



Craig Andresen/Daily Nebraskan

The happy couple is pronounced man and wife amidst a rice storm. Lisa Anderson and Chuck Stengel look on.

Pears' 24-hour marriage . . .

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Of course, after I explained to her that it was all in fun, she was more willing. That, and the fact that my friends and I didn't untie her until we were inside.

The weddings usually start about 11 p.m., although Kingsley said the Pears management is thinking of moving them to an earlier time soon.

Normally, a couple is supposed to sign up for the wedding earlier Monday night. Kingsley said Pears limits it to five couples a night, and it's on a first-sign, first-married basis. All five couples are married in about 20 minutes, he said.

"We try to make the whole thing short and sweet," Kingsley said, "so as not to bother the customers who don't like this kind of thing."

However, he said, the response usually is favorable.

"The weddings mean different things to different people," he said. "Sometimes it's just guys asking women who are in here that night and sometimes we've had people that are actually engaged get married just for the fun of it."

I can't imagine anyone really getting married "just for the fun of it."

To make sure we were on the list, Cindy and I signed up days before. You'd be amazed at how nice people are to you if they know you are writing a story about their business.

We arrived with a small contingency of friends including a best man and bridesmaid, and it was a good thing. I've been in Pears a few times before and I'd never seen fewer customers in the place than this particular Monday night.

Craig Andresen, our staff photography chief who went along specifically to take pictures of his friend getting married, really cheered me up, despite the lack of a much-wanted crowd.

"Look at it this way, Bill," he said, "more people are here tonight than will show up for your funeral."

Craig uses a Polaroid One-step. Kingsley said the weddings are very informal, so I wore a Hawaiian shirt, a painter's hat and sunglasses. Cindy wore one of those Flashdance-type sweatshirts; Pears provided a veil and bouquet. I let her have the bouquet, but I gave up the veil only after putting up a real fight.

Either Kingsley or Kirk Welsch, another manager, usually performs the services, the vows of which contain lines like "I, Bill, do take this voluptuous sex goddess to be my partner and playmate for the duration of this relationship."

And, "I, Cindy, do take this gorgeous hunk of a guy to have, hold and share a can of whip cream with."

After the wedding you can kiss the bride, and there's the free champagne, and Pears has a picture man, too. It's fun.

There is one major hazard. Everyone in the place is given rice to throw. You wouldn't believe some of the places I'm still finding rice.

Of course, there was one other matter on my mind.

"Uh, Cindy, what did you have in mind for a honeymoon?"

"Well, I don't know about you, Bill, but I'm going home and going to bed."

"Just what I had in mind," I said.

"Maybe I'd better repeat myself, Bill. I said, I don't know about you . . ."

Entertainment . . .

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Richard Lutz, owner of the Richard Lutz Entertainment Agency, also stressed the importance of diversity at a wedding dance.

"We want to please everyone there — the kids, the grandparents and everyone in between," he said.

Two other local agencies supplying bands for wedding dances are CID Productions and Applause Attractions.

Bob Coder of CID Productions said booking rates for acts — the Larson Brothers and the Chuck Pennington Band among them — range from \$350 to \$800.

Applause handles more rock bands that aren't as appropriate for wedding dances, but occasionally books a single or duo act or a jazz quartet for \$200 to \$500, agent Julie Nosky said.

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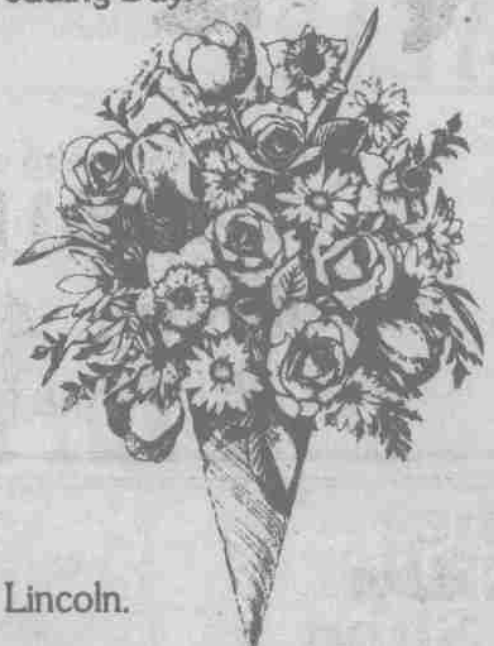
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