

# QUEST



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PARTY PLANNER  
POLLY ONET

MOTHER OF THE  
BRIDE

MEN'S FORMALWEAR

BALI HONEYMOON

**AN INTERVIEW WITH  
CLAUDE TAITTINGER,  
IRANIAN CAVIAR,  
REMBRANDT LEAVING  
LAS VEGAS,  
WINTER ANTIQUES**

BRIDAL  
FASHION

Newlywed LARA WEBB CARRIGAN is the author of *The Best Friend's Guide to Planning a Wedding*, out this month from ReganBooks. Her hard-won expertise on the minutiae of organizing nuptials made her the perfect person to interview wedding planner Polly Onet, who marshals those minutiae to produce beautiful, extravagant, unique weddings for New York society. "Having seen what she can do," says Lara, "I think Polly should have written the book." Lara lives in Valley Cottage, New York.



POLLY PLAN  
A WEDDING

BY LARA WEBB CARRIGAN ♦ PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC MCNATT

# For New York society's soon-to-be-married, the first—well, second—step is a call to Polly Onet.

As soon as Polly Onet and I walk into Indulge Bakery, I know we chose the right place to meet. The chairs are upholstered in leopard print, a small, fun detail that immediately has her describing a wedding she planned. “We set up this fantastic leopard lounge tent after dinner with a port and cigar bar, cappuccinos, frappuccinos, an amazing ice cream bar with beautiful bowls, and grappa and biscotti. It really was beyond.”

“Beyond” is a word Polly uses a lot. It also happens to be the perfect word to describe her events. One of New York society's favorite party planners, she works for fabulous clients (Barbara Bancroft and her daughter Anne Churchill, for example), throws parties and weddings in fabulous settings (Luttrellstown Castle in Ireland, for one), and will go to any length to make sure each event she plans is a success.

“Polly-Plan-a-Party, that was my nickname in college. I'd decide to have a party, lie to everyone and assure them that so-and-so was coming, and then pray everyone showed up. They always did.”

These days Polly doesn't have to lie about who's coming to her parties. In fact, she's discreet, even evasive. What she and her team at Ober-Onet will do is work very hard, especially at planning weddings. “The first thing I ask any couple for,” Polly says, “is a vision.” She sends the bride a box of books and magazines and tells her to flag everything she falls in love with, and asks couples to write down their favorite foods, music, even colors.

“I'm planning a wedding now where the mother of the bride has picked out specific music for the dinner hour. 'Fifties and 'sixties Getz and Gilberto tunes. The groom is Indian, so they want Indian-influenced hors d'oeuvres. And the bride is crazy about fava beans, so we have to have fava beans. Those are the kinds of things that give a wedding personality.”

What also gives it personality, Polly insists, is its setting. Eyes shining, she describes Samantha Kluge and Adam Cahan's wedding in the Blue Ridge

Mountains in Virginia. “I don't think I'll ever see anything as beautiful. One of the tents was covered in mesh wire, and it took two days to stuff it with lilacs and wisteria. It felt like you were under a lilac and wisteria tree. The tent looked out over the hills. It really was the most intense thing you've ever seen in your life.”

Plus, Polly admits, “Destination weddings are my favorite. Transporting people into an environment they've never been in before has a magic to it. People become much more friendly. They open up. New friendships evolve.

*Polly never sits,  
rarely eats, and pays  
constant attention  
to the music, the lighting,  
and the bride and groom  
and their families.*

Trust me, I've seen it a dozen times, it's so much more fun and special.” Only halfway through our tea, I already trust her completely.

As for the timing, Polly assures me anything is possible. She's planned a wedding in six weeks before, although this means working around the clock. “The longer you have to plan,” she says, “the more time you have to interview vendors, and you have the luxury of not feeling pressured.” One of the luxuries of hiring Polly is that you can trust her to choose the very best vendors. She works regularly with decorator Philip Baloun, and researches any company she hasn't heard of. A wedding, after all, is supposed to be fun, and the vendors are largely responsible for that fun. Polly will sometimes suggest spending less on a photographer and more on a band and D.J. “I'll ask couples to stop and think how much more it would mean to their guests.”

Taking care of couples and their guests is something Polly takes pride in. She's involved in every detail of each wedding she plans, from the guest list,

“save the date” cards and hotel reservations to silverware, stemware and tablecloth selections. And once those selections are made, she doesn't skip a beat. She writes absolutely everything down, and the week before the wedding, her schedule and list of details can run as long as fifteen pages. “Vendor arrival times, the tent delivery time, sound check, groomsmen's photographs, bridesmaids' photographs, golf tee times, tennis round robin times.” A weekend wedding often consists of up to four separate parties and three or four different activities, she explains; she's the one keeping track of it all.

Then there's the wedding itself. The bride finally makes it down the aisle, the groom stutters out his “I do,” and everyone relaxes. Everyone except for Polly Onet: Polly-Plan-a-Party becomes Polly-the-Problem-Solver. A silent observer at every wedding she plans, she never sits, rarely eats, and pays constant attention to the music, the lighting, and the bride and groom and their families, who may be having crises of their own. Before the Bancroft wedding, for instance, no one could find the thirteen ushers' boutonnieres; they finally turned up in the Piping Rock Club's kitchen refrigerator.

Even at the end of an evening, Polly can't relax. “It all comes down to transportation. You don't want a dream wedding to be ruined because a guest has to wait twenty minutes for their car—and have you ever tried to get 100 drunk guests on a bus? At the Kluge wedding in Virginia, we had the bus drivers do run-throughs to make sure they had the directions right. The day of the wedding, one of them got lost anyway.”

