

STEPHENSABAN



Saturday's cowboy host Tom Starker inside his club with three of the regulars

BUMPER CROP

When the Amazing Spider-Man (aka Peter Parker) finally married mere model-actress Mary Jane Watson, over fifty thousand people attended the wedding at Shea Stadium. That's a ballpark figure, of course. Ushers were the usual stadium employees, but members of the wedding were decidedly unusual: Spider-Man's fellow Marvel Comic buddies the Incredible Hulk, Ice-Man, Fire-Star, Captain America, the Green Goblin and Dr. Doom formed a kind of diamond ring. Since the ceremony on the mound started early—with Spidey's creator Stan Lee officiating—and since I'd had to battle the crowds on the F train and then the #7, I was late for the vows ("With this ring I thee web..."). But I caught up with the couple in the Jets' former locker room in the stadium's bowels. Spidey and his bridey were embracing for a photographer. Mary Jane still wore her Willi Smith-designed gown, Willi's last creation.

On the title page of Marvel's Special Wedding Issue! of *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual #21* it says, "Willi Smith, the gifted designer who created M.J.'s wedding gown, makes a special guest appearance in this issue, which was completed prior to his untimely death last April. In tribute, we publish the story exactly as planned, adding only this note of gratitude and affection for Willi and the WilliWear family from their friends at Marvel." I challenge you to name a designer living or dead who has been similarly immortalized. In the story, Mary Jane

visits Willi at his uptown office to tell him she's sorry she can't be in his video shoot in the Bahamas. "I understand, Mary Jane," Willi tells her, sincerely. "And I'm so happy you found 'Mr. Right.'" He moves closer to her. "Listen, expect a little *surprise* to arrive in the next few days, okay? After all, tradition says the bride should wear something *new*, hm?" She tells him he's an angel and splits for some prenuptial adventures. When the "surprise" arrives many pages and two ads later, she's genuinely surprised. "Peter," she says to her wall-walker fiancé over the phone, "you won't believe the gift I just got from Willi Smith! It's the most beautiful *wedding gown* I've ever seen! And it's an original! I wish I could show it to you..."

Meanwhile, in the Shea Stadium locker room, Spider-Man and Mary Jane released each other and I asked Mary Jane if Willi had actually designed the dress specifically for her, on her. The tight and flouncy white dress looked fit for a comic-book heroine.

Tara Shannon, the beautiful real-life actress-model who played the beautiful cartoon actress-model that day, said, "Willi designed the dress with me in mind, but the two fittings happened after his death." (Had she *actually* gone to his uptown office to cancel a *video shoot* in the Bahamas?!)

"What'll happen to it after today?" I said.

"It'll end up in either the archives of Marvel or Willi Smith—or in