

Happily Ever After

Ashley & Michael

July 18, 2015

By Kim Wegener
Family Living Editor

HARLAN -- Ashley Nelsen and Michael Weddell's long distance romance between two states came full circle for Ashley when 364 days after they were engaged they were married in her home church in rural Harlan on July 18, 2015.

Ashley was thrilled to marry the man of her dreams in Iowa.

"We got married near Harlan at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in rural Jacksonville. I have been a member of that church for several years. I have always imagined myself getting married in my beautiful church," said Ashley.

"I had always told Mike it was my dream to get married in my hometown with lots of my family and friends around. He said that he absolutely agreed and wanted me to have the wedding of my dreams."

Mike said getting married in Iowa was the right choice.

"Having the wedding in Iowa was an easy choice. Ashley loves Iowa and Harlan is home to her. Colorado is beautiful, but for us, having the wedding in Iowa was the best possible situation," said Mike.

Dating long distance

When the couple met through an online dating site in December 2013, Ashley was living in Kansas and Michael was living in Colorado. Following six weeks of connecting through emails, text messages and phone calls, Mike made the trip to meet Ashley in person.

"The first date was pretty laid back. We went to dinner and then went to a movie. After talking for six weeks, we were both nervous, but we both knew we wanted to see where this could go. We continued to date long distance from Kansas to Colorado," said Ashley.

"We would take three day weekends and visit each other. It was about 6 1/2 hours drive one way between the two of us."

Mike said he knew Ashley was the one for him very early on in their courtship.

"I had a pretty good idea that Ashley was the one for me before we ever met in person. Things were just easy when we talked. I felt like a part of me that was missing was a part of me again whenever we talked. We laughed and joked around and had some serious conversations. It was just easy and seemed to fit. Once we met, I was done. I knew she was the one for me," said Mike.

Surprise waterfall proposal

The couple became engaged on July 19, 2014 during a hike at Hanging Lake in Glenwood Canyon in Colorado. Mike surprised Ashley by asking her to marry him after they had spent 2 1/2 hours hiking to the top of the difficult trail.

"Ashley and I had talked and we both really loved the water. She loved waterfalls so it was easy for me to decide on Hanging Lake. I told her best friend (Ashley Waddell) what my plan was and warned her that the hike was going to be difficult, but it



would be worth it. My parents also knew what I was going to do. Trying to hide it from Ashley was extremely difficult, but well worth it," said Mike.

"I actually asked Ashley's parents for her hand in marriage the very first time I met her dad. I told them my plan and they were all in. The morning of the hike, they told me good luck and they couldn't wait to hear about it."

Also joining them on the hike were several members of Mike's family. Ashley thought it was a little strange her best friend, Ashley, wanted to go on the hike since she is not into hiking.

"Little did I know she (Ashley Waddell) knew what was going to happen the entire time and she was determined to make the hike and film it. I should have been clued in, because his mom, sister, brother-in-law and his niece and nephew were also on the hike. I had only met his mom previously, so I just figured it was going to be a family outing," said Ashley.

"His niece and I were looking at the beautiful waterfall and watching the fish. Little did I know, Michael's plan was to walk me out on to this log that had fallen into the lake. However it had been roped off saying it was no longer safe to walk out on.

**LOOK INSIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Decorations ~ Gifts ~ Caterers ~ Travel ~ Salon**

Weddell please see page 2

Happily Ever After

2
HARLAN NEWS-ADVERTISER
FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2016

Weddell from page 1

His niece was his distraction so he could find the best spot to propose. We were looking at the Falls, when he started to talk all sweet and the next thing I knew he was down on one knee with a ring. I of course said yes, and then he tried to put the ring on the wrong hand. Of course I cried and then noticed I was being filmed and there was a huge audience. I then turned and looked at my best friend and said I knew there had to be a reason she made the hike because she hates hikes."

Summer wedding in Iowa

Ashley purchased her wedding gown at a boutique in Manhattan, KS, during a shopping trip with her mother, Donna; sister, Erin; niece, Katrina; friends Ashley Waddell and Ashley Wehling and Wehlings' two children. The bride-to-be tried on seven dresses before she tried on the one that would be her wedding dress.

