

The Crittenden Press

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Bride inside

Get ready for your big day with this year's special bridal segment from The Crittenden Press. The five-page feature is full of bargains, specials and tips to make your wedding day a success. There are even tips for the guys looking to pop the big question and slide a shiny rock onto the ring finger of their love. Feature begins on Page 1B.

Superintendent resigns his post

Crittenden County School Superintendent of John Belt announced his resignation Tuesday. Belt made his intentions public at this week's board of education meeting. He will stay on until July 1, 2008.



Belt

"It's just time for me to move on," the Tolu native told The Press, adding that other personal obligations have become more important. "The district is at a point where I feel like it needs to find someone who will be in place for 10 or 12 years."

At the time he was hired in the spring of 2005, Belt said he did not intend to be a long-term superintendent. He has one year left on his contract.

Free food given out today to residents

Free food will be available from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., today (Thursday) at the Senior Citizens Center on North Walker Street. Residents are asked to pick up food only for themselves.

Board reschedules info sharing meet

Crittenden County Board of Education has rescheduled last week's community information sharing meetings, inviting the public to comment on the education and economic impact of the school district. Originally scheduled for Feb. 12 at the Ed-Tech Center, the noon and 6 p.m., meetings have been rescheduled for the same times on March 20. Anyone wishing to share input or concerns related to the school district should call 965-3525 to make a reservation, which is needed for the noon meeting only.

Chamber seeking award nominations

The Crittenden County Chamber of Commerce is asking the community to nominate for recognition some of those people or businesses that make a difference in the county. Nominations can be made by phone, fax, e-mail or mail for the following awards: Person of the Year, Community Pride, Unsung Hero, Volunteer of the Year and Customer Service of the Year. The deadline for all entries is March 18. The Chamber can be reached by phone at 965-5015 or 704-2712. The fax number is 965-0058 and e-mail is chamber@marionkentucky.us.

Weather

Reported by UK Ag Weather Service as of Tuesday at Princeton, online at www.wgwx.ca.uky.edu.

Forecast	
THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6 am Cloudy, 21°	Cloudy, 27°
Noon Cloudy, 29°	Cloudy, 37°
6 pm Cloudy, 30°	Cloudy, 36°
9 pm Cloudy, 28°	Cloudy, 33°

Precipitation report	
Last 7 days2.88	For 2008.....7.54
Last 30 days.....5.88	Deviation.....+0.99

Online

Visit the-press.com 24-7 for updates on your local and breaking news, including full-color video and slideshows of events. Send news tips to pressnews@the-press.com.

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Thaw-out



PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS

David Stone, like other enterprising folks around the area, began contracting tree and debris cleanup jobs last week for residents of Crittenden County hit by the winter ice storm.

Lessons from ice storm noted as cleanup, recovery continues

FROM STAFF REPORTS

What will certainly go down in the annals of time as one of the broadest natural disasters in county history has now come and gone. The Winter Ice Storm of February 2008 will long be remembered, not for its destruction to homes nor fatal consequences, but for the greater inconvenience that it caused and the message it sent to disaster preparedness coordinators.

Although damages to homes, vehicles, livestock, barns, standing timber and landscaping was widespread and problematic, it could have been even more disastrous. "We dodged a big bullet," said Greg Binkley, maintenance supervisor for Crittenden County School District. "The weather cooperated. It never got cold enough to do major damage while the power was out. If we'd have had temperatures down near zero, there would have been major problems

with pipes freezing. We wouldn't be back in school this week, I can tell you that."

Homes and buildings that were not well insulated suffered from frozen water pipes, but for the most part that type of damage was mitigated by temperatures that never dipped below 25 degrees during the electricity outage.

At the peak of power outage, electric companies that serve Crittenden County and the Salem area say they had 7,500 customers without electricity. Restoration crews worked 16-hour days clearing right-of-ways and repairing damaged lines. Within a couple of days, about half of the power to the county was restored. By the weekend, there were about 1,000 homes still without power and a couple hundred started this week without lights. That was especially troublesome for families with school-age children who had to report back to class Monday.

Schools let out early on the first day of the storm, Monday, Feb. 11, and classes were dismissed the remainder of the week.

"We dodged a big bullet..."

— Greg Binkley
Crittenden County Schools Maintenance Supervisor

Storm coverage

- 5A Businesses suffer, flourish from outage
- 6A Baptist group helps clean up town
- 8A Past disasters leave their mark
- 8A Remembering the disaster in pictures
- 9A Tree work requires consideration

School buses operated on routes that were cleared of storm debris Monday. Several areas were still too troublesome for the big, yellow buses to navigate. Caney Fork, Nunn Switch, Fishtrap, Sulphur Springs, Airport, Love Cemetery, Youth Camp, Baker Hollow, North Kirk Bluff, Nipper, Copperas Springs, A.T. Crider, Brown School, Moore Springs, Bridwell Loop, Fords Ferry and Roe Wofford roads were either impassable or problematic for school buses Monday.

Bus drivers checked their routes Sunday in private vehicles and made special arrangements to pick up students where roads inhibited travel, said school transportation

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Tax table

Magistrates delay call on new levy

By CHRIS EVANS
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

About 100 residents packed into the Crittenden County Courthouse Tuesday morning, many of them armed with their own reasons for opposing a proposed four-percent insurance premium tax.

Crittenden County Judge-Executive Fred Brown and local magistrates had discussed during their January fiscal court meeting the idea of imposing an insurance tax on citizens in order to make up for a projected \$145,000 shortfall in the FY 2008-09 budget. The plan passed on a 4-2 vote. Before the idea could become law, however, a public hearing and second vote were required.

The public meeting was held this week amid a hail of opposition, prompting county leaders to back off the idea temporarily while exploring other options. Dozens of people attended the Tuesday hearing, forcing it out of the fiscal court's normal chambers on the main floor of the courthouse and into the more spacious district courtroom upstairs. Still, every bench and chair was filled. Many voiced their opinion regarding the tax; all were against it. However, some in the crowd expressed their understanding of the county's financial woes. A few offered their own ideas of how to solve the county's budget crisis.

Of those ideas, many were either illegal or impractical based on federal, state and local laws. Some had merit and were duly recognized by county officials as possible options.

Local businessman Bobby Martin suggested putting a \$10 surcharge on property tax bills to help pay for county fire departments; Tolu resident John May, a former county judge-executive, suggested taking part of the county judge's salary out of the road department instead of taking it all from the general fund; county resident Gary Hardesty asked if the insurance tax could be collected one year then eliminated, giving the county some much needed cash right now but not holding up taxpayers from now on.

Magistrate Curt Buntin gave Hardesty's idea some credit when he said, "We just have a shortfall right now and a year from now we might not be having this discussion."

Local leaders have suggested that the new jail will save the county thousands in the coming years, but right now they are not certain enough to pencil those figures

See **TAX**/page 3A



City axes tax hike

Marion City Council tossed out the idea of doubling the city's current 4-percent tax on insurance premiums. See story on Page 3A.

U.S. 641, ferry remain in new road plan

By DARYL K. TABOR
MANAGING EDITOR

The state's plan for road projects through 2014 won't see a lot of new blacktop put down over the next two years, but transportation plans in Crittenden County remain on the map.