Most weddings, however, go smoothly. “The thing to realize,” she says, “is that some things you don't have control over. At some point, you just have to let go.”

What about her own dream wedding? “Not in a million years!” she blurts out, then relents. “Okay, maybe. But it will be very intimate and different. Somewhere no one's heard of.” Wherever Polly Onet winds up, it will definitely be a party. ♦

WHO ARE THE MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN AMERICA? (SEE PAGE 116)

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## WEDDINGS

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# PARTY OF FOUR

COLIN COWIE, BILL TANSEY, ANTONY TODD AND POLLY ONET  
SHOWCASE THEIR FAVORITE EVENTS

EDITED BY ANNE MCGEE

What makes for a great party? The question has been asked for as long as people have been gathering together. A grand fête is a gift a host gives to her guests, an expression of generosity, carried out with warmth and panache. It's a momentous production that manages to somehow seem effortless. And no one can pull off such a feat alone.

Manhattan's top tier eventeurs are the not-so-secret weapon every would-be party thrower needs. The best of them bring their flair for drama and well-honed eye for detail to help create wonders for their clients. Antony Todd, Colin Cowie, Bill Tansey, and Polly Onet and Philip Baloun all manage to stay true to their own vision, while carefully executing the whims of the host. They're artists of the possible. The results of their collaborations will never cease to astonish.

We asked these four fab eventeurs to choose some of their favorite events and talk about what made them so memorable. From the flowers to the tablecloths to the use of a stunning locale, every element was selected with the utmost of care. Add to that the *je ne sais quoi* factor, the mix and chemistry of the guests, and a host who makes everyone feel welcome, relaxed and celebrated, and you've made magic.

# POLLY ONET & PHILIP BALOUN

## NO ORDINARY GARDEN WEDDING

I picked the Tracy White and Lakshman Achuthan wedding in Lewisboro, New York to feature because the setting was one of the most special, beautiful and creative places I had ever seen. The gardens are world-renowned. So many elements were unique. It was the first time I had a client use a Plexiglas tent. A private, decorated train brought all the guests from New York City. Both the mother and the bride were wonderful collaborators and were extremely creative.

The design of the tent mimicked the Greek architecture of the house they had built on the property and the tent was transformed into a garden conservatory with all the Greek-style elements. The columns of the tent were built to match the house exactly and painted the same color. All the tablecloths were handpainted in a Greek motif, and so was the dance floor. The chandeliers were sourced to match what already existed in the house. The waiters wore black T-shirts with the wedding date on the back in white Roman numerals. There were specialty drinks of the most fabulous color blue.

My favorite time of year to produce events and parties is definitely spring and summer. Outdoor, tented weddings with warm weather at night are truly the most magical. I would have liked to have planned Jay Gatsby's parties or any party at Versailles. Why? Because they were so over the top and people really knew how to have fun back then!

The most important things to remember when you're planning your own party are to incorporate your favorite things, and to bring in your personal style but be organized. And plan ahead.





PERSONAL WEDDING ALBUMS OF THE STARS

# InStyle

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Kelsey & Camille Grammer

## 67 Pages of Celebrity Weddings

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Day to Night

## Their Worst Date

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Jennifer Aniston  
Ben Affleck  
and More

## trendspotting

Bridesmen, groomswomen. Follow the example of the wedding of Eva Herzigova and Bon Jovi drummer Tico Torres: If your best pal doesn't fit the best man mold because, say, he's a woman, just think "best woman" instead of "best man."

Butterflies are free. Well, almost. Have them released at your wedding. Ian Ziering and Nikki Schieler had their florist Ricardo Luna (of Fresh Flowers, 310-281-2565) arrange it.

Transparent (instead of opaque)

tents lend a magical mood, especially as the sun goes down and lights sparkle from within.

Write a personal message to each guest inside folded seating cards. A simple line will do.

Serve modest-size portions of simple desserts along with the wedding cake. Sorbet, fruit and ice cream are ideal (and look pretty when varied at table settings).

William H. Macy's guests were treated to an ice-cream sundae bar with their wedding cake.

Turn your wedding into a vacation spot for your guests. Model Gail Elliott planned a week at the beach for those attending her Hamptons nuptials.

*The Young and the Restless's* Laurelee Bell hosted a four-day California celebration. Some event planners, like Polly Qnet (212-876-6775), who has staged wedding at castles, specialize in foreign affairs. —Hollis Brooks



