



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

A Wedding for the Times

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In most weddings I have attended over the past sixty years, there were conventions for the proceedings of the usual two-day ceremony. That is why they were called conventional weddings.

For years, I have participated---both as a wedding party member or as a person sitting in the audience---witnessing the final vows set forth between bride and groom.

I was not always a couch potato in the back pews. I made the proclamation three times: "I do..." A supposedly forever promising vow. I am batting 1 of 3 as of now, qualifying me for an all-star ranking in baseball, but a benchwarmer in the game of matrimony. Nonetheless, my recent track record with Holly stands-forth as one who has finally learned his lesson.

Anyway, here is a brief review of this antiquated man's views on the weddings I have attended in the past, followed by my description of the wedding between our new daughter-in-law, Marshelle, to our on-going son, Tommy.

Past Practices

The After-Rehersal Festivities.

After the rehearsal for the wedding with the pastor, bride, groom, wedding party (and usually the parents of the bride and groom) in attendance, a dinner at a local restaurant takes place. All these people come together, some meeting one another for the first time. The dinner is usually at an up-scale place, specializing in mediocre meals at meteoric prices. The meal and drinks are usually paid for by the groom's parents.

The Church

The wedding is held in a church, usually a local church in which the bride or groom is a member. The proceedings are often so somber, I am not sure I am attending a funeral, instead of a wedding.

The Wedding

The wedding ceremony is also somber. Bride, groom, pastor, and members of the wedding party stand at attention before the pastor, while members of the congregation (?) sit silently and in semi-awe of what is transpiring before their eyes.

The Post-wedding Festivities

The wedding is followed by a formal, fancy post-wedding dinner. It is usually a catered sit-down affair, often with a Lawrence Welk-type band playing Lawrence Welk-type music. *Step, dip, and slide...step, dip, and slide.* Often in these affairs, couples form a circular network, moving in mass syncopation in the same direction; in a clock-wise or counter clock-wise fashion. The direction of the flow is determined by the couple who first issues the warning, "You're dancing in the wrong direction!"

The bride's parents get the short end of the stick and the long end of the bill based on the convention I am describing in this part of the report. They traditionally take--on the expenses of the Saturday's (often) bacchanalian excesses.

This post-wedding festivity takes place in a ball room at an expensive hotel or country club. Catered food, catered drinks, free wedding cake! (except for the bride's dad, who traditionally pays for the occasion.) No wonder movies have been made about uninvited wedding crashers.

The Practice of Marshelle and Tommy

Things have changed. This father-in-law and father is outdated.But don't get me wrong, unlike most of the young and semi-young Millennials and post-Millennials reading this article, I actually know the differences between Blue Tooth, Wi-Fi, and Cellular. To further distance myself from your middle-age hubris, I understand a URL is not an Internet address. So, don't get uppity on me about my "ancient" descriptions above.

Instead, let's concentrate on the January 5-6, 2018 wedding times of Marshelle and Tommy, using the outline above as a guidepost.

The After-Rehearsal Festivities

After the rehearsal for the wedding, the post-rehearsal dinner took place at a taco carry-out fast food café, and not a fancy restaurant. A scene from the taco place is shown in the picture to the left.



Tommy, to the right, is joking with some of the wedding guests and taco customers. The people in this photo are Bridget O'Neill, Dru Mouser, two of Marshelle's best friends and bridesmaids, and Dru's son, Dylan (the one Tommy is giving rabbit ears to). This occasion was not restricted to the wedding party itself. Anyone could come into the fast-food place! Obviously, it was no "conventional" restaurant. And to my luck, no possible way for the groom's father to pay for the meal. What could I do? Stand at the cashier's counter, so I could pay for each customer's carry-out?

Besides, half of the rehearsal party had avoided this café and walked down the street to a place that served drinks, such as tequila. After downing a taco, Holly and I ambled over to the other side of the table to meet other soon-to-be relatives of our son.

Then, we went down the street to meet more of Marshelle's relatives. However, I did meet Marshelle's mother, Karen, at the taco café, and had a chance to visit with her briefly. It was evident why Tommy told me he liked her so much

Down the street, at the tequila/taco café I met her father (Dink), and her step-mother (Bonnie). They are shown in the pictures below. Dink is on the left, followed by Bonnie, then Karen, on the right. The taco place serving Margaritas was more to my liking. I'm of the belief that tequila brings forth more fellowship than diet Cokes.



