

Family Affair

STORY BY NICK BRANDI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEAFO PHOTO



Lewes mayor James Ford III officiates his daughter's breathtaking wedding on the grounds of the town's historical society



It's not every man who not only gets to walk his daughter down the aisle but also preside over the actual ceremony in a town over which he also presides. But that's exactly what happened on July 3, when the Honorable James Ford III of Lewes officiated the wedding ceremony of his only daughter, Maren, to Ryan Langford at the Lewes Canalfront Park.

Established in 1961, the Lewes Historical Society (LHS) is a sprawling complex that is actually more like a compound for all its structures and newly designed, impeccably manicured landscape. Teeming with lush arboreal life that includes everything from the familiar American holly, blue spruce pine, white oak and magnolia to the more exotic crape myrtle, kousa dogwood and pomegranate, the pristine rustic verdure of the LHS makes it one of the uniquely beautiful tracts on the entire Eastern Shore.

The innate good taste of the couple-to-be and consummate expertise of Make My Day Event Planning made for a day to remember... make that *cherish*. It began with a 5 p.m. ceremony at Canalfront Park, the groom having arrived by boat — and Beatle — as John Lennon's "Grow Old With Me" played in the background. After Mayor Ford walked Maren down the aisle as his little girl for the last time, he summarily took his position before them as the officiant. The mayor married the two in a sweet and genteel ceremony that saw Funsters musician Keith Mack provide accompaniment on the acoustic guitar. As a two-canon salute rang out from the Lightship Overfalls to commemorate the couple's first kiss as husband and wife, it was clear the tone was

about to shift. George Harrison's sunny and hopeful ballad "Here Comes the Sun" lit the way acoustically as angel-faced children with overflowing buckets of hydrangea led 170 guests to the reception area for the commencement of the 5:30 p.m. festivities.

To further set the tone, Leanne Silicato of Make My Day Event Planning had arranged for strands of delicate bubble lighting to be strung among the treetops and elsewhere, weaving a gossamer web of magic as day transitioned into night.





Ryan Langford and Maren Ford
Married July 3, 2011

Waiting for the guests on the grassy back lawn with century-old trees were two 20-foot-long king's tables, assorted round tables, high-top cocktail tables and a sprinkling of picnic tables and raw-wood benches — all in good proximity to the two open bars. Pierson's Comfort Group in Federalsburg provided VIP comfort trailers for the convenience of the attendees.

Touches of simple elegance permeated the day, as mason jars of locally grown flowers dotted the scenery and homemade packages of Maren and Ryan's favorite Alfajores cookies were affectionately distributed among the guests.

A majestic 40' x 80' white, peaked tent provided by CRH in Bethany served as the main dining area and housed one of two buffet tables, guest tables, a sweetheart table for the bride and groom and a portable parquet dance floor, also supplied by CRH. The dinner — expertly executed once again by the incomparable Plate Catering of Bethany Beach — started out with the mayor and Mrs. Ford ringing the old schoolhouse bell so that guests could dive into the shrimp and scallop dumplings with sesame, soy-and-ginger dipping oil along with prosciutto-wrapped melon and fresh tomato and basil bruschetta.

A summer salad with mixed greens, sliced strawberries, goat cheese, shaved onion and toasted almonds in a strawberry vinaigrette teamed with freshly grilled and marinated kebobs featuring well beef and chicken led the entrees, with support from chilled orzo with shaved asparagus, lemon zest, olive oil, parsley, sun-dried tomatoes and shaved red onions. Freshly baked bread and butter capped the light summer fare.

The delicious and beautiful two-tiered chocolate-and-buttercream wedding cake, embellished with hydrangea and sunflowers, was baked by Maren's good friend Lauren Crandall, who is also her teammate on the USA National Women's Field Hockey team. Maren, meanwhile, has to be discreet around things like rich chocolate cake and Alfajores, as she is considered by those in the sport to be a legitimate Olympic hopeful.

When all was said and done, the event was a stellar conflation of good taste, fun and love. So much so, in fact, that the bride herself remained to bask in its luminous glow, even after the deejay had packed up his equipment, hoping that her special day would never end.



Mayor James Ford III has the privilege of presiding over a town with a rich 380-year history that also embraces the virtues of modernity.

"One reason these events always come out so well," said renowned local entrepreneur and master chef Matt Haley of SoDel Concepts, parent company of Plate Catering, "is because Plate Catering strives to provide nothing less than greatness for every one of its clients. Another key is the amazing relationship we have with Make My Day Event Planning. We work together so seamlessly, so cohesively, it's as if we were partners without actually *being* partners. I can tell you honestly that I have never seen anyone work an event like Leanne Silicato of Make My Day Event Planning. They are simply the best."

"I think the many, many comments I'd heard from first-time visitors about the lovely charm and character of [the Lewes Historical Society] is a very positive reflection on the City of Lewes and its 380-year history," offered Mayor Ford and his wife, Teresa.

There can be no doubt that the LHS is a venue steeped in tradition and rich with history. How fitting it is that on July 3, 2011, Maren Ford and Ryan Langford chose that location to make some of their own. 🌊

Field of Dreams

Jessica Dillon and Wes Bieligk are married at Good Earth Market — a popular trend that combines farm-to-table elements on the big day



Jessica Dillon and Wes Bieligk with their wedding party at Good Earth Market in Clarksville.