CONDÉ NAST

# BRIDES

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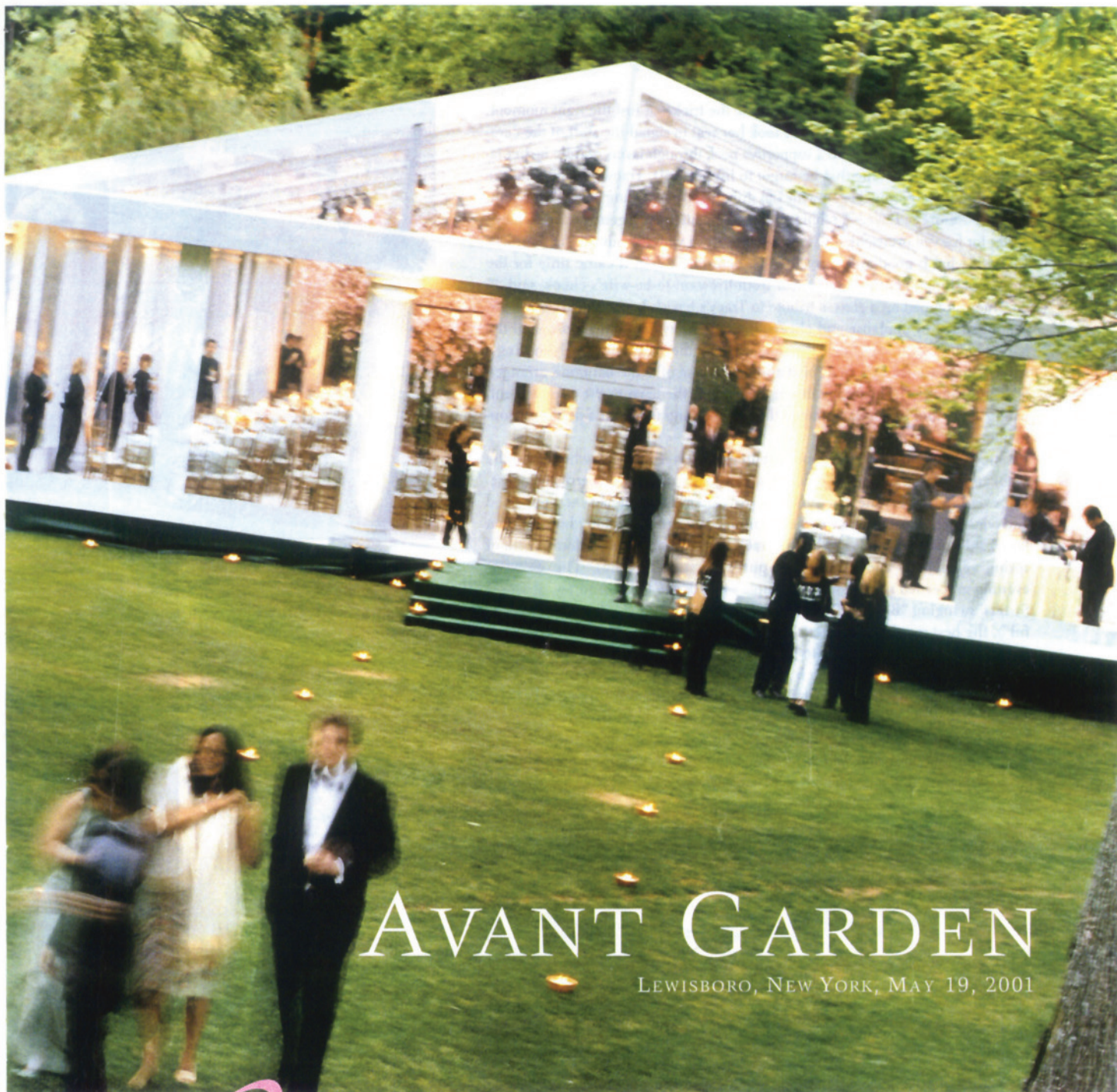
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
 The new Mr. and Mrs. head up the aisle as balloons fly, swan boats glide by, and guests look on. Candlelit paths lead guests from the ceremony to cocktails and then to dinner in a clear-sided tent that brought the outside in; the trees to the left were rented to provide natural camouflage for service tents. Wearing a pink silk A-line Angel Sanchez dress with an organza overlay, the bride takes her new husband in hand on their way to meet the crowd of well-wishers. Tracy's simple clutch of hand-tied calla lilies and a silver wine cup decorate the altar.



FLOATING SWANS, STEMS  
 IN FULL FLOWER, AND A  
 TENT THAT FEELS LIKE  
 HOME COMBINE FOR AN  
 UNFORGETTABLE EVENING



PHOTOS: ALAN RICHARDSON. EVENT PLANNING: OBERLONEY & ASSOCIATES. EVENT DESIGN AND FLOWERS: PHILIP BALDWIN DESIGNS. N.Y.C. CATERING TENT: STAMFORD TENT, STAMFORD, CT.



# AVANT GARDEN

LEWISBORO, NEW YORK, MAY 19, 2001

BY AMY KEITH

Narrow paths were flanked by thousands of daffodils, azaleas, tulips, and roses. Garden statuary—a bronze goat, marble lions, a stone chalice—gave the setting old-world ambience. And in the Circle Garden Statuary, where they first gathered, a violinist played while guests picked up their escort cards under the watchful eyes of the ancients, from Caesar to Alexander the Great. Clearly, the wedding of Tracy White and Lakshman Achuthan would be no ordinary garden party.

Though the forecast called for springtime showers, nothing could dampen the spirits of the interactive-TV-producer bride and her economic-researcher groom. And guests came out to the bride's family home in force to celebrate—one man's request to carry in the balloons that had decorated the chartered train that carried them from Manhattan was gladly granted. As the wedding party prepped—bridesmaids in the main house, groomsmen in the guest cottage—the crowd meandered over the grounds. After taking in a sarcophagus with credentials from the turn of the last millennium and strolling down by the grotto, guests gathered in the cocktail tent, where they were treated to tandoori chicken on lentil pancakes, curried lobster on *pappadam* (bread), potato *samosas* (turnovers), and other hors d'oeuvres, all inspired by the groom's Indian heritage. Thanks to a crack party planner and her minute-by-minute itinerary, the mother of the bride was free to spend her prewedding moments walking and reflecting in her award-winning gardens. (Continued)

The peaceful surroundings must have done the trick—at just the right moment, a serene, happy mother of the bride took her seat to signal the start of the ceremony. After being given a supportive peck through layers of tulle by her father (he was so overcome that he forgot to lift her veil), Tracy stepped onto the altar and the ceremony began with Lakshman's sister reading a Sanskrit poem, "On the Nature of Love." A rabbi welcomed the attendees, gently teased Tracy's father for his veil oversight, and took a serious turn with the advice "fill your basket with what is good and leave the rest behind." When it came time for the vows, Lakshman gently wiped a tear from his soon-to-be-wife's cheek, said, "I do," then stomped on a glass, a tribute to Tracy's Jewish heritage. Minutes later, accompanied by applause and cheers, the ceremony came to a close, and the hand-holding newlyweds made their way back up the aisle, completely missing a surprise appearance by a swan boat and the release of white balloons, arranged by Tracy's mother. The happy throng headed up the lawn to the cocktail tent, where Tracy and Lakshman greeted their friends and family as a dj played contemporary dance music.

