

A WEDDING STORY



Matthew and Heather (Kennedy) Roberts
JUNE 2, 2012

Q. Where do you live year-round?

A. Raleigh, North Carolina

Q. How long have you been visiting the beach?

A. I visited Crystal Coast beaches a few times as a child because some members of my distant family had a beach house in Emerald Isle. While attending NC State University I also went to Emerald Isle a few times with some friends who had homes on the beach. My husband is originally from Alexandria, La. and moved to Columbia, SC. when he was young. His first time visiting Emerald Isle was when we began our search for a wedding venue in the fall of 2011.

Q. What made you decide to plan a beach wedding?

A. As a child my grandparents had an RV. During the summer we went to North Myrtle Beach several times a month. I have many wonderful memories with my grandparents at the beach. After my grandfather passed a few years ago my grandmother sold the RV and bought a beach house in North Myrtle Beach and Matt and I try to visit some during the year.

My parents' home is only 45 minutes from Topsail Beach and an hour from Wrightsville, so frequenting the beach with friends during high school was a common occurrence. I love everything about the beach from the sound of the ocean waves crashing to the sand beneath my toes. As a child my husband's family grew up going to Hilton Head and when he was attending the College of Charleston, he lived in Isle of Palms, one block from the beach. He would take his golden retriever, Josi, to the beach every day, even in the winter, and throw the ball with her. When it came time to plan our wedding we wanted something romantic and something a little different from the norm. We wanted our wedding to be a reflection of who we are and what we love, so the beach was the perfect choice as we both LOVE the beach. We chose Salter Path beach because it is three hours from our house and it is a much smaller and less commercial beach than Wrightsville and Myrtle. After looking at beach homes on the Crystal Coast we knew this was the perfect place to have our wedding. It wasn't too far for our family and friends to drive and it was "just us."

Q. What was most challenging about planning the wedding from a distance?

A. Finding our vendors wasn't too difficult, as we had a wonderful wedding planner that did most of this for us. However, once we had vendors in mind, it was important to set appointments to meet with them (ie... taste the food from the caterer, meet with the baker and get cake ideas). Equally as important was to find a hair stylist and make-up artist and I didn't want my first meeting with them to be on the day of my bridal portraits. It is very difficult for vendors to meet on the weekends, as this is their busiest days, and it was very difficult for us to meet on weekdays due to our work schedules. All of our vendors were amazing, understanding and very willing to work with us to set up a time to meet. In two visits we were able to meet our caterer, baker, hair stylist, make-up artist and a florist.

Q. And what did you find most helpful about planning?

A. Early in our wedding planning stage, we knew that it was going to be extremely difficult to plan a destination wedding without some assistance. In July 2011, I called my college



MM DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



roommate to talk to her about how her wedding planning was coming, as she was getting married in November. During our conversation she told me about her wedding planner and raved about how wonderful she was. She gave me her contact information that night. Honestly, Matt and I didn't think we could afford a wedding planner with our budget, but I decided to give it as try as I knew it was going to be extremely difficult to plan a beach wedding from three hours away. I contacted Katherine Wrenn of Posh Weddings and Events and set up a time to meet with her the following week. We "clicked" at our first meeting and she was very affordable. I could not have planned our wedding without her, and thanks to her our wedding day was everything I had always dreamt of and more. Hiring a wedding planner was the best decision I ever made.

Q. Did you plan any special events for family while you were here, group trips, dinners, beach days?

A. We had our beach house rented out from May 27 to June 3. The "Dreammaker" home has seven bedrooms, a movie room, a billiard room, a pool, hot tub, indoor and out-

door bar and grill. The bridal party stayed at the house and most made a vacation of it by coming early in the week. We spent most days lying by the pool and most nights in the hot tub hanging out with friends we don't see nearly enough. We made a shrimp boil one night for everyone and other nights we grilled out. It was a vacation for most, prior to the wedding, and it was one of the best weeks of our lives.

