

ALISON CULLINAN & MATTHEW UNKOVICH

April 3, 2014

Old St. Patrick's Church

The Winter Garden at Harold Washington Library

Photography by Rick Aguilar Studios

THE COUPLE After meeting at Moe's Cantina in Wrigleyville, Matt and Alison's relationship quickly proved to be a home run. Things got serious in March of 2013 when Matt proposed on a beach in Hawaii, a complete shock to Alison: "I was so surprised that I don't know if I actually said yes right away. I was just so excited!"

THE DETAILS Following a traditional mass at Old St. Patrick's Church, the bride and groom hosted friends and family at a spring-themed bash. One

family member, however, had to decline: The groom's sister went into labor three weeks early, giving birth to her baby girl on the wedding day. In tribute, she named her Alison Rose, making the day even more memorable for the couple.

THE PARTY Wedding planner Ali Phillips, and the team from HMR Designs, decked out the space with 400 twinkling votive candles and a vibrant color palette of pink, orange, coral and green. The dance floor was packed all night, and Alison and her dad danced together in a sweet father-daughter moment. After the Blue Plate-catered dinner, guests hung out in a lounge-style bar area, followed by an afterparty at The Ritz-Carlton Chicago that lasted until 2:30AM. —AA



Clockwise from above: The bride wore a two-piece Monique Lhuillier gown with an embellished corset, while the groom opted for a classic tux by Tommy Hilfiger; the wedding cake, and a variety of cupcakes on the dessert table, were made by the bride's favorite bakery, Sweet Mandy B's; colorful floral arrangements of lilies, roses and hydrangeas in varying heights topped the tables.



What We Learned

"Don't lose your sense of humor. Laughter is an essential component of our relationship. We have so much fun together, which is a big reason why we are perfect for each other," says Alison.



WEDDING RESOURCES

Wedding Planner: Ali Phillips

Engaging Events by Ali

Flowers: HMR Designs

Bridal Gown: Monique Lhuillier

Ultimate Bride

Groom's Tux: Tommy Hilfiger

Wedding Rings

Bride's: Sundance Jewelers

East Lansing, Mich.

Groom's: Jones Bros. Jewelers, Peoria, Ill.

Invitations: Cloud Nine

Catering: Blue Plate

Cake and Cupcakes: Sweet Mandy B's

Music: Becca Kaufman Orchestra

Lighting: Frost Chicago

Linen Rentals: Windy City Linen

Something Old: Matt's baptismal bonnet sewn into Alison's dress



From above: Customized cocktail napkins with the wedding date and a sketch of the Chicago skyline by Cloud Nine; HMR Designs created a bar and lounge area using white furniture as the backdrop and the couple's main colors as accent pieces.

