

BRIDES OF '85

Consultants create order from chaos

Tradition dictates that the bride and her mother plan the details of the wedding. But new situations and attitudes have paved the way for a new type of bridal service — the bridal consultant who helps plan the wedding or who may even take over most of the responsibility for the event.

When an elaborate wedding has been planned or when both bride and her mother are busy with full-time jobs or when the bride lives in one city, but will be married in another, a consultant may be called in to turn a logistics nightmare into a manageable task.

Consultants provide a variety of services from fitting the wedding dress to planning the entire wedding. Though historically they have been linked with elite weddings, today's increasing number of working women and special situations have led to a widening of their popularity, according to Gerard Monaghan, president of the Association of Bridal Consultants, a trade group in New Milford, Conn.

Mary C. Weaver, a consultant in Avon, Conn., for the past seven years, summarized typical services of consultants. Most important is providing informed advice to the bride and her

parents to help them get the wedding they want for the budget they have set.

Besides giving advice, a consultant may arrange for selection of the reception hall, church, flowers, caterer, music, photographer, and other needed services and items. The consultant may help the bride choose invitations and stationery, organize rehearsal and wedding, help choose wedding attire, set up pre-wedding parties and festivities, arrange for places for out-of-town guests and wedding party to stay and even help advise on honeymoon destination and trousseau wardrobe.

Since the service is a personal one, the specifics depend a great deal on the kind of help that is desired. Those experienced in the field say a feeling of rapport and trust between consultant and bride is essential.

Consultants charge for their services in several ways. In some instances there is no charge to the bride since the consultant earns a fee based on commission from suppliers. Others figure their fee as a percentage of the total wedding budget — normally 10 to 15 percent, according to Monaghan. Another arrangement is for the consultant to charge a flat fee for an

initial consultation and then a percentage of the wedding cost. If the fee is to be based on time spent, it is wise to ask for an estimate based on similar weddings. It is both acceptable and wise to ask for references from the consultant and to call former clients to check on the references.

Consultants say their roles are as varied as the brides they serve. Mary H. Wood, of Ardmore, Okla., considers one of her main functions to act as a go-between bride and mother. "They need someone to vent their frustrations and nervousness on," she says.

Hope Warner, of Ann Arbor, Mich., who coordinates two to three weddings a year, also offers assistance to another 30 brides each year. She has found that the key requirement is to help the bride establish a budget, to make certain the couple has a place for the wedding and the reception and someone to marry them. Then some engage her to organize the wedding. Others merely ask for recommendations on florists, bands and so on and then take it from there.

Bridal consultants do little or no advertising. They tend to gain clients on the basis of personal recommendations. To find a professional, check with

department store wedding gift registries, hotel banquet managers and friends.

You can also look in the yellow pages of the telephone directory under "wedding suppliers" or "party planner" headings.

The Association of Bridal Consultants will provide names of its members to those who send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the association at 200 Chestnutland Road, New Milford, Conn. 06776-2521, says Monaghan.

If requirements for guidance are less extensive, or the bride can't find a consultant who is suitable, a lesser degree of help is available free by developing a good relationship with a consultant in a bridal department or a specialty shop.

There is no charge for these services. Services for which there is an extra charge include visits to the home or location of the wedding to help bride and attendants dress.

Brides who would like some guidance, but want to do much of the planning themselves, can also consult books on wedding planning, such as "Bride's Book of Etiquette," by the editors of Bride's magazine (Perigee Books) or "Modern Bride's Guide to Your Wedding and Marriage" (Ballantine Books).

Etiquette book has guidelines for the bride

NEW YORK (AP) — "Etiquette," say the publishers of Bride's Magazine, "offers guidelines for our social actions so that we can respond with assurance."

But, what guidelines are there for those unexpected situations? The blizzard on wedding day. The stuck zipper on the wedding gown. The arrival of an "uninvited guest." The missing wedding ring.

The fifth edition of "Bride's Book of Etiquette," by the editors of Bride's magazine, deals with the unexpected as well as the rituals. The book, which marks the 50th year of the magazine, recommends that you keep your sense of humor when the unpredictable tries to make a joke of all your planning.

"A sense of humor is basic to getting along in life," the editors say — "and a wedding is no exception."

Their advice: "When something goes wrong, try not to panic. Assess your options and choose an alternative plan quickly. Friends and guests can help.

"For instance, a cousin can go pick up an organist whose car broke down. If the photographer doesn't show up, everyone can help with candids. Forget your vows? Your clergymen will help you through."

The book deals primarily with the more traditional aspects of wedding plans, for all types of weddings, from formal to personalized, and considers the older bride, second marriages, and vows of reaffirmation after years together.



WEDDING SPECIALIST — Bridal dress designer and consultant Victoria Gordon of Seattle adjusts the headpiece to one of her custom gowns being modeled in a bridal show. Seattle brides, she says, rarely choose opulent weddings. However, Gordon's own top-of-the-line dress runs \$2,000 for her Seattle clients, while one she offers on the East Coast sells for \$24,000.

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