



ENGAGEMENTS

The BIG DAY

Aileen Crone and Bradley Oliver

Story by Holli W. Haynie | Photos by Snap Happy Photography | www.ohsnaphappy.com

Even when two people are undeniably right for one another, they may not figure it out at the same time. From the beginning, there wasn't a doubt in Aileen Crone's mind. After her first date with Bradley Oliver, she knew he'd be the man she would marry. Speaking with the couple moments before their nuptials, they recalled the memories of their first meeting fondly.

"I knew from day one, I just had to convince him," she says as bridesmaids spread out her dress so she could sit down. "I was determined. He had the whole package — smart, witty, good looking, a gentleman."

Bradley was in the other room at the church where groomsmen were glued to the television watching the Florida vs. Alabama championship football game.

They met three years ago and soon figured out they knew a lot of the same people, but strangely their paths had never crossed. They were instantly attracted to one another and began dating.

Things were going well, although by the sixth or seventh date, Aileen recalls, they hadn't yet kissed.

"After that date, I told him he really should have kissed me. On the next date, he did." But that kiss left him a little spooked. He started pulling back and Aileen took notice.

"I was a long time bachelor and was way too stubborn to leave bachelorhood," admits Bradley. His years as a deejay at a local bar spoiled him on the single life. "It didn't take long for her to win me over, but it took me some time to realize what I had."

A few weeks passed with no call when Aileen made it known to Bradley how she felt. "I sent him a text and said, 'I like you. If you like me, I need to know. I'm not going to wait around.'"

That text brought him to his senses. It appeared that

Aileen had conquered the bachelor within him.

"Not having her around made it abundantly clear what I had, and what I would be giving up," he says. "I refused to give it up."

They went on a date the next weekend and never looked back. Aileen was completing her degree at the University of Memphis and the couple decided to wait until she finished school before getting married.

"If I could've designed the perfect woman, she'd be it," says Bradley, looking away from the football game. "Luckily God did it for me."

When she graduated in December of last year, she was expecting a ring. And Bradley had every intention of giving it to her, but not before he made her sweat a little.

"I played the 'I don't have any

money card," he explains with a gleam in his eye. "I kept messing with her."

Aileen didn't doubt Bradley when he told her of his financial barriers to getting a ring but she confesses to being very disappointed at the time. "He had tears in his eyes when he said it, so I believed him completely."

By Christmas Eve, it was make or break time. After the family gatherings, the couple came home to open their gifts. Aileen had already resigned herself to the fact that this year wasn't going to be the year they got engaged.

Bradley toyed with her just a little longer before giving her exactly what her heart desired. "I told her I had a present hidden in the house and to leave it alone. I went to go get it and walked out holding a long, thin 8x8 box," he says laughing. "You could see the disappointment on her face."

The gift was a plaque with their picture on it. It had a famous quote from Winnie the Pooh: "If you live to be 100, I hope I live to be 100 minus 1 day, so I never have to live a day without you." Under the poem the words were inscribed: "Will you marry me?"

When Aileen looked over at Bradley, he had a diamond ring in his hand. It was around midnight when she called everyone to spread the happy news. They set the wedding on their three-year anniversary, December 5. The couple was wed at St. Louis Catholic Church among numerous friends and family.

"I'm without a doubt marrying my best friend," Bradley proclaims. "There's no doubt in my mind she's my soul mate and the one God sent here for me to be with."

Currently living in Lakeland, Bradley works for a transportation broker and Aileen works in transplant services at a tissue bank. The couple plan to find a new home in the next year and begin making room for little ones.



Aileen Crone married Bradley Oliver on December 5 at St. Louis Catholic Church.

Claudette Morrison, Michael Hawkins



Claudette Elizabeth Morrison, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Tarlton Morrison of Memphis, is engaged to Michael Bradley Hawkins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Bruce Hawkins of Greenwood, Miss. and Mr. and Mrs. Michael Joseph Barth of Greenwood. Miss Morrison is the granddaughter of the late Mr. William Price Morrison, Mrs. William Price Morrison and Mr. and Mrs. Claude Hollis Hill. She completed high school at The Hutchison School in Memphis. She then received both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing. She is now a family nurse practitioner and director of Cuidado para Hispanos. Mr. Hawkins is the grandson of the late Mr. James William King and Mrs. James William King, the late Mr. Vennis Ladell Upchurch, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Bruce Hawkins and Mr. and Mrs. James Allen Dykes. He graduated from Pillow Academy in Greenwood and then received his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss. He is a mechanical engineer for Ewing Kessler Mechanical Solutions, Inc. Meredith LuAnn Pierce of West Memphis, Ark., life-long friend of the bride, will be maid of honor; the groom's father will serve as best man. The couple will wed on December 19 at Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis with a reception to follow at the Memphis Country Club.

Kelly Grashot, Benjamin Wilkin



Kelly Anne Grashot, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Lee Rochelle of Oakland, Tenn. and Mr. Louis Daniel Grashot of Memphis, is engaged to Benjamin Knight Wilkin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Paul Wilkin of Tuscaloosa, Ala. The bride-elect is the granddaughter of the late Louis Edward Grashot and Miriam Jones Grashot of Memphis, and Angelina Ann Douglas and the late Buddy Rowland of Memphis. She is a 1999 graduate of Ridgeway High School in Memphis and attended the University of Memphis. She is employed by Bariatric Health and Wellness. Mr. Wilkin is the grandson of Kathleen Night Wilkin and the late Sanford Mayes Wilkin of Wichita, Kans., and the late Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cloy Strong of Tuscaloosa, Ala. He is a 1999 graduate of Tuscaloosa Academy and attended the University of Memphis and the University of Mississippi before graduating from the University of Alabama with a degree in International Marketing and Spanish. He is employed by Taco Casa, Inc. Katherine Louise Grashot of Memphis, the bride's sister, will be maid of honor. Brothers of the

groom Rodney Paul Wilkin II and Brett Strong Wilkin, both of Tuscaloosa, will serve as best men. The couple will marry on January 9 at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa.

Mary Johnson, Christopher Smith



Mary Beth Johnson, daughter of Dale and Katie Johnson of Olive Branch, Miss., is engaged to Christopher Dean Smith, son of Patrick Smith and Kimberly Huggins of Southaven, Miss. Ms. Johnson graduated from Olive Branch High School and recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism at Delta State University in Cleveland, Miss. Mr. Smith also graduated from Olive Branch High School and then attended Ole Miss Desoto Center in Southaven. The couple met in high school and have been together for the past eight years. Beth Fredrick of Starkville, Miss. will be maid of honor, and Levi Bump of Olive Branch, good friend of the groom, will serve as best man. A ceremony and reception will be held December 19 at Longview Heights Baptist Church in Olive Branch. The couple will honeymoon in Ocho Rios, Jamaica.

Catherine Rucker, William Portera



Catherine Rucker, daughter of John and Georgia Rucker of Germantown, Tenn., is engaged to William Portera, son of William and Rebecca Portera of West Point, Miss. Ms. Rucker graduated from Houston High School in Germantown and then received her nursing degree from the University of Memphis Loewenberg School of Nursing. She is now a registered nurse at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis. Mr. Portera graduated from Oak Hill Academy in West Point before receiving his bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss. He is a clinical manager at Wright Medical Technologies in Arlington. Colleen Rucker Hogue of Collierville, Tenn., the bride's sister, will be matron of honor, and the groom's father will be best man. The couple will marry on December 19 at Germantown United Methodist Church in front of more than 200 guests with a reception to follow at The Memphis Zoo. They will honeymoon in Jamaica.



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