

LOVE IN SPACE

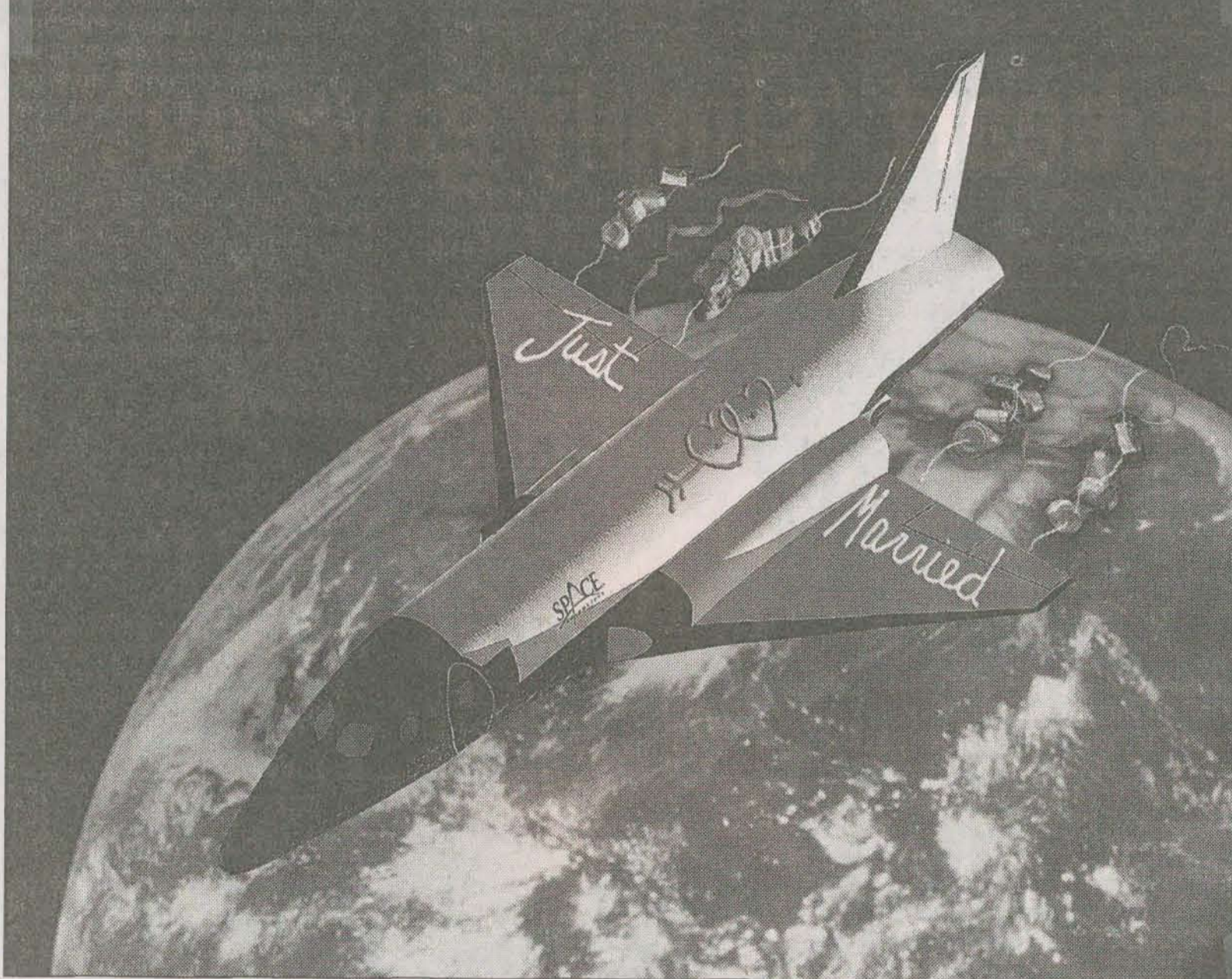


ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER ARMSTRONG, THE OKLAHOMAN GRAPHICS

Starry-eyed couple plans vows in sky

By Julie Bisbee, Business Writer

For anyone who knows Cindy Cashman, a wedding in space isn't hard to fathom. After all, she's made millions publishing a book with blank pages.

Cashman and her fiancé, Mitch Walling, hope to be the first couple to get married in space when they tie the knot 62 miles above the earth on a Rocketplane XP space plane. The couple have set a 2008 wedding date.

