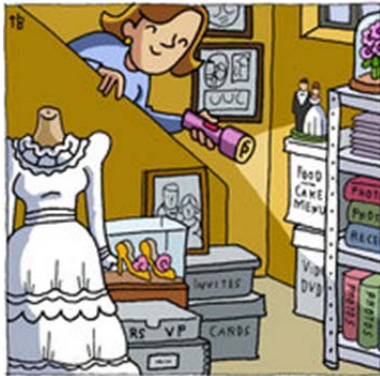


# Right Next to the Cake Topper? Why, That's a Jar of Rainwater

By BETHANY KANDEL ([http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/fashion/weddings/06field.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/06/fashion/weddings/06field.html?_r=2))

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A JAR of rainwater is not the sort of sentimental keepsake newlyweds usually take home from their ceremonies. The bride's bouquet, absolutely. The cake topper, likely. A few monogrammed napkins, sure. But some couples do buck tradition and save unusual mementos.



Tom Bloom

As Rebecca Tompkins recalled, “It rained heavily the afternoon of our wedding,” in Columbia, S.C., just as it had at her mother’s wedding. “I remember my mother saying, ‘Rain on the wedding day is good luck.’ ”

So as the skies opened up on the August 2006 day when Mrs. Tompkins was wed, a family friend was inspired to fill a [canning jar](#) with liquid memories.

Whether the rain was lucky or not, the family friend who presented the jar to Mrs. Tompkins and her husband, the Rev. Jonathan Tompkins, also suggested that the couple use its contents someday to baptize their offspring — which is what they did for their son, Edward, born May 12, 2010. (Mrs. Tompkins noted that because so little was used, she strained but did not boil the water to purify it.)

The water jar, which is kept in their Myrtle Beach, S.C., home, has come to symbolize “the beginning of our new family,” Mrs. Tompkins said.

Marta Segal Block and her husband, Daniel Block, have saved one surprising object from their May 2002 wedding in Chicago: a Spider-Man water squirter that was a prize from a box of Froot Loops that guests used to shower the couple as they walked in a makeshift parade from the Newberry Library, where the ceremony was held, to the Méridien Hotel.

“You spend thousands of dollars and countless hours planning your wedding,” Ms. Block said. “You want to have something tangible to hold onto that smells like the day, feels like it, reminds you of it.”

Although she prizes the squirter, she has found herself giving in and letting her “superhero-obsessed” children, Joey, 5, and Madeline, 7, commandeer it. “At first I thought, ‘Hey, you can’t play with that, it’s from my wedding,’” Ms. Block said. Now, when she sees them with

it, “it makes me sentimental remembering the happiness of that day and why we did it in the first place.” Then again, she also held on to copies of the couple’s invitation and menu, which are now framed and hanging in their home in Oak Park, Ill. — right beside those from her grandparents’ wedding in 1936.

Self-proclaimed “word freaks,” Mariesa and Gary Stokes of Birmingham, Ala., collected words of wisdom at their wedding: they put a red leather-bound dictionary on the bar during their reception and asked guests “to highlight words they thought were important for us and our marriage,” she said.

“A friend in television highlighted ‘broadcast,’ and wrote, ‘Always broadcast your love to each other.’ My brother and sister-in-law highlighted ‘humor,’ and wrote: ‘Find the humor in everything. It will keep you sane!’ ” Mrs. Stokes said.

Since their wedding on Sept. 6, 2009, the couple said, they have been dealing with health and financial issues, and problems with their house. “We had an unfathomably stressful first year of marriage,” Mrs. Stokes said. “But we dug deep, charged forward and made it through all of it, together.”

They still occasionally peruse the wedding dictionary. “For us, it’s not about simply reading the definitions of words like honesty, patience and hope,” Mrs. Stokes said. “It’s about really living the words at their truest meanings.”

Buffy Martin Tarbox gave away her bouquet and donated her dress to a charity thrift shop, but she saved the gold, sequined three-inch heels she wore on her first date with Orpheos Tarbox and also at their intimate November 2006 wedding in Edinburgh. For six months before the overseas ceremony, the shoes were shipped to more than two dozen of her girlfriends around the country who were not able to make the wedding.

“They signed the bottoms in gold pen so they could be with me in spirit on my big day,” Mrs. Tarbox said. After each signing, her friends put a sticker on the box showing where it had been, and sent it to the next destination. Now the box and shoes sit in her San Francisco closet as a daily reminder “of the journeys my shoes took and that my husband and I are still on, and hope to be on for the rest of our lives.”

For Mike Faber of Parker, Colo., his prized possession is his green argyle wedding socks with multiple images of [Elvis Presley](#), which still sit prominently in his sock drawer. “When my wife, Terry, and I were married on Sept. 7, 1996, in Santa Fe, I wore a pair of Elvis socks

with my tux as a reminder to have fun and be a little bit crazy.” Since then, they have become his tradition at other weddings.

“Every morning Elvis’s face stares up at me,” he said, “as a good reminder not to take myself too seriously.”

As for the Tompkinses’ jar of rainwater, it now sits in a place of honor on a shelf in their den, next to a photo from their wedding and one from the wedding 40 years ago of Mrs. Tompkins’s parents.

Mrs. Tompkins figures there’s enough rainwater to baptize any other children the couple may have. She has also decided that this is one tradition worth passing along.

“I make sure to put out a pot to catch rainwater for other people on their wedding days,” she said.

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