

## real wedding \* Kristina Clark & John Kemmerer



**details** \* Rehearsal Dinner/Caterer/Cake/Post Wedding Brunch: Block Island Gourmet, Block Island Hair/Make-up/Nails: Indigo Day Spa, Block Island Flowers: La Bella Rose, Block Island Officiant: The Hon. Richard Kyte, Woonsocket Ceremony Music: On Island Entertainment and Media, Block Island Photographer: Rose Schaller Photo, Middletown Wedding Night Stay: Sullivan House, Block Island Guest Accommodations: Sullivan House, National Hotel, 1661 Inn, Hotel Manisses, Spring House Hotel, Block Island Tent Rental: Block Island Party Rentals, Block Island

Rose Schaller

## THE SULLIVAN HOUSE



**THIS STORY BEGINS IN 1981**, when John Kemmerer met Kristina Clark through his highschool classmate Suzanne Clark, Kristina's younger sister. At the time, their four-year age difference was, as John describes, "a yawning, unbridgeable gap... I developed a hopeless crush on her and mooned over her and became tongue-tied in her presence, while for her, understandably, my existence, proximity, and meek, mute adoration barely registered. I was the runty, pipsqueak sidekick of her annoying kid sister. A hopeless situation."

In the ensuing 25 years, John and Kristina stayed in and out of contact. It wasn't until a trip to Milwaukee, when John flew to meet Kristina to test the strength of this new chapter in their long-distance friendship, that their respective futures were destined to become one. "When I first caught sight of Kristina," John recounts, "I

knew her, in a deep and reassuring and calming sense, and felt immediately relaxed and relieved. The trip was a huge success and, most importantly, allowed me to begin building a relationship with Kristina's son Gavin, her ex-husband and her dog Bingo." In the autumn of 2008, the couple was married.

The Sullivan House on Block Island was the site for their ceremony and reception. Family vacations to the island during the last 10 years have made it a magical place for John and, during their engagement, the same for his bride-to-be. "We have been there together three times and feel so at home in its nature, so at one with those gorgeous vistas and enchanted little groves off of seemingly secret and mysterious pathways." As for choosing the Sullivan House, John says, "On a lark...we visited the Sullivan House web site, and upon seeing the photos

and the menus, we were quickly drawn in, and were convinced that this was the only place we could possibly get married."

The couple was married in a spray of fall oranges, yellow and aster purple with the tent poles covered with roses, dahlias, cascading millet and other fall flowers.

According to Kristina the space was transformed "into an enchanted grove, a fairyland banquet hall." And the magical day itself was summed up by John. "We hoped it would be fun for our guests, but we expected to spend much of our time tending to family issues or otherwise getting pulled in many different directions. We weren't naïve enough to expect it to be the 'best day of our lives.' But that's what it turned out to be. We were really 'there' to experience it fully and deeply." ♣ -MP

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I'll turn off as soon as the first glass of champagne is handed to me." A year spent planning and preparing for this day and feeling good about every little concern left Gallagher with nothing more than, as she puts it, "To be in it. When the day happens. I won't worry. I won't be '7:05[pm] service comes out and serves salad.'" In Bodnar's case, the switch will definitely need to be flicked to the off position. "I'll want to be a bit of a control freak, wanting everything to look the way I have it envisioned in my head. During the rehearsal I'll pretend I'm walking down the aisle for real. Then, I'll finally take myself as a bride and relax."

In the maelstrom of searching, calling, pricing, tasting, fitting, discussing and negotiating all that goes into a wedding, all three planner brides didn't forget to have their families share in the making of a few important touches. "My Mom and Dad made the boutonnieres out of sailing rope," says Bodnar. "It's important to me to have them be a part of this and let them have a piece of my day." For Gallagher, whose family is split between Canada and Bermuda, having her mother come and help throughout the preparations was important. "The tartan we used for the tablecloths was also the material we used to make the bows on the invites and seating cards. My mother made all these and tied perfect bows on every one." And for Pamula, it was her fiancé that helped with their save-the-date announcements. "He said that, in me, he was putting his player out there. But the truth is he did his share." And her budget? "I had a budget in mind, but a few days before the wedding I really wanted linens, really wanted a Martini luge and high bar stools...you know, the necessities."

Being naïve is a bride-to-be's prerogative. Depending on who you are and who you put your trust in can either make your wedding day an emotional rollercoaster or a *c'est la vie* experience. By contrast, for this trio of brides, who know weddings from the save-the-date cards all the way to the confetti, getting married wasn't the holiday it appeared to be, but a day when they were no different from anyone who has taken that storied walk to abiding matrimony. And going over budget? Having a few snafus here and there? No big deal. Firing yourself at your own wedding isn't an option. \*

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John Fuller Photo

Lisa Berry Photo

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