Whatever one's views are on drinking alcohol, this place was rocking! Splitting the dinner between a taco carry-out café and another café that had waiters serving the tacos (and other delights) was not exactly the "conventional" rehearsal dinner to which I was accustomed. But then, when in Rome (or Hollywood) do as the Romans (or Hollywooders) do.

I had little opportunity to talk with Bonnie or for that matter, Karen. I hope to be able to visit with them someday. The truth is that for tonight, I was determined to meet Dink, to get to know him, and compensate him for his obviously paying for at least one-half of the rehearsal dinner tab, which, in my antediluvian mentality, was my responsibility.

Dink was pointed-out to me. I went over and introduced myself. I paraphrase our conversation (in italics):

- Dink, *Good to meet you! I have read part of your book (The Light Side of Little Texas). I liked the parts about the ranch and the brandings.* (Dink is a horseman and cattleman from Kentucky.)
- Uyless, *Tommy has told me about you, too, Dink. He was impressed by petting your horses... Said the two of you really got along.*
- I continued, while pulling out some bills and sticking them into his shirt pocket, *Here's to help with the tab tonight.*
- Dink, pulling out the money from his pocket and opening up my hand, where he placed the bills, *Thank you. Not needed. Already covered.*

We debated. I put the money back into his pocket. He put the money back into my hand. On and on, until I relinquished. Besides, by then we had mutually come to understand that both of us had already provided some seeding of capital for the two-day event. I finally countered, *Then let me buy you a drink.*

Accepted. Drinks in hand, we walked outside the café onto a quiet (relatively speaking) patio. For some reason, two or three younger men accompanied us, but did not sit down. They stood around us. Perhaps they anticipated an enjoyment of either a spate of wisdom or flood of old-man inanities from the two of us.

Instead, Dink and I discovered we were Vietnam veterans. In fact, both of us were pretty heavily decorated. Dink had won the Bronze Star. I had been awarded the Navy Commendation Medal. From that point, we proceeded to inform each other of our various heroic exploits...and the younger men drifted away to other tables. They let two old Cold War warriors form a more private friendship.

Marshelle and Tommy came over to see how things were going with us. Both were a bit concerned about how the dinner had ended-up in two places, something like an amoeba splitting-up and each piece going its own way.

I told them not to worry. The evening was different---not like those staid rehearsal dinners I had attended in the past. Dink and I (in my opinion) formed an instant friendship.

The Church

The wedding was held in a church, but a church in which Marshelle or Tommy did not belong. And what a church it was, as seen in the figure below. We were told the Little Brown Church, located in Studio City, California, is where Nancy and Ronald Reagan were married on March 4, 1952.



Marshelle and Tommy were adding yet more fame to this beautiful, quaint church. The church is small. I guess it would hold about 200 people. For this wedding, it was filled with guests standing in the back of the church.

I asked Tommy how many wedding invitations they had sent out. I have yet to fully understand his reply, but it went something like this: They setup a website to advertise their wedding. People could logon (I gathered anyone---democracy in action) and respond to the website RSVP. At least, that was my impression from looking at the website.

But on closer examination, Tommy showed me part of the website that gave them control on wedding crashers, shown to the left. Plus, the website was advertised to a limited audience, so they had control over the guest list. Still, I was left with the notion that the Unabomber could have registered as a wedding guest. But I recognized Marshelle and Tommy had more on their minds for their wedding than mere terrorists crashing the wedding, so I let it go. It turns out that the wedding was not interrupted by ISIS or the Sinaloa Cartel. All went beautifully and flawlessly. By the way, here is the link to their wedding website: https://www.theknot.com/us/marshelle-fair-and-tommy-black-jan-2018-dc689d29-e55d-4e14-9640-938103d83504?utm_campaign=wedding-websites-share&utm_content=short-link&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=theknot.com

Just copy and paste into your browser window.

