

Couple in Japan Is Married By a Robot



When you think about robots, you probably think of R2-D2 in the *Star Wars* movies or Rosie the Maid in *The Jetsons* cartoons. But robots aren't only in the movies and on TV. One "real" robot recently married a couple at a wedding ceremony in Tokyo, Japan.

Fifty guests stood as the music played and the bride walked down the aisle. Only one guest remained seated -- the minister, who happened to be a robot that was bolted to a chair. For this special occasion, the four-foot tall robot named I-Fairy wore pigtails and a wreath of flowers around her head. I-Fairy's eyes flashed colored lights as she pronounced the couple man-and-wife and asked the groom to kiss the bride. The wedding was the first time a marriage had been led by a robot, according to the company that built I-Fairy.

A robot might seem like an unusual choice to lead a wedding, but if you knew the couple you would think I-Fairy was the perfect choice. That's because the groom teaches robotics at a university and the bride works for the company that built I-Fairy. Besides building robots like I-Fairy, the company has built robotic dinosaurs that you might have seen in museums or on TV.

NEWS WORD BOX

robotics ceremony
occasion pronounced
encourage technician

Japan is one of the world's leaders in the field of robotics. The newly married couple hopes their wedding will encourage more uses for robots. They hope their wedding will give people ideas about ways in which they might use robots to do "everyday things" in their lives in the near future.

MORE I-FAIRY FACTS

- Wires led from I-Fairy to a black curtain a few feet away. A technician behind the curtain typed commands on a keyboard and made sure the wedding went smoothly.
- Need a robot? In Japan, I-Fairy sells for about 6.3 million yen (about \$68,000 U.S.). The company built five of the robots. Three have been sold. Two are still for sale.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Make a list of ways in which robots might be used to replace people doing "everyday things." Then share your list with classmates and vote for the *best* and *most unique* ideas. You might work in groups to complete this activity.