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Tips From the Pros on Being a Good Bridesmaid

Take it from a veteran, some do's and don'ts on being a good bridesmaid

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press Writer
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The Associated Press
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This photo taken May 27, 2009 shows Colleen Long posing in New York with some of the 14 dresses she has worn as a bridesmaid. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews) (AP)

I was hair-done, sash-tied ready in my chocolate brown bridesmaid dress. The bride had slipped into her exquisitely tailored gown and was putting on her shoes. The other members of the wedding party were waiting, and we were heading out the door when she suddenly looked stricken: She really had to use the bathroom.

So I did what any good friend would do: I squashed in next to the toilet, lifted up miles of tulle from her dress and held it high while she did the business.

Welcome to the life of a bridesmaid.

Glamorous, exciting, occasionally tedious. Believe me, after standing up in 14 weddings — the 15th is this summer — I'm practically a professional. I started as a flower girl and worked my way up the chain, and I have a big family and apparently a lot of friends.

The thing about being a bridesmaid is you wear a lot of hats. You're a social secretary, personal assistant, therapist-on-call, occasional seamstress and sometimes the party police. You're expected to perform these tasks with grace and finesse, which can be exhausting, but also rewarding as long as you remember: It's not your wedding.

For the wedding party novice, there's a lot to know. For example: You'll be starving to death if you don't eat before the wedding; the rehearsal doesn't actually mean things will run smoothly the day of; and uncomfortable shoes are a serious no-no.

Oh, and by the way, you'll never wear that dress again, but you have to tell the bride you will or she'll feel bad. (I have seven gathering dust in my closet right now.) And you may not get along with some of the other bridesmaids, but you have to be nice to them because it's your friend's big day — and you're lucky enough to be part of it.

Things often get hectic or go wrong, and you have to be prepared, because the last thing the poor bride needs is added stress.

Here's a list of do's and don'ts for bridesmaids, thanks also to wedding experts Bee Kim, who writes the blog Wedding Bee, and Rebecca Dolgin, executive editor of print for The Knot Inc., which puts out wedding publications and a Web site.

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