



VIDEOGRAPHER DAN EHLI tapes the wedding of Jennifer and Rod Chesnutt Saturday. Ehly, who owns Mid-America Video Images with his wife, Colleen, finished the videotape in time for viewing at the Chesnutt's reception.

SCOTT McCLURG/DN

Couples can't be too cautious in planning

BY IEVA AUGSTUMS
Assignment Reporter

When UNL students Heather and Derek Bothern stood hand in hand at the altar, they vowed to spend their lives together.

But they couldn't say the words "With this ring, I thee wed," because they didn't have their wedding bands.

"Wedding rings are supposed to be a symbol of our love for each other," Heather Bothern said. "Without them, our marriage didn't seem complete."

Although their rings were ordered well in advance, Nebraska Diamond didn't deliver them by the couple's wedding date.

They finally received the rings they had ordered six weeks after their wedding date.

So think before catching the bouquet or garter belt: Getting a flawless wedding together could be more trouble than expected.

The Botherns said they checked the credentials of many companies before their wedding, but they still felt cheated.

"Everything went great - flowers, catering, banquet hall - except for our wedding rings," Derek Bothern said. "We should have used someone more hometownish."

The Botherns had signed a contract with Nebraska Diamond that outlined the price and the type of rings they were getting, they said.

But a specific delivery date was not stated in the contract, Derek Bothern said.

"We knew that when we signed the contract," he added, but when the rings arrived later, they were not what the couple had ordered. Chuck Kuba, executive vice president of Nebraska Diamond, said the problem

the Botherns faced was an isolated incident.

"Problems always do arise," Kuba said. "And the problems that do arise can occur at any store, to any customer, anywhere in the country."

Kuba said Nebraska Diamond purchases their rings through a manufacturer, and the Botherns' rings were considered a special order.

When a couple wishes to have something out of the ordinary done to their rings, it can take up to eight weeks to complete the order, he said.

"There wasn't anything we could have done - the ring came back wrong," Kuba said. "But the manufacturer did stand by their product, took it back and corrected their mistake."

Teresa Furnas, owner of A Bridal Trousseau in the Historic Haymarket District, said couples can easily feel cheated if they don't double-check their wedding service providers.

Furnas said it is best to get samples and estimates from several similar wedding service providers before making any final decisions on wedding-day plans.

"What you need to do is compare apples to apples," Furnas said. "If one company says they can offer their services for \$400, and another company tells you \$500, get a list of what you will be paying for and determine what you really need."

Furnas also said couples must make sure they get every service contract in writing.

"A contract that is signed is binding by both parties," Furnas said. "If you receive a verbal quote from someone, it doesn't mean anything."

Heather Bothern said couples should never sign contracts they feel uncomfortable with. Instead, they should look into different service

providers.

"And if you don't understand something, always (ask) questions," she said.

Gerard J. Monaghan, president of the Association of Bridal Consultants, said good contracts should include exact prices, the services to be provided and the penalties for not following through with the contract.

For further protection, couples have many options for checking the credentials of their wedding services, said Doris Nixon, director of educational services for National Bridal Services.

First, couples should ask to see each company's license and insurance, Nixon said. Many couples may want to seek help from a certified wedding specialist.

Monaghan agreed.

"The best ways for a couple to plan their wedding is to hire a wedding consultant," Monaghan said. "A bride only plans her wedding once, and might not have the experience."

"Wedding consultants plan weddings as their job."

Scott Mecham, president of the Cornhusker Better Business Bureau, said couples who cannot afford to hire a consultant can use many options to check a company's credentials:

■ Contact the Cornhusker Better Business Bureau at 436-2345 to see if the company or service is reputable and is registered with the bureau.

■ Ask friends and relatives to recommend wedding service providers.

■ Contact the service provider and ask for two to three references.

A good business built on customer service should provide these credentials, Mecham said.

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