

Love and rockets

Woman plans 2008 wedding in space aboard Rocketplane XP

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OKLAHOMA CITY — It might seem far too early for a bride to fret over, but Cindy Cashman has already spoken with Oklahoma government officials about the legal license for her wedding in late 2008.

Because even though a ceremony takes place 62 miles above the state, the marriage itself has to be recorded in a county somewhere, as they explained to Cashman. And that's where she and her future husband will be exchanging vows: way up there.

"Yes, I will be wearing a traditional dress ... designed for wearing in space," Cashman said. She doesn't want her gown floating over her head in the middle of the service for lack of gravity.

Cashman, of Austin, Texas, was immediately intrigued by the Rocketplane idea when she heard about it. Oklahoma City-based Rocketplane Limited Inc. recently received Federal Aviation Administration approval for an operator's license for the Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority to build a spaceport at the old Clinton-Sherman Air Force Base near Burns Flat. Test flights are planned for as early as 2007. The company has already started accepting customers for private space flights.

The Rocketplane XP is a four-seat, modified Lear executive jet with a rocket engine that gives enough boost to attain an altitude of about 300,000 feet.

And that sounds like a blast to Cashman. She's ridden elephants, water-skied barefoot, flown upside-down in a stunt plane and swam with dolphins.

Then why not a wild marriage? Or at least an interesting wedding?

"I thought, 'I love adventure. This would be so much fun. Let's do it,'" she said.

Against tradition, Cashman decided how she wanted to get married before picking a who. She found her fiancé, Mitch Walling of San Antonio, Texas, online after "an intense and exciting 12-month period of dating 33 different men."

Walling couldn't be reached for comment. Cashman said that as a pilot for American Eagle Airlines, he's comfortable enough with the wedding locale and also is anticipating the flight.

She also met with Rocketplane executives in Oklahoma before publicly announcing her intent. They loved the idea, said Cashman and company spokeswoman Bobbie Brewer.

The adventure will cost the couple about \$500,000; Cashman said she has the funds on hand. But still, the event will likely be the first wedding in space — unless NASA has surprise plans for its own astronauts. That makes the flight special. Unique.

Marketable.

"Expensive! ... It depends on how you look at it. Because I'm an entrepreneur, and I see this as a tremendous investment," said the woman who made a small fortune selling a book filled with 128 blank pages: *Everything Men Know About Women*. She's also a professional public speaker and has actually written other books with real words.

"I'm obviously going to approach sponsors, and there will be a lot of publicity around this. ... I have a couple of key businesses I'm going to approach," she said.

Books are planned, too. Don't be surprised if a gown-designing contest is announced for even more marketing.

Some couples attend marriage counseling classes before the big day. Cashman said she and Walling will be attending an intensive, four-day, safety and operating procedures pre-flight training session.

No word yet on where the couple will have their honeymoon.