

### On the Line



## Proposal had its snags but was truly a surprise

By BAILEY CLINE

The Commercial Review

I thought I ruined the proposal.

I had a sneaking suspicion my partner, Justin, might be proposing that weekend.

He asked me in early December if I'd like to go to an orchestral Christmas concert ahead of the holiday. We peeked online to see what famous groups were performing in Indiana, and sure enough, Manheim Steamroller was visiting Butler University in Indianapolis in a few weeks.

Justin doesn't usually enjoy going to concerts, so this set a few alarms off in my head. When it dawned on me his brother would be turning 21 a few days prior to the concert, well, I didn't hesitate to shrug off my assumptions. Justin wouldn't propose to me the day after we spend a night on the town with his sibling, would he?

Surely not. Tired and sick, I woke up the day of the concert feeling like trash. I took a quick shower and geared up for the day ahead of us. See Line page 3B



Tribune News Service/Jeffree Woo

Bride Jasmine Alvarado and groom Riley Hannan, react, after officiant Amanda Loeffler pronounces them husband and wife. A friend, standing nearby, showered them in bubbles.

# Amid storm wreckage

## Hurricane was unable to stop young love

By LAUREN PEACE

Tampa Bay Times

Tribune News Service

SUN CITY CENTER — On the fifth day of their blurred new reality, in the clubhouse of the

groom's grandmother's 55-and-older community, the bride stood in a beaded white dress and fiddled with her hair clip — something new.

About 10 minutes before the

ceremony, a boy in a tan suit and Nikes knocked on the door of her makeshift dressing room, a kitchen off of one of the banquet halls where friends of the bride sipped green fizzy drinks

against the whirl of an industrial freezer.

"Riley has a question," offered the messenger. "He wants groomsman."

See Amid page 2B



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## Brides and grooms are turning more to content creators to document weddings

By ERIN MCCARTHY

The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Tribune News Service

PHILADELPHIA — In the car on the way home from her wedding, Bayley Shanley's phone pinged with a notification from one of her vendors.

As her new husband drove, Shanley flipped through more than 500 candid photos and videos.

She watched her bridesmaids walk down the aisle, a moment she had missed, and relived the speeches. She sent her flower girl's mother photos of the child helping the bride put on her shoes.

The images had been captured by Taylor Moy, a South Philadelphia-based wedding content creator, who was hired to document behind-the-scenes moments of the couple's June wedding at the Hotel Du Pont in Wilmington. Unlike professional wedding photography and videography, which is higher quality and requires weeks of editing, wedding content creators often can turn their work around in 24 hours or less.

"It felt so good to have it right away," said Shanley, a 27-year-old accountant from Bethesda, Md. "I didn't have to ask anyone for a photo. If anything, I was sending her Dropbox [virtual folder of photos and videos] to everybody," including friends who couldn't make the wedding.

And relative to other wedding costs, it was a bargain: The couple

paid about \$700 to have Moy document their wedding day and rehearsal dinner; compared with the \$5,000 they paid for professional photography and the \$2,500 to \$8,000 they'd been quoted for professional videography.

"You just couldn't beat the value," Shanley said.

Wedding content creation is a relatively new facet of the wedding industry, having gained nationwide popularity over the past two years and expanded into the Philadelphia market more recently.

San Le, 30, of Old City, recalled that she couldn't find a local wedding content creator when she was planning her March 2023 wedding; the closest ones were in New York. Since then, Le, a data analyst by day, and a handful of others have taken on the gig in the Philadelphia region, making a full- or part-time business out of snapping hundreds of photos and videos, usually on their iPhone, at weddings and other events. Most wedding content creators also offer short, edited videos that are ready for clients to post on Instagram or TikTok within days.

"The vibe that I always try to bring to the function is your uncle in the 90s with a camcorder, but modern," said New Jersey-based wedding content creator Isabella Gagliardi. The 27-year-old explains her job to older generations as "not much different from their homemade wedding video."

"I'm not necessarily capturing the '1, 2, 3 smile' clips," said Marjorie Raimo, a 29-year-old Wallingford resident and owner of Behind The Scenes Bridal. "The majority of it is unposed."

The Inquirer spoke with five local content creators, who between them have shot more than 100 weddings in the past year. For their wedding-day services, they charge between \$500 and \$2,000, depending on how many hours of coverage, photos, and edited videos clients want. Demand is increasing, the creators say, with dozens of couples having already booked for 2025.