Because of massive revenue shortfalls, the 2008 Recommended Highway Plan introduced to the public and legislators last week anticipates no money for new, state-funded projects until mid-2010. For Crittenden County, however, that will have little effect, according to Judge-Executive Fred Brown. In fact, all projects from the last six-year plan issued in 2006 have carried over into this year's version. Those projects include a four-lane U.S. 641 and the Ohio River Ferry at Cave in Rock, Ill.

The proposed highway plan unveiled last week by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet anticipates

that \$5.3 billion in state and federal funding will be available over the upcoming six-year period — \$1.03 billion less than the basis for the last plan. Moderate growth in the Kentucky Road Fund has not kept pace with a 40 percent increase in the price of road-building materials since 2005, the report noted. In addition, the state portion of the plan contains projects that exceed forecasted revenues by nearly \$3 billion.



Prather

"As we assess the Transportation Cabinet's ability to meet future highway needs, we must recognize that when projects cost more, careful choices must be made about the type and extent of road system improvements we pursue," Transportation Secretary

Joe Prather said.

Despite the massive revenue problem, full funding for grade, drain and surfacing work on the 5.2 miles of a new U.S. 641 in Crittenden County remains intact, but appears to have been pushed back a year.

"I was hoping 641 would be slated for this year," Brown said of the \$49.54 million, two-phase construction project.

Instead of that work beginning sometime after Fiscal Year 2009 that begins July 1 of this year, it will now have to wait until after July 1, 2009. That "slippage," as Rep. Mike Cherry puts it, has nothing to do with the revenue shortfalls.



Highway plan money

Only two projects for Crittenden County are in the state's transportation plan through 2014.

U.S. 641.....	\$49,540,000
Ohio River Ferry.....	\$600,000

"Construction money has been pushed to 2010, absolutely, but that's as quick as we could spend it," Cherry told The Press Tuesday.

Part of the delay is due to a hold-up in property acquisition. Because of legal disputes in the court system between local

property owners and the state over the amount offered for the land needed to construct the four-lane road, the next phase must await legal decisions on each case. That next phase will be utility construction, for which \$3.5 million is set aside, according to Cherry.

"It's all on track," he said.

The Princeton Democrat said the

See **ROADS**/page 3A

Disaster has hit in all forms

By **DARYL K. TABOR**
MANAGING EDITOR

In Crittenden County's 166-year history, floods, fires and freak weather have all left their mark on the population.

Last week's ice storm left nearly 80 percent of the county without power in its first hours, created hazardous road conditions and closed numerous services. It was certainly one of the most extensive disasters in county history. The power was out for several days in some areas. A few started a new school and work week without lights or hot water.

"We've had other ice storms, but I don't think the power had been out so widespread and for that long," said Brenda Underdown, county historian.

As bad as last week's winter storm was, no one was killed and property damage was limited. This disaster paled in comparison to some in the past that have shut down the county for many days, destroyed an entire city, swamped structures and farmland under feet of water and turned homes to match sticks.



"We've had other ice storms, but I don't think the power had been out so widespread and for that long."

- Brenda Underdown

With help from Underdown, two published volumes of the county's history and the archives of The Crittenden Press, listed below are some other serious disasters from the annals of local history:

■ On March 27, 1890, a mother and her child were killed when a terrible tornado swept through the northern part of the county around the Mt. Zion Church and Cemetery area, destroying everything in its path. According to Underdown, the tornado picked up a young mother, Susan Moreland, and her daughter, Gladys, and carried them several miles from their home and left them both dead.

"This is the only disaster that I know where a death was reported," the historian said.

■ Other tornadoes have created more monetary devastation, but have spared lives. One occurred in June of 1993 when a tornado hit Tolu and nearly wiped it from the map.

■ In January of 2000, Crayne was ground zero for an F3 tornado that ripped 25 miles northwest through the county, causing \$11.8 million in damage, destroying 97 homes and leading to a federal disaster declaration.

■ On March 16, 1923, there was a major windstorm that struck the city and county and did much damage to both areas but only minor injuries were reported.

■ With two major rivers and one secondary river bordering the county, several floods have inundated communities from Tolu to Dycusburg. Most notable was the 1937 flood - perhaps the worst natural disaster in western Kentucky history - that left one million homeless and registered damages of \$500 million from the origin of the Ohio River in Pittsburgh to Cairo, Ill. Dycusburg, along the Cumberland River, was evacuated and most of northern Crittenden County was left under water from the swollen Ohio River.

■ Other floods in 1913 and 1997 also created widespread damage, but nothing near the 500-year event in 1937.

■ The county courthouse was destroyed by fire twice, first during the Civil War in 1865 at the hands of Confederate Gen. Hylan B. Lyons. Five years later, the courthouse was again destroyed by a blaze.

■ On March 28, 1905, a stable in the rear of a Marion home burst into flames, spewing spars and embers across the city. Homes and buildings in the downtown business district were destroyed. In 1919, another downtown fire created similar widespread damage.

■ The winter of 1917 and 1918 left the entire county in a deep freeze. According to Underdown, the temperature was in the single digits or below zero the entire month of December 1917 and continuing into January and February of the next year.

"The snow over a period of weeks had risen to well over four feet deep," Underdown said. "Finally, in March, the cold spell broke and it started raining."

■ The winter of 1977 and 1978 was also terrible with snow and below normal temperatures, but the following year, in January 1979, there was so much snow and bad weather that "we didn't go to school the whole month of January and on into February," Underdown said.

Breaking the ice

A look back at last week's winter storm in pictures from The Press and the community.



PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS
After the storm, a big thaw created runoff, causing an already rising Ohio River to leave its banks. The Cave in Rock Ferry has been closed periodically since last week's ice storm.



PHOTO BY JANSON JAMES
A tree fell across a powerline on North Main Street in Marion near Curve Inn.



PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS
City of Marion employees worked to clear Clark Street of fallen trees.



PHOTO BY JANSON JAMES
Power company workers repair the broken pole on North Main Street.



Jeanette Brantley stayed with her routine and walked her dog along College Street right after the storm hit.

PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS



PHOTO BY CHRIS EVANS
Emergency dispatcher Paula Miniard and Ginny Tinsley answered hundreds of phone calls during the first few hours of the storm on the morning of Feb. 12. Two dispatchers manned the phones most of the day.



Hugh and Shelia Highfil of the Mexico community e-mailed us this photo of the ice covering trees on their farm as the sun popped out briefly last Thursday. The Highfils have lost 15-20 trees on their property.



At left, Donnie Phillips, manager of the local Kenergy office, said his crews ate breakfast at their Marion headquarters before leaving early Wednesday morning. Few of them had power at their own homes and



PHOTOS BY CHRIS EVANS

hardly any places were open to buy food, so the men made sausage and biscuits before heading out for a 16-hour day. At right, Amy Lee of West Poplar Street fills a pickup truck with limbs that had fallen in her yard.

STORM

Continued from Page 1A

director Al Starnes.

■ So far this year, students have missed 8.5 days due to weather. The school calendar had some snow days built into it and school officials are already planning to make up a day and half by shuffling the remaining schedule.

