, I exited the interstate with my stomach growling, it was lunch time. I looked at my choices. I was sick of Big Macs; with tartar sauce and ketchup on meat, Taco Bell's Cryptic menu; even after I order I have no clue what I'm getting and Wendy's stale fare; Forget fingers, the mold on the salad bar is enough for me. I decided to try Steak and Shake. I hadn't been in one since I took some courses at the U of I in Champagne Urbana, Ill. back in the sixties.

The appeal there was Friday nights, cool shakes and some fair shakes from those cute U of I girls. Here the appeal was starvation and a hearty meaty smell. I ordered the basic 1/4 lb. gourmet burger, fries and a coke.

It was the specialty of the house for a modest 7 dollars and change. Since I was alone, I sat at the "bar" and in full view of Evan aka Dr. Kevorkian, the beef butcherer who skillfully took this hockey puck of meat from an open box and beat the son of a puck to death. I mean he killed it and cooked it to death in two minutes. Then scraped the remains and proudly dropped the cremation on the bun and finished the presentation with onion, a transparent piece of tomato and some lettuce a rabbit would of walked away hungry from.

I wanted to go to the car and get my camera. I felt part of the magic of the alchemy of the moment. How did he do that, to take that hockey puck of pure prime STEAK meat, not the

ordinary burger fare the others had, and make it so thin, I have scraped more off my shoe on a bad day.

For a company to claim things about sizzle, they aren't misleading you. They are striking hard and fast at their strong point. In their case sealing the juices in with all that racket and attention is part of the sell. You are so raptured with the words STEAK and SIZZLE that you fail to look at the content or value for what you pay.

Like anything else burgers are no different than the camera manufacturers. They sell the sizzle, you have to be smart enough to know what you are getting for your dollar, is it hamburger or steak.

### **Start with the Big FOUR If you are considering a DSLR**

Just as it would appear many of the same teams wind up in the playoffs year after year there are consistent winners. Shall we say "survivors" in the camera game. It is an industry of absorption and cooperative enterprise (meaning, we make it, you put your name on it, you sell it).

I call the winners the big three. In the DSLR game Nikon, Canon, Fuji come to mind. Kodak passed the point of no return, that is no financial return and Oly and the others are reinventing the wheel with the 4/3 camera.

## **BUYING A CAMERA**

### **THE CAMERA BUYER:**

From Point and Shoot, to bells and whistles, there is a myriad of cameras to select from. The most popular are the limited use point and shoots or the "no-brainers" of the camera industry.

In the medium price range (800-1000 dollars) some of these P and S's have fairly sophisticated lenses, they are feature laden and with the exception of interchangeable lenses offer good to excellent quality.. Many pro shooters keep one around or have one of these as a backup-backup. They are also within the price range of a DSLR sans lens.

Sooner or later someone will graduate from the P&S level when they need to produce more interesting or complex imagery because of the availability of the wider and longer lenses. If one merely wishes to use one roll of film a year to cover a vacation, Thanksgiving, Christmas and a birthday party, stop now, you would be wasting your time going any further.

We will be addressing the next level of photography through the use of an SLR Type Digital camera known as a D-SLR.

### **CAMERAS are purchased by Yin, Yang, Moe, Larry, and Curly..**

There is as much as diversification in camera design, makes and models as there are types who use them. BUT reality tells us we are all exposing a light sensitive electronic material digitalizing a subject of interest and retaining this for visual information at a later date. It has appeared to me (over forty years worth) that we can break it down into three larger categories of camera

ownership.

**Shooters** take pictures, and are interested in the art of Photography. He or she understands there is more to this than just pushing a button. Photography is a tool, a very powerful tool. It is also a form of expression. The real shooter is a hunter and thief. He selects the quarry just as a hunter would view the herd looking for the prize. And he will steal that moment of time for himself.

**The Snap Shooter** is just that. His level of expertise was achieved when he opened the box and got the camera charged and the card loaded in right after three attempts.

**The Bull Shooter** is more interested in the tools. Bull Shooting is a viable hobby though only it is very expensive. Unfortunately the technique of bull shooting is based on what you own rather than what you know. The Bull shooter will have more explanations to make and is usually seen running off to buy another camera or system next week. He truly believes the camera is the key.

