

Nups erupt into ruse



What? Larry Dean Cook soon after the surprise at the wedding chapel.



He's been had: Larry Dean Cook, formerly of Livonia, is surprised when the wedding turns out to actually be his 70th birthday. Right is his wife, Nancy Cook, his sister, Carol Johnson, and her husband, Karl of Wixom.

Wedding altered to surprise party

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Sure, it looked like a white wedding, but it was a chartruse ruse.

Larry Dean Cook and wife Nancy drove 300 miles from Steubenville, Ohio, to attend his niece's wedding March 12. At Little Wedding Chapel in Farmington Hills, everything looked in place.

Family and friends assembled. The wedding march played as the bride walked down the aisle with her father, who lifted her veil and kissed her at the altar. The groom Dennis Green waited for his soon to be wife.

But the "I do" turned to "I got you." The minister looked up from the Good Book and asked if anyone objected to their union. The best man whispered into the bride's ear.

She turned to the gathering and announced the wedding wouldn't take place: It was Larry Dean Cook's 70th birthday.

"I had no clue," said Cook, whose Michigan-based son and two daughters joined in the elaborate wedding hoax. "I was fully expecting to see my niece get married."

Nearly 50 people turned out for the surprise birthday bash, which proceeded over to a Livonia condominium clubhouse. Cook's softball teammates and a person whom he attended the first grade with also turned up.

Cook, a retired Detroit Public Schools teacher and for Livonia resident, didn't want a birthday party. Two of his children live in Chicago and New

York and he didn't think they could make such a trip.

"I told them I've had enough birthdays," Cook said. "Once you reach 70, you give them away rather than count them."

His reluctance to celebrate No. 70 only fermented his family's desire to plot some subterfuge.

Cook's niece, Valerie Johnson, and his daughters, Lori Eason of Livonia and Debbie Dey of Fowlerville, figured the only way to get him to Michigan would be for an engagement party or wedding. Staged nuptials would less likely raise suspicions, they surmised.

Valerie enlisted her boyfriend, who agreed to play groom.

"They're not even that serious yet," said Carol Johnson, mother of the acting bride. "They've only been dating four months. He was a good sport about it, though."

Dean Cook, who came with a wedding gift, even sported the navy blue suit he was remarried in eight years ago. His wife kept mum about the surprise as did other family.

"It looked very official," Cook said. "That's all I can say."

The birthday boy attributes his close-knit family's fondness for get-togethers in spawning the surprise party. In addition to six children, Cook has 13 grandkids.

He's touched family went to such lengths to mark his birthday.

"I told them I'm willing to go to 80 to have another party like this one," he said.



Well-groomed: Cook kisses his niece Valerie Johnson and tells her he still expects a wedding to her boyfriend, Dennis Green.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMITY

Farmington commission hosts Health-O-Rama

If you need to get your vision, hearing or blood pressure tested or want to get screened for different types of cancers, the Farmington Commission on Aging's Health-O-Rama might be for you.

The commission is sponsoring the health fair 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 24, at the William Costick Activities Center, 28600 11 Mile.

Anyone 18 and older is welcome to attend. Free tests and

services will be offered on height and weight, vision, hearing, blood pressure, health education and counseling and referral.

In addition to these free tests, a number of other tests will be offered for minimal fees, including colorectal cancer screening for \$8, women's cancer antigen tests for \$25, men's prostate specific antigen tests for \$25, H.Pylori blood test screens for ulcers and gastritis for \$15 and bone density tests for \$25.

The blood test panel consists of 23 profiles for \$24. A four hour fast is recommended before the blood panel test.

Dr. Steven Forche, a Farmington Hills dermatologist, will be available to answer questions about moles, warts and other skin care concerns. MedMax will provide body composition tests.

Hearing evaluations will be provided by the Deaf & Hearing Impaired Services Inc. For details, call (248) 424-8600.

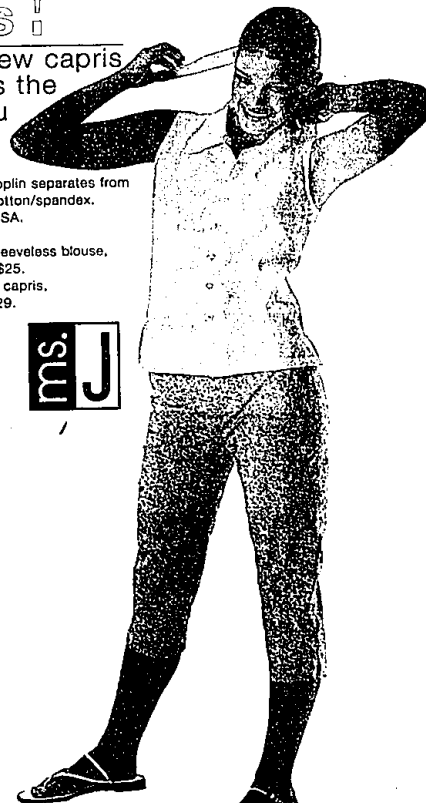
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