Guests lingering in the gorgeous evening air delayed dinner, which gave the rabbi and wedding party time to locate and sign the misplaced marriage license. But eventually everyone assembled in the classic Doric-style tent—designed and constructed just for the wedding to mimic the structure of the house—for a knockout meal starring leg of lamb, Israeli pesto couscous, a garden's worth of spring vegetables, and a fava-bean puree (Tracy's favorite). The evening proceeded seamlessly: the couple's first dance to the Andrew Sisters' swinging "Bei Mir Bist du Schon" ("To Me You Are Beautiful"), the best man's toast (guests learned that Lakshman had abandoned breakfast that morning to fax Tracy a love note), the maid of honor's moving speech, in which she revealed how thrilled she was that her friend had "met her match in her childlike capacity for joy." And now that their love was legalized, spiritualized, and fully supported by friends and family, all that was left to do was enjoy the feast, chat with loved ones, and wait for the late-night ice-cream-sundae bar that would send everyone off with full stomachs and happy hearts.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: The Greek key pattern from the escort cards reappears on the linens and, along with Roman numeral table numbers, continues the classical theme. The bride and groom practiced for two months before wowing guests during their first dance on a one-of-a-kind floor built just for the wedding. The caterer concocted a festive drink of curacao, champagne, and orange juice to add a vibrant jolt to the evening's color scheme. Like the cherry blossoms reaching to the rafters, all of the flowers used were varieties in bloom on the grounds; the chandeliers were exact copies of the fixtures in the main house. Cheryl Kleinman crafted a buttercream-filled chocolate cake covered in marzipan icing and gum-paste sweet peas and lilies.

PHOTOS: ALAN RICHARDSON

FROM THE CUSTOM LINENS TO  
THE LIGHTS AND MUSIC—A  
TRIUMPH OF PERSONAL STYLE

# WEDNESDAY FRIDAY

Anne Wiedemann and John Churchill Hit a Locust Valley High Note

20  
WWD, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2000

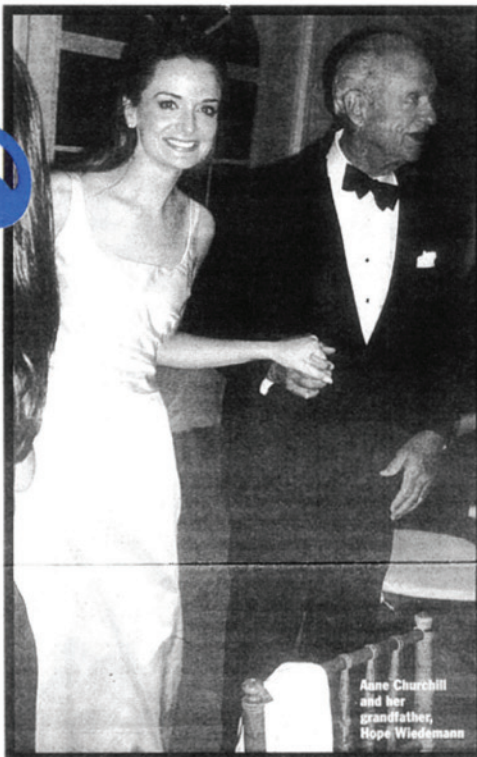
# WEDNESDAY

By Aileen Mehle



Say what you will, there is nothing quite like a society wedding — especially if it's a high society wedding. High society, you see, is something that should be coddled and cared for and championed, considering there is so little of it left. So it behooves us all, valiant preservationists and protectors alike, to hold high the torch of tradition, fight to prevent extinction of the species and beat back the hordes of parvenus, arrivistes, self-promoters and press-and-party-loving barbarians forever striving to storm the social ramparts. With the exception, of course, of the nouveaux riches, another breed entirely. Let us welcome them with open arms based on the incontrovertible fact that no matter how you come by it, money, newly minted, self-made or inherited, is always better than no money, don't you agree? Nouveau riche has a much nicer ring to it than nouveau pauvre any day in the week. Still, the best of all worlds is to have the background and breeding and the fortune and good fortune that comes with those families who have had a place in true New York society for generations. So — these deep and profound sociological reflections having been uttered, let us now proceed to the business at hand.

