

***Thirty to Wife* Author Q&A**



Craig Michaels, a graduate of the University of Virginia and Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management, is a happily married man, but the memory of his wedding planning is still fresh in his mind.

Craig owns and operates Groom411.com, an extensive Web site serving as a sounding board to help grooms not make the same mistakes he did.

He has spent the past ten years moving up the ranks in Silicon Valley, working on some of the most successful products, such as launching Apple's iMac, and most promising consumer technologies, including a new internet-delivered video on demand service.

Craig lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his wife, Debora, and Lucy, their Labrador. This is his first book.

Why did you write *Thirty to Wife*?

For most of my engagement (and pre-engagement), I didn't have others to turn to for real, honest wedding advice. In my close circle of friends, I was the first to get married. Our families were supportive, but not in the "here's what to expect way." And the wedding books that were given, gifted and strategically placed around the house were too focused on lists and responsibilities.

As I guy, I want to laugh. Preferably at other people's expense. A wedding's a big event. With lots of little events leading up to it. As I saw these events add up during my engagement, I saw the opportunity to take some notes (what better way to avoid my to-do's than writing about avoiding my to-do's) and see what kind of story I could relay back to my friends. That led to a story I could relay to the world.

How did you write *Thirty to Wife*?

After secretly taking notes during the engagement, I confessed to my new wife my activities and intentions to write the book. Fortunately, we hadn't unpacked the frying pan yet.

Originally, I had aspirations to relive the Lake Tahoe cabin part of my bachelor party and write a first draft in the peace and tranquility of the great outdoors. But a cabin was too expensive to rent on my own. So I wound up reliving another part of my bachelor party, by sequestering myself in a \$10 a night hotel in Reno for a week.

What makes *Thirty to Wife* different than other groom—or bride—books?

Thirty to Wife fills a void in the groom/wedding book category by uniquely offering the combination of:

- A humorous, real-life and in-depth pre-wedding narrative, written by a thirty-something man.
- An identifiable voice, providing comfort, guidance and real-world experiences that both male and female readers can relate to.
- A comprehensive list of what every groom needs to know, from the proposal to the wedding day.

People have responded favorably to my "everyman" story. There are too many dumbed-down groom lists online and in other books. And way too many elaborate lists for the women available. My goal was to offer an engaging narrative that allowed the reader to follow a "complete" wedding story, while giving enough facts for any groom along the way. As such, I'm able to satisfy both the relaxed groom-to-be who wants a good story and the desperate groom-trying-to-be who seeks a life-saving tip.

Is *Thirty to Wife* for grooms or brides?

Both. While groom-oriented, *Thirty to Wife* was written to be very bride-friendly. Women will use *Thirty to Wife* to assist their men in being the grooms they dreamt of marrying and have their favorite "so what are you really thinking" question answered without even asking their mates. Men will use the book to learn that they're not alone in their struggle with the pressures and joys of being engaged and get a few helpful tips along with way. Both women and men will enjoy the book for its love, excitement and humor told through personal experiences.

When/where did you get married?

I got married a few years ago in Las Vegas. Surprisingly to most (including our guests and especially our family), it wasn't a spur of the moment, just hit it big with the slots, everyone dresses like Elvis affair. We booked a resort about thirty miles off the strip, pulling off the perfect balance of elegance and cheesiness. But, while we took pains to keep the ceremony and reception away from the neon, the after-party took place right in the middle of all the action.

Was your wedding very unique?

While there was nothing specific that made my wedding unlike anyone else's, I believe this "relate-ability" adds significant charm and appeal to the story.

That's not to say we didn't have our own "challenges," like

- Almost forgetting the proposal after a wild New Years Eve party.
- Almost canceling the wedding due to a "complete failure to communicate" during a last-minute rafting/couples-bonding trip.
- An almost-fatal case of mistaken identity during the bachelor party. My friends hiring prostitutes instead of exotic dancers could have gotten me killed when I returned back home.
- Almost missing the ceremony due to a groomsman's love of cheap Vegas buffets.

So what did you learn from this experience?

Don't just "get through" your wedding. Help out. Share in the good and bad of planning the big day. It's something that you're going to remember for the rest of your life. And something your bride will remind you of for the rest of your life. I looked back and realized I missed out on much of the action. And while my wedding turned out to be an amazing affair, I'll always know that I placed too much of the burden on my better half. And if you still fail to help out, don't write a book about it.

Why should grooms care about their weddings?

Years ago, the groom's role was mostly about just showing up. And maybe worrying about life after the wedding. In many cases grooms were purposely excluded from planning, as weddings were strictly the domain of the bride and her mother.

Today's weddings are more elaborate, with more choices and include more events for the groom. They're more expensive (and more often paid for by the couple themselves), more likely to be "destination" (or at least out-of-town) and occur later in life. Therefore, grooms are expected to have more say in the decisions. Couples are now going into the engagement as a team, giving grooms the chance to shine, especially if other priorities (e.g., work) take critical planning time away from the bride. And, of course, technology has helped make it easier for the groom to participate—from booking travel online to shooting the china registry with a bar code gun.