They plan to be onboard Oklahoma-based Rocketplane Kistler, which is scheduled to begin commercial space flights in 2008. The company will use a plane with a Lear Jet fuselage to get into suborbital space. The flights will take off and land at the Oklahoma Spaceport in Burns Flat.

The idea of getting hitched in space came to Cashman, an author and motivational speaker, while meditating at her home in Austin, Texas. No idea is too crazy for Cashman. Under the pseudonym of Dr. Alan Francis, Cashman published the best-selling book, "Everything Men Know About Women." The punch line — the book is filled with blank pages.

"Why not get married in space? I've swum with dolphins, flown upside down, barefoot-water skied," said Cashman. "I'm always asking myself, 'What would be really fun?' That's how I come up with a lot of my ideas. They sort of come out of nowhere."

Finding a company that would take her to space was easy. The hard part was finding a willing partner that wouldn't mind taking his vows from space.

Cashman had a lot of candidates. During a 12-month period she dated 33 different men, meeting some on online dating sites; others she met through friends

or traditional dating services. After only a few months of dating, Cashman and Walling decided to get married, and Walling agreed to a wedding that will literally be out of this world.

"He loves it," Cashman said. "He's a pilot with American Eagle airlines. When I told him of my dream to be the first couple to be married in space, he gave me a look like 'Really? What's the odds of that happening?'"

The sales team at Rocketplane had to do a little research before promising a legal marriage in space said Bobbie Brewer, who handles sales, reservations and customer relations for the company.

"She called, and we talked for about two hours," Brewer said. "She not only was interested in a flight, but a space wedding. She had already spoken with her attorney on how to make it legal on her end. We had to find out how to make it legal on our end."

The space plane will be hovering in suborbital space over Beckham County in far western Oklahoma when the wedding takes place. The exact coordinates will be listed on the marriage certificate.

"She had a request, and it sounded like a great idea," Brewer said. "If we can make her dream come true for her — great."

So far, the wedding has a price tag of about \$500,000, the cost of getting the bride and groom into space. Like most brides, Cashman has a list of things to do, although the items on her list are a bit different: Find a dress that won't flow over her head in space, find someone willing to marry the couple in space, find sponsors to help finance her wedding and find a camera crew willing to put the wedding on television.

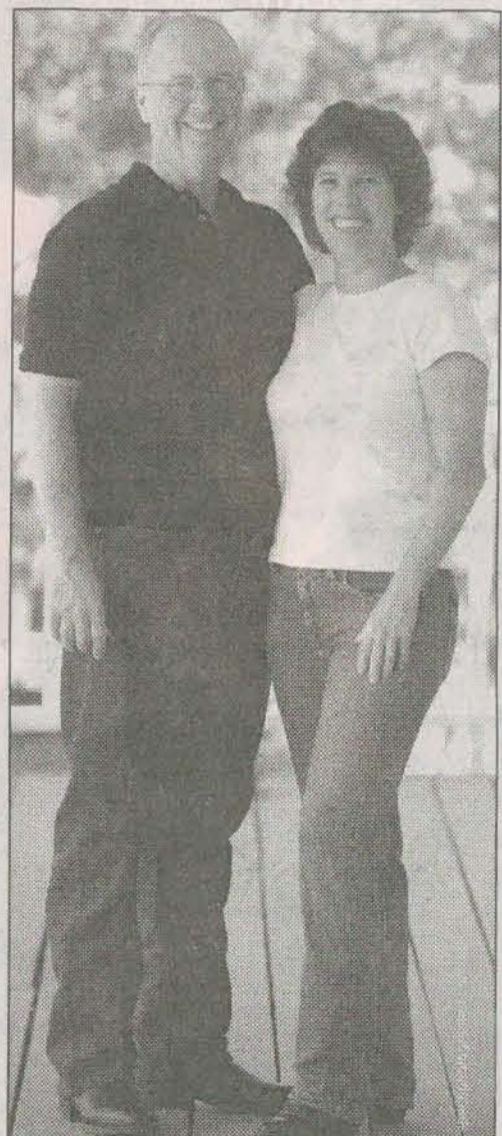


PHOTO PROVIDED BY ROCKETPLANE KISTLER

Cindy Cashman and Mitch Walling hope to be the first couple to be married in space. Cashman came up with the idea to get married in space while meditating. She spent the next 12 months searching for a husband. The couple will be married in 2008 during a flight to suborbital space with Oklahoma-based Rocketplane Kistler.

"Think about it, if millions of people watched the first man walk on the moon, why wouldn't they watch the first couple get married in space?" Cashman said.

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