

“I used to think a wedding was a simple affair.  
A boy and girl meet, they fall in love,  
he buys a ring, she buys a dress, they say ‘I do.’  
I was wrong. That’s getting married.  
A wedding is an entirely different proposition.”

– Steve Martin as George Banks in “*The Father of the Bride*” (*Touchstone*, 1991)



As a fictional father of the bride, Steve Martin comes face to face with the madness that goes into planning *The Perfect Day*. As the wedding plans are taken over by his wife, daughter and Frank the wedding planner (who uses the French pronunciation “Franque,” of course), the father feels left out, overspent and confused.

In real life, the father’s role in the wedding is a little more nuanced.

“Bob was interested, but he wasn’t that concerned with making the plans,” explains Lynne Killian when describing her husband’s role in their daughter Bonnie’s wedding to John Turner on April 26, 2008. “He wanted to provide his only daughter with whatever she wanted.”

Most families agree, the father of the bride is interested in the big picture, including the budget, but isn’t particularly involved in the details. As Bob Thompson explains, “I think a line can be drawn in the sand between men and women, and women are just better with all those details. It was just too nerve wracking for me.”

While the bride and her mother are selecting flowers, dresses, invitations, decorations and settling on hundreds

of other details, the father of the bride seems perfectly happy trusting the ladies to make all the right decisions. As Dalee Merrill says of her father, Bobby Leebern, “He did whatever I told him to do” in preparation for her Feb. 23, 2008 nuptials to Ramsey Merrill.

In Bob Killian’s case, the meticulous planning provided a source of humor. When his wife was looking up tide charts, moon phases and weather reports to make sure each wedding day moment was absolutely perfect, Bob would interject comments like, “Have you arranged for the porpoises swim in formation?”

Melissa Ippensen, a wedding designer at Sea Island, works with nearly 50 families a year in designing the day of their dreams. Ippensen says that most fathers view their role as the financier, but she adds, “Deep down, they always have a strong opinion about at least one or two things.” Sometimes it’s the cake flavor, the color of the boutonniere or how the bride and groom leave the reception.

“That’s the one opinion we all really need to respect,” Ippensen says.

Most families seem to have a system for keeping dad involved but not overwhelmed. After all, they know best how to manage him.

“We would narrow down our selections and then run them by him,” says Diane Laws of her husband Bill as she and daughter, Sara, planned Sara’s May 17, 2008, wedding to Paul Moerman. Len Hoshall says he had enough to keep him busy as daughter Peyton planned her May 10, 2008 nuptials with Stuart Johnston, but acknowledged, “not everything was my shot to call.” As Susan Wit and her ex-husband Bob Thompson were planning their daughter Jennifer’s June 14, 2008 wedding to Jeffrey Andrioff, Susan says at times Bob wanted to be more involved, but then he’d get caught up in the minutia and “he’d run for the hills.” Ippensen confirms that during the planning process, the father doesn’t quite understand all the attention to detail.

With the level of planning and number of decisions required to pull off the perfect day, you might think some fathers would be surprised by something in the ceremony or the reception on the wedding day: a 12-foot ice sculpture, the size of the floral arrangements or release of white doves at the end of the ceremony. But again and again, the one thing that surprises fathers is the flood of emotion.