

What About a Weekday Wedding?

By Bill Schmick

If they had their choice, most couples would want to get married on a Saturday. The problem is that there are just so many Saturdays in a year, and tying the knot is a crowded trade this year.

Weddings, like so many other events that involve community gatherings, have suffered mightily during the pandemic. Postponements were about the best a couple could hope for during the worst of the COVID-19 crisis. Since then, bottlenecks, supply and labor shortages, not to mention the isolation required to safeguard against the coronavirus itself, have plagued wedding planners continuously. But as virus fears begin to fade, there is suddenly a mad rush to get hitched.

A look at wedding statistics, according to WeddingWire.com, which follows nuptials data, reveals the average cost of a wedding in 2021 was \$22,500. That number is supposed to rise to \$23,517 or more in 2022. Last year saw an increase in weddings from the dismal lockdown year of 2020. In 2022, more couples will be getting married than at any time since 1984, with estimates exceeding 2.5 million.

Underneath these figures is the story of a wedding industry that had suffered steep financial losses from the 2020 season. Many of this year's estimated 2.5 million weddings are simply rescheduled from 2020-2021 postponements. During the last two years, the industry, like so many others, has had to cope with, and then adjust to, the costs of the pandemic. For example, increased safety precautions, such as temperature checks, sanitation stations, and spacing concerns have reduced the space available while increasing manpower and health safeguard requirements. In addition, vendors and venues were hit with a vast array of higher costs for everything from caterers to personnel, flowers, paper products and much more.

What this means for the average couple, who may have been waiting for a year or two, may be a severe case of sticker shock. Adding insult to injury, competition for popular locations, dates, photographers, DJs, and even wedding gowns makes for a wedding planning nightmare. To just get married somewhere at some time during the year is a win-win. Obviously, making key decisions now, without delay, should be at the top of the list for engaged couples.

On the cost side, there are things couples can do to keep expenses down, starting with hiring a competent wedding planner who knows how to cut costs. You can also reduce guest count and share expenses with another couple who are getting married at the same venue or in the local vicinity and who can share certain items like flowers. Finally, choose a venue that offers some flexibility on things—lower minimums on food, beverages, and smaller numbers of guests. That venue may be harder to come by if you are planning a weekend wedding.

Weekday weddings, therefore, may be just the ticket to keep costs down while also getting most of what couples want. That is why a lot more couples are seriously contemplating a weekday wedding. Weekday weddings are expected to rise by about 2% in 2022, according to a survey by TheKnot.com. In the destination wedding category, 13% of weddings took place on weekdays in 2021. Thursdays seem to stand out as the weekday most coveted by couples planning either local or destination weddings. A Thursday allows for a long weekend of activities for guests.

A weekday wedding, in general, provides a lot more flexibility around dates, especially when it comes to booking a dream venue. It may also come with a

discount on everything, from the site itself to the prices various suppliers normally charge. Most venues also offer added extras on weekdays, including things like reduced minimum spends and complimentary extras, such as arrival cocktails, upgraded beverage options and side dishes. There will also be much less competition for photographers, bands, make-up artists and hairdressers. If you are planning a destination wedding, hotels and airfares are less expensive as well. You can also expect a smaller guest list and, therefore, a more intimate affair.

But will your invited guests agree to come on a weekday? My guess is that more than you think will say yes. Who knows, a day off from work may be just what they need. After two years of remote work, they have probably built up a lot of paid time off or annual leave. And after so much enforced isolation, many more than you might expect may be up for a wedding with friends they may not have seen for a year or two. Destination-wise, I would love a Thursday wedding in Costa Rica right now. How about you?

Bill Schmick is registered as an investment advisor representative of Onota Partners, Inc. (OPI), in the Berkshires. Bill's forecasts and opinions are purely his own and do not necessarily represent the views of OPI. None of his commentary is or should be considered investment advice. Direct your inquiries to Bill at 413-347-2401, or email him at bill@schmicksretiredinvestor.com. Investments in securities are not insured, protected or guaranteed and may result in loss of income and/or principal.

Fishing and Hunting

(Continued from page 12)

Linda has heard many Tom Kelly stories during our marriage, and not long ago I learned after his retirement from Scott that he became a well-known and respected author of wild turkey hunting books. Linda and our son Eric managed to surprise me with one of Tom's 24 books this Christmas. The title is *The Tenth Legion*, and I started reading it Christmas Day. I could hear Tom's voice telling me his turkey stories some 57 years ago. It was a magical experience.

Tom was 14 years my senior when I worked for him. I am now 80. As I closed the last page of the book, I decided I needed to know more about Tom. Internet work led me to his daughter in Chevy Chase, Maryland. I worked for Tom in 1964-65 and I knew a daughter was born in 1967, when I was in Nigeria. I figured she would know nothing about me, but I called the number. Incredibly, I had found the right person, and we had a wonderful phone call. I learned Tom was still living at age 94 and doing pretty well. I asked if she felt it would be OK for me to call Tom after all these years, and she gave me his number.

I called him the next day, and we erased 57 years of separation in an hour and fifteen minute call. I have since called him about once a week. We talked about his books, forestry, Alabama geography and, of course, wild turkey hunting and the life of the birds. Tom has sent me two of his books with best wishes and autographed. I have found two in the Yancey County Library and have received them on inter-library loan and read them.

With some luck, I have a dream to somehow get Tom Kelly down to Beaufort County so we can hunt turkeys this April or May. I already have four farms lined up for our hunt. Wish me luck in this endeavor. After all, Tom says he no longer buys green bananas for an understandable reason—he turns 95 in May.

Tom has a web site, TomKellyInc.net, and if you would like more information from me, text me at 252-944-9863 or email rcs@kamlar.com. You do not have to be a turkey hunter to really enjoy his writing. Since Christmas I have enjoyed six of his 24 books. But, remember, I am a turkey hunter so I am always out to learn more about wild turkeys.