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Local Couples Find Unique Ways to Make Encore Weddings Special

By Jennifer Wake



Newlyweds Svend Ryge and Karen Lennox enjoy a moment together at their garden reception
Photo Lynds Photography

With nearly 60 percent of men and more than 40 percent of women remarrying, second marriages - or encore weddings - have become more common, offering couples a unique opportunity to celebrate their commitment to each other and to their new blended families.

In 1980, Lafayette natives Natalie and Chris Lane barely knew each other at Stanley Middle School, and after graduating from Acalanes High School, they didn't meet again until 20 years later at a high school reunion committee meeting.

"Several months after the reunion, Chris asked me to have dinner with him," Natalie said. "We ate at a local restaurant, talked without those uncomfortable pauses and had a wonderful evening."

Just over two months later, Chris asked Natalie to marry him. (She said yes.) They were married one year ago on New Year's Eve at the Veteran's Memorial Building in Lafayette.

With two sons and one daughter from prior marriages, they thought about trying to incorporate their children into the event, and did so in very minor ways, but Natalie says they wanted to keep it simple.

"As hard as it is, we tried not to fall into the mindset that we need to have all the things that go into the traditional wedding ceremony," Natalie says. "We began to realize that the 'wedding of our dreams' didn't have anything to do with the color of the napkins. It was all about us being able to profess our love and

commitment for each other."

According to "I Do Take Two.com" - a second wedding online resource - more couples venturing down the aisle for an encore wedding are creating their own traditions, substituting the throwing of the bouquet or garter belt for a special toast, or exchanging personalized vows. "You can create your own tradition, with all of your children walking beside you and your groom and standing with you at the altar," the Web site notes. "You're bound only by your imagination."

When Karen Lennox and Svend Ryge got married at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church last August, they created a theme for the celebration: "Families Intertwining."

Their children from previous marriages (two each), as well as siblings and best friends, lit the church candles, ushered guests, sang, read scripture, and stood up to declare their support for the new family unit.

"During the ceremony we showed a five minute slide show set to music that presented our individual families growing up and our new family intertwined," Karen says. "We received many comments that it was a touching and wonderful ceremony."

Much like the Lanes, Karen and Svend wanted to invite as many people as could they could. Two-hundred attended Karen and Svend's wedding, and the challenge then became finding parking for 100 cars on their street for their backyard garden reception.

"It worked out well. We also needed to have most of the food passed on trays due to a limited seating area," Karen says.

According to I Do Take Two, most encore wedding challenges include deciding on the guest list, sticking to a budget, and finding ways to include children from a previous marriage in the celebration.

Fortunately, Chris and Natalie say they could see that their three children were blended long before the official ceremony occurred. "We made conscious effort on a regular basis to treat them all equally and respect their feelings about the change."

So what's their advice for encore wedding couples? "Laugh . . . a lot!"

As with Karen and Svend, the Lanes say the ceremony was simply a meeting place where they could show everyone at once how happy they were and how confident and relaxed they were about joining not only their lives, but their children's lives and their immediate families as well.

"What made our marriage so special," says Natalie, "was the fact that we both knew without any doubt that we had finally found a person with whom we could each respect and accept for the person they are."



Families intertwined: Svend Ryge, Karen Lennox, and their respective children are all smiles at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church ceremony
Photo Lynds Photography



Newlyweds Chris and Natalie Lane share a quiet moment together Photo Lisa Duncan

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