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# Steer clear of butterflies and bullets on your wedding day

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*When he isn't making millions laugh with his humor, he plays in a literary rock band called Rock Bottom Remainders. Other band members include Stephen King, Amy Tan, Ridley Pearson, and Mitch Albom. He and his wife, Michelle, live in Miami with their two children Rob and Sophie.*

**By DAVE BARRY**
*Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)*

It's wedding season again. You can tell because the average bridal magazine currently weighs more than the average bride.

Bridal magazines are massive because they carry enormous amounts of advertising designed to convince the bride-to-be that her wedding will be a hideous disaster if it costs less than a nuclear aircraft carrier. "If your parents have any money left over for retirement, you have FAILED," that is the message to brides from the U.S. wedding industry.

There are no magazines for grooms, of course. The groom's sole wedding responsibility is to arrive at the ceremony wearing pants and not actively throwing up. Everything else is up to the bride, who must make thousands of critical wedding decisions, such as: Should she invite all her relatives, or just the attractive ones? Where should the guests sit? Should they shoot firearms into the air?

On that last question, my advice is: No. I base this on an Associated Press story, sent in by many alert readers, concerning a wedding last October in Serbia, which, as you are no doubt aware, is a country located somewhere. The AP story, which I swear I am not making up, begins as follows:

"In an apparent first, wedding guests shooting off celebratory rounds in central Serbia brought down a small aircraft, local media reported Sunday."

You read that correctly: Wedding guests "shot down a plane." The AP states that "Shootings and fatalities are frequent at Serbian weddings because of the centuries-long tradition of blasting away with firearms in celebration."

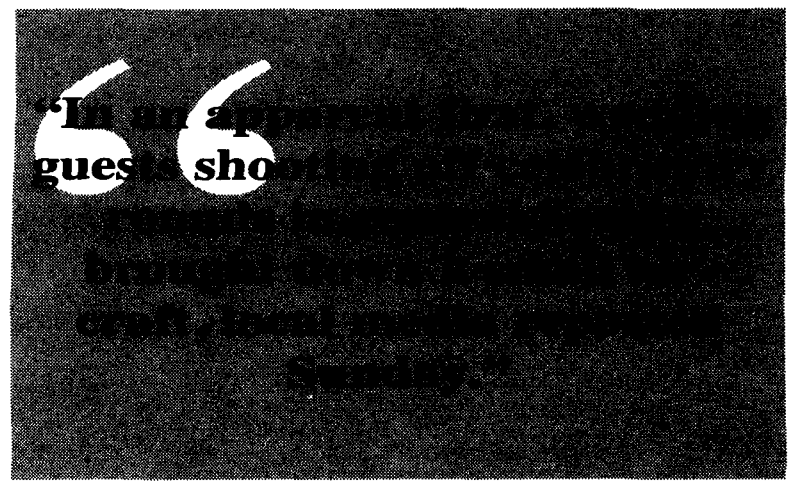
Now, I have been to some exuberant wedding receptions, including one where a good friend of mine - whom, out of respect for his privacy, I will identify here only as "Joseph DiGiacinto, 235 Main Street, White Plains, NY 10601" - waded into a large fountain and attempted to overthrow, via hand-to-hand combat, a religious statue. But as an expression of joy at the union of a man and a woman, this pales by comparison with shooting down aircraft.

Fortunately, the two people in the plane survived. But this should serve as a reminder to brides of the importance of discouraging reception guests from discharging their firearms unless they have a good reason, such as that the band vocalist is attempting to perform "I Will Always Love You" in the official Whitney Houston Diarrhea of the Vowels version ("And IIIIIIIeeeeeIIIIIIIII, will alwaaaaays love yoooooeeeeeeeeeoooooooooooooouuuuuu-ueeeeeeeeeoooooo" BANG)

Speaking of things going bang: We need to straighten out a common wedding misconception concerning rice. Somehow, a rumor got started that you should not throw rice at the bride and groom, because if birds eat the rice, it swells up in their stomachs, and they (the birds) explode.

Well, guess what? According to the Internet - and if we can't trust the Internet, who the hell can we trust? - birds do NOT explode from eating rice. Avocados, yes; that is exactly why we do not throw avocados at the bride and groom. But rice is fine, except of course for the carbohydrates.

Unfortunately, many brides believe the exploding-bird myth, and so, as an alternative to throwing rice, they have come up with a new, and truly alarming, tradition: Releasing live butterflies at weddings. I am not making this trend up. There are butterfly-breeding farms that ship boxes of butterflies, at about $10 per head of butterfly, to weddings all over the country. That's correct: We have reached the point, in this once-great nation, where people are "paying to have insects at their weddings." What's next? Colorful snakes?



I have here an e-mail from an alert reader who actually participated in a wedding butterfly release. This reader, who asked to remain nameless, offers this chilling account:

"... it was undoubtedly the creepiest thing I have ever done. The butterflies were kept in tiny, tiny boxes and we had to stand there looking cheerful as they frantically tried to escape those tiny, tiny boxes, practically flying away (box and all) in the process. Some, tragically, did not survive the attempt. And let me tell you, nothing says 'I love you' like a dead butterfly."

On behalf of wedding guests everywhere, I beg of you brides: Stop this insanity! It's only a matter of time before a rogue bull Monarch butterfly, driven insane by his ordeal in captivity, lunges from his box at a wedding reception and, in a blind rage of fury, brings down an airplane.

In conclusion, wedding season is a magical time. To the brides out there, I say: May you have the most wonderful, most special, most expensive, most gunfire-free wedding ever. And to you grooms, I say: Your pants are on backward.

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