

Wedding fashions are laced with tradition, modern tastes



By **SHELLEY SPERRY**

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For many couples laboring through the endless wedding checklist, the first question that comes to mind (after "Who's footing the bill for all this?") is "What to wear? WHAT TO WEAR?"

Anxiety creeps in and tempers may flare. Relatives who were once-removed yesterday are twice removing seams today and hemming and hawing tomorrow.

From this paragraph onward, cringe not behind your crinolines! For the benefit of anyone who will ever consider approaching the hymeneal altar, Lincoln's own matrimonial mavens here offer to enliven your livery, thoroughly rebut breeches of etiquette, and size up the latest hot and haute couture.

Sandy Rowson of Sassi's at the Wedding Tree, 2530 O St., said the range of styles, colors and fabrics available to today's brides is wider than ever. She often has noted a look of amazement and perhaps some envy in the eyes of older sisters who accompany brides to choose their gowns.

"Today the fabric choices are better," Rowson said. Taffetas and cotton blends are extremely popular, but new lightweight satins allow women to indulge in that old-fashioned elegance even in the warmest summer months.

Although couples are free to choose any clothing styles today, specific trends always appear. The influence of Princess Diana's wedding ensemble is beginning to fade, Rowson said. She said many of the most popular gowns still have basque waistlines and puffed short sleeves, but the 1950s trend in the fashion market as a whole is most significant. Rowson added that, while the general look is '50s, "the styles seem to be more streamlined and the colors are prettier" than in that era.

"Gloves are coming back in," said Joyce Jacobs of JMarie's Bridal Shop,

Another new touch, Rowson noted, is the return of bateau necklines and bodices cut very low in back.

Margaret Simon of Ben Simon's Inc., in the Atrium at 13th and N streets and in the Gateway Shopping Center, said white is still slightly more popular than ivory for bridal gowns. Yet many women, especially fair-skinned blondes, look better in ivory. Rowson said summer brides often sunbathe with great determination in order to obtain tans that will accentuate their white dresses.

The color spectrum, according to all the experts questioned, is much wider than in the past and is much less centered on pastels. Greens are least popular, said Cindy Hankerson of Ben Simon's. Rowson said the appearance of deep jewel tones — royal blues and lipstick reds — for summer weddings proves that almost all of the old Emily Post conventions have disappeared.

Recently, according to Rowson and Simon, hats have been almost as popular as traditional veils, but flowered and laced wreaths now are enjoying a burst of popularity. Newest on the scene are petite, simple hats that also can have illusion (veil-netting) attached to them, Rowson said.

Bridegrooms' togs are less complicated, but equally subject to the whims of fashion.

"Last year the industry tested the colored ties and cummerbunds," said Jay Willhoft of Ben Simon's formal wear department. Although it's often difficult to match bridesmaids' dresses and groomsmen's cummerbunds exactly, he said, it is a popular option that is replacing matching ruffled shirts.

By far the most popular colors for male attendants are varied shades of gray, and at least 40 percent of grooms wear white tails, Willcroft said. Fathers usually opt for slightly darker shades, he noted.

Continued on Page 20



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