Again, a wedding for the times, as well as a wedding invitation for the times. For the weddings of my times, the parents had to spend hours and many dollars printing and mailing-out hard copy invitations. No longer. In spite of The Donald's assault on America's national monuments (Bear's Ears, as the first example), Marshelle and Tommy saved a branch or two of a tree with their website invitation.

The Wedding

The wedding ceremony itself was more along the lines of the weddings I had attended in the past. People came in and found their seats. The bride and groom's parents were accorded first row privileges. The formal proceedings began with traditional (scary) organ music, but ameliorated with two flower girls leading the way. Ruby and Rose, my grand-nieces and the daughters of my niece (Lisa) and nephew (Rob) gently cast flower petals onto the aisle as they made their way toward the altar.

I was reminded by stint as a flower boy (don't get smart. I was a macho flower boy) for my brother, Ross, and his bride, Cherrill, in 1952. Granted, I don't recall casting flowers about, maybe I was a ring carrier.

After Friday nights' unusual wedding bi-party event, I was not going to be surprised by an unusual wedding ceremony. I overstate a bit, as Tommy sent me a photo of his trying on his wedding tux around with his best man, Joshua, the son of Marshelle.

Sidebar.

For many years, I have harbored the illusion that someday I would be a grandfather. In that role, I would move next door to my son and daughter. I would act as the daily baby sitter while they went about their professional chores. Feeding, napping, changing diapers; they were well-known to me. After all, I was a father to Tommy.

It did not turn out this way (nor did the "next-door parent," likely to the relief of Marshelle and Tommy). No changing the diapers of my now step-grandson, Joshua, who is in his 20's. ... to the relief of both of us.



Tuxes and gowns? Maybe something conventional was slated for the ceremony. As seen on the photo to the left, above, it was a traditional ceremony. Well, somewhat, as seen on the photo to the right, above. As for our new daughter? As seen in these pictures: gorgeously serene.

From the left to the right, here are the names of the wedding party: Dru Mouser, Lindsay Pulsipher, Amber Fair (Marshelle's sister), Bridget O'Neill, Marshelle, Tommy, Joshua Bridgman (Marshelle's son), Rick Parker, Tony Hudson, and Rob Black (my nephew and an above average person). By the way, Tony Hudson is the noted Slash's father. Slash is not a singer. He is a famous (amazing) guitar player.

The Post-wedding Festivities.

After this traditional ceremony, my conventional thinking about weddings was once again coming to an end. As mentioned above, my many years of attending weddings were experienced by attending a sit-down dinner, including obligatory salutes to the couple from whomever wished to say a word; the meal; the cutting of the cake; an initial dance between the bride with her father, and the groom with his mother...followed by a mass demonstration of dancing ineptitude by the wedding guests---spirited by the in-taking of spirits.

As a run-up to the wedding weekend, I asked Tommy about their plans for a post-wedding reception, such as a dinner, drinks, band, and dancing. I did not enquire as a fatherly person, only as a curious person. (I have learned to keep my nose out of my son's business. I give advice only if he asks for it.)

In short, here is his reply, again, paraphrased in Italics: *No problem. We're having the reception at the Viper Room. (a famous/infamous rock and roll bar in Hollywood) The wedding meal will be provided by a curb-side In & Out truck. People will get their hamburgers and cokes and come down into the Viper Room to eat.*

Excuse my French, but I thought, *You've got to be bull-shitting me!* But I remained passive. After all, the bride and groom are past their thirties, on the own. So, who was I to make a comment?

Still, I asked how the Viper Room folks would know who was a guest or a crasher? Tom's reply: *Dad, no one is going to be trying to get into the Viper Room at 7 (or so) unless they are a guest. The place does not go public until 11 PM (when the ABBA backup band performed). Besides, we've a bouncer at the door to place a wrist band on the wedding guests. That way, they can come and go throughout the evening without paying to get in. He mentioned also that the Viper Room did not open until late in the night.*

Father: *Paying to get in?*

Son: *Yes, as the evening goes on, regular customers will be coming in. They won't have the wrist band. But that is late at night, dad.*

Father: *Something like a hospital patient's wrist band giving him access to the hallway.* No, I did not say that. I let it rest.