As of right now, students will have to make up four days at the end of the year, meaning the last day will be May 30, unless other adjustments are made to the calendar such as eliminating spring break or going to school on days already scheduled as holidays.

■ The American Red Cross and Crittenden County teamed up to provide a local shelter during the power outage. Crittenden Elementary School was turned into a makeshift motel and restaurant. It fed several and provided warm lodging two nights. Overnight Tuesday there were 41 at the shelter and overnight Wednesday there were 61.

Geraldine Shouse, local Red Cross coordinator, said volunteers were very helpful in providing services to those in need.

"Conrad's, CVS and other businesses and churches really helped out by providing food, plates, towels, napkins and other items," she said. "We had Red Cross cots and the jail gave us mattress pads and the nursing home provided blankets.

"We even had Bingo and learned ballroom dancing thanks to Doug Wallace and Don Cruce."

Wallace, whose family was staying at the shelter, borrowed Bingo cards from the nursing home and even bought prizes himself to give away to winners.

"People were just wonderful helping each other out," Shouse said.

■ Donations to the Lakeland Red Cross, which provided assistance last week, may be made c/o Geraldine Shouse, 60 Lafayette Heights, Marion, KY 42064.

■ The Crittenden County Senior Citizens Center and Crittenden County Public Library were both without power part of last week, disrupting service to local residents. The library re-opened Friday and changed its schedule this week to be open on Presidents Day, a federal holiday, to better serve people needing to use computers and other library material. No late fines are being charged on books turned in this week which were due last week during the power outage when the library was closed.

The senior center was closed last Tuesday and Wednesday and operated on an abbreviated schedule Thursday and Friday. The center, operated by the Pennyrite Area Community Services, provides meals and transportation.

■ Donnie Arflack, chief of the Crittenden County Rescue Squad, said the disaster was the most widespread he's ever seen.

"This was actually worse than a tornado," he said, "because a tornado actually goes in a direct line and you normally have a straight path of destruction. This one affected everybody."

Arflack suggests that area emer-

gency and disaster agencies get together in the coming days to discuss the community's weaknesses in such disasters.

"We got a taste of what could happen if we ever suffer a major earthquake," he said. "If that happens, there will be little or no outside help. All these power crews that came in from somewhere else wouldn't be coming in to help."

■ The storm earned national media coverage. Crittenden County was mentioned in USA Today's weekend edition and on national

dents do not know where to turn for emergency information.

Because cable television was out for a period and weather radios don't provide such local information, he said many people were left in the dark about shelter availability and where to turn for help.

However, City Administrator Mark Bryant said WMJL and 93.3 FM WKYQ and WPSD TV NewsChannel 6 out of Paducah are the most reliable sources for up-to-the minute news on weather and emergencies in Crittenden County.

Extension agent for agriculture, said most stock animals are well equipped to handle a good bit of bad weather as long as their nutritional levels are high. Because of the poor hay condition this winter, Payne said some farmers were probably on edge, worrying that temperatures could dip lower and indeed been a serious threat to their livestock.

■ Kentucky Transportation Cabinet crews are continuing to make progress on removing

downed trees and limbs along highways across the 12 counties and 2,800 miles of road in district one. However, highway engineers expect the clean-up to take up to six weeks or more. It may take another two months before the cost of ice storm response can be fully calculated. According to District One Operations Engineer Henry Luken, highway crews in the hardest hit areas are getting assistance from neighboring counties. "We have a few of our southern-most counties that were not as hard hit as those closer to the Ohio River. Those crews will be assigned to assist their neighbors with removal of fallen limbs and trees to help expedite the process," Luken said. Two contractor crews are working to cut up and remove trees that may be larger than what highway crews are normally equipped to handle. Luken noted that Ballard, Livingston, and Crittenden counties were hardest hit.

■ Marion resident Steffany (Smith) Lester was seriously injured in an automobile accident last week at the onset of the storm. The wreck happened Feb. 12 on the U.S. 60 Ledbetter Bridge near the McCracken County line.

Lester, three months pregnant, was taken to Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville where she remains in critical condition with multiple injuries. A family friend said she is in a coma. Her husband, Shain, was also in the car, but suffered only minor injuries. He was treated and released from the hospital last week.

■ As Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District One workers prepped roadways for another blast of expected winter precipitation this week, engineers began replenishing stocks of salt and other ice-fighting chemicals. The district has placed orders for 7,000 tons of salt and 28,000 gallons of calcium chloride. So far this winter, the district has used just under half of the ice-fighting supplies it had on hand at the start of snow and ice season Nov. 1. Snow response season officially ends for state highway crews on April 1.

■ Sign-ups for free tree removal and maintenance through Marion Baptist Church netted assistance for about 190 people in need of help cleaning up after last week's ice event. Eddie Osburn, coordinator of the Salem-based Ohio River Baptist Association Disaster Relief, said Tuesday that the all-volunteer crews had cleaned up about 40 properties. Sign-ups for the free aid have ended, but the crews will need the rest of the week to fulfill their work. The coordinator said the effort comes under the umbrella of the nationwide Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief.

television and radio networks.

Many people kept up with the storm damage through The Crittenden Press Online. Multiple daily updates, video, slideshows and still photographs were posted at www.the-press.com. People around the country and world were able to watch the storm and restoration efforts unfold. The Press Web site had thousands of daily viewers, many of whom were getting information from the Internet then calling powerless relatives in Crittenden County on cell phones to keep them posted on electric company updates.

The Crittenden Press and WMJL radio, the county's only two media outlets, were both disrupted by the storm. The Press was without adequate power to operate its presses on a normal schedule. Without electricity to power computers, newspaper staffers moved equipment to the Marion Ed-Tech Center and set up shop to produce last week's Press. It was on sale at The Press office at 9 p.m., last Wednesday, but wasn't available at normal newsstands until late morning Thursday. The Feb. 14 edition was an abbreviated version, containing just a dozen pages and had to be printed out of town.

WMJL was without power and off the air for more than three days. The station went down due to the loss of electricity overnight Monday and was back on the air at 6:15 a.m., Friday.

Reliable communication to the community as a whole was difficult during last week's power outage from the winter storm. While the City of Marion regularly issues its boil-water advisories and other urgent news to WMJL in Marion and broadcast and print outlets in both the Paducah and Evansville areas, Arflack is concerned resi-



Don Cruce (left) and Ed Hinchee pass time with a game of Hands and Feet at a makeshift shelter from the winter storm at Crittenden County Elementary School last week. Both men were left without power at their Bellville Manor Apartments.

PHOTO BY DARYL K. TABOR

Trees hit hard by ice storm

STAFF REPORT

Scars from last week's winter storm will be evident for months or years to come despite the best efforts of homeowners to remove limbs and damaged trees from their lawns.

Dr. Bill Fountain, a master arborist with the University of Kentucky, said there are several things property owners should know about damaged trees, foremost is whether the person doing your cleanup work is properly insured.

Fountain said tree trimming specialists cost between \$45 and \$75 per hour depending on the type of equipment they have at their disposal. Smaller operators concentrating on lawn cleanup are fetching around \$25 to \$30 an hour.

A property owner should ask two questions before contracting with an agent to handle storm cleanup.

