

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Episode 26: Wedding Celebrations

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Rachel.

Leah: And I'm Leah.

Rachel: This month, we would like to talk about wedding celebrations. We know that many ideas for your special ceremony can be found online, but never forget that your local library also stocks plenty of books on this subject. These are helpful if you are looking for high quality, full-color photo spreads, step-by-step guides, or other details that you might not get from an idea board on Pinterest. Checking out free books is a lot more cost effective than purchasing glossy magazines that you'll eventually throw out, too. Although, now that I mention it, the library also has wedding-related e-Magazines available through Overdrive and Libby. Why limit yourself?

Leah: To kick off the episode, Rachel and I thought we'd talk a little about each of our weddings, and I'm going first. And, well, to be honest, mine hasn't happened yet. At least, not at the time we're working on this episode. By the time you're listening, it will have! We're tying the knot on June 14th in beautiful Colorado. Neither my fiancé or I wanted anything large, and our families were on board with waiting to celebrate with us at a later date. So, we contacted an elopement coordinator who helped us plan everything other than where we'd stay, what we wore, and a cake. Those were on us. But they handled coordinating the officiant, photographer, hair and makeup, flowers, and gave us a whole bunch of different preselected locations. They had so many hidden gems of places that we could pick from. Some are very 'in the wilderness', and some more in a city, but always with the theme of nature and beautiful views. My fiancé and I picked our location—one more on the wilderness side of things. After all, if we're going all the way to Colorado to get married, I want to get married on a darn mountain, with beautiful views all around me, rather than in a city park. So, the day of our wedding we'll take a short hike to our location, located with a dramatic mountain backdrop and a pretty lake nearby, and exchange vows. Get some hopefully super-rad photos taken and have this amazing memory to take home with us. We are so excited.

Rachel: I'm excited for you. (laughs)

Leah: Now, if we hadn't gone the route of a non-surprise elopement, I might have picked up a book like "Emily Post's Wedding Planner" written by Peggy Post. This book has something on everything. It has 20 chapters, ranging from the engagement to after the wedding and everything in-between. What I really liked about it—and maybe this isn't terribly specific to this

book in particular—was that it has spots where you can fill out “vital information” about the details of the wedding. I mean, like details down to the shoe size of your ushers. Maybe a little myopic for planning, but gosh, if you’re dealing with planning a big ol’ wedding, I personally would find having that level of crazy detail available to me somewhere. And in one handy place! I definitely think I’ll be looking into something similar for planning a reception. One note for a copy from the library though: you definitely can’t fill ours out. But you could make copies of the pages that have those awesome checklists and places to fill out information and make your own binder for pretty cheaply. Something about this book in particular I did like was it did what Emily Post does best: gave many tips for etiquette and proper behavior. Now, the book is from 1999, so take some of it with a grain of salt, but much of it is still pretty solid advice.

Rachel: My wedding celebration was the definition of “low-key.” We went to the courthouse downtown in order to take care of the legal side of things with nobody else but the two required witnesses. The main event, though, took place later that same day in the home where I grew up. I had converted my parent’s dining room into an intimate, secluded area with soft drapes on all sides, pretty lights, and a few decorations. Neither I nor my husband have big families, and we’d agreed in advance that we didn’t feel comfortable in front of a large audience of extended relatives and friends. So, all told, there were just five guests. Yeah—a tiny gathering. We were originally going to elope in secret, but A) we didn’t want to upset anyone by not letting them know that we’d gotten hitched until after the fact, B) the time between the engagement and the actual wedding would make it tough for either of us to keep it a total secret, and C) the people we did invite were incredibly important to us. Often, I think that weddings are more for both sides of the family than the couple themselves. But, in the end, I’m grateful we decided to mark the occasion and make it all that much more memorable. Because we had technically already gotten married at the courthouse, no officiant was required at our personal ceremony. Instead, my father walked me up, my mother said a few words, and we performed a handfasting. According to “The Knot Guide to Wedding Vows and Traditions”—that’s k.n.o.t.—by Carley Roney, this ritual is attributed to a number of cultures, but we took inspiration specifically from Celtic tradition. Handfasting dates back to the Middle Ages, and I think that was the major appeal. I like learning about history, so to integrate a ritual from such a long time ago felt...special. Basically, the betrothed have their hands bound together with a series of ribbons or cords to symbolize their new union. A third party—usually a priest or other officiant—explains to those in attendance what each strand represents as they cross them over the joined hands. You can obviously adjust those meanings to whatever you desire; it is a highly customizable rite. The nice thing is that you then have a cord as a keepsake. A lot of flowers and other decorations cannot be preserved, but—and not to take the magic out of the moment—a length of string is easy to store.

