

# The Bridal Extravaganza

## *Marriage License*

Both individuals must appear in person to complete the application for a marriage license. Proof of age is required. Acceptable forms of proof include certified photocopies of your birth certificate, baptismal record, adoption record, immigration record, naturalization record, or passport. Proof of citizenship is needed for any parties not born in the United States.

You must check with the Marriage License Department at the City or County Clerk's office for requirements for your state. Ask if the license is good anywhere in the state, legal age to marry, what you need if not of legal age, how long is the license valid before wedding, is a blood test required and how do you pay for the license.

## *Prenuptial Agreement*

A prenuptial agreement is a legally binding document, prepared prior to the wedding, which details assets brought into the marriage and provides for the distribution of property in the event of a divorce. While no one likes to think that their marriage will not last, the number of second marriages continues to attest to the fact that not all marriages survive. A prenuptial agreement can provide protection for both parties in the event of a divorce.

Many people are tending to marry at an older age, arriving at the altar with an established career and sometimes significant assets. Additionally, those who have been previously married may bring assets they want passed on to the children of the prior marriage in the event of their death. While division of assets upon death is traditionally covered in a will, a prenuptial agreement will help prevent problems such as a contested will from occurring.

Should you decide to enter into a prenuptial agreement, remember that you must each acquire the services of independent attorneys. The same attorney cannot fairly represent both parties.

## *Will*

A will is a vital document that dictates the disposition of a person's property upon his/her death. The preparation of a will is generally a simple process. It can encompass as little as disposition of personal assets among relatives, friends, and/or charities, or as much as establishing guardianship of children and implementing a trust to care for their share of the assets.

It is highly recommended that you seek the counsel of an attorney to ensure that your will is valid. Should you not wish to use the services of an attorney, you can consider several do-it-yourself books, kits, and/or computer programs on the market.

## *Changing Names*

Traditionally, the bride has assumed the husband's family name upon marriage. Today, many brides prefer to retain their own family name. Women with established professional reputations in their own name are reluctant to surrender their hard-won identity. Check with an attorney if you are considering alternative solutions, such as a new, blended family name.

Should you decide to retain your own name, you should discuss how you would handle the last names of any children born. This can be as simple as having children use their father's last

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name, or using the hyphenated version of both names.

While a bride who retains her last name may not have to worry about name changes, you should still keep in mind that marriage might bring about a change of address or a change of beneficiary. Be sure to review your financial records and determine which changes you will need to make.