"Ask them: Are you insured and do you carry worker's compensation insurance?" he said. "If they don't and they are injured on the job, it can bankrupt you. Also, make sure that if they cut a limb and it falls through your roof, their insurance will cover it."

Fountain says tree trimming is the second deadliest job in North America. High winds mixed with widowmakers — large, damaged limbs and branches clinging atop trees — can be dangerous for amateurs and professionals alike.

For those doing their own cleanup work, the City of Marion and Crittenden County are each keeping their debris dumps open to the public round the clock. Both locations are for logs, limbs and other plant matter. No garbage or household refuse can be left there. Both are free of charge.

The city's dump site is on Mill Street. Its can be accessed best from East Depot Street. It's a gravel road next to the old railway.

Neither the city nor county will pick up limbs or other storm debris left on the curbside or on rights-of-way of county or state roads. In fact, Judge-Executive Fred Brown says no such material should be left on the edge of the road.

The county's storm debris dump site is located on Bridwell Loop Road at the entrance of the old county dump.

When considering whether a damaged ornamental shrub or a tree with sentimental value should try to be salvaged or cut down, Fountain said it's best to seek professional advice.

"There are so many factors to consider such as what species it is, how many branches it's lost and the size of those branches. Some trees will recover," said the arboriculture specialist.

Make or break?

Tree species with a high potential for ice damage

- Red maple
- Silver maple
- Sugar maple
- River birch
- Catalpa
- Hackberry
- Redbud
- Yellowwood
- American beech
- White ash
- Green ash
- Sweetgum
- Tulip poplar
- Crabapple
- White pine
- Eastern sycamore
- Sawtooth oak
- White oak
- Southern red oak
- Pin oak
- Black locust
- Weeping willow
- American elm

Tree species with reduced potential for damage

- White fir
- Sugar maple
- Ginkgo
- Kentucky coffeetree
- Black walnut
- Dawn redwood
- Blackgum
- Hop hornbeam
- Spruces
- Bur oak
- Bald cypress

"We call that the collar," Fountain said. "You don't want to leave too much of a stub or cut it off flush."

Do not use pruning paint, Fountain says. It will actually slow the closing over of tissue and promote decay.

When negotiating a price for cleanup, Fountain says the property owner may be able to get a discount if the limbs are chipped up on site and left in the yard. That material can be used later for mulch and could save the homeowner because the workers will not have to haul off the debris.

For more about trees and storm damage, go online to www.treesaregood.org.

Storm Cleanup
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Wedding Tips

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Words for your Wedding

Writing vows. Making toasts. Sending congratulations. There are many moments in a wedding when people struggle to find just the right words.

The latest volume to offer help has a familiar name attached. "Bartlett's Words for the Wedding" from Little, Brown and Co., is a collection of poems and prose on love, commitment and other nuptial themes.

The volume is meant to save readers from the time-consuming chore of going through the classics looking for that lovely passage vaguely remembered. For instance, it serves up six lines pulled from "Romeo and Juliet," and a long paragraph found in Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms."

Present for the couple

What to give the bride and groom? And how to give it?

Leigh Zarelli at the Web site Gifts.com, offers some tips:

If you've been invited to an engagement party and the couple hasn't registered yet, take the opportunity to be creative. Consider a membership to a wine club, or "experience" gifts like cooking classes, or personalized gifts such as anything monogrammed.

If you think the couple has registered but you don't know where, call their parents, close friends — or the couple themselves — to find out. You might also find answers online, for instance at Gifts.com's Wedding Registry Finder service.

Should you bring the gift with you on the wedding day? No. Better to send it, and give the couple (and you) one less thing to worry about.

Trends

Cocktail hours. Blogs. Orange. Italy. Those are among hot wedding trends for 2008 compiled by the Web site TheKnot.com. More details:

From creamy peaches to mod citrus to deep tangerines and burnt sienas, orange is being used to create a variety of moods.

Listing a personal Web site with a URL on the invitation is now standard. Next, look for daily blogs by brides, digital music, streaming video and online RSVP. To build your own site, check out WedORama.com or WeddingTracker.com.

The pre-ceremony cocktail hour has become a big event, and couples are breaking tradition by seeing each other there and taking pictures.

Wedding cake remains king, but a new dessert star is a massive buffet, traditionally known as the Viennese table. The goodies are rolled out on tables onto the dance floor or occupy a whole room. Popular items include chocolate buffets and cheesecake sampling.

Florists

How to find the right florist for your shindig?

WedAlert.com, a wedding planning Web site, advises brides to start looking for a florist six months before the date, since good ones will be busy.

You might start by asking the hall where you are having the reception for any florists they recommend, the site says. Also get suggestions from friends and family.

Other tips:

■ Get price estimates from prospective florists and go see their work. Bring some fabric from your bridesmaids' gowns so the florist can help with the colors and types of flowers to use.

■ Consider using a florist who has worked in the hall where your wedding will be. They may have a better sense of what works there.

■ Remember that you may need to work with the florist on many items, including the bride's and bridesmaids' bouquets; boutonnières; corsages; the flower girl's basket; aisle decorations; altar decorations; candles for the ceremony; table centerpieces; cake table; chair covers.

■ Don't feel bad about negotiating the price, and ask whether delivery and setup are included in the price. Ask about what flowers are in season.

■ Don't hesitate to ask for references.

■ Get a contract of exactly what will be provided.



Just Married

Story and photos by Allison Evans, Associate Editor

Kim Hunt and Mark Vince are following a national trend, choosing to wait until their mid- to late-20s before tying the knot. And since Vince's unique proposal, the two have carefully planned their June 21 nuptials during an 18-month engagement.

Hunt said she would never wait to marry as late in life as her parents, Charlie and Nancy, who were 28 when they tied the knot. Now she finds herself in the same boat, ready to marry the love of her life at age 27.

The couple, who were introduced by mutual friends while attending Western Kentucky University, have dated seven years. There was no magical first date; instead, Hunt said their friendship evolved into a romantic relationship over time.

"There wasn't really a big moment when I realized that he was the one, but rather over time we grew to love each other more and more," Hunt said. "We love to laugh. We both can make each other laugh and I believe that has truly impacted our relationship."

The story Vince tells of his proposal would bring tears to anyone's eyes.

"After dinner and before dessert at Patti's Restaurant in Grand Rivers, I handed Kim a little black book and told her I had written her something. In the book, at a marked page, was a poem I had written her. In this poem my proposal waited to be read.

After reading the last line she looked at me and with a little smile she simply said "yes." I then instructed her to turn the page. Inside the remainder of the book, in the recess of a heart shaped hole cut into the remaining pages, resided a white gold band which was topped with a round cut solitaire diamond. The ring was tied to the book with a small piece of silver ribbon. Upon removing the ring from its former home I placed myself on one knee and gladly gave the ring a new home on her finger."

Vince, a computer programmer, and Hunt, a history teacher at Crittenden County High School, are ready to end their long-distance relationship. The couple have spent very little time together, by most standards, in the years since their 2003 college graduation. On average, they have seen each other less than once a month for the last four years. Vince works in Madisonville and Hunt in Marion. Last year they compromised, buying a house in Princeton where Vince resides alone until they get married.

