

If it's true love, it has to be a grand affair

The second time's as sweet

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Who says second weddings have to be understated, minor affairs? In Texas, if love is in the air and the greenbacks are bountiful, there is no limit to the level of celebrating a second, third or even fourth time around.

Last spring, two Lone Star couples crossing the threshold for at least the second time treated their guests to celebrations worthy of a Merchant Ivory production, albeit with a Texas accent. Both were ranch weddings and both made major statements — declarations of true love that also affirmed the beauty of American capitalism.

Susanne Dawley and John Byram

Susanne Dawley lived in Houston for more than two decades before heading to Austin two years ago. There, she met the love of her life, rancher/businessman John Byram. In April, the two were wed in a black-tie ceremony at his vast Byram Ranch in the Hill Country.

Dawley's experience (she's chaired everything from the Houston Ballet Ball to the March of Dimes Gourmet Gala) and her innate creative talents led to an evening that made Jenna Bush's ranch ceremony look like a starter wedding.

"The funny thing was," Susanne said, "we talked back and forth about a big wedding or a small wedding. I wanted to go away for a small wedding. But he wanted a big wedding."

And big it was — 300 guests for the outdoor ceremony, seated dinner, dancing to music by Houston's Richard Brown Orchestra and a fireworks display. The setting: a dazzling fantasy with thousands of candles and lanterns and an embarrassment of floral riches.

"I think we cornered the market on orchids," Susanne said, recalling the zillions of white orchids and white tulips that decorated the lakeside wedding site and the elaborately embellished marquis party tents.

Three months later, guests are still talking about designer David Kurio's floral magic. The RK Group of San Antonio provided the wild-game dinner. And a white-jacketed staff of more than 100 kept up with guests' every need.

The bride wore an elegant yet simple halter-neck gown by Parisian designer Romona Keveza, then slipped into a strapless, beaded Monique Lhuillier gown for dancing.

Michelle Sackett and Frank Hevrdejs

In a similar vein, Michelle Sackett of Pebble Beach, Calif., and Frank Hevrdejs, Sterling Group CEO, chose his ranch in Brenham for their not-so-modest wedding with 75 family and close friends attending.

They married beneath an ancient oak tree next to a pond and waterfall that the groom had built especially

for his bride. The highlights of her outfit were a skirt made from antique lace and her custom-made alligator cowboy boots. He wore black jeans and a stylish western shirt with a high collar and, of course, cowboy boots. They said their vows beneath a wrought-iron arch overflowing with dogwood.

It was off to the party barn for cocktails in the honky-tonk setting, then to the immaculately cleaned equipment barn for a sophisticated seated dinner provided by Jackson & Co. Profusions of flowering dogwood softened the environment.

While the early April marriage was a relatively small affair, the newlyweds went Texas big for a post-wedding party at River Oaks Country Club a month later. For this party, the bride wore a rose-colored Ralph Lauren strapless gown accented with a turquoise and silver concho belt.

The western-themed event transformed the sedate private club into a lively dance hall, thanks to the talents of Nancy Ames and Darryl Murchison. Aside from the roasts by Frank's friends, the big entertainment was a performance by Asleep at the Wheel, who kept the 300-plus guests two-stepping into the late-night hours.

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