

Finally...

Wedding Portraits that are worth more than the paper they're printed on!

You've selected the most beautiful gown, gorgeous flowers, the perfect spot to be married to the one you love; now whom can you trust to create a portrait album filled with your precious wedding memories?

Dear Bride & Groom,

You already know how much time and energy you and your fiancée have spent planning your special day. You want everything from the invitations you send, to the napkins on the table, to be absolutely perfect.

Selecting a photographer to capture all of your special moments can be especially difficult. After all, this is the person you are entrusting to record the most important day in your entire life. How can you possibly choose?"

That's why we've put this letter (O.K. small book) together. To give you some tips on choosing the perfect photographer for you and to shamelessly explain what Jason Skarpness has to offer you. To be honest, our studio may not be the studio for you.

If you select Jason Skarpness - great! We guarantee you'll be thrilled. But even if you don't, We want you to be comfortable with whomever you choose. A qualified professional photographer should be willing and able to answer the following questions without hesitation. As the commercial goes,

"You've Got Questions: We've Got Answers"

One of the first questions you may ask is "A friend of mine has a great 35mm camera and has taken some fantastic pictures, why shouldn't I just ask her to photograph my wedding." In other words...

"Why even bother hiring a professional photographer?"

Photography is typically high on everyone's priority list and it's no wonder - the portraits are all you have left after the wedding (besides a wonderful marriage of course!) Trying to save money on the wedding portraits is tempting, but it's wise to resist the urge. Well meaning friends and relatives who are amateur photographers often bite off more than they can chew when they shoot a wedding. Adverse lighting conditions and other technological challenges such as a



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malfunctioning camera or flash can be the downfall of even the most talented amateurs.

Amateurs just don't have the equipment needed to adequately cover a wedding. Using a consumer style camera to photograph the formals and groups at a wedding is like a surgeon using a butter knife to perform surgery. The results just won't be the same.

But it's not enough to just hire a professional photographer. You also want to make sure you get the right kind of professional photographer.

“What, there's more than one kind of professional photographer?”

Afraid so. Just like doctors, photographers specialize. Although there are lots of specialties, the two most common are commercial and portrait photographers.

While commercial photographers work for advertising agencies and other industrial clients (working with mostly inanimate objects), portrait photographers concentrate on weddings, special occasions and (of course) portraits. Skarpness Photography is a portrait studio, and our subjects are the living and breathing kind.

But wait! There's still something else to check out. Once you find a portrait photographer, make sure you check out his equipment. (Yes, his photography equipment.)

“What kind of equipment will you use to photograph my wedding?”

One size does not fit all

There are three basic format camera sizes –small (ex. 35mm), medium (ex. 6x6), and large (4x5 & 8x10; the ones seen in old movies.

Too little

Small format cameras are fast and are great at capturing spontaneous actions. Unfortunately they produce portraits that lack the ncher depth, warmer tones, and sharper contrast of the large format cameras.

Too big

Large format cameras are unsurpassed in the quality of their prints, but unless you're built like Arnold Schwartsaneaner. you don't want to tn to capture spontaneous moments with them.

Just right

The medium format camera is the perfect solution and compromise between the two. It's small enough to be handled .4uicklly. and large enough to produce portraits with sharp contrast, warm tones and beautiful depth.

Just one is never enough

We use professional level cameras, in fact we use three. We always have a back up on hand. We're firm believers in one of Murphy's Law's "If it can break, it will, and at the worst possible time."



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We bring way too much equipment with us, several lenses, camera backs, bodies, and multiple flashes and batteries. Our accountant may not be too fond of all the money we spend on duplicating equipment, but when you're photographing an once-in-a-lifetime event, you can never be over prepared.

You've got enough to think about. Worrying if your photographer's camera is O.K. shouldn't be one of your concerns. Have we ever had a camera break during a wedding? Of course we have, we'd be lying if we told you otherwise. But with our back up equipment our clients have never known.

“Do you use a flash?”

As little as possible. We prefer to use available ambient light for a more natural realistic look, especially for outdoor wedding portraits and during the ceremony. When we use flash (mostly for your personal portrait series, group portraits, and reception candids), we use special flash systems with several special diffusers and light bouncers.

It's an extremely versatile flash system that produces a very flattering light that shows off every detail in your wedding gown as well as your wedding cake, without producing the dreaded “red eye” affect in you or your guests. And ~es. we use two of those too.

The second flash is not attached to the second camera body. It's attached to the second human body Jason brings with him. Jason uses an assistant with him at all times to help pose the formal portraits, and to help create beautiful special lighting effects that just can't be produced with a single on-camera flash.