Those who know her describe Hunt as very attentive to



Mark Vince and fiancée Kim Hunt stand on the porch of Hunt's parents' home in rural Crittenden County, where the young couple will exchange vows on June 21.

detail, highly organized and one who strives for excellence in all she does. With that in mind, it is no wonder that she and Vince planned their wedding around their careers and a dream honeymoon. But she claims organization wasn't the main thing that prompted an 18-month engagement.

"As a teacher it is easier to get married in the summer. We weren't ready to get married last summer, so it was only logical for us to pick a date in June 2008. It's given us time to get all our ducks in a row. We've bought a house, I finish graduate school in May, we both have solid jobs and the timing now is just right."

The couple will tie the knot in an outdoor wedding at Hunt's parent's house in rural Crittenden County on June 21.

"We made our wedding plans after we decided on our honeymoon," Hunt explains. "We're going to London, Edinburgh and Dublin for 13 days. The trips only leave at certain times so we had to plan our wedding around the departure dates. Neither of us has been to the UK and we will be in London during the Wimbledon tennis tournament, so we are very excited."

Couples share recipes for enduring love

Magic keeps couple together 70 years

By **TIM WOODWARD**
IDAHO STATESMAN

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — When one of Marvin Sparrell's granddaughters asked him about the best investment he ever made, he told her he'd sleep on it and let her know the next day.

His first thought was to tell her about the stock he bought for \$10,000 and sold for \$200,000. But the answer he gave his granddaughter the next day was very different.

The best investment he ever made: the \$10 he spent on a marriage license to marry her grandmother.

"She's been my whole life," he said. "We've been in love ever since."

"Ever since" in their case acquires special significance. On Jan. 1, they celebrated their 70th anniversary.

They met the night he asked her for a date at a dance in Whitefish, Mont.

"He didn't ask many girls, so I was delighted," Dorothy Sparrell said. "I thought he was nice looking."

Times were hard. "We didn't have any money," her husband said. "We went steady for two years and saved a little over \$100 for our honeymoon, a week in Spokane."

The honeymoon was almost derailed when their friends tried to hold a shivaree and put them on trains heading in the opposite direction.

"We'd tried to keep our plans quiet, but

we were coming home from getting our marriage license in Kalispell and heard on the radio that the county's last wedding license of 1937 had been given to us," Dorothy said. "That meant that the secret was out. But we got wind of the shivaree and fooled them."

In those days, \$10 for a wedding license was a major expenditure.

Marvin Sparrell, 95, still calls it the best \$10 he ever spent.

"He got a new family for his \$10," Dorothy said. "His dad died of diphtheria when he was 10, and he lived with his grandparents from the age of 12. When we got married, my family took him in. He got four new brothers, a sister and a second Mom and Dad."

He also got a marriage as durable as a Montana cowboy. The Sparrells have survived the Depression, five wars, 12 presidents, six children, 19 grandchildren and 30 great grandchildren. They lived in half a dozen Montana cities before moving in 1964 to Idaho, where he worked as a meat cutter at the first Buttrey Foods store in Boise.

"We've had our ups and downs like all couples," he said. "But more ups than downs. One thing we've always tried to do is never go to bed mad at each other. If we disagree about something, we always try to work through it. We've had one

Siblings share 391 years of marriage

By **RICK CALLAHAN**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BROWNSBURG, Ind. (AP) — Newlyweds could probably learn a few things from the five Estes sisters and their two brothers, who collectively have lived through 391 years of marriage.

In an age when nearly half of new marriages are expected to end in divorce, the seven surviving children of C.M. and Minnie Estes have all been wed 50 or more years.

The youngest, Sue Bass, completed the streak of golden anniversaries Saturday when she and husband Edwin marked their 50 years together in a laughter-filled banquet room, surrounded by Sue's six surviving siblings and many of the couples' 71 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"We're the last. We made it," Sue, 69, said after the Basses' spotlight dance. Added Edwin, 73: "The others made it and we weren't about to get beat!"

The Estes siblings, ages 69 to 84, attribute their marital success in large part to the moral example set by their late parents, who were married 58 years.

C.M. Estes was a Christian minister, and he and his wife raised their eight children — one is deceased and a ninth died as a toddler — with the belief that marriage is for life.

Seventy-four-year-old Joyce Samples said her parents endured hard financial

times but set a loving example that she's emulated in her 57-year marriage to John Samples, 74, also a minister.

"They always showed respect for each other, which made us know that was part of marriage. There wasn't a lot of verbal advice. You just watched them and knew how it was done," she said.

Aside from Joyce and Sue and their husbands, the other Estes children and their spouses are: Agnes and Howard Byrd, wed 61 years; Douglas and Kathleen Estes, 60 years; Charles and Grace Estes, 57 years; Eula and L.B. Champion, 54 years; and Gladys and Bob Maple, who were married 52 years when Bob died.

An eighth Estes sibling, Joe, died in 1992, by which time he and his widow, Ruth, had been married 48 years. Their marriage boosts the Estes' matrimonial total to 439 years.

Stephanie Coontz, a professor of history at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., said it's unusual for so many siblings to have such long marriages.

Coontz, who has studied marriage trends for 25 years, said many marriages that began in the 1950s ended as more women entered the work force in subsequent decades. That wasn't an issue for the Estes siblings; all the wives were homemakers.

David Popenoe, a professor emeritus

5 tips for choosing an engagement ring

STATEPOINT MEDIA WIRE

Before popping the question, most men realize they know little or nothing about their girlfriend's tastes in jewelry; especially when it comes to a ring she will be wearing forever.

It's no wonder then that 75 percent of all brides-to-be give their future husbands direct input on the engagement ring they want, according to industry experts.

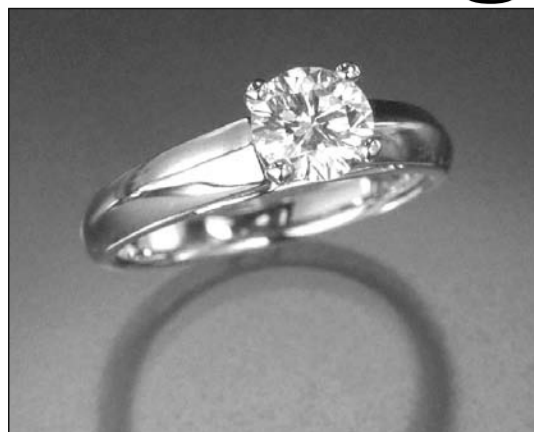
Those potential proposers who aren't so lucky to be on the receiving end of such helpful girlfriend advice, would do well to heed these five tips from the experts at Brides.com on how to select and purchase the right engagement ring:

■ **Determine style:** Are you and your girlfriend modern, classic or bohemian? Take a look at the style most often worn and consider the metal: is it mostly silver, platinum, yellow gold? Having a sense of style helps narrow your choices and will allow the most comfort when wearing the ring.

■ **Enlist family and friends:** They may provide valuable insight into what she might like or dislike in an engagement ring (if she's clever she will tell them so they can drop you a hint!). If you are feeling brave, ask your girlfriend's best friend or sister to shop with you. It helps to get a good second opinion.

