WEDDED IDENTITY

a balancing act

Not all women take husband’s name after marriage; local couples explain name decisions

By MARY ANN ALBRIGHT

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tirving for balance was a hallmark of Jacqueline Allen’s and Marc Bomnin’s relationship, and they exchanged traditional gender roles. So, when the two decided to marry, they took an egalitarian, out-of-the-box approach. They became the Allen-Bonds.

“Together, we decided let’s create a name,” said Jacqueline Allen-Bond. “Our whole life was about trying to make something that was ours.”

While couples may be more free now to break from tradition, it’s still the norm for the woman to take her husband’s last name upon marriage, according to TheKnot.com and WeddingChannel.com’s 2009 Real Weddings Study, the most recent data available. The survey looked at 24,000 U.S. couples married in 2009 who were members of http://theknot.com or http://weddingchannel.com. This figure was down slightly from 88 percent in 2006.

Most couples still use the traditional route, but some people are embracing a number of alterna
tives, everything from separate last names to hyphenates to hybrids that combine the two surnames in new ways. Many women who do take their husband’s surname then make their maiden name their middle name.

“I think it’s a sign of the times,” said Aria Winikoff, senior editor of the New York City-based wedding magazine and website The Knot. “It’s among the more popular threads on discussion boards on http://weddingchannel.com because of all the issues of identity wrapped up in a name. For brides who’ve already established themselves professionally, changing their name has career implications, as well. Some legally take their husband’s surname but still go by their maiden name in the workplace. The options are as varied as couples themselves.

HERRERA BEUTLER

One local resident made headlines when she took on her country’s last name. U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, 23, announced in December that she was adding the surname of her husband, Carrie, and would be going by Jaime Herrera Beutler.

Herrera and Beutler were married in August 2008. She explained that going on her name didn’t make sense during a hectic campaign for the 3rd District House seat and could have confused voters who knew her as Herrera.

“She said that the decision had settled, she had the chance to thoughtfully consider and make a permanent choice regarding this personal decision about my family,” Herrera Beutler said in a news release.

“This sense of identity is the most important thing for most women,” Winikoff added. “It’s one of them that don’t make right off the bat. It’s something many of them POLL throughout the whole wedding planning period.”

For some women, however, it’s an easy choice. Ceci Maims never considered keeping her maiden name of Hirshberg when she married Jim Mains about 20 years ago.

“I never thought of doing anything different,” Ceci said. “I always assumed when I got married I would take my husband’s last name. I was never really a question.”

Striving for balance

For Jacqueline and her late husband, Marc, the decision to become the Allen-Bonds made sense based on their philosophy on marriage and also their relationships with their respective families.

Jacqueline’s parents didn’t have

Kauai is true garden of earthly delights
any sons to carry on the family name, and she knew it meant a lot to her father that she hadn’t wasted his close family or at his last attached to so many, they do decided to follow suit and become his housemates. There are certain assumptions
people make about the couple and the last names
of the couple last names, which can be frustrating, they say.
They never intended it to be a strong social or political com-
mitment, and they do, “it’s just a name, people.”
Both are frequently asked why they chose to be the same.

The joke is we were a liberal arts college in the 80’s and
hypenated last names came with the diploma,” said
Jim, 42.
More seriously, it was a way for us to keep the Jordyns,
and he says, to keep the family
in history. A hypenated last name is like a family
in the Myers family. “It’s a represent-
at of the fact that we’re about to
blend our lives, so why not blend our names?” said
Jim, 42, who homeschools the
couple’s two children.
This is the verdict: Luton,
Williams and, less seriously, variations
such as Wilkins and Ludtke before deciding that Williams-Luton sense made more sense.

We played word games. We had fun with it,” Jim
said.
This is the considered
Deb hypenated her name,
though it is an option some
consider.
“Always said I don’t see
the point in hypenating your
name if my husband has a dif-
f erent last name,” Deb said.
They felt that their two last
have both Luton and Williams
in their last name meant a lot to his
parents, said Jim, 42.
Jim said a comment about
how Williams-Luton kids grow up marrying people with hypenated last names?
you’ve got a sentence for a
last name,” Jim laughed.
And there’s, there’s not even space
there’s a long name on
forms or electronic registra-
tions and applications whenever
for services at the rate was listed at
Clark at Williams-Luton.
“Williams-Luton is a funny it can be;
on the first day of class,” he
said.

The power of a name
The Williams-Lutons encour-
age people not to read too much into
the names they’ve got to be
meaning. For many people, a rose
by any other name is a small anal

“Even though I don’t
have a clue what it means to
give up a name, we’ve had a
100 years,” said Hackett, 44, who
holds a law degree in
of counseling, authored the
book “Couples and the Art of Flaying
and has officiated several
for 40 years as a Methodist
pastor.
I think a lot of young
women just see this as part of
the romance. Many of them don’t
really give a fig if we give
up their family name and don’t
understand the symbolism of
that name,” he said.
When Hackett and his wife,
Joan, got married 42 years ago, she took his name without even
considering the alternatives.
“Never occurred to me not to do it,” he said.
Now, however, he advises couples to give the decision
some careful thought.
“Something most engaged couples don’t like to think or talk
about is divorce, but it’s worth noting that getting one’s
name back can be a time-consuming and expen-
sive. Unless the woman asks for it and the
proceedings are part of the divorce, then she’ll have to
togo through district court.

Going the traditional route
The majority of couples still
married simply because they
even though they could be more flexible when deciding on a
family name.
Among those happily going along the more traditional path
are the couple.

“Absolutely. A new
chapter in your life, a new
one,” said Ceci, a 25-year-old
officer, who works for the city
department at Clark College.
Both Jim and Ceci grew up in
urban areas, so they’re not
households, so the woman
taking her husband’s surname
marriage is not unknown.
That was raised kind of
in your traditional setting. Her
parents (both had her father’s
last name as a child to be
It just seemed like the way it
said,” said Jim, 33, who owns the marriage is not unknown.
Main Distribution.
The change did take some
getting used to for both of
Jim, it jarred being referred to as
Mrs. Mason.”
“That’s my mom,” he laughed.
Ceci, who had just signed her
new last name and getting accustomed to the
It also had to go through the process of getting a new
license and Social Security
name on her bank accounts and
had Jim confirmed.
It was well worth the hassle,
though, Ceci said. The couple’s
child doesn’t have children yet
plan to, and are happy that the whole family will be named
Mains. It’s kind of easier that we all have the same name.

Professional considerations
Elsia Wells and Seth Moran
found another way to make
sure their kids are going to have
last name as they do. The kids are
Wells-Moran, while Elsia and
Seth each kept their surnames.
When they got married in
June of 2006, both their last
names made the most sense
professionally.
Wells had more philosophical
reasons for keeping her

I also as a feminist objected to the
assumption that I would change
my name,” she said.
I like having my name. I’ve always
had it, grew up with it. It’s who I am,”

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