“What else does your assistant do?”

Jason's assistant does a lot more than just help out with lighting. We like to think of her as a quality control person for your wedding. She's there to help you out whenever you need whether it's getting important messages to key people. pinning flowers on the guys (there's a right way and a wrong way) or making sure your gown is perfect just before you walk down the aisle, In addition, she helps better position equipment and lights, load film, switch batteries, find missing people, and assist with all the lenses, filters, and special effects.

She also acts as my second pair of eyes to make sure even the smallest detail is covered. With her help Jason can deliver the quality portraits you're looking for, yet take as little time as possible getting them. After all, you have a ton of celebrating to do. You don't want to be standing around all day taking formal portraits.

Check with the photographers you're considering -ask them if they use an assistant. Photographing a wedding can be done without one, but it would be kind of like a doctor working without a nurse.

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“Impressive equipment; great assistant; but do you know how to make it all work?”

But wait, there's more...

Being an Eagle Scout with a merit badge in photography was just the beginning of Jason's photography education. Holding four degrees from North Iowa Area Community College, and being a certified member of the Minnesota Professional Photographers Association (MPPA) and the Iowa Professional Photographers Association (IPPA) has really helped to round out my education. We are continually attending seminars throughout the United States featuring the most



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prestigious photographers in North America and Europe (talk about the frequent flyer miles we accumulate).

“Got anything else?”

Jason has also been selected to be a judge of the North Iowa Fair’s photography competition for several ‘ears and has been a guest speaker at several organizations and area schools. Currently Jason is working on his masters degree in photography. What does this mean to you? Our desire to stay on the very cutting edge of what’s new’ in professional photography has opened doors to creative ideas that just aren’t found at any other studios.

“What about awards?”

While we’ve won our share of awards for photography, that doesn’t mean anything to you. Awards are nice (they make great bookends) but they shouldn’t be used as a basis to choose a photographer. The toughest judges anywhere are not at the competitions we enter. Our day-to-day clients are tougher than any judge on the planet.

“O.K smart guy, so can you work in the real world?”

All of the text books, classes and seminars in the world will never prepare you for what an actual wedding is like. We’ve been photographing weddings for over a decade, and the experience we’ve gained over the years could never be taught in a classroom.

Learning how to calm a nervous bride or anxious groom, handling large crowds without coming across as “boss” or “militant”, getting couples to relax enough to share a tender or intimate moment in front of me without feeling self conscious, coaxing a smile out of a flower girl or ring bearer who is overwhelmed by all of these “huge” adults. These are techniques only experience alone can teach.

“If you’re so good, why haven ‘t I seen any of your ads or heard of you before?”

As humbling as it is to admit, you may not have heard of Jason Skarpness, even though we’ve been around since 1983. We don’t use a huge display ad in the yellow pages. We don’t usually advertise on the radio, the TV, in the newspaper or in any wedding publications. Why?

We feel word of mouth advertising is much more valuable. That’s how we fill the majority of our bookings. We appreciate the fact that our present clients keep us pretty buss. Speaking of word of mouth, a qualified photographer will willing to give you several references from recent clients. We’ll be happy to give you a list.

Not spending a lot on ads is also one was we do what we can to keep your costs down so that more of what you spend goes toward your portraits, not our ad campaign. We operate out of a home based studio. So frankly, if you’re looking for expensive antiques and fancy carpeting, you’ll be disappointed ‘cause you won’t find it here.

“Can we come take a look at your work?”

You bet! Never hire a photographer without seeing their work and talking with them in person. We would strongly discourage you from booking Jason Skarpness before we had a chance to meet and discuss your wedding plans. And please remember your visit (some call it consultation :you say potato, I say) is just that –a visit. There are no strings attached, no costs involved.



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“What will our visit be like?”

You'll be surprised how low key our visit will be. We promise to leave the heavy sales pressure stuff to the other studios. You'll be meeting with Jason. Not his assistant, not his office manager, not his secretary. The guy who's actually going to photograph your wedding. How else can you see if your personalities match?

Toss me an album

First, you'll have a chance to look at a complete wedding album. We don't use the “greatest hits” approach. Anyone can show you a great shot here or there, we want you to see how we've handled several weddings from start to finish. You'll even be able to see one or two recent weddings (work in progress) so you can see what Jason's work looks like unedited, uncut, and uncensored.

Talk, Talk, Talk

Next we'll just chat and get to know one another. We'll go over your expectations and map out a list of your wants and needs in terms of photography. You'll get to know Jason's style, personality, and philosophy, and be able to determine if that fits in with your plans.