STORY BY NICK BRANDI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGIE MOON PHOTOGRAPHER

It's 125 long miles from America's power capital, Washington, DC, to the sleepy climes of Sussex County. Naturally, then, finance executive Wes Bieligk had some trepidation about *schlepping* all those button-down DC types — including himself — over to the Eastern Shore to witness him marry his fiancée, Jessica Dillon. After all, people who run in his circles are more accustomed to venues like the Four Seasons and the W when it comes time to kick it in style — not some dusty organic farm where even the livestock drive hybrids and recycle. Well, it may have taken some cajoling, but Wes and Jessica did wind up getting married at Clarksville's Good Earth Market on August 6 in a farm-to-table-style wedding that established even to Wes' satisfaction that class and elegance can be found in any zip code.

Of course, it didn't exactly hurt that he and Jessica had heavy hitters like Make My Day Event Planning in Rehoboth and Bethany's Plate Catering on their side to give their special day that unforgettable four-star feel.

Following a traditional ceremony at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roxana, buses provided by Jor-Lin Tour & Charter in Milford shuttled roughly half of the 250 invited guests to the Good Earth Market, where owners Susan and David Ryan staged their farm's first-ever outing as a wedding venue.

The Ryans had the garden-patio area behind the market perfectly poised to be the site of the cocktail hour, with vined archways, various herbs and a pepper garden that Susan had planted in honor of the couple. A collection of bistro and high-top cocktail tables served as the hospitality platforms as a member of popular DC-area band The Winn Brothers set the tone gracefully with his electric acoustic guitar. Plate Catering staff were strategically deployed at the entranceway with sparkling water and wine for the guests so that there wouldn't be any long waits at the main serving stations. Butlered cocktail-hour appetizers included tomato bruschetta served on housemade crostinis, shrimp lollipops with corn aioli, microgreens, mini fish tacos with lime garnish and curried-chicken skewers with spicy peanut dressing.



After the cocktail hour, things proceeded to the facility's sprawling pasture for the reception that was elegantly tented by Coastal Tents & Events of Bethany Beach. Escort cards containing the seating arrangements were carefully tied by Make My Day staff to the fencing along the path to the field. Twenty-foot-high poles swathed in white fabric lit the way to the reception entranceway, which, along with the poles, was adorned with stringed bubble lighting throughout. The totality of its effect served to set an ethereal motif for the magical day. An inviting set of tiki torches blazed a trail thereafter.

When it comes to outdoor events such as this one, the attendant structures are just as important as the main ones, yet another reason why expert event planning is critical to staging a flawless affair. For the brand-new Bieligs, the gargantuan 60' x 130' main tent was supported by a 20' x 20' catering tent where all the food was prepped and plated in addition to a 20' x 20' lounge tent that wound up becoming an offshoot gathering spot for guests who wanted to temporarily repair to a less-peopled spot. The tent — often referred to as a "groom's room" — featured not only its own bartender armed with the groom's favorite libations but an especially neat twist in the form of a photo booth where guests could pose for light-hearted impromptu shots that were only moments later lavishly projected onto the big white walls of the main tent for the entertainment and amusement of every attendee. Meanwhile, VIP comfort amenities came courtesy of Pierson's Comfort Group in Federalsburg in the form of a luxurious 25' x 13' trailer that assured the pastoral plot would remain blessed only by local fauna.

Inside the main tent stood a perimeter bank of 10 high-top cocktail tables surrounding a set of 17 dining tables, which included a mixture of long king's tables and square tables, each with a custom-designed floral arrangement by The City Florist in Salisbury set in antique pewter containers and glass vases that authentically captured the rustic-yet-elegant theme of the affair. The guests were treated to a family-style tour-de-force performance by Plate Catering that was kicked off with a Bibb-lettuce salad and Northeast seafood-kitchen house bread and Kogler dark bread (accompanied by Good Earth Market's organic handmade herb butter) with house-infused olive oils.

Main courses consisted of rockfish served over local squashes with roasted tomatoes, garlic confit and organic basil in addition to shaved flank steak served over grilled scallions with fresh nectarine-and-corn salad with lime, chilies and fresh herbs in a brown-sugar vinaigrette. A variety of Good Earth Market heirloom tomatoes and red bliss potatoes with lemon mustard crème fraiche and shaved celery complemented the sumptuous wedding feast — which apparently was more than worked off thanks to the abundant talent and showmanship of The Winn Brothers, who had the joint jumping from beginning to end, with 4-year-olds dancing alongside 84-year-olds and a bride and groom whom Silicato recalls leaving the dance floor only to perform necessary wedding rituals. The desserts, meanwhile — which seemed to appear out of nowhere at the foot of the portable parquet dance floor — were also the yummy handiwork of Plate Catering and included a creative offering of fancified mini cupcakes in addition to a scrumptious batch of chocolate chip cookies, the bride and groom's favorite.

It has been said among those in close proximity to the event that when all was said and done, the crowd from the Beltway didn't have a clue about the incomparably good time that was waiting for them down on a farm in Clarksville.

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