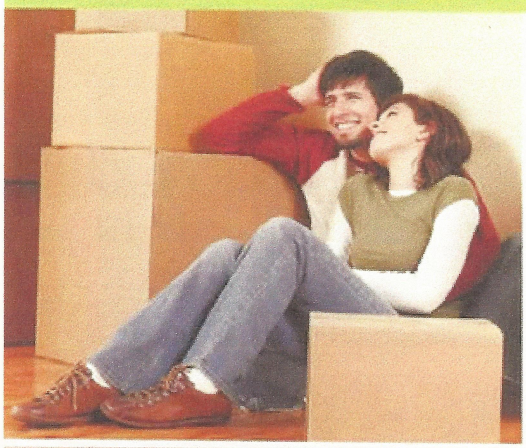

YOUR *Blessed* NEST

Finding and Creating a Comfortable, Beautiful, and Harmonious Living Space for Two

YOUR WEDDING AND HONEYMOON HAVE BEEN JOYFULLY celebrated and now it's time for your real life together at home to begin. Should you buy a house or rent an apartment, use the heirloom china or everyday dishes, and who's gonna clean the bathrooms after you both have had a long hard day at work?

By Kathryn Bechen

"Professional Organizer Elizabeth Hagen suggests compromise to keep harmony in the relationship and to keep the household running smoothly."

Obviously the first thing you need is a place to live. For renters, websites like www.ForRent.com and www.ApartmentRatings.com provide a way to search neighborhoods, check prices and ratings, view photos, and even allow you to book your dream apartment online.

Daniel Mendes, Community Manager of *La Jolla Palms Apartment Homes* in San Diego, CA, says his first recommendation for couples is to rent a two bedroom, two bath unit. "Couples think they'll save money with a one bedroom, one bathroom unit but inevitably it's too small and they end up moving again to a larger unit," he said. Mendes suggests couples discuss ahead of time things like their preferred location in the complex, amount of sunlight a unit gets, and potential noise from streets or the swimming pool.

For couples who don't want homeowner maintenance, but want the feel of a home, Mendes said renting can provide a viable alternative as many apartment complexes now offer amenities like high ceilings with crown molding, lofts, dens, and in-unit washers/dryers. Complexes like *La Jolla Palms* even offer a "concierge lifestyle" including dry cleaning pickup, security patrol, mail pickup, twenty-four hour business center, fitness center, club room, and more.

For couples considering buying a house or condo, Michael Levison, Director of Sales with the award-winning *Prudential Real Estate* agency, The *Alan Shafran Group* in Carlsbad, CA, recommends that buyers have loan pre-approval and also that they interview three real estate agents/agencies to make sure they are receiving the absolute best representation.

"A home purchase is one of the biggest financial decisions a couple will ever make," said Levison, who along with his partner, Alan Shafran, rank in the top fifty *Prudential* producers in the U.S. "So it's important they select an agent they have confidence in, and then they should both commit to working together one-hundred percent."

Levison said couples should look for an agent whose top priority is "to find the home that is perfect for them, who will work to protect their financial interests, is a savvy negotiator, and who will act as their advisor and consultant, but not push them into any particular home."

Some of the practical issues Levison said couples should consider before buying are the benefits of a tax write-off, renting vs. buying, how long they might own the home, commute time to work, schools, and any special features they want in their home.

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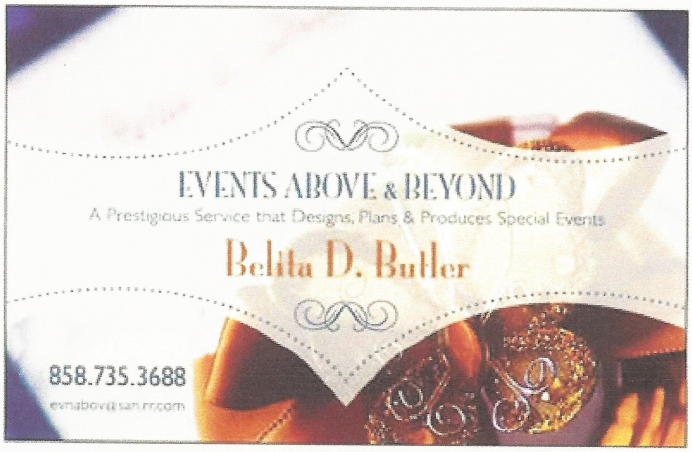

Next up on the newlywed housing tour is insurance. Carolyn Konecki, VP of *Konecki Insurance* in San Diego, CA, said the most important thing when insuring a house is to get the right amount of coverage. "Every homeowner policy for a house has four property coverages and two liability coverages that are standard," Konecki said.

She said condo insurance is "a unique animal" because there is typically a homeowners association. Renters insurance covers only personal contents and liability. Konecki suggests couples find a local agent within fifty miles of where they live, and also make sure the agent represents more than one insurance company.

