

## Reel Love

By Jacquelyn B. Fletcher



Photo by Bruce Fritz Photography



It was a match made in television. Sarah Sorenson, now 29, moved from Chicago to La Crosse, Wis., in February 1999 to take a job as a reporter and weekend anchor at the local television station. Sam, now 27, a photojournalist who worked as a cameraman, remembers the day he first saw Sarah in the parking lot. "She waved and shook my hand. I tried not to let my jaw drop too far."

Sarah liked him instantly. "We became fast friends." But Sam wasn't interested in being friends. "She likes to tell people we started off as friends, but I never intended to let it stay that way," he says.

It wasn't until October 23, 1999, that they had what they consider their first date. "We went out with a group of friends, dropped them all off at the end of the night, and drove up to Granddad Bluff because we didn't want the night to end," Sarah says. "It was really quiet and peaceful and we didn't say much; we didn't have to—we'd been flirting (finally) all night."

A year after they began officially dating, Sarah considered a move to Madison for a new job. "We moved in 2001 to Middleton when she got the job at Channel 27 in Madison," Sam says.

"Once we'd been together a year, I was willing to follow her anywhere."

Sam decided to pop the question on March 3, 2002. "It was three years to the day that we went on our first news story together," Sarah recalls. "He had chosen a significant date that I wouldn't necessarily remember."

Since Sam carried his personal video camera with him everywhere he went, he had an archive of footage from their lives to choose from. He edited moments together that corresponded with his journal entries of important events in their courtship, which he taped himself reading out loud. The result was a 50-minute intimate documentary about their love.

"I knew he was up to something," Sarah says. "But I didn't think it had anything to do with proposing. I was on the couch being lazy when he walked into the living room. He was wearing a nice sweater and smelled of cologne. I'm usually pretty quick, but I still had no idea. I thought maybe he thought he stunk."

They watched the video together and laughed and cried, but when he got up to leave the room, she was confused. "I'm thinking, 'he's such an idiot. Why didn't he save this for the proposal?'" He came back in the room and handed me another VHS tape and told me to put it in the VCR. He was standing up and I was on the couch, so I said, "Why don't you do it?"

Sam insisted and when Sarah pulled the tape out of its sleeve, she found a ring tucked inside. The 100-year-old ring was one her great-grandmother wore that her grandmother reset in the 1950s. It was exactly the ring Sarah wanted and fit her perfectly. They set a date for the wedding: September 20, 2003.

Sarah and her mother planned the entire event and they decided to set most of the festivities at the Heidel House Resort in Green Lake, Wis. The ceremony was held at 4 p.m. at the nearby Grace Lutheran Church in Ripon, Wis., where they were allowed to bring in their own pastor from their former church in La Crosse. They added personal touches to the ceremony, including candle lighting to honor seven of their grandparents who had passed away. During one song, Sarah and Sam handed bouquets to their mothers, which were made up of the same flowers they carried in their own weddings.

After the ceremony, the wedding party joined the newlyweds on a short cruise around Green Lake aboard the Escapade Yacht. When they returned, the rest of the wedding guests had assembled on the lawn for a cocktail hour. Shortly thereafter, dinner was served and cheesecake from Simma's Bakery in Milwaukee sweetened the meal. Finally, the party started. "My mom and I had a goal. We wanted our guests to be exhausted the next day," Sarah says. "We wanted it to be a fun party and have the dancing be a highlight." They hired the Peter Hennes Orchestra out of Chicago to rock the night away.

Sarah loved the father/daughter dance. "My dad is an almost obsessed Elvis fan." The band started slow with Love Me Tender but after a few bars, launched into Blue Suede Shoes. Sarah lifted her skirt to reveal a pair of blue suede shoes she'd snuck onto her feet, and her dad surprised her by slipping on a pair of Elvis-inspired shades.

Sam made his wife another video that he unveiled between dinner and the reception. The 10-minute movie had the audience in tears and clearly showed how this pair belonged together. "I knew very quickly that she was the woman I wanted to marry," Sam says. "I had waited for her a long time, and I knew it was right."