NICOLE GRANACKI & BHARGAV VADAKKE KUNNAMKODE

August 30, 2014

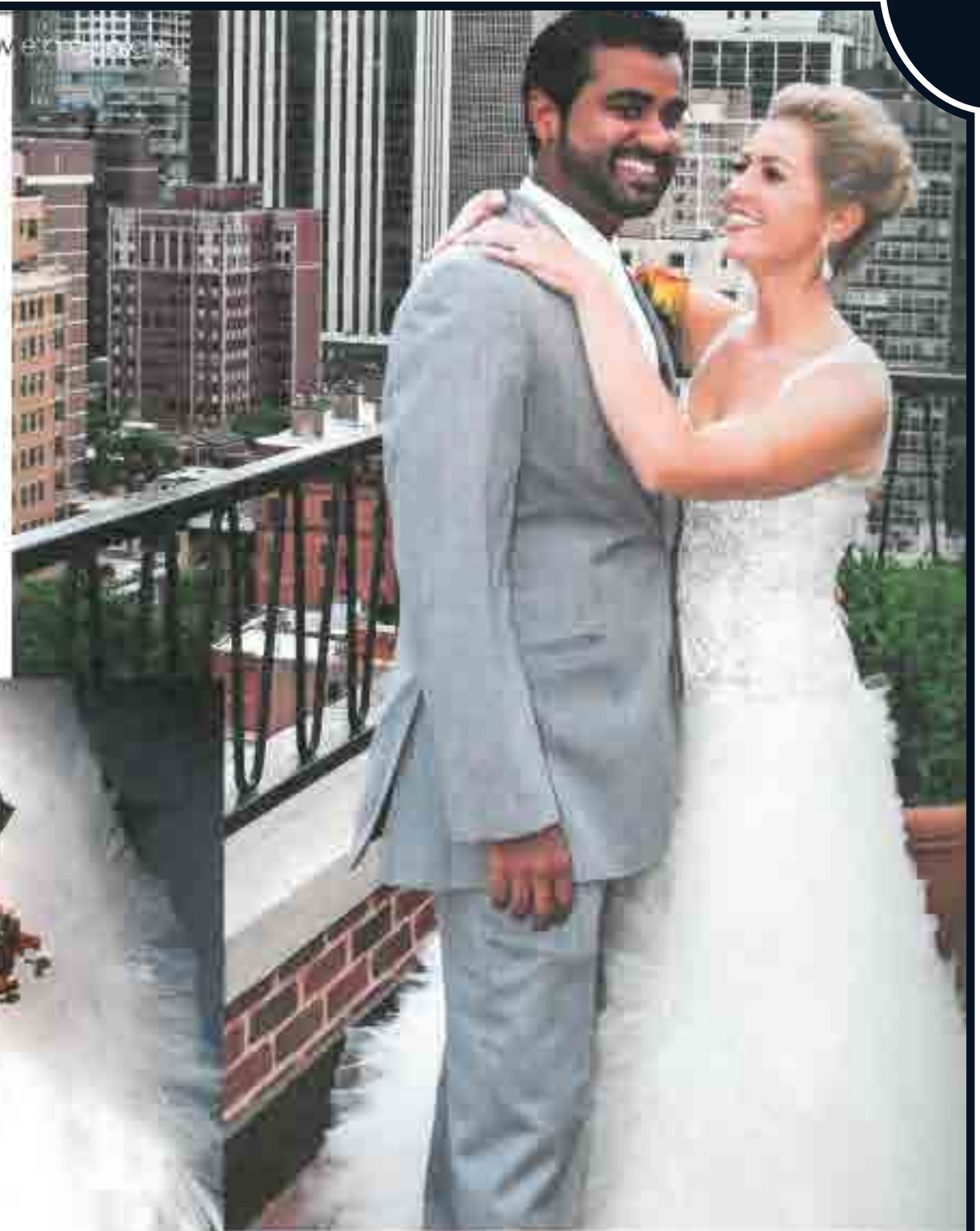
Café Brauer

Photography by Garbo Productions

THE COUPLE "We were both transplants living and working in Washington, D.C., when we met," Nicole fondly remembers. A perfect match, she and Bhargav kept each other company during the day at cultural events and spent their evenings dancing with friends. After five months, Bhargav confessed his romantic intentions. Before long, he was on one knee with a vintage European diamond ring asking Nicole to be his bride—and they weren't alone. Four other couples from their D.C. group also ended up tying the knot.

THE PARTY As a fifth-generation Chicagoan, Nicole wanted to get married in a historical building—and with the granddaughter of the Café Brauer architect, Dwight Perkins, as one of their guests—the venue was a perfect fit. With Indian-inspired decor infused throughout the architectural gem, the setting was truly remarkable. The couple joined hands under an Indian-style canopy that served as both a Jewish chuppah and a Hindu mandap. Then, there was the party room: Clown roses filled every table, and candles dispersed overhead twinkled while guests enjoyed the wedding feast. The final design feat was the cake from Bittersweet, which was inspired by the storied venue. Thanks to the raspberry and white-chocolate flavors, though, it didn't last as long.

THE HONEYMOON In place of a honeymoon, Nicole and Bhargav fled to India a few days after the wedding for a second ceremony. —KMB