Content creators stress that they aren't replacements for professional photographers and videographers. So far, all of their couples have also hired a photographer, they said, and about half of them also have had a videographer.

"I actually will not work a wedding where a professional photographer is not present," Gagliardi said. "They are exponentially more expensive than me and probably more important in the grand scheme of things."

While wedding content creation was borne out of Gen Zers' and millennials' obsession with social media, creators said their clients don't only care about how many likes and views their wedding content gets on Instagram or TikTok.

See **Creators** page 4B

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## Amid ...

Continued from page 1B  
The bride's eyes widened.

"Why is he deciding this now?" she said, laughing, raising a palm to her forehead. Here came another twist in a surreal week of insurance claims, drywall demolition, switching up venues, finalizing a song for their first dance — and wondering, "Where do we live now?"

With a shrug, she nodded her approval.

Little, it seemed, would go as they'd planned. But they were 20 and in love, and nothing was going to stop this wedding.

They'd planned the ceremony for a Tuesday. Riley Hannan liked the idea of a tidy anniversary, and Jasmine Alvarado wasn't picky. It would be exactly two years since they'd wandered the passageways of Fort DeSoto, their first-date giggles bouncing through hollow rooms, conversation billowing.

Though they were a surprising couple to some — the quiet girl with inky black hair who loved puzzles and gardening, and the willowy boy who rode motorcycles and loved people and fishing — they shared a sweetness that prompted those around them to echo the same refrain.

"Good kids," they'd say. "Really good kids."

Jasmine hadn't expected the proposal this past April. They were young and had only been dating a year, but Riley's cousin, four years older, had died in a recent car accident.

"He had a girlfriend that he wanted to marry, but he never got to," Riley had thought to himself. He didn't want to wait.

When he got down on one knee in the sunflower field, Jasmine felt her heart swell.

They sent invites over Facebook for an Oct. 1 celebration in the backyard of Riley's childhood home.

That's where the couple lived with his parents, tucked just inside

the Tampa Bay coastline under the Gandy Bridge, in Riviera Bay.

As the ritual of hope and sand bags returned to Tampa Bay in late September, Jasmine and Riley watched forecasters warn of Hurricane Helene's track. They texted friends and parents for updates, assuring one another that they'd make it out alright.

Their home, like many, had never flooded before.

Then the sky darkened on Sept. 25, and the water began to rise.

From his grandmother's condo in Sun City Center, where they'd evacuated the night of the storm, Riley and Jasmine waited for news.

Back at home, as surge crept near their red front door, Riley's mom, Sondra Hannan, grabbed Jasmine's wedding dress and splashed in rainboots toward the truck. His dad, Shawn Hannan, followed.

When the family returned the next morning to soggy furniture and the smell of manure, Jasmine started to cry. Red Cross trucks wove through the neighborhood.

For blocks, people began the work of emptying their lives onto the curb.

In the shock of it all, Jasmine didn't register it at first, the braid of sunflowers and tulle.

But there it was, balanced on the end tables, out of place on its perch above the muddled wreckage and somehow untouched by the worst storm to strike Tampa Bay in more than a century: their wedding arch.

For weeks, on Wednesdays — her day off from housekeeping at a rehabilitation home — Jasmine had worked with Riley's grandma to build the piece from chicken wire and craft store flowers reminiscent of the sunflower field.

For Riley, the wedding was never in question. He'd marry her in a parking lot. In the center of the street lined with broken dressers and moldy mattresses.

But for Jasmine, the arch, intact in a house of drowned belongings, felt like some sort of sign. In the mess of it all, they'd find a way.

Five days later, they gathered at the clubhouse well outside a flood zone.

Guests drifted in, reciting post-flood scripture.

How did things hold up? Darn, you guys too?

But when the flower boys emerged at 7:06 p.m. — two teenagers in black slacks, sporting flower crowns — the room spilled over with laughter.

Jasmine emerged a minute later in dolphin earrings and a heart-pendant necklace, a gift from Riley's grandmother.

She floated toward Riley and the sunflower arch. By 7:13, they had said "I do."

After the ceremony, guests — those who could make it — piled plastic plates with mac and cheese and pulled pork sandwiches kept warm on aluminum trays.

