

MR. WEDDING PLANNER



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One woman's trip down the aisle as envisioned by Dad

BY BRENDA JANOWITZ

A month after getting engaged, my fiancé and I met with our florist, my parents in tow.

"What's your vision for the big day?" asked the florist.

"Um..." My mind reeled. I did not have a vision. I wasn't even aware that I needed one.

"It should be bridal," I said, pleased with how clever I was to come up with a concept on the fly.

"You want your wedding to be bridal?" she asked, frowning her brow.

"Yes," my mother said. "Bridal sounds wonderful. It should definitely be bridal."

The florist sighed. She was in utter disbelief that neither bride nor mother-of-bride had a vision for the big day, that we hadn't dreamed of it our entire lives. But she didn't have to worry. There was someone there who had. My father.

My big, strong, real estate developer of a dad, who wears jeans and Timberlands most days, translated "bridal" into white roses, baby blue hydrangeas, pink stargazer lilies and white Dendrobium orchids. When I finally saw a sample of what the florist planned to do based on my father's suggestions, it was perfect.

His vision wasn't confined to flower selections, either. He imagined a black-tie evening affair with 300 guests, a 14-piece band and an extensive gourmet menu that included a lamb chop station, a choice of not just three but five entrees, and a Viennese dessert table complete with chocolate fountain. He even asked for a red carpet leading guests from the valet to the entrance of Woodbury Jewish Center — a venue he chose only because it does a flower-encrusted floating *chuppah*, a wedding canopy he saw at a ceremony there years ago. My dad set his plan into motion the moment I

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got engaged, and accounted for every last detail. Including the gown.

Sure, fathers have entered Long Island's pristine and decidedly feminine Wedding Salon boutique before, but usually just to pay for the dresses, not to actually help pick them out. But amid the haze of teary-eyed mothers and glowing brides-to-be, there he stood, in his jeans and boots, joining the debate about Vera Wang versus Monique Lhuillier. (He prefers Monique.)

He gave the bride in the dressing room next to mine his opinion on whether she should wear a rhinestone-encrusted tiara (he's against them) and then helped the saleswomen change the water cooler. When I put on the dress that would ultimately be the one I'd choose for my big day — a silk satin organza gown with a hand-tufted skirt — he called out, "That's the one!" and I knew he was right.

To the outsider, it may seem odd that a man who spends his days on construction sites would be so involved in planning a fairytale wedding, but it wasn't to me. Each day, as a builder, my father creates communities out of acres of raw space.

Plus, after his own father died suddenly in a robbery when I was little, he's learned to celebrate life whenever he can — whether it's a dinner to commemorate the purchase of my gown or a party to toast buying the perfect backyard grill. My father is always there, right by my side. And when the time came, he encouraged me to leave it to stand by my husband.

As I glanced at my dad just before our walk down the aisle, dashing in his custom-made tuxedo and Italian shoes, I knew that my wedding would be perfect. Just the way he dreamed it would be.

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