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She's devoted to

Michelle Jewell has made a career out of keeping brides in stitches. Jewell, owner of The Fitting Room, 114 E. Fourth, Rochester, sews and designs wedding gowns for brides who aren't satisfied with the styles they see on the racks. Favorites this year include substituting an arrangement of beaded lace worn on the side of the head in lieu of the traditional chapel length veil. Another option exercised by modern brides is wearing a wreath of flowers dipping gracefully onto the forehead.

For those brides who want to forgo the traditional bouffant skirt of a wedding gown, Jewell turns out tailored, fitted skirts without an overlay of lace. Pettis are popular as accents for slim skirts. Traditional and modern brides both are opting for hats. But bridesmaids costumes usually don't include them.

"Most (bridesmaids) are concerned about their hair. Many brides try to stay away from added costs for their bridesmaids," Jewell said.

However, lace is a popular item for attendants' gowns. And those gowns are most likely coordinated to match each other in such details as neckline, hemline or sleeve style.

Familiarity with the style you like best is a necessity when visiting any dressmaker, she advises. Don't hesitate to try on a wide variety of gowns before approaching a dressmaker. "I will not do a gown unless a girl has gone shopping and tried on dresses," Jewell said. Know which styles look good on you, which details, such as collars and sleeves you want.

"Some brides come in with a 10-page scrapbook with each detail as explicit as possible," she said.

But most brides don't arrive at the dressmaker with every detail worked out ahead of time. Some come in and ask advice on current bridal fashions. A few come in an ask for a copy of an expensive designer gown. Occasionally, the design changes after a few fittings. "Sometimes we do an about face on a gown."

If you decide to work with a dressmaker, budget for it. Be prepared to pay between \$500-\$800 for a bridal gown. Brides-

Cover: hand-colored photograph by David Frank
Editorial Coordinator: Louise Okrulsky
Advertising Coordinators: Linda Hockenbury, Margaret Shaieb

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keeping her brides in stitches

moths can expect to pay an average of \$120. Mothers of the bride usually pay more than \$200 for their dresses. Most brides order their dresses about four months ahead of time. "If they don't allow 12 weeks all of us are sweating at the end," she said. Housleaves generally are ordered at least three weeks in advance. Special materials take extra time to order. For alterations, "We won't touch it until one month before the wedding. Brides will either lose weight or gain right before the wedding." Generally, it takes at least two fittings for a dress. Brides should be prepared for four to five fittings.



Cindy Viola, assisted by Fitting Room owner Michelle Jewell, tries on the dress she plans to wear when she marries Jim Jurasek later this year in Troy. Brides who have their gowns specially made usually go through four or five fittings.

Bridesmaids: Handle with care

Accompanying the more than 2.5 million brides expected to walk down aisles all over the nation this year will be more than 10 million bridesmaids. And while the days of worrying about always being a bridesmaid and never a bride have passed in most quarters, being a wedding attendant still carries its share of anxiety.

According to Bride's Magazine, today's bridesmaids share some complaints and concerns that have worried attendants since the advent of the modern wedding party.

Perhaps the most frequently heard complaint is that the bridesmaids didn't like the dresses the bride chose for them. Color, style and price of the gowns chosen all came in for criticism from the women who wore them.

Although it's hard for the bride to please everyone, Bride's suggest that brides take their maid or matron of honor shopping with them to narrow down the choices to about three styles.

Be sure the dresses you choose flatter your attendants. Full skirts and blouson tops are classic styles that look good on a variety of figures. You may even want to look at two-piece outfits or shorter styles that can be worn again.

Once you've made the preliminary selection, schedule a time when the rest of the women in the wedding party can come to the bridal shop and vote on the final selection.

Be considerate of your attendants' budgets. Costs can add up when you consider that it's usual for attendants to pay for their own outfits, including shoes, accessories and maybe even an extra dress for the rehearsal dinner. Add that to the cost of wedding and shower gifts as well as transportation, lodging and meals for attendants from out of town.

You may want to enlist friends and relatives to offer your attendants a place to stay. Or let your bridesmaids select their own shoes, perhaps even wear a pair they already own. If you can, offer to provide all meals.

Another problem encountered by bridesmaids that can be readily alleviated by brides centers around a uncertainty of exactly what their duties are. Give your bridesmaids a chance to practice walking down the aisle with you. Make sure they know where to stand during different segments of the ceremony. Allow them to rehearse and feel comfortable with anything they may be required to read during the ceremony. Practice passing the bouquet to your attendant.

Before the wedding, ask them for help if you need it, in choosing your dress, addressing invitations and welcoming out-of-town guests. Remember, though that bridesmaids, as well as brides, are busy with the details of their own lives. Don't expect a total commitment to planning your wedding.

Finally, try to find time to spend with your bridesmaids. They're friends and relatives who, it's assumed, will continue to be close to you after the wedding ceremony is but a fond memory. Many bridesmaids complained to Bride's that the bride was so engrossed in her plans and parties that she wasn't interested in them anymore.

Sensitivity is the key to handling many aspects of planning your wedding. Brides should be sensitive to the fact that even an impending marriage doesn't allow one to ride roughshod over her friends.