See **Amid** page 4B

**In the shock of it all, Jasmine didn't register it at first, the braid of sunflowers and tulle.**

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# Line ...

Continued from page 1  
We were running extremely late — when are we not running late? — but I needed something to settle my stomach. Justin, the picture of health, stopped at a burger joint. His cheery demeanor was uncharacteristic for a man who would rather watch paint dry than attend a concert, much less show up late to one.

Another bell going off in my head, but this time my thoughts were too hazy to recognize it.

Justin spilled mustard on his sweater. We tried dabbing at it with some wet napkins, but to no avail, it was there to stay for the evening. Justin's mood stayed unphased.

One trait I love about Justin — he isn't hot-headed. He's usually pretty easy going.

But there was a lot going wrong that day.

I announced to Justin we were going to be rolling in about 40 minutes late, and this man simply says, "worst comes to worst, we can always sneak in during intermission."

"There's an intermission?" I responded.

Yes, the concert is two and a half hours long, with an intermission in the middle, he explains.

This time, the bell was more like an alarm. Justin isn't a planner. He didn't book the tickets — this information was something he sought out.

We arrived at Clowes Memorial Hall severely late, but we were able to slip in between songs and find our seats without interruption.

While we waited for the traffic to clear out afterward, I asked if there was anything else he wanted to do in the big city. Indianapolis Zoo had a bunch of Christmas activities going on. He liked that idea.

He routed his phone's GPS to our next destination, and we headed that way.

I suggested dinner first and pulled up directions to an Italian restaurant. Looking at the road, I instructed Justin to turn left at the traffic signal.

He said no. I asked if he didn't want Italian food. Something else, then?

He drove us into a parking garage and up to a valet parking area. After waiting a few minutes with no one coming to greet us, he decided instead to pull into a regular parking space. He got out of the car and signaled for me to do the same.

## Looking back, there is also something mystical about getting engaged in the fog.

Confused, I followed him to an elevator, and we rode up to the first floor of the Hyatt Regency. He led me to the front desk and asked for directions to The Eagle's Nest.

My heart started pounding. Soon enough, we were in another elevator. Justin turned to me and sheepishly admitted he had plans for the evening.

We shared a lovely romantic dinner — a fine dining rooftop experience I won't forget. I could hardly eat, though, because of the butterflies in my stomach. I hadn't been that nervous on a date for a long time. A proposal was surely on the way.

Of course, it didn't come at the restaurant.

Nor did it come when Justin asked me to pose for a picture in front of a breathtaking Christmas tree made out of poinsettias.

Was he enjoying teasing me like this?

We debated going to the zoo, but at that point it would have only been open for another hour.

So, we headed home. I couldn't contain my disappointment and admitted I thought Justin planned to propose that night. He gaslit me, asking why we couldn't have a romantic evening without thoughts of a proposal. He also said the moment would come when I least expected it.

As we neared home, visibility on the road worsened. We agreed it was easily the foggiest night either of us had ever seen.

Justin pulled over at a nearly empty gas station (Sunoco) outside of Muncie and asked if I could drive the rest of the way home. Still unengaged and ridiculously tired, I tried to convince him to keep driving. No such luck.

He agreed to buy me a snack inside the convenience store.

As we left, Justin followed me to the driver's side.

He opened the door. There was a ring box sitting on the seat.

What?  
He bent down on one knee.  
No.

He popped open the ring box.  
"Will you make me the happiest man on earth ..."

You're kidding.

He stared at me for a second while my thoughts continued to scramble. I didn't believe it. I truly didn't believe he was proposing. I thought it was another tease on a day full of them.

So, I did what any good future wife would do. I promptly snatched the ring box out of his hands and sprinted around to jump back into the passenger side of the car.

I opened the box again and found a bright diamond set in a jewel-encrusted band shining back at me.

It's real.

Oh, no. I ruined the proposal.

Confused, Justin hopped back into the car with me and said nervously, "You didn't say yes ..."

We both started laughing, and I responded with something along the lines of "Yes, yes, a million times, yes."

Justin admitted he had several hiccups that night, including issues with valet parking and the ring box being too large to fit in his pocket.

I've always said I wanted a private, not public, proposal. I've also always loved Jim Halpert's proposal from the TV show "The Office," so Justin figured a gas station proposal in the fog would be a nice homage.