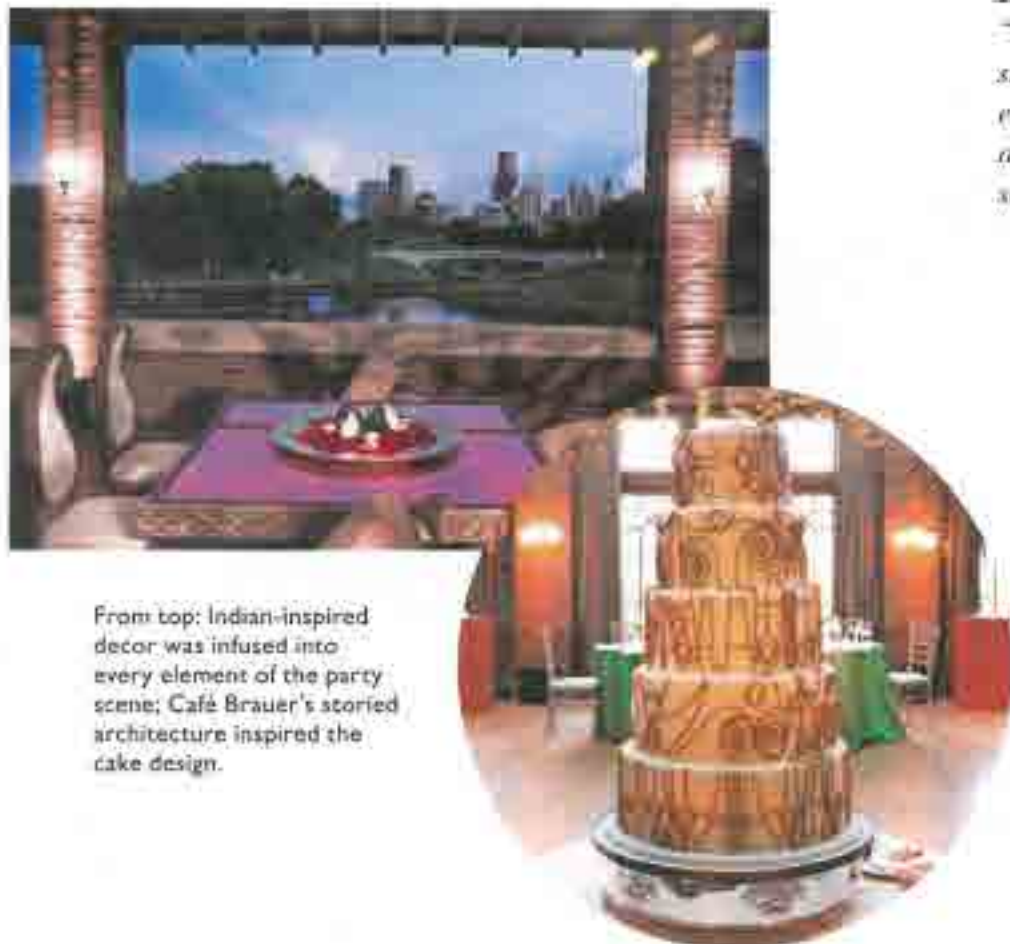


What We Learned

"Don't leave each other's side. We got to experience everything together and had a fantastic day because of it," says the couple.



Clockwise from top: Nicole stunned in a Monique Lhuillier Violet gown; the bridesmaids wore bright persimmon-colored dresses by Alfred Angelo; HMR Designs created a lush bouquet of clown roses, the bride's favorite.



From top: Indian-inspired decor was infused into every element of the party scene; Café Brauer's storied architecture inspired the cake design.

WEDDING RESOURCES

Wedding Planner: Lori Stephenson, Lola Event Productions
Flowers: HMR Designs
Bridal Gown: Violet by Monique Lhuillier, Ultimate Bride
Bride's Shoes: Custom, Battaglia Footwear
Groom's Tie: Black

Tie Formalwear

Wedding Rings: Brilliant Earth, Beyond Conflict Free Jewelry
Groom's Jewelry: James Ciccozzi
Bridal Shoes and Accessories: Bride's Hall, Leticia Lam
Bride's Makeup: Sonia Roselli
Invitations: Hannah Handmade
Clearing: Blue Plate

Cake: Bittersweet

Music: Arlen Music Productions
Videographer: Orange
Wedding Films: Films
Favors: Pieces of wedding cake wrapped in wax paper with a bamboo fork tied to the top
Linens: Platters Blue Plate

GARY METZNER & SCOTT JOHNSON

Aug. 15, 2014

Morgan Manufacturing

Photography by Jeremy Lawson Photography

THE COUPLE Even though they lived only half a mile from each other, Gary and Scott didn't meet in person until 2001—online. A whirlwind romance was well underway and then a new job moved Scott to the West Coast, so the couple spent the next six months flying back and forth to see each other. Then 9/11 happened. Scott came back to Chicago to be with Gary, and they planned to live happily ever after. Thirteen years later, when same-sex marriage became legal in Illinois, they decided to finally tie the knot. Fittingly, their celebration both maintained tradition (through the ceremony

and sequence of events) and broke it (hello drag queens and male models as entertainment).

THE PARTY Gary and Scott were the very first couple to hold their wedding at Morgan Manufacturing in the West Loop. J&L Catering set up a trio of cuisine stations in the industrial space: Asian, Mexican and comfort food, each with a drink pairing (mini sake, margarita and Pilsner beer shots). Bill Heffernan of HMR Designs used hanging amaranth, chandeliers, and pops of vibrant green and crisp white to dress up the space and make it modern for the couple.

