



A HEART-STOPPING AFFAIR

CATHERINE WARREN & BRADLEY ERNST

September 7, 2013 Lake Forest, Illinois | Photographed by Amanda Sudimack for Artisan Events



Catherine Warren says she remembers the night she found out Bradley Ernst had a crush on her “like it was yesterday.” The two attended the same high school and had hit it off while spending time at a friend’s lake house one summer. Though they both developed crushes on each other, neither revealed their feelings until one night nine years later, when a mutual friend insisted Catherine go out with him and Brad. “I asked him why he kept bringing Brad up and he responded, ‘Because he’s in love with you,’” Catherine recalls. Flattered, she admitted that she, too, had always liked Brad.

That fateful night led to a year of dating, after which Brad knew the time was right to ask Catherine’s parents for permission to propose. “From just looking into Catherine’s eyes and seeing her smile, I could always tell she genuinely loved me and cared [about] me from the bottom of her heart,” Brad explains. He got down on one knee in front of an iconic Chicago fountain with a beautiful custom-designed ring. “I remember feeling my jaw drop!” Catherine says.

Since the couple met in high school, the decision to hold their wedding in their hometown of Lake Forest, Illinois, was easy. Brad took an active role in the planning process, as did Catherine’s entire family, which became especially beneficial when Brad moved to Los Angeles for a summer internship and didn’t return until two days before the wedding. In fact, Catherine was pleasantly surprised when her father became eager to help after being “tricked” into perusing floral samples. “He was blown away by how much detail was involved!” Catherine smiles.

RESOURCES

Aisle Runner
Kehoe Designs

Beauty
Ashley Young for Salon Buzz - hair
Krista Muir for KM Beauty - makeup

Bridal Gown/Veil
Ines Di Santo

Bridesmaid Gowns
Love Lane

Cake
Amy Beck Cake Design

Calligraphy
Elizabeth Grace

Catering
Exmoor Country Club

Consulting
Parties Etc.

Entertainment
Matt Lewis and The Union - reception
DJ Matt Roan - after-party

Favors
Frango Mints

Floral Design
Kehoe Designs

Hair Accessories
Erin Cole

Invitations/Stationery
Elizabeth Grace

Jewelry
Therese Crowe Design

Lighting Design
Kehoe Designs

Linens
BBJ - Table Fashions

Photography
Amanda Sudimack for Artisan
Events

Registries
Bloomingdale's Honeyfund
Williams-Sonoma

Rentals
M&M - The Special Events
Company
Partytime-HDO Productions, Inc.
Tablescapes Event Rentals

Venue
Church of St. Mary - ceremony
Exmoor Country Club - reception

Videography
I Do Films





An elegant Catholic church with incredible high ceilings was a particularly meaningful choice for the ceremony, since the priest had officiated Brad's father's memorial service years earlier. Clusters of white and ivory hydrangeas and roses decorated the aisles, and two vases draped in crystal strands and filled with lush arrangements of neutral flowers flanked the altar. Bridesmaids dressed in draped strapless gowns in slate grey preceded the bride to the sounds of a soloist and classical trio. Catherine looked radiant in a mermaid gown with an elegant lace overlay and floor-length veil. Brad says before the church doors even opened he was struggling to fight off tears of joy; when his bride, a former Miss Illinois USA, began her journey down the aisle, he "lost it." "I still couldn't believe how beautiful she looked," Brad remembers. "Taking her hand, looking into her eyes, and walking up to the altar was the happiest moment of my life!"



**“A few times we looked at each other and said,
‘This is so much fun and I can’t believe it’s only 6PM!
We have so much more fun to have.’”**



Guests traveled to a nearby country club for the reception, chosen for its stunning golf course views and outdoor tent, which served as the perfect canvas for Catherine to create the exact romantic, elegant atmosphere she envisioned. Inside the white tent, tables were decorated with either a low arrangement of ivory flowers, or a tall

Waterford crystal vase overflowing with blush and cream hydrangeas and roses. Sunlight bounced off gold-rimmed glassware and chairs. The couple's bullion monogram personalized the sparkling dance floor, and a lounge area featuring sofas, chairs, and charming pillows in white and soft gold hues provided intimate, comfortable seating.





After enjoying a delicious surf-and-turf dinner, Catherine and Brad admit that they spent most of their night on the dance floor. “To borrow some words from my man Bruce Springsteen, it was a heart-stopping, earth-quakin’, booty-shakin’, pants-droppin’, hard-rockin’, electrifying, history-makin’, legendary affair,” Brad says. Agrees Catherine, “Every time I walked off the dance floor, I wanted to turn around and go right back.” A slow-motion video booth filled with bubbles, balloons, hats, and silly glasses provided additional amusement; and guests were delighted when waiters handed out custom party sunglasses and donuts later in the evening. Another sweet treat: the five-tier cake, frosted with the same lace pattern that adorned Catherine’s dress and accented with fresh floral clusters.

The evening was far from over once the wedding cake was cut. Festivities continued at the nightclub-themed after-party, held in the ballroom of the country club, where guests enjoyed music spun by a DJ and snacked on comfort food such as grilled cheese sandwiches, mini hot dogs, and tacos.

After their whirlwind wedding day, the newlyweds declare that moments spent with each other, dancing with friends, and listening to family members’ speeches linger in their minds as the most memorable. Their advice to other couples is simple: Assemble the right people. “It doesn’t matter where and when [the wedding] is. Just get everyone that matters to you together and you’ll naturally start smiling, making fun of each other, laughing, and hugging,” Brad affirms. “Nothing beats that.”

ERIN MIGDOL