He's the guy with the latest and greatest and nothing hanging on the walls. He can quote the relative aspherical glass densities from the production run of Nikon glass from the week of July 3rd by the second shift. **WARNING:** He is not the one to coach you on what to buy for yourself. You will be broke and have a new "buddy" to talk shop with and still not know a thing about photography. Besides, whatever he talks you into today, he will not have tomorrow.

### **CAMERAS and SALESMAN**

Since the demise of the camera stores owned by independents, beware of the friendly "salesman" in chain stores. Some are active shooters, have strong beliefs in their chosen field and like working in the camera store.

Then the other kind. Their morality is based on the various spiffs provided for by the manufacturers. The salesman gets 5.00 for selling the older model, the discontinued version or the old inventory that's on the pay now, no float list. I call them "rappers", closers or what, they spell it "wrapper". May we wrap it up for you? He or she is also the smooth well versed on their house products smooth talker. They get classes on this stuff. In a heartbeat will talk you out of the manufacturer's prime lens and sell you the Quandolfo 29-84mm all purpose special coke bottle glass edition. His morality just earned him the five dollar spiff and you got a coke bottle.

### **CAMERAS ON THE WEB**

There are deals galore and crooks galore. For every responsible well run E-Commerce enterprise there is another group who are bait and switch thieves. For safety's sake we recommend your local dealer and if you do go on-line go to:

- **B&H in N.Y.** <http://www.bhphotovideo.com/bnh/controller/home>
- **Adorama in NY.** <http://www.adorama.com/>

Both are rated very highly and been in business for decades. These are the GOOD guys.

But some in the mail order business were not so reliable. Almost forty years ago some enterprising individual started the mail-order camera business. One of the earliest was Cambridge Photo who originated the unique sales marketing scheme known as "shorting" or package breaking.

Today this is only one of the scams used by the store-front crew located in the Big Apple although there have been reports of a few locations doing the same things in other parts of the country.

"Shorting" Usually a manufacturer ships the new camera KIT with lens, strap and those nice plastic caps to protect the front and rear of things. They separate the kit. When these guys advertise a Canon IV body, that's what you get, a body, not the kit. They advertise it bare-bones and cheaper than anyone else. It's called "low-balling", a technique used in the car business. They break up the boxed units and sell it part by part. You call and the pitch begins. Would you like the matching strap, lens, batteries and caps?....followed by some enormous freight and handling bill. But in most cases you want it so bad, you bend, diversion and credit cards do this to you. Also called "bumping".

"Bait and Switch" is another technique. Lets say in a Nikon N65 kit, Nikon ships the lens, camera, strap and battery. They part it and advertise the Camera with the "better Quandolfo 28-135 which the sales agent tell you has better resolution and lists much higher than the Nikon basic lens and he'll save you money too. Yea right.....If you are stupid enough to think, this guy is your pal, then I want to sell you the water rights for under the Brooklyn Bridge, as we all know the last guy did buy the Bridge. The Quandolfo probably cost all of twenty five dollars and is made from reconstituted coke glass. Meanwhile the lens really shipped by Nikon will bring eighty dollars. A sixty five dollar bump.

The other technique is if you don't fall for the above games, and they know they will lose money is the "it's on order, we'll ship when we have it". Johnny Mathis used to sing "The Twelfth of Never'. That's when you'll see, you'll cancel before.

Many of these stores are not really stores at all and really don't carry an inventory. After you are "bumped" they'll go and find the thing you want. If you cut their phone lines, they could close shop and be opened up in another storefront in a matter of days. Several are owned by one individual. If you go to the website [www.pcprice.com](http://www.pcprice.com) some don't even have information about the company as afar as who really owns them. Nice to know when your camera breaks in the tenth month and you find out the warranty was only thirty days because it came from Fugastishtan or Outer Croznivia.

Gray and Grayer: There are two categories of cameras that these guys will sometimes try to sell you. "Gray market" is a camera product brought into this country by someone other than the certified legal importer. Genuine Nikon come into the USA as Nikon USA. Some companies have their own buying concern direct from Nikon. B&H does this and they back it up with their own parts and service. This line of Nikon is made for the same US market specs and is OK to buy from B&H or Adorama.