Q. Are there any things you wish you knew ahead of time and didn't?

A. I am very much a control freak and type A, so I had crossed all my t's and dotted all my i's several times. I went as far as calling the rental company a month out and asked about the number of linens in the house since almost 20 guests would be staying at the house during the week. After we arrived at the house, I checked all the outdoor light bulbs and when one was blown out, the owner came and turned off the sprinkler system and changed the bulb. I also had a wedding planner that had a back-up plan for the back-up plan, so fortunately we knew almost everything imaginable ahead of time.

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Wedding Location – *Lawn of the Dream Maker House in Salter Path*

Reception Location – *Dream Maker House, cocktail hour was held around the pool area and the reception was held in the yard*

Planner – *Katherine Wrenn of Posh Weddings and Events, Raleigh*

Caterer – *Class Act Catering*

Cake – *Mrs. Vingerber's Sweets, Stella*

Photography – *MM Digital Photography (Owner: Ena Sellers)*

Rentals – *Crystal Coast Tent and Event Rentals*

Floral Design – *Flowers and Designs by Ernest, Beaufort*

Band – *Barbour & Hinton Band*

Officiate – *Dr. Tommy Green of Duluth First United Methodist Church, Atlanta, Ga.*

Hair – *Just Hair, Emerald Isle*

Make-up – *Stephanie Hunihan, New Visage, Morehead City*

Bridal Gown – *Paloma Blanca from Traditions by Anna, Raleigh*

Bridesmaid Dresses – *Lula Kate from Traditions by Anna, Raleigh*

Men's Formalwear – *Jos A. Bank*

Guest Accommodations – *Hampton Inn, Emerald Isle & Pecan Tree Inn, Beaufort*



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Q. Is there anything you would have changed?

A. I always hear brides say, "If I could do it all over again I would change this or that..." There is honestly NOTHING I would

have changed about that day. The weather was absolutely gorgeous (sunny, but not too sunny and low 70s), the band sounded amazing, the flowers were perfect down to the smallest detail and I married my best friend. Every girl dreams of her wedding day where she looks like a Disney princess and walks down the aisle and marries her knight in shining armor. Just like every other girl I had that same dream and I can honestly say that our wedding surpassed any dreams I had ever had.

Q. What advice would you give to brides and grooms in the process of planning a beach wedding now?

A. When planning your wedding, don't settle for just any location. Take your time and find the perfect beach house for you and your fiancée. When we were trying to find a place, we looked for several weeks and I was becoming frustrated and overwhelmed. We traveled to the Crystal Coast twice and I had spent several hours looking online. There was a particular house that I wasn't in love with, but I almost settled for just because I wanted to move the process alone. I am so glad I continued my search because our venue was more than we could have ever imagined.

Don't stress out about the weather; there is nothing you can do about it. Have a backup plan, either a large tent or possibly an indoor location, and forget about the weather, you can't change it.

Find a beach house close to public parking. I have heard many complaints from people that have attended a beach wedding on the Crystal Coast where they either had trouble finding parking or they had to park and ride a shuttle and the shuttle didn't run frequently enough. We chose a house that was located adjacent to public parking and we had no issues. I have also heard complaints that public parking can be difficult in Emerald Isle and Atlantic Beach due to beach goers, but if you find a smaller beach such as Salter Path or Indian Beach, parking isn't a problem.

It was extremely important to us to enjoy our wedding and spend time with our guests and not spend our wedding day posing for pictures. We found a wonderful photographer and communicated the importance of not spending an hour after the wedding taking pictures, but we of course wanted wonderful pictures. The photographer was very understanding. My advice to people planning a wedding is to make a list of exactly what pictures you want, give it to your photographer and discuss which pictures she can take before the wedding so you don't spend so much time taking pictures after the ceremony. Our photographer took all of the groom's pictures and detailed pictures before the wedding. She also took all the pictures of myself with the bridesmaids and some family pictures prior to the wedding. This saved us several minutes that we could enjoy with our guests after the ceremony.



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