

A bridesmaid dress and the tale of the tape

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Bridesmaid dresses.

Any readers still out there? I know if I read that opening I'd run screaming. I'm something of an expert in the subject since I've been a bridesmaid a few trillion times. At one point I had four, f-o-u-r, lavender bridesmaid gowns. Ok, one was more maroon. Still, I could have sponsored a purple cotillion out of my closet . . . and I sort of did.

Anyone in Salem for Halloween 2003?

If you were there for the festivities, you may recall three women, with crazy makeup, sparkling glitter hair and matching lavender gowns walking arm in arm down Derby Street.

Bewitched Bridesmaids anyone?

Other dresses have been great for more formal reuses. There was the black bridesmaid dress that I wore it to my husband's Christmas formal. And last year my cousin chose an espresso bridesmaid gown that will hit the circuit this holiday season.

But the winner of all bridesmaid dresses is making an appearance this summer at another cousin's wedding. It gets the prize not because of style or color: It's a classy, cerulean blue, swishy number. Rather, the issue has to do with the minor detail of sizing. The detail being that I had to get sized, three, *three*, weeks after giving birth to our second daughter.

I realize that in Hollywood the stars are back to their skinny jeans in three weeks, but I'm here to say that I was not. Not even close. What I was at three weeks was showered.

When I strolled into the bridal store, still in maternity clothes, the skinny, barely 20-something sales clerk flashed me a perky smile and said, "Sooooooo!! What size do you think you are?" I pointed to my infant daughter in the stroller. "Now, or when the wedding will take place in four months?"

She flipped her shiny hair over her shoulder, put her hands on her size zero waist, and replied, "Now. We always size for how you fit now."

I nodded.

“Uh-huh, well, *now* I am the size of a manatee — so whatever size that is — but four months from *now* I will be an entirely different size.”

She smiled at me like she heard that 100 times. She probably had. I felt the need to point out the obvious. “I just had a baby. This isn’t a diet thing; it’s a pregnancy thing. I mean, I’m still wearing maternity clothes right now!”

“Mmmm hmmm.”

She vanished into the rows of dresses and returned with one that fit — four months ago.

But, since I was right, since it’s a basic fact of science that you don’t retain a pregnant body forever, my dress has to be altered.

By the way, the wedding is next week.

Here’s a life equation to bear in mind: If suddenly you find yourself with a bridesmaid dress that doesn’t fit, and the wedding is less than two weeks away, every tailor and seamstress in the entire state will be on vacation. Month-long, entire-store-closing sabbaticals. Does no one in Beverly need a bit of stitching or hemming during the summer!?

Finally, finally, after four attempts I found that Zeke’s across from the Dairy Queen on Cabot was open and willing to take on my dress.

“Let’s see,” he — presumably Zeke — said as he tucked and pinned the blue fabric. “I have to take in this section,” he held up the dress corset, “where the fabric is double layered with the boning in between. Then I have to match the seam back up to re-create the slant of the gown.”

I nodded as if I understood that. Was he saying a basic stitch wouldn’t work? He spelled it out for me.

“It’s a difficult alteration . . . let’s see, how is the end of next week?”

I smiled and took a deep breath, “Yes, well, the wedding is *at* the end of next week.” He was quiet.

I shrugged apologetically. “I know, I know. It’s just I had a baby, I had to wait till now because my size kept changing and . . .” I trailed off. There was no point.

He remained silent and I had a momentary vision of duck taping the inside of my dress . . . maybe blue painter’s tape wouldn’t be as obvious??

Finally he nodded. "I can do it."

Whew. Ok. It was a close call, but I think this particular bridesmaid dress situation is finally under control. And if something does go wrong don't be alarmed if you see a blur of screaming, swishy, cerulean blue running through town next week.

Note: Esther Baird is a Beverly writer. Her column appears regularly in the Citizen. Please contact Esther with suggestions or comments about The Baird Facts at: esther@estherbaird.com, or visit her Web site at: www.estherbaird.com.