But "Fantastic Cameras, Digital Sounds and Swedish Smorgasbord" in Brooklyn does it different. They buy them in the Euro market, big place loose borders, lots of black market and ship them here. That's the "grayer market". In reality you might not have a warranty at all. There's simply more than one way to get a camera into the US and some of it is really risky business. This is really done a lot in the film industry some of the Kodak film never making it to the boat to go to Europe.

Buyer Beware and if it seems too good to be true it usually is.....

Josh Old' Buddy ... You did the right thing because one day you will be great wedding shooter because of your passion about it.

Just don't go cutting off an ear or anything like that to prove it. Too hard to get in museums these days and ears tell you when you need a haircut if nothing else.

I appreciate the comment you made about me being tough on newbies from the articles I write about. This being a tougher business than their one minor success's will indicate. Good soldiers don't tap-dance in minefields.. Sooner or later.

And it's not the competition; I care about, I'm retired, with 400 good weddings under the belt. I've seen it. I care too about the how some of the competition is killing those who have vested lives in this game and really do share the passion and do a good job. And a year later you never hear from the newbies, or see of them again, but the damage is done. Just cut out the Wedding section of your Yellow pages and save it till next year. In some places a 25% change is normal in an area.

I related it to the whole process of automation. You know when you own a lab that does do both amateur and professional work ( we did E6, c41, R4 to 30 inches, B&W and Chroma work, direct slide to print) you get to see trends that passersby's often miss. I saw the good and the bad the PROS and the SCHMOS.

We started seeing less Pro Work and more from some new names. And the new names were handing out CD-ROMS and the Brides were coming in with them to get prints made. (This was after the famous Reggie shot of Kennedy)

Oh boy!. Talk about the onus on our store. If the work was crap we got blamed for not spending two hours correcting a 39 cent print. Poor camera cropping, underexposed, color shifts from fluorescents, the list is too long here to post. And this was in the infancy of digital printing, the SENA tubes were just coming out and Photoshop was up to number five.

Some so bad, I called it 600 of 600 bad. All available light, and blurred. Not one formal shot, bra shots and boot laces and bad ones at that. Listen I know the difference between blurred and soft focus, really garbage work. \$1500 dollars worth of nothing.

They just couldn't print, and not even close to our color space, horrendous color shifts from fluorescents and OUT of FOCUS. So we tried to go B&W to calm the bride down, by killing the shifts and converting the files. It was the first time I watched a mother and daughter cry so hard, I honestly thought I needed to get the paramedics. HISTERICS and chest holding. I mean bad, stopped up the whole operation, no work getting done. Like I needed this.

And P\*ssed off Brides and Mommas really venting on us and I started to get a little hot about being dumped on by the photog. Believe me in forty years of that business I bit the bullet a lot of time to cover someone's arse.

Like I said we couldn't win. I offered to drive them over to a friend's lab to run a few test prints, that was the B PLAN, get them out of my store, and the work turned out worse at his.

After that I said "What the hell am I getting into? This is between him and her and I'm getting all the grief. Yes, some of us do care about others and we try to help. Some times we win and sometimes we get crapped on.

I knew after that this guy wasn't sending me any more work because I intended to tell him not to. Three strikes and you're out...

It gets worse, it came down to them going after him in court, and I might add this was not a BRIDEZILLA, just a kid whose big day was shattered by a wannabe who BS'ed his way and 1500 dollars out of them.

I was glad when he returned their money; I really think he saved his own life. The father and the groom came into the store soon after "following up and talking a lot about baseball.....and bats". It's an honor thing with some cultures.

It never went to court though you guessed it, I got nailed for a one hour deposition. I guess he figured return the 1500 and not get additional fees nailed on.

Guess who got to shoot the re-run. Guess who got paid and made a friend. . I took the couple, we got the TUX place to rent at half price (after threatening to go elsewhere) We spent 500 of it on that and I got paid close to 500 for the day, more than my day fee at that time. Got a limo for two hours and just did the bridal party in great locations around the city and that's how "2nd Chance for Romance " Weddings on Location got started. We redid what others screwed up. Today, Photoshop CS is easier.

Almost everything that happened to you will happen to some of these newbies, how they react and handle the situation will tell you whether they will survive or not. Funny part is a lot of what you mention is in my hand book which is free to all at FM if they email me.

“The DEVIL WORE BLACK AND WHITE”

**“BOOT CAMP FOR WEDDING SHOOTERS”  
OR HOW NOT TO GET THE BOOT**

And a few other titles....