Leah: (laughs)

Rachel: Nor is it likely to deteriorate during your lifetime.

Leah: Very good points.

Rachel: Yeah. Anyway! After that, my husband and I also integrated a candle lighting. This ritual is easy to perform, and I've seen a few variations using colored sand or water. In this instance, the bride and the groom use separate wicks to light a larger candle. This symbolizes two lives coming together as one. As far as origins go, Roney explains that unity candles are popular in the Catholic faith, but modern pagan ceremonies also use them. It's pretty much as nondenominational as you want it to be. Marriage itself is steeped in customs and sacrament. If you're interested in learning more about these traditions' roots or how to turn them into something unique, I recommend Diane Meier Delaney's "The New American Wedding: Ritual and Style in a Changing Culture." It covers everything from rings and fashion to cake and the honeymoon.

Leah: Another book that caught my attention is "The Green Bride Guide" by Kate Harrison. It's all about creating an earth-friendly wedding on any budget. The author says, to use the book, she tried to make the book "as accessible as possible, each section is subdivided by topic and type...[and] wherever possible I have further subdivided by price." She clarifies that the prices are just rough guidelines, and further, this book was published in 2008, so any prices you see in the book might be pretty out of date. Or not! I don't know how much prices in the wedding industry have changed over the last decade. In any case, the book is jampacked with ways you can create a wedding celebration that's a little easier on the earth and a little more environmentally friendly. Even if you incorporate one or two ideas, you know? Moreover, the book functions as a planner, too, since it walks you through the different decisions you could be making to make those 'greener' ones. One idea stood out to me, though not applicable in my situation, was to make welcome baskets for folks in the event of destination wedding. But that's seriously the tip of the iceberg covered in this book. So, I have to confess, at the time of writing this I haven't finished writing my vows yet.

Rachel: (gasps) Leah!

Leah: I'm definitely a procrastinator! In light of that, the book "Complete Book of Wedding Vows" by Diane Warner caught my eye. It advertises hundreds of ways to say "I Do." But guys...I don't think I've rolled my eyes harder in my entire life.

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: Hundreds of cheesy, over-the-top vows. One nice feature of the book is that it's organized in 11 different chapters all with different types of vows. Like traditional, non-traditional, second marriages, for older couples, theme weddings—just all different kinds. I'll admit, I'm not the one for cheesy romance lines. But listener, if you are, then this book has some great ideas!

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: I'll leave you with an excerpt of a few that were particularly overwrought, in my opinion. And maybe you'll love it.

(The song “Past Sadness” by Kevin MacLeod plays in the background)

“Your smile is a tonic to my battered soul, a healer of my broken heart, a blessing beyond description. How thankful I am to have found you at last, my soul mate, my other half...”

(Music stops abruptly)

Rachel: Oof.

Leah: Or, a few pages earlier, how about...

(Music resumes where it left off)

“You are the sunshine of my life after the storms, my sweet nectar after the bitterness of my days, and my joy after the painful seasons of sorrow.”

(Music stops abruptly)

Rachel: Wow.

Leah: As I said, those are just excerpts, and maybe they really resonate with you. I can honestly say (laughs) I don’t think I’ll draw any inspiration from anything I read in there for my own vows, though.

Rachel: If you’re still having trouble coming up with inspiration for your prepared vows—

Leah: Like me!

Rachel: (laughs) I might recommend the book “Words for the Wedding: Creative Ideas for Choosing and Using Hundreds of Quotations to Personalize Your Vows, Toasts, Invitations & More” by Wendy Paris and Andrew Chesler. These quotes range from cheesy to heartfelt, coming out of religion, pop culture, and everywhere in between. We’re talkin’ 17th-century poetry penned by John Milton paired up against dialogue from 1987 cult classic “The Princess Bride.”

Leah: Nice.

Rachel: Much like Leah’s book, this one can be a bit over the top. That said, you never know when you might read something that resonates. Plus, “Words for the Wedding” also gives you talking tips if you’re not super into public speaking. Not that I know anything about that particular fear.

Leah: (laughs) I thought for my next discussion point that I might work off of the idea of event and party planning. As I mentioned earlier, I’ll be in the position of planning just a reception party relatively soon, and it struck me that a wedding could just be considered a big ol’ party. And in light of that, why stick strictly to wedding-themed books and resources? A pick from our collection is a book by Darcy Miller entitled “Celebrate Everything.” ...which does seem to be a statement that I can get behind. It’s roughly organized into two sections, one being the “Party

Handbook,” which provides...sort of...the blueprint for party planning of any kind. The second part is the “Party Playbook,” and that has a list of different themed parties and puts together different ideas for throwing that kind of party. For example, a “Rainbow Party.” Miller talks about everything from a tablescape and how to decorate the room, to inviting your guests to come dressed head-to-toe in one color, to tasting the rainbow. And no, she doesn’t just mean you serve Skittles to your guests.

