



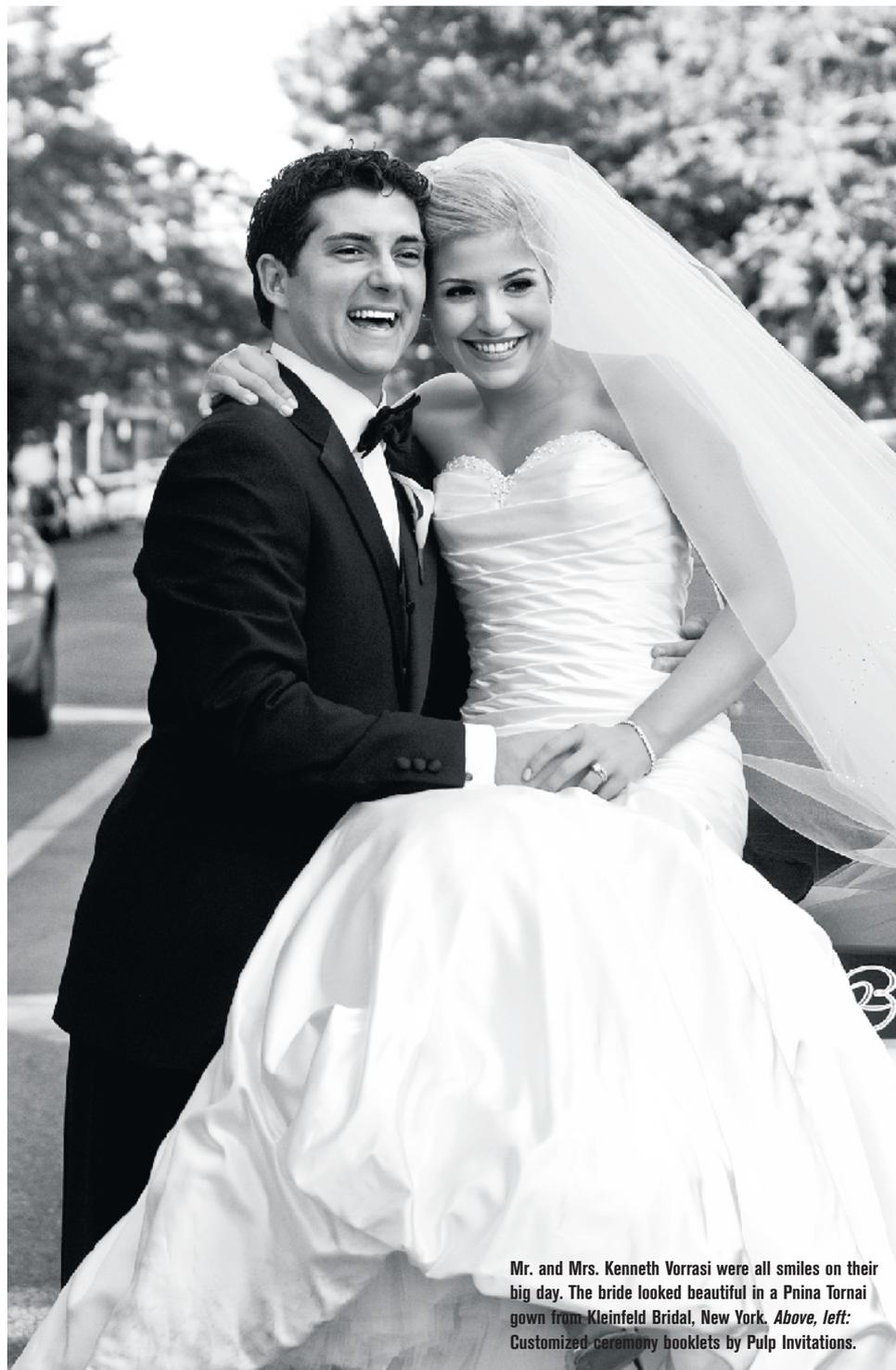
SO HAPPY TOGETHER

A DRAKE HEIRESS AND HER CAPITOL HILL BEAU TIE THE KNOT TRADITIONAL-STYLE

BY JENNIFER BERG | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARA GARABARINO OF GARBO PRODUCTIONS

Elizabeth Brashears was a freshman at Cornell University when senior Kenneth Vorrasi approached her. "His opening line was 'I like your outfit,'" says Brashears. "And that was what got me. That was my 'you had me at hello.'" Besides fashion sense, the couple had plenty in common—enough to keep them talking for the six years that they dated. And when Vorrasi, now an attorney in the Washington, D.C. area, knelt down on a Georgetown canal to propose to Brashears, who currently works in hotel operations, the college sweethearts were on the fast track toward a resplendent wedding at The Drake, which was held on September 15, 2007.

