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The Legitimate Filipina – American Wedding

Saying “I do’s” is such a fulfilling event in a life of a Filipina. One of the greatest and worth memorable event of a woman is to be wedded to the partner of a lifetime commitment. But wait, it’s not really a walk down the aisle with flowers, not a honeymoon with beds of roses, but there are some thorns to trod before the ceremony, preparations and the like, and after the grandiose wedding, your actual encounter with “combi-culture” adjustment.

This article is focused on the intermarriage of Filipino woman to a foreigner, specifically an American. And getting married is not as easy as you could imagine. Yes, it takes two to tango, so you need each other’s hand to accomplish a step-by-step requirements before your set long table. If you wish a successful wedding and a “not compromised” commitment, the westerner groom-to-be have to strictly follow the guidelines and rules provided by the Philippine government before legitimately acquire the love of his life, “the Filipina”.

The American Groom-to-Be

The government of the Republic of the Philippines has provided a law requiring all foreigners who desire to wed a Filipino woman to secure a “Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage” from his embassy to be able to file a marriage license in the Philippines. This is a “must” requirement.

The U.S. Embassy has its own version of this document and below are the steps in securing this contract.

Securing a **Legal Capacity to Marry** in the U.S. Embassy Manila are by appointment. Before booking your appointment, the rules and regulations required by Philippine Law specifically for non-Filipino nationals regarding the Certificate of Legal Capacity to Marry should be well understood. The United States Consuls do not have the capacity to provide any legal document certifying the eligibility of US citizens to marry outside of their country, instead, the U.S. Embassy in the

Philippines can issue an Affidavit In Lieu of Certificate of Legal Capacity to Marry. This affidavit is the only legal document that the embassy can provide.

Understanding the rules for the "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage."

Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage

Any foreigner who wishes to marry in the Philippines is required by the Philippine Government to obtain from his/her Embassy a "Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" before filing an application for a marriage license. This certification affirms that there are no legal impediments to the foreigner marrying a Filipino (i.e, that the foreigner is already married to someone else). Unlike the Philippines, the U.S. Government does not keep a central statistical registry for births, marriages and deaths and cannot verify this information. Instead, the Philippine Government accepts an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage." Americans may execute this affidavit at the American Embassy in Manila or the U.S. Consular Agency in Cebu. Personal appearances of the American citizen applicant cannot be waived, but the fiance(e) need not be present. Philippine authorities will not accept any substitute document initiated in the United States.

Applicants may apply for the "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" at the Embassy's American Citizen Services Branch by appointment only. There is a fee of \$50.00 or its peso equivalent for the affidavit, payable in cash only.

The Affidavit is notarized by a U.S. consular officer. The consular officer can refuse to perform this service if the document will be used for a purpose patently unlawful, improper, or inimical to the best interest of the United States. Entering into a marriage contract with an alien strictly for the purpose of enabling entry to the United States for that individual is considered an unlawful act. Section 4221 of Title 22 United States Code provides penalties for individuals who commit perjury in an affidavit taken by a consular officer.

Reference link: <http://manila.usembassy.gov/marriage.html>

Book an appointment online @

<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=MNL&appcode=1>.

Please select "Request notarial and other services not listed above." Select a date and print the confirmation of your appointment.

Documents to present during the scheduled appointment date

1. Confirmation printout
2. Certificate of divorce decrees
3. If widower, death certificates which provides proof that the U.S. citizen applicant is free to marry
4. U.S. passport that is valid.

5. Fee of USD\$50 in (or PhP equivalent).

Note: Fiancées of US applicant for legal capacities to marry are not obligated to appear.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS: APPLY AND SECURE A MARRIAGE LICENSE

As soon as an American citizen has secured an Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Marry from the Embassy, he can now file an application for a marriage license at the office of the Philippine Civil Registrar together with the bride-to-be, in the city or town where the girl resides. This license is the most legally important document and a requirement either a church or a civil wedding in the Philippines. Below are the additional requirements to present when securing a Marriage License:

- the Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Marry;
- divorce decree(s) or death certificate(s) required to verify civil status and capacity to marry;
- U.S. passport;
- documentation regarding paternal consent or advice, if applicable.

A minister, a judge, or any person authorized by the Philippine government can perform the Matrimonial rites. Applicants ages 18 to 21 are required to present a parental consent. Ages 22 to 24 also must have received a parental advice. Marriage of individuals under 18 are prohibited by the Philippine law .

Once you already filed the application, Philippine law obligates a 10-day waiting period for the issuance of the marriage license and the validity is 120 days from the date of issue. This license to marry can be used only in the Philippines.

If there's a will there's a way and the sincerity of a foreigner to be wedded to a Filipina is measured in his willingness in fulfilling all the required rules and laws of marriage of the Philippine government. This legal action will give assurance to the bride-to-be of love, commitment and companionship that no one can hinder.

WEDDING REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHURCH

In general, there are requirements and procedures in arranging a Church wedding, be it a Catholic or non-Catholic, but these are mostly required by the Catholic religious ceremony:

- The marriage license
- Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates – This document must be original and new with annotation: "For marriage purposes only", and valid for 3 months only. The groom and the bride is required of this.
- The Canonical Interview – One month before the wedding date, the parish priest or his aide will conduct a counseling and interview with the couple to

be wedded. The schedule will be given upon applying for an interview by signing an application form.

- Pre-Marriage Seminar- This can be scheduled during the canonical interview
- Wedding Banns- Posting of scheduled wedding date in their respective parishes of consecutive three Sundays.
- Names and addresses of Principal Sponsors – This should be submitted to the parish office or church a week before the set wedding date and consist ideally of at least 6 pairs.

There may be additional requirements depending on the Church affiliation where the couple will be solemnized. Church venues are strictly advised for the ceremony but in some religious affiliations this is now an optional. It is the groom and bride-to-be who decides where their wedding venue be, but of course with the priest, pastor, or minister who do the wedding ceremony.

Now all set for the wedding day... and they lived happily ever after.



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