"I had a feeling the one I was saving for last was going to end up being the one. Sure enough when I put it on it was it. I grinned from ear to ear and almost cried. My mother bought my dress and I am extremely thankful for that. The next day was a bridal show in Manhattan, so it was just a really great girls weekend," said Ashley.

When it came to choosing a wedding date, Ashley had always wanted to have a fall wedding, but Mike thought summer would be better time. Mike felt more people could attend in the summer and it would be better to spread out their anniversary date from holidays and their winter birthdays.

Ashley also was fearful of how hot and humid it can be in July in Iowa. After much discussion, they decided to marry on July 18.

"It was 98 degrees and 98 percent humidity on our wedding day. Mike's families comment was they were still trying to chew our air. Being from Colorado they are not used to the crazy humidity we have in Iowa," said Ashley.

More than 240 handmade flowers were created

Approximately 180 people attended the wedding ceremony at Bethlehem Lutheran and the reception and dance which followed at Veteran's Auditorium in Harlan. The rehearsal dinner hosted by the groom's parents and Steve Heuton was held at the Heuton farm.

The couple said it was easy to select members of their wedding party because family is so important to them as well as their close friends.

Matron of honor was Erin Fox, sister of bride. Maid of honor was Ashley Waddell. Attending as bridesmaids were Nikki Nelsen, sister-in-law of bride; Rebekah Warga,



SURPRISE PROPOSAL -- Michael Weddell asked Ashley Nelsen to be his wife on July 19, 2014 during a hike at Hanging Lake in Glenwood Canyon in Colorado. (All photos contributed)

sister of groom; Ashley Hill, Kelsey Hill and Ashley Wehling. Junior bridesmaid was Lydia Nelsen, niece of bride. Flower girls were Katrina Fox, niece of bride, and Alaina Warga, niece of groom. Honorary flower girl was Braelynn Nelsen, couple's goddaughter and niece.

Best man was Joshua Graham. Serving as groomsmen were Kevin Miller, Eric Sanders, uncle of groom; Grant Weddell, brother of groom; Clint Nelsen, brother of bride; Ryne Nelsen, brother of bride; and Joel Weddell, brother of groom.

Junior groomsman was the bride's nephew, Marcus Nelsen. Ring bearers were Kenneth Fox, nephew of bride; and Koen Warga, nephew of groom. Honorary ring bearer was the bride's nephew, Karl Fox. Ushering the guests were Chris Warga, brother-in-law of groom; and Matthew Fox, brother-in-law of bride.

Their wedding colors were chocolate brown and pastel pinks, greens and yellows. The bride's accessories included her great-grandmother's brooch in her hair.

Ashley and Mike are grateful for all the help they had from family and friends with all the wedding preparations.

"My mother made all of the bridesmaids' chocolate brown dresses and also the two flower girl dresses all by hand. She is amazing at what she does and I am so thankful for the way they turned out. She made a total of 10 dresses," said Ashley.

Mike's mother put all of the bouquets together and made the boutonnieres and corsages. The more than 240 flowers for the wedding were made from coffee filters.

"It took over 24 boxes (100 filters per box) for the roses and another 180 hydrangea balls which took another 12 boxes of coffee filters. We cut out patterns we printed from the internet and cut out each pattern several times on the flat coffee filters then the pieces were wrapped individually on pieces of floral wire with floral tape. After they were put together, we dipped them into watered down acrylic paint to make them off white," said Ashley.

"We then used a blow dryer to dry and fan out the petals. My sister went through with water color paint and colored all of the flowers free handed. They turned out amazing! Most people that saw the flowers could not believe they were fake. Let alone made out of coffee filters. A few of my bridesmaids really did an awesome job of helping with all of the flowers. They were definitely tired of making flowers and I am sure they never want to make another flower as long as they live!"

The remaining roses and all of the hydrangea balls were used in the centerpieces at the reception. Old barn wood from the bride's grandparents' farm was used to make wooden boxes featuring flowers and lanterns.



Perfect guy. Perfect tux. Perfect place. Perfect flowers. For your wedding, nothing less will do.