Though Brashears and Vorrasi were living in D.C. at the time of the engagement, they knew that nothing but a Windy City wedding would do: Brashears' family lives in Chicago, and the fact that her great grandfather, Edwin L. Brashears Sr., owned and ran The Drake until 1979, gave her a sentimental tie to one of our city's most beloved reception venues. For the ceremony, a friend of the couple recommended that they



Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Vorrasi were all smiles on their big day. The bride looked beautiful in a Pnina Tornai gown from Kleinfeld Bridal, New York. Above, left: Customized ceremony booklets by Pulp Invitations.

hold it at Southport Avenue's St. Josephat Catholic Church, a venue willing to accommodate a special request of the groom's: "The church agreed to let us use Kenny's law professor from Notre Dame as our officiant," says Brashears, "and that was very important to us."

With the venues in place, all the couple needed was a planner. Enter Master Bridal Consultant Frank Andonoplas, founder and owner of Frank Event Design. "The people at The Drake recommended Frank—everyone did. He's fabulous," says the bride.

Andonoplas began his work by sitting down with the couple to get a sense of their style. "They're very much traditionalists," says Andonoplas. "They like a bit of contemporary flair, but nothing over the top." The bride's mother, Karen Brashears, who was instrumental in the planning process, adds: "The look we were going for could be called 'sophisticated elegance.'" To keep things pretty but not excessive, "Liz was interested in

botanicals all in one color scheme," says Karen. "And we thought shades of white and green would coordinate well with the bridesmaid dresses and against the rich hues in the Gold Coast Room of The Drake [where the dinner and dancing would take place]."

When the big day finally came, the couple met up at the ornate, Lincoln Park church, which Andonoplas had decorated with simple florals: white dendrobium orchids and calla lilies. "I didn't think I would cry," recalls Brashears looking back on the ceremony. "But walking into the church, everything was so beautiful. It all felt so breathtaking that I just started bawling." The scenery for the rest of the day would be no less impressive: After the ceremony, the couple and the members of the wedding party posed for photos against iconic Chicago backdrops like the Lincoln Park Zoo and Michigan Avenue.

Once inside The Drake, the festivities began with a cocktail reception for Brashears' and Vorrasi's 260 guests in the hotel's French Room. "The cocktail hour was done in gold tones, a prelude of what was to come in the Gold Coast Room," says Andonoplas. Along with passed hors d'œuvres like golden fig and Mascarpone in phyllo dough, guests at the cocktail reception were treated to shrimp, snow crab, oysters and clam chowder from a lavish raw bar.



The decadent food kept on coming during a dinner of sea bass and filet mignon in the Gold Coast Room, where guests sat at tables decked in apple green lamour satin with white ribbon overlay. Centerpieces of three different heights, made up of calla lilies and Hawaiian orchids, came courtesy of Anthony Gowder Designs. The cake, designed to mirror the china pattern that the couple had registered for, provided another piece of ornate eye-candy.

As the Al Sophia Orchestra began to play, the bride and groom took to the floor to dance to Michael Buble's "Save the Last Dance for Me." "It's an upbeat song so we did a foxtrot," says Brashears. "It was important to us that everyone had fun, and that really kicked it off. All our guests were cheering." The dancing, which included a

father-daughter spin around the floor to "Isn't She Lovely," would continue for several hours.

At midnight, the Gold Coast Room was transformed into a lounge for the couple's high-energy after party. The lounge channeled Miami's Delano Hotel with tables embedded with fresh flowers, chaises and a blue-and-white color scheme. Late-night snacks of chicken wings and pizza kept guests fueled up and dancing 'til two in the morning. "Our wedding was everything we hoped it would be and more," adds Brashears. "We feel very fortunate." ■

PLACE OF CEREMONY ST. JOSEPHAT CHURCH **PLACE OF RECEPTION** GOLD COAST ROOM AT THE DRAKE HOTEL **WEDDING PLANNER** FRANK ANDONOPLAS, MASTER BRIDAL CONSULTANT FRANK EVENT DESIGN **CAKE** MARK SEAMAN OF MARKED FOR DESSERT CAKE BOUTIQUE **FLORALS AND LIGHTING** ANTHONY GOWDER DESIGNS **VIDEO** EARLE GREENBURG OF CHICAGO VIDEO WORKS **MUSIC** AL SOPHIA ORCHESTRA, MICHAEL O'DEA OF O'DEA ENTERTAINMENT **LINENS** BBJ LINEN BOUTIQUE **INVITATIONS** PULP INVITATIONS **BRIDAL GOWN** PNINA TORANI AT KLEINFELD BRIDAL, NYC **ENGAGEMENT RING** THE TINY JEWEL BOX, WASHINGTON D.C. **BRIDESMAID DRESSES** JIM JHELM **HAIR** ROGER GUMM OF COLETTE SALON AND DAY SPA **MAKEUP** MARY HARRIS

Clockwise from top left: Calla lily centerpieces by Anthony Gowder Designs; the Frank Andonoplas-designed after party; and the couple's monogram-topped cake by Marked for Dessert.



"His opening line was 'I like your outfit,'" says Brashears about the first time she met Vorrasi. "And that was what got me. That was my 'you had me at hello.'"