

Dreams Come

But only after a lot of planning. How some Silicon Valley couples put together their own fairy tale weddings. *By Marisa Milanese*

ONCE UPON a time, weddings adhered to tidy formulas. Bridal march. Buffet dinner. Bouquet toss. Buh-bye.

Consider instead what was supposed to happen last September when Maria Valmeo, 30, married Paris Greenwood, 35, at the Mountain Winery in Saratoga. Bride arriving via hot air balloon. Skywriting exhibit after the I-do's. Laser show beaming blasts of color from the winery's aerie once the sun set.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature didn't cooperate; it was just too drizzly for all things airborne that evening. But the rest of Valmeo's down-to-the-nitty-gritty orchestration fell right into place—the elaborate five-course dinner for 230 guests, the video about the newlyweds played on a continuous loop during the reception, and the CDs of the couple's favorite R&B songs, which each guest took home when the band finally packed up at midnight.

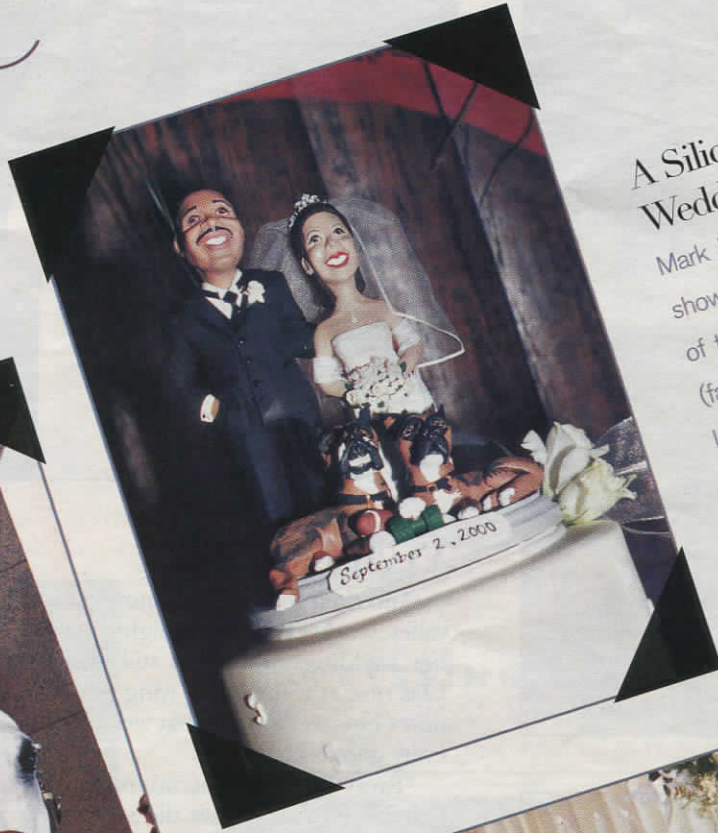
Such are weddings—Silicon Valley-style. The days of weddings-by-rote are past. Maybe you've noticed. On any given weekend in Santa Clara County, 200 couples are throwing weddings of their own. Skywriting and hot air balloons aside, many will mirror the Greenwoods' evening: a marriage across cultures (she's Filipina, he's African-American) that pays tribute to the pair's roots, an event—often showy and expensive—planned and paid for by the couple themselves, a personalized celebration that expresses their very own definition of a fairy tale wedding.



True

A Silicon Valley Wedding Album

Mark Diel and Pamela Hinds, being showered with bubbles at the bottom of this page, chose an unusual cake (facing page). Dev Mohindra (center left) arrives on a horse for his wedding ceremony. Cake figures (left) of Maria Valmeo and Paris Greenwood. Former Miss Iran Niosha Nafei and Jamali Fardad (below).





CREATIVE VISION

Niosha Nafei and Jamali Fardad

Nafei, a former Miss Iran, and Fardad both came to the U.S. from Iran when they were teenagers. Their 12-hour wedding celebration in April 1996 included a traditional Persian *agha* (ceremony) at the Saratoga home of

Nafei's parents and a reception with hours of dancing at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose. Nafei incorporated Persian elements that aren't typically part of weddings, such as an ornate tea station.