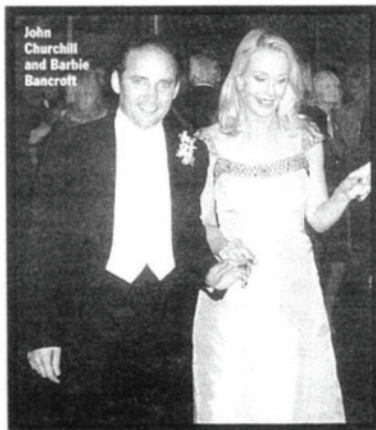
At a beautiful — yes, high society — wedding in Oyster Bay, Long Island, Anne Spencer Wiedemann, the daughter of Mrs. Thomas Moore (Barbara) Bancroft Jr. and George Stanhope Wiedemann III, was married to John William Churchill of Somerset, England. It is a truism that all brides are beautiful, but Anne was especially so, dark and slender and cameo-like, as she glided down the aisle in a strapless satin dress designed by Richard Tyler with a full skirt embroidered with satin rosettes and a long, cloud-like tulle veil. Her maid of honor, Olivia Siocum, and four bridesmaids, Lisa Mazzola, Kingsley Gregory and Anne and Wendy Fulewider, wore long, peachy taffeta skirts, sleeveless tops and little jackets. It is also a truism that all flower girls are adorable, but the five at this wedding, Fanny Murray (she is Muffie Bancroft Murray's daughter), Lillian Bancroft (the daughter of Suzie and Fred Bancroft), Serena



Anne Churchill and her grandfather, Hope Wiedemann



Nina Griscom



John Churchill and Barbie Bancroft

Bancroft, the daughter of Debbie and Billy Bancroft), Libby and Katherine Kelter (the daughters of Lonny Bancroft Kelter) were especially so in ecru taffeta and sashes of peachy taffeta that exactly matched the bridesmaids' dresses. All were designed in London by Serafina. (Should you be wondering why the name Bancroft pops up so often — the bride's stepfather, Thomas Moore Bancroft Jr., has a lot of relatives, obviously closely knit.)

The tall, golden-blond mother of the bride, known to one and all as Barbie, wore a pale gold tea-length taffeta dress with a brown-and-gold-beaded neckline and a matching stole edged with beading designed by Carolina Herrera. She was escorted down the aisle of the old stone chapel of Saint Dominic by two of her sons, Townsend and Cryder, yes, Bancroft. The 19 ushers wore white tie and tail, but of course.

Afterward, there was a reception for 300 wedding guests at Piping Rock Club, a bastion of old society that

can best be described as terminally exclusive. Barbie Bancroft herself designed the huge dinner tent made of miles of sheer pale pink shirred fabric edged in draped and scalloped swags. Pink and amber lights washed over and filtered through the fabric, casting a rosy glow. The tables were covered in creamy linen damask, and the fruitwood ballroom chairs with white seat cushions. There was a dark parquet dance floor; the floor of the tent itself was carpeted in buff sisal and its sides featured faux cathedral windows. You would have loved it, but you were there, weren't you?

The flowers at the church and reception were the work of Andrew Pascoe of Locust Valley, who filled the clear glass bowls at each table with beige hydrangeas and white roses. Hank Lane played for the dancing, and his girl singers did what they do best.

And this is the story that swept Locust Valley like, well, locusts, during the wedding. No doubt it will amuse the friends and family of five-year-old Oliver Legrad for years to come. Smartly outfitted in the groom's (Johnny Churchill's) red and blue childhood military uniform, complete with bright gold buttons, Master Legrad was to be ring-bearer at the perfectly executed ceremony. Although he hid under a pew during the rehearsal rather than walk the line, it was assumed he would pull through when his real cue came. Well, when the wedding music played, he absolutely refused his part in the ceremony. Stage fright is not confined to Broadway. Just in case, the best man was entrusted with the real ring and a fake band had been sewn on the satin pillow so the bride was not disappointed at the altar.

The wind blew during the reception to the point that Polly Onet, the event planner, ordered the tent to be battened down. It's nice to have someone to think of these things when you have a honeymoon on your mind.

As for the guests, among them were Nina Griscom Baker and Dr. Daniel Baker, Hilary Geary and Peter Green, Deborah Norville and Carl Wellner, Lord Charles Spencer Churchill — no relation to the groom — and you can read about the rest of the grown-ups here next week. But while you wait, be informed that the sweet young things there included, most of them under 35, LuLu de Kwiatkowski, Rachel Peters, Samantha and Serena Boardman, Lily Phipps and Fernanda Niven, delectable creatures all.

# QUEST

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN BEARD

## WEDDING PLANNING

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Planning a wedding can be the most wonderful time in a couple's life. It is a time for celebration and traditions. Traditions may be inherited and passed down through families or they may be new ones a couple has decided to incorporate into their ceremony and celebration. This is your wedding. It is a time to express your own individual style.





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# Wedding Planning



The Solomon/Long wedding.  
Photo: Philip Baloun Designs

What does event coordinator Polly Onet look for? Elegance & simplicity.

“No two weddings are the same. There’s no model to follow; no one size fits all,” says event coordinator Polly Onet of Ober, Onet & Associates.

## Planning the Wedding

While both budget and location are probably the most important elements in the design of a wedding, the location is really the basis for everything else. “It’s the centerpiece around which you try to build the budget.

“A wedding in a hotel may fit a relatively limited budget because so much of the infrastructure is in place, and the details, like decor and flowers, are rel-

atively easy to install.

“On the other hand, a tent is basically a construction site and it requires a lot of what I call hardware—the floor, the canopy, heating, lighting. It also needs a full array of software (the decor) designed and built-in to hide the construction.”

Polly starts with the venue, then chooses the caterer, the band, the photographer, the videographer, the decorator, then the menus and the wines. “If we’re doing something complicated, our decor designer does sound, lights and flowers.

“You may already have particular vendors in mind, or you may want to shop around and talk to a few design-

ers.” Polly goes to each interview and reviews every proposal. “That’s the logistical side of it.”