How to avoid "his and her turf wars" over space and possessions and stay blissfully wed? Professional Organizer Regina Leeds, author of *Sharing a Place Without Losing Your Space: A Couple's Guide to Blending Homes, Lives, and Clutter and One Year to an Organized Life*, said couples should "Talk over every detail before moving into their new space so that it's a total joy for both of you to live there."

Each partner needs some private space, no matter how small, Leeds said. And the one household guideline she's developed after years of organizing couples is that they "can't invade each other's private area."

Leeds' other organizing suggestion is, "If one person is messy and the other neat, a marital agreement should be made that the central area of the home that visitors see will have a sense of order."

Professional Organizer Elizabeth Hagen, author of *Organize With Confidence*, said a neat mate might handle the paperwork and a messy one do laundry to keep a balance. Like Leeds, Hagen suggests compromise to keep harmony in the relationship and to keep the household running smoothly.

Hagen also suggests separate home offices if at all possible. However, if the space is too small, she says, it's best for each mate to at least have their own desk and computer.

It's time to decorate your place so it feels like home! World-renowned interior designer and lifestyle expert, Alexandra Stoddard, author of over 25 books including *Feeling at Home*, says the most important thing for couples is to make their home or apartment their autobiography.

"Decorate together," Stoddard said. "Research and make a written plan together before setting foot in a furniture store. And just the two of you should go shopping rather than take others with you."

According to Stoddard, "Paint color is the least expensive change when decorating. Choose a delicious color for your walls, add a pretty tablecloth, light a candle, and have some fresh flowers. You can be so happy with so little if you're true to yourself," she said.

"The final straw in *feathering* your *nest* is to choose art that you'll BOTH LOVE to come home to."

Sheryll Jackman, owner of *Seaside Home* stores in La Jolla, Coronado, and Rancho Santa Fe, CA, says the three most important things for couples to consider when decorating are comfort, scale, and a style they both like.

"Sometimes a couple's tastes are 180 degrees apart so having an interior designer as a third party to help with space planning,

furniture selection, and lifestyle evaluation is really beneficial," she said. Her in-store designers provide this service for free.

Other decorating tips from Jackman include using laptop computers to save space and sectioning off a corner of a room with a screen or plants to create a private home office area for each mate. She suggests using the "three P's" of pictures, pillows, and plants if couples are on a limited decorating budget.

The "final straw" in feathering your nest is to choose art that you'll both love to come home to, according to Ruth Welter, owner of *Artful Creations* in West Point, NY. She suggests you buy "only art that makes you both happy" rather than buying it solely as an investment or as a "matchy matchy" decorated look. Welter added that art includes not only paintings but also items such as pottery and hand painted home décor.

Couples can start their art collection by looking at online sites such as www.Art.com, said Welter, and her best suggestion when tastes radically differ is to compromise by having a custom painting done of a couple's pet. She recommends Linda O' Neill, of www.AbbyCreekStudios.com, who is one of the top dog painters in the U.S.

Another great way to purchase art and have a "fun date," Welter said, is to attend art fairs like she and her husband and business partner, Chris Eberle have done for years.

Erin Houghton, owner of *The Painted Garden* in Costa Mesa, CA, recommends purchasing original art vs. prints and she said local art shows and the internet are great places to find affordable art. Houghton suggests www.DailyPainters.com, which features a new painting every day, and also www.ArtWalkSanDiego.com, and www.BalboaIslandArtWalk.com.

"Couples can effortlessly blend styles by choosing a color palette they both like, and when they choose art they both love, it will make every day together a special day," she added.

By doing your "homework" and adding in a big dose of mutual love and respect along with a pinch of creative ingenuity, you really can create your own cozy "blessed married nest" for two! ✻

{SDSW planning guide}
HOME RESOURCES

APARTMENT LEASING
- www.Forrent.com
- www.ApartmentRatings.com
- *La Jolla Palms Apartments*
  Daniel Mendes, Community Manager
  www.LaJollaPalms.com

HOME OR CONDO PURCHASE
- *The Alan Shafran Group*
  Prudential Real Estate
  Michael Levison, Director of Sales
  www.AlanShafran.com

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZING
- *Regina Leeds, The Zen Organizer*
  www.ReginaLeeds.com
- *Elizabeth Hagen, CPO*
  www.ElizabethHagen.com
  www.OrganizeWithConfidence.com

INTERIOR DESIGN
- *Alexandra Stoddard, Inc*
  Alexandra Stoddard
  www.AlexandraStoddard.com
- *Seaside Home*
  Sheryll Jackman
  www.SeasideHomeLaJolla.com

INSURANCE
- *Konecki Insurance*
  Carolyn Konecki, V.P.
  www.KoneckiInsurance.com

ART
- *Artful Creations*
  Ruth Welter
  www.ArtfulCreations.biz
- *The Painted Garden*
  Erin Houghton
  www.ThePaintedGarden.net

PET PORTRAITS
- *Linda O'Neill*
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- www.Art.com
- www.BalboaIslandArtWalk.com
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