

sheila and dan 09.13.08

keswick, va



You have to wonder how the number 13 achieved such a bad reputation. After all, it's just the putting together of one and three, or the unremarkable addition of nine and four and so on. As it turns out, the traditionally unlucky number proved quite the opposite for Sheila Motley and Dan Boyle, who met on Friday the 13th. "The next day, Dan left a note on my door with his number and flowers," Sheila remembers. "We began dating and moved in together a year later." On their sixth anniversary, Dan proposed, which meant Sheila, a professional wedding and event planner, was about to start bringing work home.

"Dan and I wanted our wedding to be as different from the events I work on as possible," says Sheila, "but still have elements that are personal to us." With that, they decided to host their nuptials at Highground, her parents' farm and Sheila's childhood home in the mountains of Virginia. "It meant so much to us to be married at a place that will be in our family forever," Sheila says of the picturesque property. "We created an event that was more like a huge party with family and friends."

Their late summer wedding was held at dusk on Saturday the 13th, a nod to the fortuitous date on which they met and were also engaged. 300 guests arrived, greeted with cocktails on the front lawn, an event which thankfully was saved by Sheila's resourceful team, who quickly put together a new setup after an unexpected afternoon rain shower soaked everything. Sheila remained blissfully unaware as they quickly re-set linens and the staff dried their shirts in her parents' laundry just before guests arrived. The bridal party and their families surprised everyone by joining the pre-ceremony festivities, mingling to festive music by The Duke Merrick Band from Charlottesville, longtime family friends.

As the sun set, guests were seated for the ceremony in the garden at Highground. Dan, wearing his late grandfather's tuxedo, stood with his father, who was ordained for the day so that he could perform their ceremony. His groomsmen wore Joseph & Feiss one-button shawl lapel tuxes and tuberosa boutonnieres as they waited for the bridesmaids and the bride beneath the giant glowing sphere of a helium balloon, suspended over the gathering like the full moon. Sheila, escorted by her father, wore a 70-year-old wedding dress belonging to her grandmother who was married on the 13th day of May, 69 years earlier. Sheila had it moderately reworked by a local seamstress who repaired the aging lace and redesigned the neckline. Her four bridesmaids wore chocolate matte taffeta gowns and carried simple bouquets of white Weber parrot tulips, massed into a symmetrical form and bound with a collar of brown



French wired ribbon. Sheila carried a bouquet of white and green striped miniature Lady Slipper orchids, Weber parrot tulips and Pee Gee hydrangea, wrapped with a collar of ivory satin ribbon while their mothers and grandmothers carried simple nosegays of massed gardenias and dark green laurel leaves.

Sheila changed into a Monique Lhuillier ivory Caricata satin dress and fuchsia Manolo Blahnik heels for the reception, which was held in a large, brightly lit tent in the middle of the farm's racetrack. "The path to the tent was illuminated with white balloons monogrammed with our 'SD' logo," says Sheila, who wove their 'SD' motif throughout the entire event, from save-the-date cards and invitations, to the balloons and even the trays carrying canapés. "The focal point of the reception was a square hedge bar in the center of the tent surrounding a large arrangement of hydrangea, tulips, grasses, birch branches and peacock feathers," Sheila explains. "The hedge boxes were made from wood that Dan took from the racetrack's rails. A mix of round and square cocktail tables draped in white linens surrounded the bar. Food stations were scattered throughout the tent, also draped in white with floral arrangements of assorted orchids from a friend's private greenhouse and the menu displayed in chalk on slate tiles." Two vintage chandeliers and white fabric draping hung from the tent's center poles and each end of the tent featured its own stage, dance floor and lounge area to accommodate the number of musicians Sheila and Dan hired for the party.

Guests enjoyed hors d' oeuvres of miniature crab cakes with mustard remoulade, cucumber with spicy Ahi tuna, smoked duck breast topped with citrus mascarpone, poached pear wrapped in prosciutto with arugula and shaved parmesan, and fried goat cheese with caramelized onions. Dinner featured a menu of braised beef short ribs, grilled baby lamb chops, raviolis of grated pear and Pecorino Romano, wild mushroom risotto, and grilled seasonal vegetables with parsley butter. A late-night snack of truffled mac n' cheese was offered later in the evening. To sweeten the deal, the wedding cake was an arrangement of chocolate cake with blackberry filling and vanilla cake with lemon curd filling, all finished with amaretto icing. However, Sheila says, "Guests were most interested in the







other dessert option, which was a vintage donut cart serving fresh made organic donuts, hot chocolate and apple cider."

Reminiscing, Sheila says that working "on the other side" was a highlight of planning their wedding, though she credits her coworkers and colleagues for their hard work and devotion. "I didn't like not being able to control all the details," she admits with a laugh, "but I trusted that everyone from our team would do a wonderful job. I can't thank them enough!" All the organization, planning and work on the details paid off in spades, especially when you hear Dan's version of the day. "The sun went down and the ceremony was perfect, from the glow of the balloon to the glow of the moon, and having my father next to me made a pleasant calm come over me," he says. "My bride looked beautiful coming down the aisle, and the ceremony was the perfect length. My sister read an excerpt from *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, my brother read an excerpt from Pablo Neruda and my father closed the ceremony with the Irish Prayer. We had a great reception, lots of music, food, spirits and good times were had by all!" JLG



Ceremony and Reception Site: Highground Farm. Gown: Monique Lhuillier. Boutique: Hannelore's. Hair: Erica, II Esthetics. Makeup: Jen Skiffitt, Elan. Shoes: Manolo Blahnik. Jewelry: Angelo. Officiant: Groom's Father. Wedding Consultant and Catering: The Event Company. Florist: Anastasia & Private Orchid Greenhouse. Ceremony Music: The Duke Merrick Band. Reception Music: Horizon, Mystic Vibrations, DJ Jeremy Kimartin. Baker: Cakes Unlimited. Party Rentals/Linen: Festive Fare. Invitations: Wedding Paper Divas. Transportation: Ambassador Limo. Accommodations and Rehearsal Dinner: The Clifton Inn. Invitations: Custom design.

Photography: Jen Fariello Photography, www.jenfariello.com.