Then there is the “social secretarial” side—guest lists, invitations, calligraphers, RSVP’s, seating and escort cards. “It’s a huge job making sure everybody is seated properly, that we don’t forget somebody and that all the names are spelled right.”

If it’s out of town, they make sure all your guests are getting to where they are supposed to be, and that all accommodations have been arranged.

“We may have to write letters to your guests, explaining where they are



Photo: Cutty McGill

going and how to get there.”

### **A Multi-Day Celebration**

“We also may have to write a letter about attire and inform your guests about the weekend’s activities. For example, there may be a clambake on Friday night and sailing on Saturday.

“If you do a long three or four day event, there is usually golf, tennis and sailing. Many of my weddings end up being like conventions.”

One multi-day wedding Polly did was in Ireland. “We created seven different events.”

Every one had a different invitation, a different scenario, different vendors and different foods. They did separate ‘Save the Date’ and direction cards. “Obviously doing a wedding in town is a lot easier.

“Sometimes the groom’s mother wants to do something amazing. She may want to use the same vendors, but it’s seldom the same location.

“The rehearsal dinner sometimes turns into something bigger than the wedding itself!

“Then you have your bridal lunches over the weekend. Maybe the men are

going to have a cigar lunch, and you have to make sure they all get there.”

### **Avoid Confusion**

“There are challenges every day when you’re planning a wedding,” Polly explains. “I recently had a situation where the wedding was only five weeks away. The invitations were printed and ready to mail, and the bride called and said, ‘I don’t think I want to do the wedding in Dark Harbor, Maine. I think I want to do it at the Knickerbocker Club in New York.’ ”

Changing plans close to your wedding date can create confusion and cascading problems. A golden rule is: ‘Don’t do it unless you absolutely must.’

“That’s when I say to the bride, ‘You have to make a decision. You can’t keep going back and forth.’ ”

Such cases often arise from conflicting wishes among different family members. Polly’s wise solution is to listen to everyone, “and then act accordingly, taking all their wishes into account.”

Recently she had to fly 300 guests to

Charlottesville, Virginia in private planes and take care of their luggage. And that wedding in Dark Harbor, Maine (it wasn’t re-located) was accessible only by a little dirt airstrip or by ferry. “We had to tell the guests how to get there. There are no hotels on the island!” All 150 guests stayed in people’s homes.

“Then if we have a big nine-bedroom house being lent to us, who stays in what bedroom? Every bedroom has to have a pretty little heart-shaped note on the door that says, ‘Rick and Nancy’ or whatever, because how are they going to know what room to go to? There are so many little details.”

Handling all those details are essential to wedding day success, but some brides don’t recognize the importance of doing so.

One bride told Polly, “I don’t want it to seem like I have a wedding planner and everything is perfect and organized.” Polly replied, “Your wedding has to flow and be perfectly organized. Otherwise things are going to be left undone, guests are not going to have a good time, and you will be disappointed.”



The wedding of Julia & David Koch.  
Photo: Philip Baloun Designs



The Clements/Taubman wedding.  
Photo: Philip Baloun Designs

**Your Suppliers:  
Choose Them Carefully**

“I must have vendors I can rely on completely. When a bride says to me, ‘I have this great caterer I want to bring out to the country,’ if I’ve never heard of the firm, I check it out.”

One bride had recommended a caterer who had only done dinner parties for 10 people in private homes. “The caterer told the bride he could do her wedding,” says Polly, “but I couldn’t agree. I saw disaster.”

In the end, it’s the planner’s reputation on the line, so she’ll do everything possible to make sure each element is taken care of professionally.

“When I do a huge tent wedding, I like to pick the designer, who will do flowers, oversee the logistics of the layout of the tent and determine how the flow of the tent should be. He or she will also do all the lights and sound. Rather than having six separate vendors, I pick the top ones and have them oversee all that.”

**Elegant Affairs**

Polly did the wedding for businessman and philanthropist David Koch and his bride Julia. “It was beautiful. It

was held in their home in Southampton.” The ceremony was very private, with only a few family members and friends in the living room overlooking the ocean.

“She didn’t have on a typical wedding dress, which I adored.” Julia wore a lace taupe dress with a beautiful coat-jacket over it. “She was glowing.”

The reception took place in a tent which had been transformed into a ballroom. “You walked into the tent from the top because it was over the tennis courts. There was a butterfly staircase, and as you entered, you overlooked the whole tent. It was breathtaking.

“Everything about the wedding was very unique.” Rather than a white cake, theirs was a subtle, cool green. “I had done a lot of weddings before that, but not anybody as well-known as David and Julia.”

Then she got the Kluge wedding, “which was way over-the-top beautiful. We flew all the guests down to Charlottesville on private planes! Except for some transportation problems with several guests, the whole weekend came off without a hitch.

“The property in Charlottesville was

just magical. Her bridal luncheon tent where the ceremony was held was probably one of the most beautiful things I’ve ever seen.”

Wire mesh netted the ceiling of the tent, which was filled with lilacs and wisteria, creating the impression of a thick, fragrant forest.

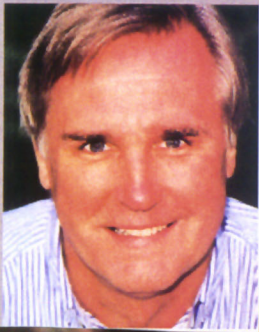
“You walked into that tent and it was just purples, whites and greens. You couldn’t see the top. You never saw or smelled anything like it in your life. One side of the tent was open and it looked out over the Blue Ridge Mountains.”