■ **Decide on a stone:** Though diamond is the obvious choice, more and more brides are opting for color with a ruby or sapphire. Also, familiarize yourself with the different shapes -- round, square, marquise, heart, pear ... then buy the most expensive stone you can afford!

■ **Go to a reputable jeweler:** You don't want to



GEMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA
Before choosing a diamond, learn your fiancée's taste in jewelry.

take chances here. Make sure they have a solid reputation and are certified by the Jewelers of America and/or trained by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). GIA also provides diamond-grading certificates. And don't forget to get it insured.

■ **Think way ahead:** Give yourself plenty of time to buy the ring before you pop the question. You might need to save money, or if you are buying a stone separate from the setting the jeweler will need time to set it. Any custom work or engraving takes time, too.

And when getting down to the nitty-gritty of actually choosing a diamond or other gemstone, be sure to visit the GIA's Web site at www.gia.edu to learn how to compare different stones and to be able to speak the language of diamonds with the jeweler.

For more helpful wedding planning tips visit www.brides.com.

What women want

Engagement rings with personality... and sparkle

By SAMANTHA CRITCHELL
AP FASHION WRITER

NEW YORK (AP) — Once upon a time, when a man proposed, he gave a woman a shiny solitaire diamond engagement ring. It was the standard. It's probably what her friends had and she was eager to join the club.

Fast forward to 2007: It's now the norm for a woman to influence what her engagement ring will look like — if not to pick it out herself, says Mary Moses Kinney, director of the Independent Jewelers Organization.

The result is bigger stones, nontraditional settings and some rings that forgo the diamond altogether.

"Size matters," says Millie Martini Bratten, editor-in-chief of Brides magazine. "People love a big sparkly ring, especially coming from the person they love most in the world."

Moses Kinney thinks the larger rocks are being driven by two things: Women aren't shy about asking for what they want, and, because couples are getting married a bit older, they typically have more money to spend.

The older bride also has had more time to carve out her personal style. "Women want personality in their ring. They want to make an emotional statement with the ring. They want it to reflect who they are," says Moses Kinney.

The groom, Bratten says, if left to his own devices, would probably still go for a classic solitaire because that's what he thinks an engagement ring looks like. But he's rarely left to his own devices.

Usually, she says, "He will take his fiancée to the store and let her point out shapes she likes — the shape is the priority — and settings. She'll drop hints whether she likes gold, platinum or white gold."

The Diamond Trading Company, the sales and marketing arm of De Beers, recently interviewed 10,000 U.S. couples on their purchasing behavior for diamond gifts: Only 19 percent fit the conventional image of a man presenting a woman with a surprise diamond. Thirty percent of diamond purchases were by women called "assertives" — those unafraid of making their views known early. Many went so far as to buy the item, wrap it and hand their partner the receipt.

If a man is a little more old-fashioned and does want the engagement ring to be a surprise, he still rarely goes into a jewelry store without doing his homework.

He may have noticed what kind of ring his girlfriend's mother has or if his intended has commented about a friend's ring, says Bratten of Brides. At the very least, he probably has done a little price research to try



to get the most sparkle for his buck. He also might ask other brides-to-be about their rings.

"We do get on occasion grooms on our site asking other brides for ideas about the ring. The other brides completely get into it: They'll ask, 'What's she like?' 'What does her other jewelry look like?' 'What's the lifestyle?'" reports Theresa DiMasi, editor in chief of Brides.com.

It's really in everyone's best interest to make sure the bride gets a ring she loves, DiMasi says. "She wears it for many, many, many years. It's not like the dress that you wear for one day."

Over the years, brides have moved away from yellow gold, both for engagement and wedding bands, in favor of platinum, which they consider more wardrobe-friendly, DiMasi observes. Men, she says, still tend to want gold.

The price of platinum, however, has shot up because of increased demand, and couples are again interested in gold — yellow, white and rose-tinted.

"Rose gold is pretty, new and trendy," according to Brides' Bratten. "It looks good on many skin tones."

Many rings have micropave diamonds outlining the setting. That makes the center stone appear bigger and sparklier. "You get the look of the big ring without piling on too much additional cost," she says.

Another trend is three-stone rings, with pink or blue sapphires — or, less often, emeralds

or rubies — flanking the center diamond. Colored diamonds are considered chic, but are also expensive, more for the rich and famous, Bratten says.

Model Heidi Klum's engagement ring is a canary yellow diamond, designed by Lorraine Schwartz. Klum says her favorite part about it is that her husband, Seal, knew her well enough to choose something in her own style.

(Seal was a traditionalist when he proposed two years ago. Klum says she first saw the ring when the singer went down on one knee and put it on her finger.)

"The sentimental attachment is something so special that takes it beyond just a piece of jewelry. I have a great husband with fantastic taste," says Klum, host of TV's "Project Runway" and a jewelry designer for the Mouawad brand.

In the quest to personalize engagement rings, even semi-precious stones are being used.

"There is no right or wrong ring," says Moses Kinney. "It's like a favorite color. If one woman likes a princess cut, the next will want an emerald cut."

Her own 1930s-era ring comes from the estate of a Chicago politician. It features an Art Deco-style emerald-cut diamond that is long and thin.

"I get stopped all the time and hear, 'I've never seen anything like that,'" Moses Kinney says. "It's my favorite piece of jewelry, bar none. And I think that's how people should feel about their engagement ring."

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Right questions can lead to right photographer

STATEPOINT MEDIA WIRE
Your wedding photographer is supposed to provide you with keepsakes of your special day.

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is serving up some tips to help make the job of selecting one easier:

Solicit recommendations from family and friends.

Schedule interviews with several to review services offered, work quality and related fees.

Ask the photographer if he will be photographing your wedding. If not, meet with the photographer who will be shooting it and review photos from several events.

Does the photographer work with an assistant? If so, is that included in the fee?

Check the BBB for reports on photographers you are considering.

Check references. Someone who is reluctant to provide references is questionable.

Is the package fixed or customized? How many photos are included? What about reprints, enlargements, albums?

What is the time frame for delivery of proofs and other products? Can you keep proofs or negatives?

What type and how many cameras will be used? Are color and black-white included?

What types of photos can you expect - formal, informal?

Does the photographer know the policies of your church, synagogue or other institution?



Obtain a written contract detailing every service, payment schedule and the name of the photographer present; location, date and time length of all events; type of package; a list of guaranteed prices for enlargements and any additional charges.

The contract should specify what happens if your photographer doesn't show, and the cancellation/refund policy.

Dream trip or difficult?

'Destination' weddings ask guests for more commitment

By MELISSA RAYWORTH FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It wasn't long ago that attending a friend's wedding meant spending a Saturday night eating prime rib and dancing to cover versions of "Louie Louie" and "Brown Eyed Girl."

Now, it might involve three days in Mexico or a long weekend in Maine. There could be scuba diving, cruises, square dancing or a marshmallow roast at a national park.

With a growing number of couples opting to exchange vows far from where they and most of their guests live, saying "yes" to an invite has taken on a whole new meaning.

"Destination weddings" can be fun. And time-consuming. And terribly expensive. Those most likely to be invited to a lot of weddings - people in their 20s, say - also tend to have the least seniority at work and the least disposable income.

