

For many couples, beliefs are key for nuptials, and life beyond

By Kathleen Roberts
Copley News Service

Couples merge to varying degrees of faith. Some choose a religion, for others, spirituality forms the core of the ceremony.

Born and raised Roman Catholic, Elizabeth Griffin-Stephens wanted a wedding Mass with candles and communion laced in an Irish blessing.

"I really would not have felt married," without it, she said. Griffin-Stephens' wedding included an adoration of Mary to ask for support and blessings. She and her husband Scott prayed the Hail Mary together, while a soloist sang "Ave Maria."

The couple agreed to raise their children Catholic and to send them to parochial school. Raised Lutheran, Scott attends church with his wife, but stopped

short of converting. That's OK with his bride, who disagrees with the church's practice of banning non-Catholics from communion.

But for other couples, marrying within their faith is crucial. Jan and Chris Rabin signed a traditional Jewish marriage contract, or *ketubah*, outlining their duties as husband and wife. He agreed to support and protect, while she vowed to be sincere and affectionate.

"It was very important for me to marry somebody Jewish in that it was important for me to marry someone with the same value system," she said. "It was also important from a holiday standpoint."

The Rabins married under the traditional canopy, or *huppah*, symbolizing the first temple, as well as their new home.

Valerie Baines-Hoover and her husband Conner lived together for about a year before their 1996 courthouse wedding. Born and raised Baptist, Baines never felt

quite right about "living in sin." But the couple couldn't afford a traditional church wedding.

Instead, they saved their money and renewed their vows in a Baptist service a year later. While Hoover is also Baptist, his wife said all that mattered to her was that he be a Christian.

"I accepted Christ as my personal savior at an early age," she said. "As an adult, we kind of stray away from God, but God is always still there."

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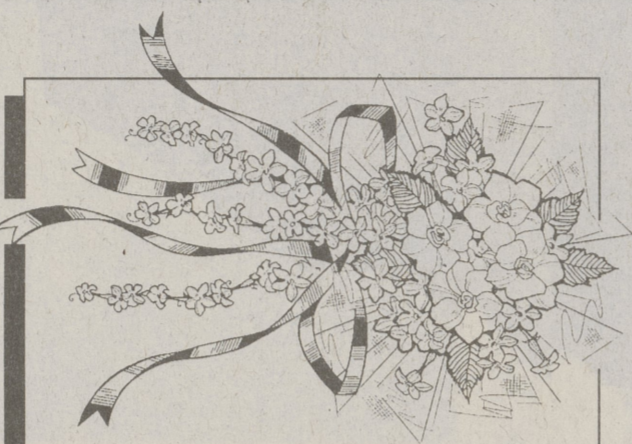
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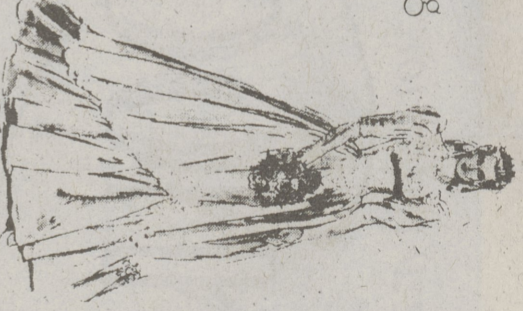
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