Polly hesitates when asked to pinpoint the most important thing to consider when planning a wedding. “There’s no golden rule. I suppose if I had to suggest one thing to a bride, it would be to keep it as simple as possible—and have a good plan, especially if it gets more complicated. Simplicity is relative, but it always breeds elegance, and those are virtues for a wedding, or any other kind of celebration.” — Rick Bard

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# AVENUE



## *Social Diary* by DAVID PATRICK COLUMBIA



*Bobby Taubman and Julie Clements were married in a small, family ceremony one early August evening in Wain-scott. Afterwards 200 joined them for salsa music, pome-granate and mango margaritas and spicy (the bride likes spicy) hors d'oeuvres as the sun was setting over Georgica Pond. Then all moved into a magical Philip Baloun designed tent paneled with ersatz boxwood sprinkled with lights. The menu featured sea scallops, crabcakes, Argentine tournedos and pommes frites (the bride is mad for French Fries), DJ Javier Peral did the music and party impresario Polly Onet made it all happen for the couple who honey-mooned in Greece before they married.*

OCTOBER 1999/FIVE DOLLARS

MARTHA  
STEWART

# Living

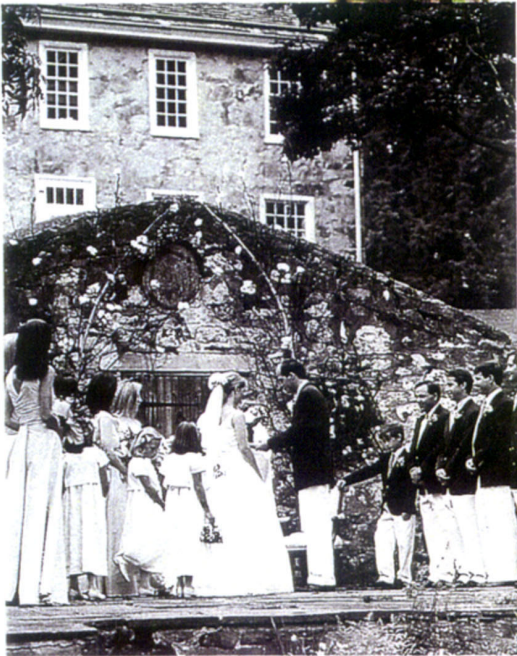
A SPECIAL ISSUE  
THE BRIDE AND GROOM

## WEDDINGS

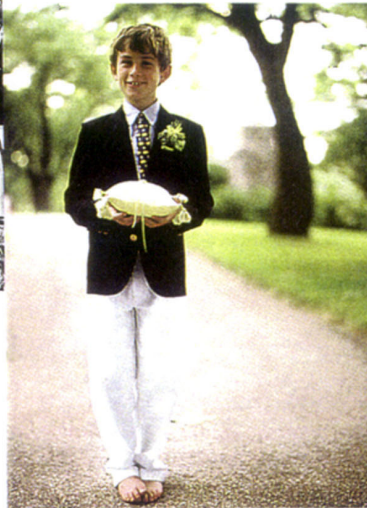
FLORAL DRESSES FAVORS CAKES  
VEILS BUFFETS BOUQUETS BOUTONNIERES



\$5.50 USA (CAN. \$6.50)



SOMETHING OLD "My favorite memories are from here," says Josephine Sasso of her family's eighteenth-century farm. "It's an incredible place for a child." Rolling grounds and weathered buildings also make it wonderful for a wedding. Peter's 9-year-old son, Hart (below left), is best man and ring bearer. Guests gather at dusk for the ceremony (below right). "I love the transition from daylight to darkness," says Peter. Josephine and Peter say their vows (left) in front of the 1713 springhouse. The blowsy beauty of the gardens in bloom (bottom left) is echoed in the decorations, which include herbs and greens in painted buckets (bottom right). A ribbon adorns a pasture bell (above). Opposite: The couple marches down an allée of potted dogwood trees. Triplet flower girls Tori, Elli, and Liesl Benecchi (top right) carry moss baskets filled with rose petals (center right).



JOSEPHINE SASSO TO PETER CALLAHAN  
VALLEY FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA 6.7.97





For most couples, falling in love is easy; getting married is the tricky part. But Josephine Sasso and Peter Callahan had plenty of experience with weddings. He's a New York-based caterer; she's a New York-based designer whose dresses are popular with bridesmaids. It was the romance that nearly did them in.

Their courtship unfolded like a Shakespearean comedy, full of twists and misunderstandings. The couple met when he catered her brother's wedding; according to Peter, "there were fireworks then." But whenever they saw each other after that—he became a guest at her family's parties—their signals got hopelessly crossed. At one event a family friend spent hours trying to fix up Peter with her niece. "I couldn't figure out why I wasn't being set up with Josephine," says Peter. At another, Peter paid all his attention to one of Josephine's

friends. "I thought Peter was interested in her," says Josephine, "so I completely ignored him." But, Peter says, "I was only talking to her because Josephine wasn't talking to me."

Finally, Josephine realized something had to be done. "I had given him all the wrong messages," she says. So she called him up, and they decided to go out—just the two of them, alone.

