



THE LEES were married in a western-style ceremony 12 years ago in Korea.

rean couples live their whole lives with the groom's family, although this is changing.

THE ROOTS OF THIS CUSTOM come from 4,000 years of Korean history, according to Dr. Lee. In the countryside, weddings follow the practices outlined by Confucius and prescribed during the 500 year Lee Dynasty until the Japanese occupied Korea.

"In the old days," Dr. Lee said, "boys and girls were kept separated after the age of seven. By the time they were of marriageable age, there was the need of a matchmaker.

"And to this day, in the rural areas of Korea, each family retains the services of a matchmaker. It is usually a woman -- the soul of honesty -- who will inform the groom's family the true background of the bride and vice versa.

"The prospective bride and groom have no say in the matter," Mrs. Lee interjected. "The agreement is between the fathers."

One of the deciding factors in a suitable marriage is whether the couple's birth dates -- called "the four posts" -- the month, day, year and time of day match up well. This is determined by a fortune teller, Dr. Lee explained. "I don't really believe they know what they are doing, but it is an astrology type of thing."

"If all goes well, the father of the groom sends a formal letter to the bride's family. The bride's father must also accept by letter.

"On a day previous to the wedding, the groom's best friend takes a gift box to the home of the bride. In it are contained "the four posts" of the bride and groom set down in writing; also two bolts of material -- one red and one blue."

According to the custom, which is also practiced by modern Koreans -- including the Lees -- the bride's father receives the package and without looking must open it up and select one of the bolts of cloth. If he chooses the blue one -- the couple will have a boy first. If the red -- a girl.

The groom's friend is given some money for his trouble. He returns to the groom's house and they use the

money for a night of celebration.

"THE MORNING OF THE WEDDING, the groom comes on horseback to the bride's home," Mrs. Lee continued the story. "A carriage follows -- to carry the bride and her possessions to the home of the groom. Her parents follow.

"Generally, a woman performs the ceremony -- an older person who has had a good life," Mrs. Lee said. "But the ceremony mainly is between the parents. The bride keeps her head down in a shy manner. Very likely she has never seen the groom before this day.

"She wears a costume mainly composed of red and yellow. Those colors indicate 'newly wed'."

The old-style Korean bride has no veil, but wears a special ornament in her hair made of stones and designed to look like a flower. "She may not wear this ornament again until her 60th birthday," Mrs. Lee declared. "There is also a special wedding hat for the groom.

"When the ceremony is completed, the bride makes a series of bows to the members of the groom's family. They throw her dates, which she collects in her skirt, then hides in a pillow. The bride and groom will eat them together when they are alone. It is supposed to insure that the first child will be a son.

"The wedding celebration lasts three days. During that time, the bride is not supposed to do any work -- she must rest. The groom can do whatever he wants. They then remain to live in the groom's house."

Mrs. Lee joked that women's lib hit Korea many years before the United States since Korean women have always retained their maiden names. "I would not be Mrs. Lee in Korea," she stated. "I would remain Sang Yeon Kim. But my children would have the surname of Lee."

Dr. Lee, a pediatric surgeon, and his wife, a nurse at Redford Community Hospital, have four children who seem to have the best of both worlds -- Korean and American. Wook, 11, Joon, 9, Sue Ann, 8, and Mary Ann, 6, all attend Clay Elementary.

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