FLORAL ELEGANCE provides contemporary, stylish & always elegant bouquets, arrangements, accessories & tux rentals for your **PERFECT DAY**.



Special Discount when you order both your Tuxes & Flowers together!

Alterations by Reneé Milsted



Chatburn Plaza, Harlan
712) 755-2680 • (888) 285-2680
www.floraleleganceharlan.com
M-F, 8-5; Sat., 9-Noon
Locally Family Owned for Over 40 Years.

Hodges Smokehouse Catering



Ready to serve your next social or business event with full catering services.

Phone: 712-483-2836 • 800-272-3529
Minden, IA



Advice for future brides and grooms

Ashley shared a couple of little things that might not have gone as planned on the wedding day.

"There are always little hiccups in every wedding, and ours was no different. My nephew, Kenneth Fox, who was also the ring bearer, came back down the aisle as my dad was escorting me down and he decided he needed to be a part of that. He definitely stole the show," said Ashley.

"At the reception, we forgot the cake knife and server, so we improvised with a plastic knife. No wedding is ever perfect, but it was perfect for us. I wouldn't have changed anything about it."

Even in the moments where they became very stressed and frustrated during planning, Ashley said everything came together perfect.

"I loved planning my wedding and I really enjoyed doing a lot of it with my sister," said Ashley. "She definitely was the creative genius who helped make my ideas come to life. From the invitations to the flowers, it was a long but memorable experience."

Mike's advice to future grooms is to make sure the bride has the wedding of her

dreams.

"Learn two words that are very important, 'Yes dear'. The wedding is 100 percent about her and it should be the only wedding she ever has, so let her do whatever she wants. The week of the wedding, just be there for her to take away the stress," said Mike.

Ashley's parents are Mark and Donna Nelsen, Harlan. Mike is the son of Michael J. Weddell, Glenwood Springs, CO; and Shelly Weddell, Denver, CO. Grandparents of the couple are Lloyd Nelsen, Kimballton; Joy and Lyle Sanders, Bridgeport, NE; and Harry Covey, Erie, CO.

Two days after the wedding, Ashley made the final move to Denver where the couple is at home. She is employed as an optician at Vision Care Specialists in Denver. Mike works as a communications technician at Comcast in Denver.

"Our plans are to return to Iowa in the future to raise our own family in a great community. I am proud to be from Harlan and it will always be home," concluded Ashley.



*With over 50 years
combined experience
we'll make
your dreams
become reality!*

4 SEASONS TRAVEL
CORPORATE AND LEISURE

1119 7th St., Downtown Harlan
800-356-5579 • 712-755-3811
www.4seasonstrav.com

Ready To Be Fabulous?

Bridal Specials for Wedding Parties*

- Creative Hair Styling
- Air Brush Makeup
- Manicures & Pedicures

Special Occasions Updo Styles.

Will travel to your location

Radiance Salon

Professional Hair, Nails & Makeup by Amanda Rold
712-579-9647 • 411 Court St. • Ste 103 • Harlan
* One week notice, please. Travel fee may be required.



Kitchen Sisters

Tastes like home.



Great food and service for your rehearsal dinner, wedding reception or bridal showers!

Sheila Roane (402) 676-6532

KitchenSisters@hotmail.com

KitchenSistersCatering.com

Like us on Facebook®




Personalize your wedding... the most important date of your life!

- **Personalized** Invitations
- **Personalized** Programs, Thank You Notes & Napkins ~ each including your names and wedding date.
- **Personalized** Picture Frames ~ engraved for lasting memories.

You will love our prices. Contact us today.

Concerned, Inc. Print Shop

"We specialize in the celebrations in your life"
712-755-5834 • cierterprises@concernedinc.com
1812 Industrial Parkway (Hwy. 59 S.), Harlan, IA



CONCERNED, INC.

Charting A Course
Toward Independence

Fresh Ideas for Your Wedding



From simple
to elegant,
we're your

**One-Stop
Catering
Shop.**

Offering appetizers, entrees, desserts & cakes for your
wedding, party or corporate event.

Helping couples create beautiful memories for 17 years -

MARKET
MAIN STREET

Panama, Iowa • 712-489-2601

Credit, Debit & EBT
Cards Accepted.