He also wanted to surprise me. He definitely did.

Looking back, there is also something mystical about getting engaged in the fog.

So, I didn't ruin the proposal. Neither of us did. He still popped the question, and I still said yes.

Justin's proposal didn't go perfectly, and I contributed toward those bumps in the road — but an imperfect proposal is what made it real and memorable. It's a story we'll share for the rest of our lives.

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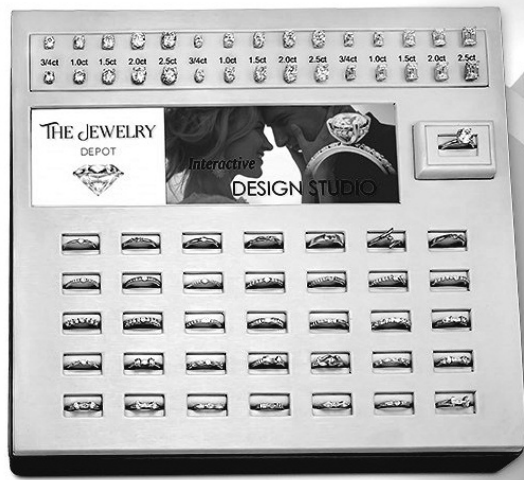
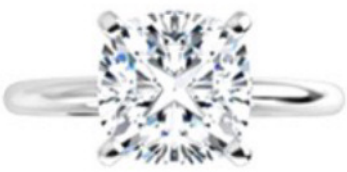


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## Amid ...

Continued from page 2B  
They did the Cha Cha Slide, the Cupid Shuffle. And when it was time for the first dance, Jasmine took the microphone and made a plea.

"We'd like to request that you all join us," she giggled. "We don't want to do it alone."

As they swayed to soft guitar, the heaviness of the past week dissipated. They had no idea that out in the gulf, another storm was soon to be stirring.

That in their first week as newlyweds, they'd once again be cast out from home — running again from water and wind.

There'd be no registry. No honeymoon. In the morning, they'd return to work tearing out doughy drywall.

But this evening was their own. Riley pulled Jasmine close. She lay a head on his chest as they admired their rings.

"Feel better now?" he asked, placing his hand over hers.

She nodded. "We're married," she whispered.



Tribune News Service/Jefferee Woo

Flower boys, Nate Haynes, left, and Reese Hannan, brother of the groom, make their entrance at the wedding of Riley Hannan and Jasmine Alvarado. "We don't really know any small kids, so we thought 'why not,'" Alvarado said of the decision, which drew laughter.

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## Creators ...

Continued from page 2B  
Some wedding content creators do cater to couples who want their big day to go viral — sometimes even posting from clients' accounts in real time. But Philadelphia-area vendors said few of their couples opt for that.

"That's just not something that I've done. I'd be open to doing that," said Raimo, a full-time wedding content creator who has shot 23 weddings so far this year. But "I think there's a specialness in the moment, of just keeping it to yourself for a little bit."

She said she and most of her clients are of the mindset: "Can we just live this for now and post in the morning?"

Le, who owns Vivid Moments with San, said her clients aren't usually interested in recreating trendy wedding TikToks and don't care how many people beyond their close

friends and family see the content.

"Most people just want those moments for themselves to relive the very next day," she said.

The local wedding content creators said the biggest draw for clients seems to be the quick turnaround time — as well as the pressure they take off guests to capture every moment.

"Everyone wants to share everything, but we're also putting a big emphasis on living in the moment," said Claire Vance, owner of Scorpio Media.

A wedding content creator "allows everyone to enjoy the reception," said Gagliardi, a full-time creator with the Wandering Stardust Collective. "You don't have to worry about leaving your phone at the table. I got it."

For the couple the next day, she added, "it does

eliminate all of that 'Who has this video? Does anybody have this?'"

And while a content creator's iPhone images are lower quality than the professional photos, they're often better than the crowdsourced shots that couples usually look through the day after.

"Do you really want your great aunt's blurry photo with her thumb in it?" said Vance, 25, of Limerick. "Probably not."

Wedding content creation is not just for the day-of events, either: Philadelphia creators say they have shot engagements, showers, rehearsal dinners, even bachelorette parties.

