

# Michele Turner

## WEDDING PLANNER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Story: Tim Brown

The ballroom looks wonderful—the tables are set, the linens are pressed, the flowers are in place, and at long last, everything is ready. Michele Turner has, yet again, created a perfect setting for a perfect wedding. She breathes a sigh of relief as she makes her way around the room, performing a final inspection.

Suddenly, she hears a monumental crash—a waiter bursts into the ballroom and announces that the caterer has slipped, broken her ankle, destroyed the wedding cake, and shattered all of the glassware in one fell swoop. Pleadingly, he asks, “What are we going to do?”

Michele Turner is calm. She thinks for a moment. And without blinking an eye, she says, “I’ll take care of it.” And take care of it she will.

The hypothetical situation above is based upon experience. Michele Turner is the owner of Consultants Unlimited, a special event consulting, planning, and design group specializing in wedding ceremonies and receptions. Michele has been planning events for years, both with Consultants Unlimited and with the Georgia Museum of Art, where she has been the Event Coordinator since 2000.

Simply put, Michele Turner is an Event Planning specialist. During her career, she has dealt with just about every catastrophe imaginable, and she has gained a reputation for being able to solve any crisis, regardless of the circumstances, one way or another.

Challenges for a wedding planner of course include the occasional Bridezilla—or the Mother of Bridezilla. But some situations are much more challenging. One such memory for Michele involved the weather. “We had planned a wedding at Port Armor that was to be held outside, including the ceremony; the arrangements included tents overlooking Lake Oconee and a croquet court for the guests. Little did we know that a hurricane would be passing over Georgia that day. About two hours before the ceremony, we moved everything to the



Bryan Redding

clubhouse and managed to get it all done before the guests arrived. The evening went fine—but it was a close call.”

While Consultants Unlimited will facilitate any kind of event, around eighty percent of their business comes from weddings. “We do around fifty to sixty weddings a year, mostly during the regular wedding season.” One of the slowest months of the year is June, which is somewhat



Photo provided courtesy Michele Turner



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surprising, considering the tradition of June Brides in American culture. “A lot of brides assume that everyone will be getting married in June, so they avoid that month.”

Consultants Unlimited is made up of six wedding coordinators, including a planner based in Atlanta. Although the majority of the weddings are in Northeast Georgia, they have coordinated events in many locations. “Destination Weddings are becoming more and more pop-

ular, and we have helped several brides make long-distance arrangements,” says Michele. Interestingly, many of their destination weddings take place right here in Athens, a popular event location for out-of-towners. “Many couples first met at UGA and have fond associations with Athens. I have facilitated weddings for brides whom I didn’t actually meet until the ceremony rehearsal.”

One aspect of Consultants Unlimited’s services that couples appreciate in particular is their attention to financial considerations—although there are, of course, all-inclusive packages, Consultants Unlimited will meet any budget, and will work with a bride to determine which services are affordable.

“There is often a misconception that hiring a wedding coordinator is incredibly expensive, a la ‘Father of the Bride.’ But we offer assistance on all levels—sometimes there are only one or two details that need taking care of, like developing a timeline, running the actual ceremony, and so on.”

Of course, Consultants Unlimited will be more than happy to plan a wedding from beginning to end. Their credo is to meet a bride’s every need, and they will facili-

tate every aspect of the wedding—from addressing the invitations and selecting the menu for the Rehearsal Dinner, to ensuring that the right brand of chocolate graces the pillows in the couple's Belize honeymoon suite.

Michele Turner's business has benefited enormously from her involvement in Athens Wedding Professionals (AWP), of which she is currently the president. Athens Wedding Professionals is a non-profit professional organization of wedding-related businesses; there are currently around sixty members of AWP, including caterers, florists, photographers, facilities, planners, etc.

"The main benefit of AWP is exposure—we work as an advertising cooperative," Michele explains. "Most of our members have limited marketing budgets, and this is a way to maximize resources and gain a great deal more exposure than would be possible individually." Camaraderie among members is also a benefit. "We all end up working together so often—sometimes every Saturday—that we develop strong working relationships."

Michele's degrees in theatre from Young Harris and UGA have provided a great deal of training for her current business. "My mom said that I would never use my degree, but I've actually become a stage manager—every event is a big theatrical production."

Although Consultants Unlimited is available all the time, Michele would personally rather not work on Game Days—As everyone who knows her can testify, Michele



Photo provided courtesy Michele Turner

Turner is a Bulldog Fan of rare intensity. If you ever need her on a Football Saturday, you need look no further than Sanford Stadium. If the Dawgs are playing in Athens, Michele will be near the hedges, rain or shine, cheering her head off in the red and black ocean. But don't worry—Consultants Unlimited's less fervent Georgia fans are available for game-day events.

Someday, Michele would like to record her memoirs, "Reflections of a Wedding Planner." But in the meantime, she has a bit of work to do. There is always an event around the corner, and Michele is usually busy taking care of details. She loves a challenge—whatever arises, she will handle it. Guaranteed. □

For more information about Consultants Unlimited, call 706.548.3948, email Michele@consultants-unlimited.com, and visit www.consultants-unlimited.com.

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