The meaning of life (well, sort of)

Speaking of photography philosophies, here's ours. Communication is the keystone to great wedding portraits. A pretty basic philosophy for any kind of relationship .don't you think? We need you and your fiancée to be comfortable working with us.

Whether it's making a request, asking a question, voicing a concern or expressing an opinion: it's extremely important that you be at ease with the photographer you choose. If you feel at all uncomfortable or ill at ease with your photographer .it will show in your portraits.

The second visit

Boy are we going to get pick~ during our second visit. Since this is your wedding, we want to make sure we understand your wants and expectations. Your wedding will be unlike any other wedding that's ever been. And that's the way all of the people you hire to handle your wedding should treat it. We don't assume anything (you know what that does).

Instead, we'll work together to create an itinerary for your wedding day that covers all of the bases.

Who's in the wedding party? Where are the events going to take place? When do you need us? What types of photographs are most important to you? What kind of timetable did you have in mind? The more specific you can be the better. That way you'll have less to think about on your wedding day and be able to enjoy ~our celebration more.



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“That’s fine, bull don’t want you in my face all day.”

We don’t blame you. We wouldn’t want someone shoving a 150mm lens up my nose while trying to recite our vows either. Our biggest goal is to be remembered as the photographer who recorded ~‘our day but wasn’t a part of it. We want to be as unobtrusive as possible.

We’d like to think of ourselves as gentle conductors rather than absolute dictators. We don’t suffer from “directors disease” or have the “sergeant syndrome” where we hark out orders at you. This is your wedding celebration, not a military exercise.

Remember, Jason’s a photographer, not a high-pressure salesman. Since we’re going to develop a rather close relationship, we want you to make an educated decision that you can feel comfortable and confident with.

“How long will it take before we see our portraits?”

You’re completed wedding images will be ready for viewing in approximately four to six weeks after your wedding day. All of the hard work will be done for you. Your wedding portraits will be presented in your personally designed custom wedding album in their correct sizes and shapes. We take great pride in your wedding album and don’t feel you should have to wait until your first anniversary to show it off.

“When should we book our photographer?”

A good suggestion is that you book a photographer as soon as you have a wedding date confirmed. Unfortunately, photographing only one wedding per day means we can only take on a limited number of weddings.

In fact, we limit the number of weddings we do even more because you deserve the same excellent quality of service no matter if your wedding is in November or May. We limit the total number of weddings we do per year to 15 so that when we show up to photograph your wedding it doesn’t matter what time of year it is. We’ll be excited and enthused, not burned out and tired from all of the other weddings we tried to cram into our schedule.

“What happens if you get hit by a bus?”

We would have a very bad day!

Life is unpredictable. Fortunately in all of the years we’ve been photographing weddings we’ve never had something keep us from working. We can only hope (knock on wood) that this trend will continue.

But if something unforeseen should happen and we couldn’t be there for you, we would make sure you were taken care of. Being a member of the Iowa and Minnesota Professional Photographers Associations allows us access to several other of the finest portrait studios in the Midwest. We take care of each other and together we take care of you.



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“Can you be more specific about what’s included?”

As you may have already guessed by now, no one has ever accused me of being vague. Any photographer you interview should be direct and very up front about what you get and what you don’t get. If you’re not satisfied with an answer .push!

You deserve to know exactly what you’ll be getting for your money. Speaking of being specific all of the wedding coverage’s at Jason Skarpness include the following:

- ~ Two visits to plan your portraits and your album.
- ~ Choice of time and location coverage’s for your wedding day. (you won’t need to feel rushed)
- ~ Unlimited film coverage of your wedding day. (we don’t skimp on film)
- ~ Creative formal poses at a pre-arranged location. (no “line ‘em up and shoot ‘em”)
- lii Black and white glossies for your newspaper announcement.
- E A Large Designer Wedding Album with a lifetime guarantee.
- El** Access to our Montage computer system. The ideal software to help us design the perfect wedding album for you.
- El** Your choice of color, embossing, and album design.
- El Your choice of layout and page design.
- El Cropping assistance so you see exactly how your portraits will look before they’re printed. Just in case you’re unsure or have questions.
- El Free engagement session and black and white glossies for your newspaper announcement.
- El** We will not only be on time for your wedding day, we will be there early so that we don’t waste your time while we set up.
- El We will have backup equipment, extra cameras, lights, power packs.
(as mentioned we have double and triple everything)
- El** You will like each portrait in your finished album or we will reprint it at absolutely no charge.
- El** Your portraits are covered by a Lifetime Guarantee.
- El** Your negatives will remain safely on file with us.
- El The workmanship in all of the albums is guaranteed forever.
- El** Jason will be ~our photographer .no subcontractors, stringers or free lancers.

