

Lavish, weddings not necessary for marital bliss

By Edgar V. Barmann
NC News Service

As part of the American dream, brides may wish to arrive at church in a limousine, walk up the aisle in a wedding dress with a 12-foot train and entertain 300 guests at a sumptuous wedding dinner in a luxurious hotel or club.

Such lavish weddings offer no guarantee of marital bliss and in fact may contribute to tension. Overspending can leave couples hard-pressed to meet ordinary living expenses. The dream can become a nightmare.

Here are some suggestions for having a wedding which doesn't break the budget yet is a memorable and joyful occasion.

Invitations: Engraved invitations are the most attractive — and the most expensive. An offset printing process can lower the price considerably. There will be further savings if the time of reception is printed on the invitation, rather than on a separate card. A double envelope enclosure also isn't necessary. And even Emily Post says that invitations can be handwritten rather than printed. But if the guest list is long, it could be a tedious chore.

Rings: Strictly speaking, an engagement ring isn't necessary, but the reality is that most brides want one. Rather than a diamond, the prospective groom could choose semi-precious stones like rubies, emeralds or sapphires. A family heirloom perhaps handed down from a grandparent can serve as an engagement or wedding ring. Though currently in vogue, a wedding ring for the groom is optional.

Wedding dress: Purchase of a beautiful gown, veil and accessories may



represent from one-third to one-half of the total cost of a wedding, so it is worthwhile to consider alternatives. Wedding dresses can be purchased at a thrift shop, or can be rented. If sewing is the bride's forte, she could buy the material and a pattern and make her own dress. Or she can give the job to a dressmaker. A dress worn by the bride's mother or any other heirloom dress can be an economical as well as sentimental choice. A hand-me-down gown from a relative or best friend may be available.

Flowers: If there is another wedding scheduled the same day at the parish church, an agreement might be worked out with the other couple to share the cost of altar flowers. If that's not possible, two vases of flowers will suffice. Cut flowers from a home garden also will fill the bill for summer weddings.

Photography: If a professional is hired, the couple can save by ordering only the photos, and buying an album later. Perhaps a friend or relative could be persuaded to take photos, and the film then could be sent to a reliable mail order firm for processing. Videotaping equipment is economical to rent and even rank amateurs can produce an acceptable record of the big event.

Reception hall: If available, the parish church hall may be a good choice, unless of course such a gathering can be accommodated in the home of parents or a close friend. A public garden also is a possibility. The search for a hall should begin early to insure a wide range of choices. In many areas, reception halls are booked six months to a

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