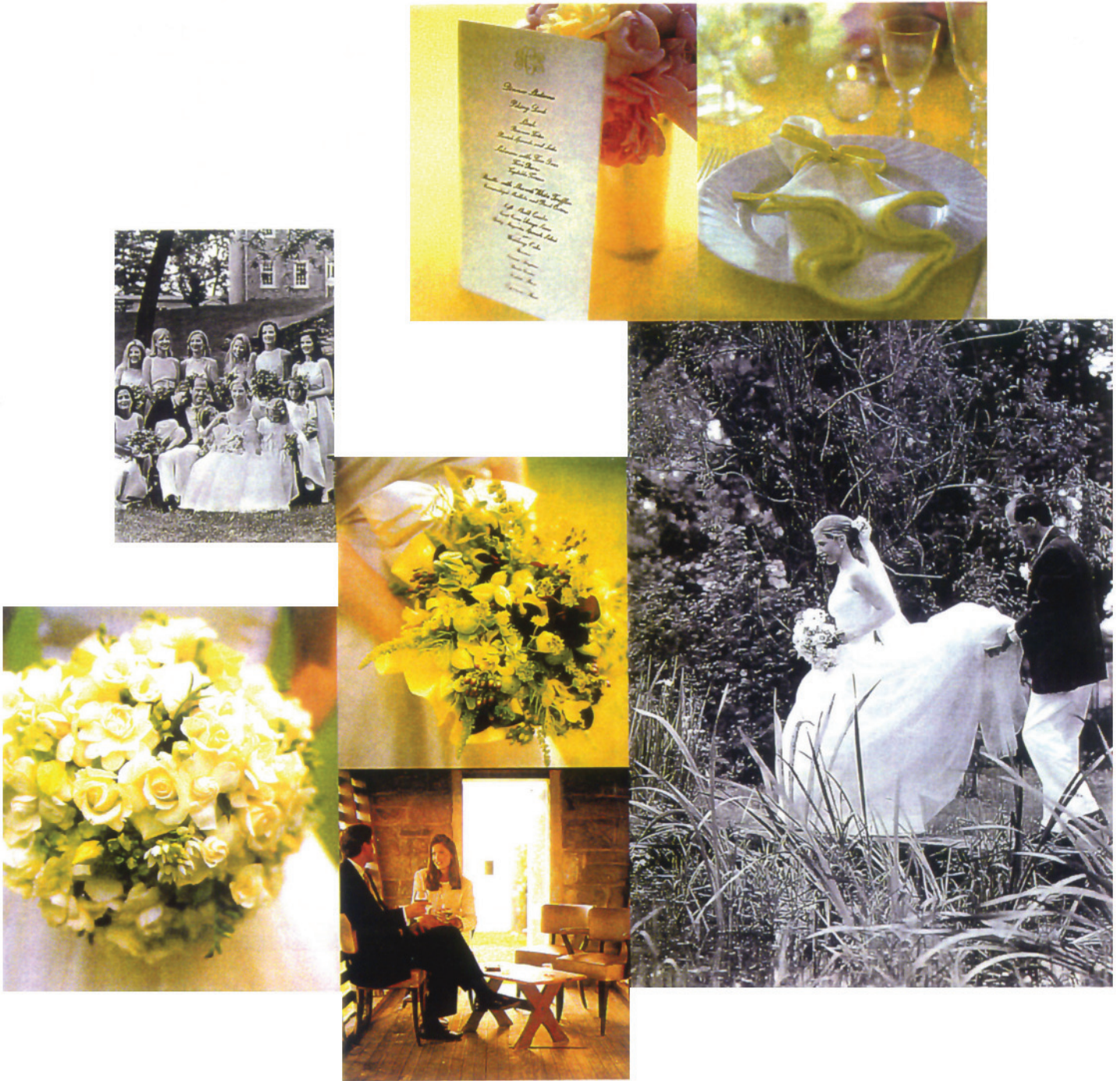
Their first date was at a masquerade party. Despite their disguises, they began to see each other clearly. "We had a wonderful time together," says Josephine. "We stayed up half the night."

Less than a year later, they were married. Peter's company did the catering, and Josephine designed the dresses for the wedding party. For them, that was easy. More important, when the time came for Josephine and Peter to say their vows, their message was perfectly clear.



**GARDEN OF DELIGHTS** Every tabletop becomes a miniature garden (top left): Topiary rosebushes sprout from concrete urns capped in moss; nearby, herbs trail from silver cups. The vanilla cake (top center) is decorated with crystallized flowers. Josephine's mother, Anna Sasso, talks with Peter's mother, Betsy Callaban (top right). Favors (above left) are nonpareils in plastic boxes finished with monogrammed stickers. "I wanted to use my new initials the first opportunity I had," says Josephine. Petits fours are arranged in a checkerboard pattern (center). Luminarias light the pathway to the farmhouse (above right), where Peter and Josephine will live after the wedding. A food station (above center) includes salmon topped with foie gras, and stuffed cherry tomatoes. Peter and Josephine dance on a canvas floor (right), painted black and white to resemble a tiled ballroom. SEE THE GUIDE FOR SOURCES





**A FARM-FRESH THEME** *Shades of lettuce green and white appear throughout the setting. Josephine's bouquet (above left) is a globe of fragrant roses, gardenias, and freesia. Josephine designed the bridesmaids' dresses (center left) as well as helped plan the bouquets (center); in the weeks before the wedding, she began collecting clippings from around the farm. "We'd be talking," says Peter, "and suddenly Josephine would reach up and grab a branch and say, 'Oh, this would be great in my bridesmaids' bouquets.'" Peter helps Josephine negotiate the dam across the springhouse stream (above right). The menu (top left) lists a wealth of choices: salmon with foie gras, filet mignon, risotto with truffles, soft-shell crab, and Peking duck. Josephine had the napkins (top right) custom-made out of white cotton piqué edged with China-silk piping. Guests Bill Manger and Andrea Lans converse in a converted corncrib (above center).*