Some guests, of course, are happy to pack their bags.

"I love the opportunity to travel and go somewhere I wouldn't have gone, or just to have an excuse to go somewhere that I like," says Tamar Kummel, a massage therapist from New York City. She plans to attend a friend's wedding in California and another on Cape Cod later this year.

"If you didn't have this invitation, you'd never go," she says.

But there's a downside. Kummel's boyfriend, Sean Harris, who works at an investment banking company, has a limited number of vacation days and sees a three-day wedding extravaganza as a drain on his time.

"He finds it really inconsiderate of people," Kummel says. What's a modern wedding guest to do? A primer:

■ Do you have to attend?

"People who are having a destination wedding absolutely expect certain people can't attend the wedding for financial or schedule reasons," says Carley Roney, co-founder of the wedding planning Web site TheKnot.com. But she advises against mentioning your finances when you decline. "It's such a guilt-tripping kind of thing," she says. "Come up with a very appropriate reason, even if it has to be a white lie."

Joanna Hanak of Broomfield, Colo., knew that

some invited guests wouldn't attend her wedding last fall in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. "We told people that we didn't expect them to come, but wanted them to know they were welcome," she says.

Hopefully, guests will get plenty of warning.

"Couples should give their guests at least three or four months to plan by sending out detailed Save-the-Date cards," says Lei Lydle, founder of the Atlanta-based WeddingBasics.com, which publishes bridal Web sites in several U.S. cities.

That's especially important if the wedding falls on a holiday weekend, when travel can be difficult and expensive.

■ Must you stay where the bride and groom suggest?

The couple will likely offer information on a range of accommodations, and they may have blocked rooms at several locations.

"In a situation where the bride and groom have not been so thoughtful," says etiquette expert Samantha von Sperling, founder and director of Polished Social Image Consultants in New York, "go online and book your own accommodations and then you can call them and say, 'I'm sorry but I couldn't afford the place you picked, so I've found something else just down the road. But I promise I'll be there and be on time.'"

■ Do you have to attend every planned event?

Destination weddings often involve a raft of events, including a cocktail party to welcome guests and a brunch the morning after the ceremony. If three solid days of bonding with rela-

tives, co-workers or strangers doesn't appeal to you, Roney says it's fine to opt out of a few daytime events. But if you're skipping something, let someone in the bridal party know so that no one waits or searches for you.

■ What if you've got kids?

If children are invited (with destination weddings, they often are), your hosts may have some childcare planned. Ask whether kids are welcome at all the weekend's events, then ask if baby-sitting is available during any that are grown-ups only. If nothing has been arranged, you might contact the hotel where the wedding is happening or where you're staying and inquire about baby-sitting services.

Some guests, like New Yorkers Michele Clarke-Ceres and her husband, Rudy Ceres, see destination weddings as an opportunity for a private getaway sans kids.

"We take advantage of taking time away to just spend time alone," she says.

■ Do you have to bring a gift?

"You can definitely scale back," says Roney. "But unless they specifically say, 'the present is your presence,' you should buy a gift, even if it's a \$30 something off their registry. People who are in that age range where they are going to a wedding every weekend can chip in with a group of people and do a group gift."

Amid all the travel plans and scheduling difficulties, remember that "being invited to witness their union is an honor," says von Sperling. "Even if it is an inconvenience."

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Some brides buy two dresses instead of one

By JANET FRANKSTON LORIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
NEW YORK (AP) — Melania Trump did it.

So did rock star Avril Lavigne, with designs by Vera Wang.

Now, some regular women are following suit, deciding that one dress isn't enough for their wedding day. They want princess-like ball gowns as well as sexier sheaths for the party that they can dance in.

For her April wedding in Palm Beach, Fla., Kathy Reilly wore a sweet, flowing gown for an afternoon ceremony and a sleek number for the party that evening.

"It's an overwhelming choice to try to narrow it down to one," said Reilly, 42, a consultant to luxury brands who lives in Manhattan.

On the other hand, "It's certainly a big deal to purchase two dresses and get them altered and pressed. It's a big economic consideration."

Maybe not for Trump, whose Vera Wang and Christian Dior dresses were featured in Vogue, or Lavigne, who wore an ivory strapless tissue organza gown with wrapped bodice and applique lace beaded skirt, and then an ivory strapless draped Chantilly lace dress.

Still, brides say they like the idea of a second dress for comfort, to display another side of their personality and, of course, for show. The trend could have a big impact on the wedding industry, always looking to create new revenue streams.

And it's not only those aiming for the fashion stratosphere who opt for two dresses.

Some brides want to wear vintage gowns worn by their mothers or grandmothers, then emerge in their own dress later. Others seek

to blend different cultures, changing from a traditional white gown, say, into Chinese or Indian bridal attire.

Mark Ingram, who runs the Bridal Atelier on Manhattan's East Side, said he began noticing women buying a second wedding dress about a year and a half ago.

"As the primary dress is becoming a little bit more elaborate, they wanted to change into something slinkier or shorter or sexier, that they could really party in," he said.

He said the first dress may conform to a parent's or fiancée's wishes.

"The second dress is more of a statement of who they are, as a young independent woman getting married."

Women in his shop, which sells designers such as Oscar de la Renta, Karl Lagerfeld, Monique Lhuillier and Carolina Herrera, sometimes spend more than \$6,000 for the first dress, then \$2,500 and up for the second, Ingram said.

Reilly wore a \$7,000 backless silk taffeta designed by Amsale for her ceremony. With thin straps, a fitted bodice and a bubble skirt, it was more bride-like and appropriate for a church, she said.

Later for the reception at the Breakers, an oceanfront resort, she changed into a white sheath, more "slinky, Hollywood and red carpet-y," she said. Its price tag was about \$3,000.

"It just flowed so naturally and it was just a great dancing, party dress," said Reilly. "I could not have gone solely for the second one. It was probably a little too sexy for the church and probably not high impact enough."

Kiki Hronis, whose alterations have been fitting brides into gowns for more than 15 years in Manhattan, worked on Reilly's dresses. She said she isn't sur-

prised that brides would want to change mid-wedding.

"Of course not. It's their wedding day. It's a very special day. They can keep the other dress and wear it again."

For her ceremony, Stacy Deemar stepped into the same gown that her grandmother, mother and sister wore at their weddings. Then she changed into a more bubbly dress later. She even explained the reason for the change in the program for her 2002 wedding in Chicago.

"People thought I was nuts, but it was important to me," said Deemar, 35, a drama teacher.

"I didn't want to ruin it dancing and having dirt scrape on the bottom," she said of the heirloom dress, a hoop-skirt satin with freshwater pearls and 6-foot train that had faded from white to ivory but otherwise held up since her grandmother first wore it in 1941. Her grandmother paid \$66.75 for it, which included \$5 for alterations.

For Swati Bose, 31, the challenge was including her Indian culture and her husband's Afghan one in their May wedding in New York.

She donned a red sari for the ceremony and switched into a white dress with mermaid black lace for the reception. He changed too, from a traditional Afghan embroidered long shirt and pants into a tuxedo.

"Since it's an interreligious, intercultural and interracial wedding, we wanted to find ways to incorporate both of our cultures," said Bose, a law student.

