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USVHS Spring Fling

Author Invites Ladies to Share Wedding Stories

Story and photos by Colleen Kesterson,
Pathfinder

A capacity crowd of 55 ladies gathered at the Holland Lake Lodge May 31 to share stories, photos and memorabilia at the Spring Fling Luncheon put on by the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society.

Author Martha Kohl, a historical specialist at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, spoke to the group about the history of weddings in Montana. Kohl is the author of "I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings".

According to Kohl, weddings in Montana are the result of several traditions taken from many cultures. She spoke about the Native American tradition for the families of the bride and groom to share gifts with each other. Multicultural traditions evolved from immigrants to Montana, who in the 1920s made up two-thirds of Montana's population.

Arranged marriages along with celebrations that last for days in Montana's early years were adopted from other cultures. Shivarees where pranks, such as releasing live chickens into the couple's home, tub beating at all hours of the night outside the couple's windows and partying were also popular to welcome the newlyweds.



Pat Sinz telling of her future husband who got cold feet after trying to get to Montana from California.

One of the problems was a brand new tire that blew and wrapped steel belts all around the axle. It took a long time to fix.

Kohl invited participants to share their wedding stories. Several women took turns at the microphone to tell about how they met their future husbands, their shivarees and other highlights of their weddings.

Many of the dresses worn and displayed at the event and wedding pictures will soon be on display at the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society Museum, located on Highway 83 North, Mile Marker 42. The museum is open Memorial Day through Labor Day, Wednesdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.



Mai Williams in a traditional Vietnamese dress worn to weddings. The Vietnamese bride wears the same style in white.



Fern Kauffman's dress is on display at the USVHS museum.