Couples forego pomp and circumstance for courthouse nuptials

By Scott Silvestri

MARKHAM, Ill. - Dressed in a gray suit, Kerwin Holman empties his pockets onto a tray and walks through a metal detector.

He's then searched by a Cook County sheriff's deputy before collecting his belong-

Today, he's going to get

Thousands of couples will be married in courthouses this year. They come from all walks of life, rich and poor, appearing in all manners of dress, from full wedding gowns and tuxedos to denim.

Why would anyone want such a hallowed ceremony performed in a courthouse?
"It's quick," Holman said.

"We just wanted to get it out of the way.

Some choose courthouse nuptials for the smart pricing, and others have no religious obligation to fill through a church service.

With 10 bucks, some basic personal information and 15 minutes from a judge, a couple can get married any day of the week

All 23 judges at the 6th District courthouse in Markham take turns performing the brief ceremonies either in a courtroom or in chambers.

"Most of us absolutely love said Judge Sheila Murphy, presiding judge of the 6th District. "It's one of the most satisfying things we

Murphy said she spent \$80 on a bouquet of silk flowers, which she keeps at the ready should any brides-to-be want to borrow it.

"It's been used about 800 times," she said. "I think it's a cheap investment to make people happy.

Some judges provide taperecorded wedding music to

enhance the wedding. Murphy performs her ceremonies in front of a large angel chambers. "Hopefully, they'll be blessed

Over the weekend, after judges are through presiding over felony bond hearings for anything from armed robbery to murder, they shift responsibilities and become justices of the peace.



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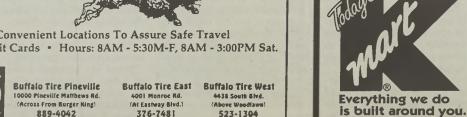
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