On top of all of this, the different wedding coverage’s we offer are extremely flexible and can be ifurther customized to meet your needs.

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- Your negatives will remain safely on file with us.
- The workmanship in all of the albums is guaranteed forever.
- Jason will be your main photographer, not a subcontractor, stringer, or a freelancer.

On top of all of this, the different wedding coverage’s we offer are extremely flexible and can be ifurther customized to meet your needs.

In addition, we guarantee that

M We even guarantee the weather!

Don’t even worry about your wedding day weather while planning outdoor photography.

We can plan a time for you on another sunny day for your outdoor formals if needed.

Do you know any other photographer who is willing to guarantee the weather in The Mid-West?”

“Are the originals free?”

Be very cautious of a photographer who says that your originals (proofs-previews) are free. Reality check time. There is a cost involved in developing and printing the originals that has to be figured into the cost of doing business. If the photographer says your originals are free, then he has already figured the cost of the originals into your package and is in



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essence forcing you to buy them.

At Jason Skarpness, you have an option. You aren't forced to buy anything. As matter of a fact, if your interested in keeping the costs down, we will show you the simplicity and ease in which your album can be designed and laid out with out all the high cost of wasted originals.

What happens to the negatives?"

The first anniversary is 'paper. We've had several couples come back and order a Display Portrait of their favorite image in time for their first anniversary.

Now for The Big One!

"How much L~ all of this going to cost?"

There's a saying that goes:

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"The bitter taste of poor quality lingers long after the sweet taste of a low price has long been forgotten."

Rather Zen-like but very true. We've heard of places that offer 'deals for as little as \$200. Then the "photographer" shows up shoots the wedding and hands you the film when he's done.

Not a bad deal, huh? We want you to consider this for a minute. What incentive does this person have to correct any problems if the last you see of them is when they hand you the film at the reception?

For that matter what incentive do they have to concentrate on making sure you get all the shots you want? They've got your money and they're gone. It may sound strange but this is a case where you can spend a lot less, yet still pay too much.

We're in this for the long haul. Well be with s'ou before your wedding, during sour wedding, and long after sour wedding.

"Are you going to answer this question today?"

Oh, right cost. Well, we have coverages ranging in price *from \$295*. To \$495., add on coverages are available ranging from 575. To \$100. You'll know exactly what you're getting. In addition, you'll receive a special package discount on everything in your wedding album. What could be easier?

There are no hidden costs. Something else you should look for, make sure you know exactly what you're getting for your money. Some photographer's pricing methods may be as easy to understand as the Federal Income Tax Code.

At Jason Skarpness, all prices and charges are up front and explained in terms you'll understand. That may be why we may seem more expensive that other studios when in fact, when all is said and done you may actually be spending less.



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You'll even find the payment system easy (if that's possible). You can pay with Visa, Master Card, Discover, checks, money orders, or (if you really push) cash. You're welcome to set up a payment plan to make small payments by the week or by the month.

Are you still with me?

If you haven't slipped into a coma yet, hang in there we're in the home stretch! Below is a summary of the questions you should ask photographers you're thinking of hiring.

1. What kind of photography do you specialize in?
2. What type of equipment do you use?
3. Do you have backup equipment?
4. Do you use an assistant?
5. What is your educational background?
6. What is your experience?
7. Can I see a list of references?
8. Can we see several complete wedding album samples?
9. Can we see a recent wedding?
10. What's your philosophy on photography?
11. Who is the actual photographer going to be?
12. Are there any time limits?
13. Is there any limit on the amount of film used?
14. Can we see a sample of the actual album well be getting?
15. What exactly is included with your packages?
16. How long will it take to get your finished album and extra orders?
17. What happens to the negatives?
18. How much is this going to cost?
19. What happens if a bus hits you?

Interested?

If you made it through this entire letter and would like to come in for a visit, here's all you need to do

First: Sit down with your fiancée and decide when you're BOTH available for a visit

Next: Call (A.S.A.P) to make your appointment for your private visit

Then: Relax, your wedding plans are well under way.



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Cordially,

Jason J. Skarpness
Wedding Photography Specialist

P.S. I know we said we're not into high-pressure sales. However, I should mention we only have a few dates left available in 1999 and 2000. If you're interested, please don't hesitate to give us a call today. We would hate to have you lose your date just because you waited one day too long to call.



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