Even two dresses wasn't enough for Jane Chew at her 1998 wedding in New York. In Chinese culture, she said, the more times a bride changes the wealthier it shows she is. But she had other reasons, too.

"I wanted to wear a white wedding gown just because I was born and raised in the States," said the dermatologist, 38, who practices in Columbia, Md. "The Chinese dress is a nod to my strong Chinese heritage. It wouldn't have felt like a wedding with-

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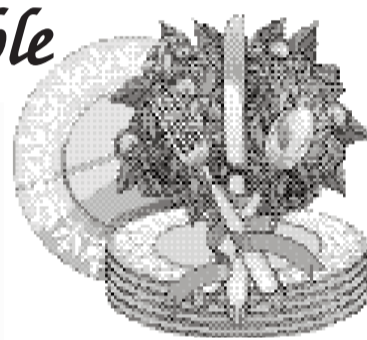
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Trouble finding that perfect wedding dress?

STATEPOINT MEDIA WIRE
When selecting a wedding dress, be daring and style-savvy, but remember to consider comfort.

"Your wedding gown provides a chance to dress completely differently than you do on any other day in your life, so feel free to pursue your bridal fantasies when you start shopping," says Diane Forden, Editor-in-Chief of Bridal Guide magazine. "Even if you don't choose an ornately styled gown, it can't hurt to try one on. Many brides report being talked into trying on a more elaborate dress than they'd envisioned and then falling in love with the look."

Experimenting can be a good thing, so try different styles to see what matches your figure. Don't eliminate anything based on how it looks on a hanger - many gowns look odd without a body inside.

Be sure to consider the formality of the day, Forden stresses. Generally, the more formal

"...Feel free to pursue your bridal fantasies when you start shopping."

- Diane Forden
Editor-in-Chief,
Bridal Guide magazine

the wedding, the more formal the bride's attire. And keep the season in mind, since some fabrics might be too heavy or light for certain times of year.

"Also consider your comfort, both physical and emotional," she says. "All eyes will be on you throughout your big day, so this might not be the best occasion to wear your first strapless gown. And a body-skimming sheath won't let you kick up your heels on the dance floor as freely as you might like."

For more tips, visit www.bridalguide.com.



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'I love you' doesn't have to be difficult

STATEPOINT MEDIA WIRE

Saying "I love you" is all about celebrating what makes every relationship special and unique in a way that reflects your personality and style. And, many people choose to share that feeling in a greeting card, whether on Valentine's Day or any other time of year.

Here are some tips from American Greetings valentine writer Nicole Fraser for adding sincerity and flair to your card:

■ Don't over-analyze the act. In all honesty, it doesn't take a greeting card writer to get the message just right. "Saying, 'I love you' can be a vulnerable moment for some," said Fraser. "Opening up and revealing your true feelings to someone can bring a lot of relief and peace, but the most important thing to remember is to be true to who you are and the relationship you have together."

■ Make the greeting reflect your relationship. If you are in a budding romance filled with fun, your message should reflect that spirit. If you've stood the test of time together, acknowledging your commitment to the relationship is a very personal way to bring in a bit of reality.

■ Use lists to get yourself going. Make a list of what you love about the other person, the inside jokes you share, the nicknames you have for one another and the memories you've made together. The list will help you craft a message that fits the two of you. "Anytime you can reference personal attributes you admire or

shared experiences you cherish, you're sure to strike a chord in the recipient," Fraser added.

■ Don't worry about how you say it, just say it. It's a romantic greeting, so it only sounds right if it truly comes from the heart. Don't dwell on perfect grammar; your relationship isn't perfect so you don't need to be either. The important thing is that you tell the other person how you feel.

■ Sometimes, less is more. Instead of attempting to write original poetry or just copying down the lyrics to your favorite song, keep in mind that a few well-directed and meaningful words often have more of a positive effect than a long ramble. Look at your list of what you love about the other person, and simply write what's in your heart.

■ Don't stop after finding the right card. Finding the right card and including the perfect personal message is just the beginning of how you show someone you care.

Of course, as with all gifts, presentation is everything, so consider one of these special deliveries for your card this year:

Does your spouse tidy the bedroom in the morning? Play tooth fairy and hide it under the pillow.

Pile on the love with a combination of e-cards and paper note for your loved one throughout the day. Show your funny and romantic sides with a mix of greetings.



Slip the greeting into a briefcase, purse or house slipper, or tuck it into the morning paper.

Have your card delivered along with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Above all, be yourself when crafting your love note and method of delivery and your loved one is sure to get the message.

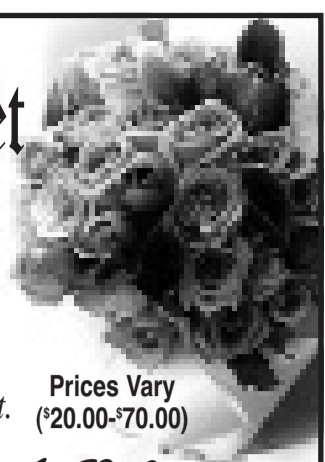
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70 YEARS

Continued from Page 1B

serious argument in our marriage. That was my fault. I apologized, and now I'm ready for the second 70 years."

Dorothy, 90, attributes the harmony of their marriage to being in the same mental groove.

"When you're with one guy this long, you start to think like him," she said.

Some of their secrets for a life-long love might surprise you:

Don't get too busy to have fun. Once or twice a month, Marvin said, they made it a point to go out to dinner and a movie "and have a couple of beers."

"Have some kids," Dorothy said. "Kids keep you together."

Invest something from every paycheck. It leads to financial

security, peace of mind and fewer arguments over money, often cited as a factor in troubled marriages.

Take a week of vacation every year just to be with each other. No kids, no work, no distractions. It's a way of reconnecting with what attracted you to each other in the first place.

Set an example for your children by keeping your relationship vibrant.

In the Sparrells' case, it appears to have worked.

"Two of our kids have been married over 20 years, two of them over 40 years and one of them over 50 years," Marvin said. "Divorce has never come up in our family."

He'd be the first to admit that there's also a little magic involved. "I've always loved her, and I always will," he said. "That helps."

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of sociology at Rutgers University, said religion, commitment to the marriage and a willingness to overlook problems are often factors in long unions.

"One wag says the most important thing for a marriage is having a bad memory – in essence, you overlook things that would cause other people to break up," said Popenoe, co-director of Rutgers' National Marriage Project.

"They're committed through thick or thin to the other person and the marriage. They're willing to work through problems as they arise and overlook things."

The Basses' love story began in 1957 when they met at a Georgia grocery store, where Sue was a cashier and Edwin was a stock boy. After a few dates, they were smitten.

They tied the knot on Feb. 9, 1958, in the only traditional church wedding of the Estes children. All the others had low-key weddings, typically with only a minister in attendance.

A half-century on, the Basses, who have three daughters, agree that the key to a long marriage is listening to their mate's concerns

and working together to overcome problems.

"A marriage is definitely teamwork. It's not one-sided, that's for sure," said Sue.

"You've got to let love grow," added Edwin. "You've both got to pitch in, in order for it to work. You have to work at it, and we still work at it every day."

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