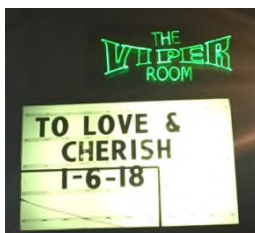


And it worked! To the left is a photo of the bouncer at the entrance to the Viper Room. The two men facing the camera are this writer and my nephew, Hollister. The writer is the one bent over and looking a bit older than the nephew, just in case you might have confused the two.

This modern-day dinosaur left it at that. It was not for me to suggest a more formal way to eat. As it turns out, again, my antiquated thoughts about a marriage ceremony were just that: antiquated. Just take a look at the fun people were having with this way of celebrating a wedding with the post wedding-meal:



By the way, that gorgeous woman on the left side photo is my sister-in-law, Katherine. The right photo shows my wife, Holly getting ready to dig-in to her hamburger and another other sis-in-law, Sharleen, close to the bite. The middle photo shows the hamburger truck with its servers at the ready.



The occasion was a post-wedding heaven, and was advertised on the Viper Room marquee as seen to the left. No ponderous plates of food; no ponderous platitudes from well-meaning but long-winded friends. Just order your hamburger from the curb-side truck, take it down into the basement of the building (the Viper Room bar (and stage), and eat!

Tommy had intended to give drink tickets to the wedding guests so they could have access to the Viper Room bar. I am sure this gesture was lost in the frenzy of the occasion, so I opened a tab at the bar and told the bartenders to give drinks to anyone who came up to the bar and said "Uyless." I am sure I did not tell everyone in the place about the tab, just anyone I happened to run across. For those who missed-out on the tab: Sorry, no offence intended. And Dink, Bonnie, and Karen, I hope I had informed you. Anyway, it appeared most of the bar tab came from orders from my immediate relatives.

Later, the lower level of another bar at the Viper Room was open only to the wedding guests. I opened another tab, but most people were gracious enough to pay for their own drinks.

Other Friendships: I was pleasantly surprised to see Steve and Carolyn Graham at the wedding. They had flown-in from Santa Fe, New Mexico to attend the occasion. The Graham family has long held a treasured place in my heart. They have owned and operated the local newspaper in my hometown since I can remember: *The Lovington Leader*. They have been greatly supportive of the Black family for many years.

Steve and Tommy nurtured each other through some hard times during their employment at the Screen Actors Guild. It was an honor to Tommy that they took this trip.

Carolyn is CEO of *The New Mexico Magazine*, one of the best in the country. It is a visual pleasure to examine. I admire this magazine very much, even though I have let my subscription expire. It has nothing to do with its quality.

I renewed my friendship with Rick Parker (seen in the wedding photos above). He has been a running-mate and band-mate with Tommy for many years. As such, I have come to know him a bit, as well as to like and respect the man. We never fail to have stimulating and interesting conversations.

The bartender at the hotel where we stayed during this weekend was Lee (Leroy) Webb. Upon our entry and mentioning our name, he said something to the effect, *You're Tommy's dad!*...and our drinks were on the house.

Lee is almost bald-headed. It makes no difference. He is a handsome person. Later, he showed up at the Viper Room reception---with a woolen cap on his head. I thought he was doing his baldness countenance a disservice, and (respectfully) gently removed the cap. By then a small contingent had gathered around this disrobing---and all applauded when Lee had exposed his crown.

I wanted to talk with more with Tony Hudson. We exchanged some hellos, but I hope to visit with the man in the future. ...The future is running short. Maybe we should schedule a get-together fairly soon.

Meanwhile, we continued to celebrate the wedding of Marshelle and Tommy.

To top-off the evening, Tommy and friends put on musical performance on the stage of the Viper room. The photos below show some scenes from the performance.



The picture to the left tells the story of the wedding weekend. The new husband serenades his new wife. Everything else...church, taco carryout, hamburger truck, rock and roll bar---they all played second fiddle (ok, bass) to this lovely scene.

My idea of a wedding...a "conventional" wedding...has been cast aside. This wedding ranks first on my list, just ahead of the wedding of Rob and Lisa (my nephew and niece). But then, Rob and Lisa are, as said, nephew and niece. Tom and Marshelle are son and daughter. I trust a bit of bias can be overlooked.