



Weddings: String of lucky sevens no match for heat

By **Todd C. Frankel**

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Tim Callihan should know if St. Louis faces a mad rush on marriage Saturday —7-7-07 — a date full of the lucky number seven.

He manages and drums for the Chesterfield-based **Spectrum Band**. They do weddings. Lots of them. They are booked solid through November 2008. Bridal magazines rave about the band. Callihan also books for four other wedding bands.

None of them has a gig Saturday, which is unusual, especially on what is billed as the year's premier wedding day. "I didn't even have any inquiries for that day," Callihan said.

Kaye Rathert, owner of Dreamcatcher Weddings and Events in Barnhart, also is not working Saturday. Neither is another wedding consultant she knows.

Over at Washington University's Graham Memorial Chapel, a popular wedding spot, the doors will be closed. The chapel sees three weddings a day on Saturdays in June. But when no one booked it for this first Saturday in July, staff members decided to use the rare opportunity to do chapel maintenance.

Couples across the nation reportedly have been itching to get hitched on 7-7-07. The popular wedding website theknot.com reports 38,000 couples who registered with the site will get married Saturday, more than three times a normal Saturday in July. Mass weddings of thousands are planned in Las Vegas. A wedding planner in Washington called this the most popular wedding date in decades.

Despite considerable hype, 7-7-07 seems to be something of a bust in St. Louis. "Because it is ridiculously hot," explains wedding planner Rathert.

St. Louis in July — a time of high heat and humidity, plus vacations — has never been a popular month for weddings. Couples prefer May and June, followed by September and October, according to wedding experts. And no string of lucky sevens could change that.

People are still getting married Saturday, just not in droves. "It's just not a big deal here," says Barb Kurtz, office administrator at Trinity Lutheran Church in Soulard, where there are up to three weddings on some Saturdays, especially in June. This Saturday just one wedding is planned. The

Missouri Botanical Garden turns into something of a wedding factory in June and September. It can handle 10 ceremonies and three receptions a day. On Saturday, the garden will host four ceremonies and two receptions. Good business, but the same number have reserved the following Saturday, the seemingly ordinary 7-14-07.

"It's a normal weekend in July," said Melissa Clark, event planner for Catering St. Louis, which handles garden events. But not all couples in the St. Louis area are ignoring the 7-7-07 phenomenon.

Seven couples plan to take vows at the Six Flags theme park in Eureka at 7:07 a.m. Saturday; the couples were chosen through a contest sponsored by a radio station. The Butterfly House in Chesterfield is busier than normal, with three weddings and a reception. Windows on Washington in St. Louis has seven wedding receptions planned for Saturday, including one where the bride insisted on holding it on the seventh floor.

Area marriage license offices say a paperwork lag means it will be weeks before they know how popular Saturday really was as a wedding day. And there are signs Saturday might turn out to be busy. In St. Clair County, 17 couples picked up paperwork last Saturday, about twice the normal number.

"It is up some," said Dina Thurlow, vital-records supervisor. But all the 7-7-07 hoopla will be forgotten with the approach of the next must-have wedding date.

"I've already had people calling about 8-8-08," said Amy Hammann, Butterfly House special events manager.

tfrankel@post-dispatch.com | 314-340-8110