THE HONEYMOON Gary and Scott waited until November before jetting off on their South American honeymoon to Playa Vik Jose Ignacio, a buzz-worthy boutique hotel in the small coastal town of Jose Ignacio in Uruguay. —AH



Clockwise from top: Gary and Scott, decked out in custom-designed Thom Browne suits purchased in New York City, drove off in a Mini Cooper convertible in newly wedded bliss; HMR Designs used pops of green, white and purple to enhance the industrial space at Morgan Manufacturing; the grooms' dapper Thom Browne oxfords.



What We Learned

"As [our photographer] Jeremy Lawson suggested, try to relax and enjoy the day because it will be over before you know it. Serve cocktails before the ceremony. It gets your guests into the party mood," says the couple.



WEDDING RESOURCES

Wedding Planner Linda Alpert,

Affairs With Linda

Flowers and Decor Bill Heffernan,

HMR Designs

Groom's Suits Custom, Thom

Browne, New York City

Wedding Rings Custom platinum

bands, Gregg Helfer Ltd.

Invitations Edie Fake

Catering J&L Catering

Cake Cake

DJ/Band/Entertainment DJ Kiss;

drag queens, Diva Entertainment

On-Site Coordinator Sara Barg,

Morgan Manufacturing

Linens Rentals HMR Designs

Lighting Frost Chicago

Groomer/Car Mini Cooper

convertible.



From top: Deconstructed strawberry shortcakes served in mini jars, made by Cake, the three-tiered confection was banana-flavored and featured a salted-caramel filling. The personalized topper was made in Vietnam especially for the couple.

STACY PETERSON & JOE MONACO

July 26, 2014

Chicago Botanic Garden

Photography by Christy Tyler Photography

THE COUPLE Stacy and Joe, both physical therapists, first met while working together at the same clinic. Their connection was instant. First came friendship; 11 months later saw them officially dating; and just a year after that, Joe dropped to one knee at the Chicago Botanic Garden and proposed with Stacy's mom's engagement ring. The gorgeous location held a special place in Stacy's heart, as she and her mom had spent quality time there before her mom passed away in February 2013. To bring the connection full circle, the couple chose the garden as the site of their ceremony and reception too.

THE PARTY It didn't take much to make the already-stunning location shine, so the couple, alongside planner Kelly Cavanaugh, owner and senior event consultant at Clementine Custom Events, opted for a neutral color scheme of peach, blush, white and champagne. Planning the wedding was a family affair, as Stacy's dad, Ken, was involved in every detail, and her brother, Brian, officiated the ceremony. To end the incredible evening, guests tucked into a petite sweets bar stocked with chocolate-dipped strawberries, raspberry creme brulee, cheesecake bites and homemade fruit-filled empanadas.

THE HONEYMOON Right after the wedding, "we spent a relaxing minimoon at The Geneva Inn in Lake Geneva," says Stacy. "This January, we're heading to the Dreams La Romana Resort & Spa in Bayahibe, Dominican Republic. It will be the perfect escape from the Chicago winter!" —*Misty Millote*



Clockwise from top: The newlyweds share a sweet moment together at the Chicago Botanic Garden; the flower girl (the couple's niece) wore a baby's-breath crown in her hair; Deerfields Bakery created the couple's garden-inspired, three-tiered wedding cake.

What We Learned "Try to be patient, flexible and as open-minded as you can. When it's time for the wedding, you'll be able to enjoy the special moments and just have fun!" says the couple.



From above: A neutral color scheme of peach, blush and champagne unified the decor, and sweet accents, such as the "Mr and Mrs" bunting on the back of the bride and groom's bistro chairs were a hit; straws at cocktail hour sported flags that said "cheers!"

WEDDING RESOURCES

Wedding Planner: Kelly Cavanaugh, Clementine Custom Events
On-site/Wedding Coordinator: Mary Biller and Connie Belle, Chicago Botanic Garden
Flowers and Decor: HMR Designs
Bridal Gown: Rivini, Belle Vie
Bridal Couture:

Brides Shoes: Stuart Weitzman
Groom's Tie: Jos. A. Bank
Wedding Rings: Kathy Sattelbach, Steven's Jewelers
Groom Jewelry: Diamond-and-pearl earrings and diamond bracelet, Steven's Jewelers
Bridesmaid Flowers: Sonia Roselli
Invitations: Magnificent Milestones

Celebrating Culinary Landscape

Deerfields Bakery
DJ/Dancefloor Entertainment: String Theory, Style Matters DJs
Limon Mercuri B&B Livery
Something Blue: The bride wore her mom's diamond-and-sapphire bracelets (a gift from her dad on her mom's 50th birthday)