Rachel: (laughs) That’s my kind of party, though.

Leah: Though I suppose it could be a good addition! (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: Instead, she suggests how to make layered Jell-O cups, arranging cut fruits and veggies into a rainbow on a tray, tinting marshmallows into different colors and serving those, and even making different frosting colors to make sugar cookie sandwiches with. But beyond food, Miller also provides a playlist with songs that have the vibe of “sparkle, shine, or soar” and include “22” by Taylor Swift and “Unwritten” by Natasha Bedingfield. Heck, even instructions for making a pop-up rainbow invitation are included in here. I mean, if you really want to throw a party but you’re not sure how, there’s a heck of a lot of great ideas for that. Perhaps this is a smaller scale than a wedding reception, but I think there’s a lot of inspiration that can be taken here. Next, I also grabbed “Celebrate” by Lauren Conrad. I admit, I recognized Lauren Conrad’s name first from her television fame, as I faithfully tuned in to watch her on “The Hills” back in my college days.

Rachel: (laughs)

Leah: Of course, as a regular Kohl’s shopper I also recognize she has a line there. All this to say, Lauren Conrad has had quite the life, and I’ll read a book about party planning from her. She too, has two parts to her book: the “Prep” and the “Party.” It’s filled with really attractive, aesthetic pictures, and the writing style very much speaks to me—someone who is relatively similar in age to the author. Honestly, I was reading through the book for the episode to find some talking points about it and just found myself reading it. And I’m not sure I can give higher praise than that. But I will point out, she lays down, like, a 40-page planning guide laying out her own wedding. From the engagement, to planning the rehearsal dinner, reception menu, a wedding planning timeline, ideas for cute bridal group outfits, décor, entertainment, and little details that can tie it all together to an amazing event. Frankly, this is a book I might be picking up for myself to just have on hand. It’s not the normal kind of book I stock up on, and I couldn’t have anticipated how much I would like this one. But I sort of see, on the horizon post-COVID, how a newly married couple might start hosting lots of different guests in their home, and the idea of throwing some parties sounds pretty great. This might be a nice reference for myself. But I’d have had no idea about it until I picked it up for this episode. If there’s a book you’re thinking about purchasing but you’re not sure if you want to buy it, try searching the library’s catalog and see if we have it. It’ll give you the chance to check it out and see if it’s something

you want to add to your own collection. Or, maybe you find referencing the library's copy will do you just fine. But it's always a great place to start.

Rachel: That is a really good tip. Now, because my wedding celebration was rather...uh, quaint, shall we say?

Leah: (laughs)

Rachel: I'm clearly not the best person to give advice when it comes to throwing a big shebang. For that, check out a copy of "Barn Weddings" by Maggie Lord. Hosting your ceremony outdoors or in a barn as opposed to a church is a popular prospect for couples young and old. I can kind of see the appeal, especially after flipping through this book. Styles range from rustic to classy, depending on your own taste. Barns offer a lot of vertical space, which is excellent for decorating with lights, garlands, and huge flower arrangements. There is also plenty of room to lay out tables for food or to go crazy on the dance floor. These spaces allow for an all-in-one ceremony and after-party, too, which helps if you are operating on a budget and cannot afford to rent separate spaces on top of all the other usual expenses.

Leah: That sounds sort of similar what my brother did for his wedding when he got married. He and my, um, my now sister-in-law rented, um...actually, an architectural firm—their building. And it was this beautiful building in Georgia that was just a...a wonderful space to have an all-in-one ceremony. So, they got married in the front half of it, separated by a curtain from the back half, and then when the ceremony was over they just, uh, invited everyone outside, they took the curtain down, set up all the...all the tables and such.

Rachel: Mhm.

Leah: And then we had the...had the reception in there. It was a really nice way to do it.

Rachel: Yeah, it sounds really versatile.

Leah: Yeah. That's the end of today's show! Feel free to check out the show notes for a list of all the books we discussed on this episode. Remember to subscribe and rate the podcast if you like what you hear. You can always reach us through the Oak Creek Public Library's website or Facebook page by sending a message to @OakCreekLibrary. Until next time, happy reading.

Rachel and Leah: Bye!

(Brief outro music)