

# Being Us

By Andrea Milam

Photography by Becky Spencer Photography





Bold rays of sun broke through the rain and heavy cloud cover that had just thwarted Adrian Beasley's plan to propose to Shane Hartnett atop Bermuda's iconic Gibbs Hill Lighthouse.

The couple took to the Willow Stream Spa patio, relaxed and happy after a couples massage, and gazed out across the lush Fairmont Southampton grounds, the golf course's rolling emerald hills, and the island's south shore beyond, all dappled in a calico of sunlight and shade. Adrian reached into the lining of his shorts, where, in the absence of pockets in the spa's robes, he'd resourcefully nestled a box containing the ring. He asked Shane to marry him, and though the proposal didn't take place atop the lighthouse and the ring was too small for Shane's finger, Shane said yes with tears in his eyes.

Adrian's romantic June 2014 proposal was the culmination of a relationship that spanned more than two years and involved traveling thousands and thousands of miles to spend precious moments together. Adrian, born and raised in Bermuda, was living and working on the island when he met Shane, an Ireland native, who was working in the British island territory. By the time Shane departed for London a few months after he'd met Adrian, the couple recognized the potential for something special between them. They credit Apple's iMessage with allowing them to stay in contact "all day every day," says Adrian with a smile in his voice. Shane returned for a visit a few months after he'd left Bermuda, and their interest in one another was further piqued. They decided to meet in New York around Valentine's Day 2012.

"We had a really amazing weekend, and we were like, 'okay, this is definitely worth traveling for,'" says Adrian.

From that weekend on, the couple never went more than six weeks without seeing one another, taking turns flying across the Atlantic between Bermuda and London or meeting up in the U.S. or Canada. Finally, Shane made the decision to move to Bermuda permanently to be with Adrian in early 2014. The couple decided to make Bermuda their home

and after a lot of red tape dealing with work permits and Bermuda immigration, Shane moved to Bermuda in early 2014.

"It was an easy decision to uproot my life," says Shane. "Between the time I'd spent with Adrian and being able to do my job in Bermuda's relaxed environment, it made perfect sense."

Adrian, a lawyer, and Shane, an accountant, had already started their family by embarking on an ongoing adoption process when Adrian popped the question.

"It's important to us that we have a solid, stable family unit," says Adrian. "One of our themes is how much we love being us."

Though the couple knew they wanted to celebrate their union in Bermuda, same-sex marriage is not legal in the conservative British territory. So they returned together to New York, where more than two years earlier they'd shared the special weekend that solidified their relationship, to be legally married. The couple and their photographer, Mike Allebach, navigated the Manhattan Marriage Bureau on a busy summer Friday wearing their orange and lime green Bermuda shorts.

"It's a beautiful building and it was fun to see all the brides and grooms, and grooms and grooms, and brides and brides," says Adrian.

Once they were officially married, the couple returned to Bermuda to put the finishing touches on their blessing ceremony and weekend of events for the 140 guests who would join them from Ireland, the U.K., Canada, and the U.S. Shane and Adrian carefully chose their venues and vendors based on reputations for fabulous customer service, a marked investment in and support of Bermuda's tourism product, and support for same-sex marriage.

The fun began on Friday, September 4, with a welcome happy hour party at the Hamilton Princess; as



arriving guests mingled outside on the marina and live music played, the couple reveled in the joy of seeing their loved ones come together, rum swizzles and dark 'n stormies in hand.

The following day, the party took to the water with an afternoon cruise aboard the Über Vida, where international guests marveled at the top-notch service, which included wait staff swimming trays loaded with drink orders out to those bobbing in the beautiful Atlantic.

"It's so different to see the island from the water," says Adrian. "A lot of our guests who had never been to Bermuda thought that was the best part of the whole weekend."

That night, guests traded flip flops and swimsuits for elegantly casual attire at Red Steakhouse, one of the couple's favorite restaurants on island, for the rehearsal dinner. Finally, the big day arrived. The blessing ceremony was set to take place at the Wesley Methodist Church, where Adrian is a fifth-generation congregant. The couple worked with the leadership of the church leading up to their blessing.

"We put in our 'application' with the Spiritual Interest Committee, which couldn't decide whether to allow our ceremony after a couple meetings," says Adrian. "They had us come in and we talked through why it was important to us to have the ceremony there. The committee then made their recommendation to the official board, which voted in favor of our ceremony. It was then taken to the congregation, which voted in favor, but it did cause some ruptures in the church; some members did leave."

As the couple stood together in the church at their hard-won ceremony, with sunlight streaming through the same stunning stained glass windows Adrian had admired throughout his childhood, the significance of the ceremony and Adrian's love for Shane swelled within him in a moment he'll never forget.

"Looking back on that moment, it was surreal," says Adrian. "That really happened, right there at the front of the church."

Mere months after their wedding celebration, Adrian and Shane are still riding the wave of bliss and contentment that comes with sharing such a once-in-a-lifetime event with their cherished friends and family. They live a happy life in Bermuda and simply enjoy "being us."



