

Sign here: For most brides, a new name comes with the ring

BY PAUL R. HUARD
Copley News Service

When most women take their vows, they also take their new husband's family name. It's a time-honored tradition that still suits many brides, but it is also a choice that means you should consider all the legal requirements of a name change well before the wedding day.

According to the experts at WeddingChannel.com, if you decide to change your name begin using it immediately (and consistently) after the wedding.

Use your new name whenever possible — liberal doses on business cards, in introduc-

tions and with friends and family members will get the word out.

But when you receive your marriage license, contact your local Social Security office and Department of Motor Vehicles to obtain new identification cards.

WeddingChannel.com has a Web page that lists the contact information for each of the 50 states so you can begin the process of obtaining new I.D. It's located under "Name Change" in the "Bride & Groom" section of the Web site.

In some states, if a bride changes her name to anything other than what is legally her

groom's last name at the time of marriage, she may be required to pay a fee.

Be sure to ask your county clerk about the specific laws governing your area.

There are plenty of institutions and government agencies that will need the updated name information. They include:

- Employers, 401(k) or retirement accounts.
- Banks, stockbrokers, credit card companies.
- Post office, utility companies.
- Voter registration, U.S. State Department (Passport Services).
- Mortgage/deed/lease com-

panies, insurance companies.

■ Personal memberships such as health or athletic clubs, schools and alumnae associations.

■ By the way, avoid a common pitfall that could spell disaster for your honeymoon trip if it includes foreign travel.

In our post-Sept. 11 world, the name on your passport must match that on your airline ticket (and your photo identification card). Make sure your passport passes muster, or consider changing your name after the trip.

Still feeling overwhelmed? WeddingChannel.com offers "The Name Change Kit:

Everything You Need To Go From Ms. To Mrs."

Billed as "the original, comprehensive name change kit," it includes a Bride Name Change Software information kit (Mac and PC compatible) and The Name Change Kit Planner with three checklists to track who needs to be notified.

The kit also includes step-by-step instructions on who, what, and when to notify the government and others to change your name, and time-saving tips to make the process more efficient, a myriad of forms and templates that help you deal with everything from changing your address to notifying various institutions and individuals about your change in status. It costs \$23.95, plus shipping and handling.

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