

PAPER PERFECT Invitations and other bridal needs

Ah, bliss. For two weeks since you announced your engagement you've been riding the crest of a romantic, rolling wave. But before your wave finally reaches land, you'll be floundering in the backwash of details regarding the ceremony, reception, attire and a myriad of other things.

No wonder they invented the honeymoon! The guests with whom you choose to share your wedding day are second only to the sacred exchange of vows. After all, they're the ones who'll benefit from all your planning.

The presence of relatives and friends is one of the most uniquely memorable expressions of your special day. Wait until you hear the stories!

Compiling the guest list, choosing the style and wording of the invitation and deciding whether to print an announcement are several of the primary considerations in the early planning stages of your event. And post-event, that important follow-up thank-you note.

GET THE WORD OUT

A newspaper announcement is the most widely used way to spread the word of your engagement. The service is free in many small-town papers, but may cost in metropolitan areas.

Commonly you'll be asked to fill out an information sheet and attach a photograph. Make a photocopy of the form — or ask for an extra — so you can send in your wedding announcement as well.

YOU GUEST IT

Often the most troublesome aspect of planning a wedding, compiling the guest list, takes more than a working knowledge of whom you want to invite. Before sequestering each family for their list, you and your fiancé should determine the size wedding you want and try to work within these means. Let each family know their magic number and let them figure out a method of controlling their list.

Once the lists are combined, you'll need a tracking system to keep it all organized. A small notebook or index card file works best — many stationery stores carry such a "bride file." The data you'll need for each guest on this master list will include full name and address, whether receiving an invitation or announcement, whether they've responded, gift received, and date thank-you note was sent.

Allow plenty of time to gather addresses; you'll have to make many phone calls to track down everyone, especially friends from school with whom you've lost touch.

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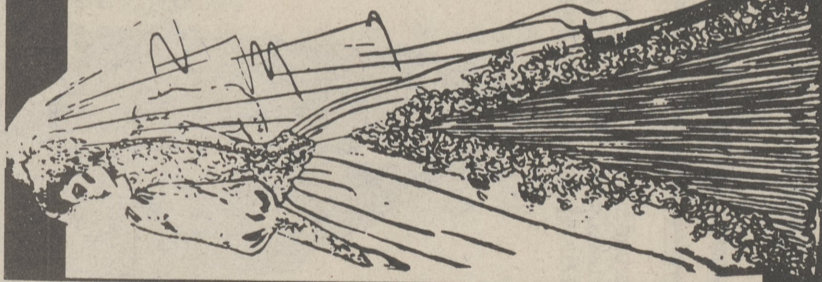
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BRIDAL BOUTIQUE Romancing lace for lovely brides

If there was ever any doubt that weddings are romantic, those doubts were put to rest with the debut of this year's gowns.

"Wedding gowns today are more romantic than ever before," says *Bride's* magazine editor-in-chief Barbara Foer. "I think the most important thing to remember is that they're very, very feminine."

This season's silhouettes are simpler and more elegant than a year ago. Whereas last year the skirts of many bridal gowns cascaded with lace and overflowed with pearls, this year, skirts are simplified.

"Many of the skirts are totally plain without any embellishments at all," explains Holly McMunn, director of public relations for Bridal Originals. "In fact, trains and skirts have unadorned fabric with just a touch of lace. The emphasis has really gone to the bodice of the gown."

Look for lavish hand beading

and the use of appliques on both the front and back. Or, hand beading appears on sheer lace that covers flesh-tone organza, creating the illusion of a show-through look.

Some gowns appear lingerie-inspired, mixing lace and embroidery for a feel borrowed from intimate apparel.

Necklines receive new emphasis, and this year, there are innovative alternatives to traditional high-neck styling. The portrait collars, capelets, fichus and scarfed looks that appear in ready-to-wear also influence bridal clothes.

Waistlines are slightly higher, and in more fashion-forward gowns may even be Empire.

"The sheath is another gown shape that's enjoying a resurgence," adds McMunn.

And if skirts are full at the hip, they may be pegged at the ankle, creating a dome shape that looks fresh now.

Another strong trend this year is the use of color in bridal gowns. Blush pink and icy gray-blue show up in trims and overskirts, providing options to the classic ecru, ivory and white.

By Lisa Lebowitz
Copley News Service



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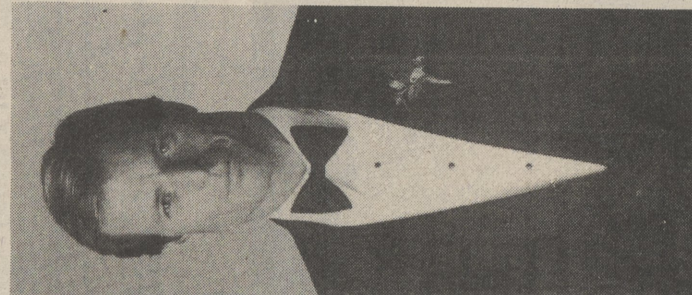
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FLORAL FASHION - The right flowers add to the romance of any wedding. Shown above: This bride is wearing lilies of the valley in her hair, which are repeated in her cascade bouquet of stephanotis, gardenias, star of Bethlehem and lilies.

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