Vance spent the Fourth of July weekend in Avalon documenting her first bachelorette party, a celebration for 26-year-old Gabrielle Vagnozzi. It was Vance's first time doing content creation for a bachelorette, and she

charged around \$900, a tab picked up by Vagnozzi's maid of honor.

On other bachelorettes Vagnozzi has attended, "everybody takes photos, and then everybody wants to look at the photos, and we don't have somebody to take the photos of all of us. It's a pain," said Vagnozzi, a Collegeville native now living in Virginia Beach. "It takes away from the moment."

Vagnozzi knew she wanted a content creator at her own bachelorette so she and her friends could be more present, without the stress of making sure every moment was well-documented.

"This generation — and I'm so guilty of it — we just always care about photos," said Vagnozzi, a sales rep. "I didn't want to worry about that. I just wanted to be with my 13 girlfriends who I was lucky enough to all have in one room."

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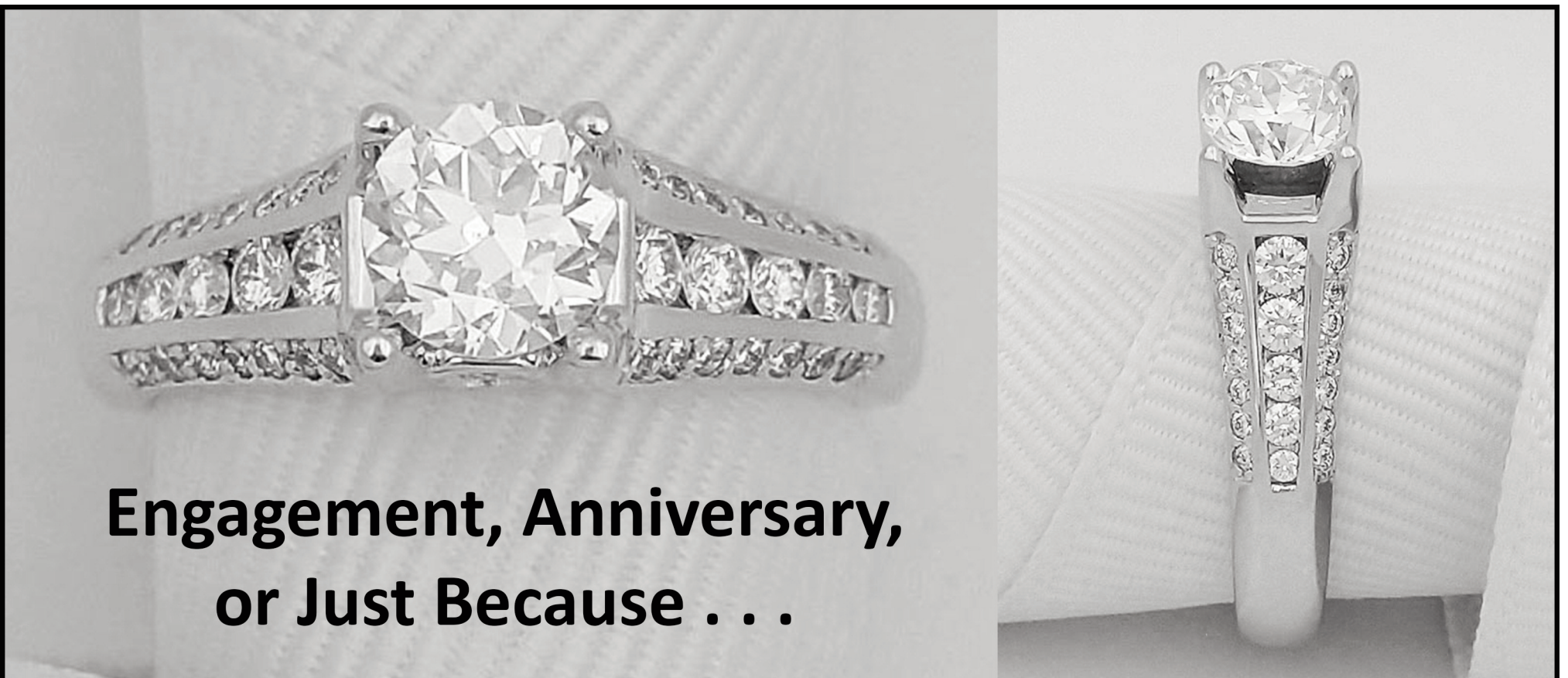
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