

UW Oshkosh love story leads to AWCC's first wedding

by Mandy Potts - Friday, February 14, 2014

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When Brooke Buntrock and Ron Tabbert met, they had no clue their sporadic encounters at and through the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh would lead them to the altar.

Now, they are making history in April as the first bride and groom to celebrate their marriage at the University's new Alumni Welcome and Conference Center.

"It is such an honor to be the first people to celebrate our marriage in that building," said Buntrock '04, who has close ties with UW Oshkosh through her role on the Alumni Association Board of Directors. "We are so excited to get married and to have it start at a place that was so important to our lives and really in molding us to be the people we are today. It's pretty cool."

Buntrock's groom agrees: "I've thought quite a bit about the fact that I owe a lot to Oshkosh for my education. If not for the University, I wouldn't have ended up meeting my best friend and marrying her. I've always been a big fan of Oshkosh, but now it's even deeper, it's how Brooke came into my life."

Buntrock and Tabbert didn't have a traditional path to marriage, some might say. In fact, they became roommates in the Milwaukee area years ago before they ever had interest in dating each other.

"He was looking for a roommate and I was looking for a new place to live, so we moved in together," Buntrock said. "So, we were roommates."

That was in 2007.

Buntrock and Tabbert weren't complete strangers before they moved in together, however. They had both landed jobs in the Milwaukee area and spent time casually hanging out as friends.

Once they became roommates, the two realized just how much they had in common with each other. Both were extremely involved with student organizations during their days on campus, both were deeply involved with Greek life communities; Buntrock with Gamma Phi Beta and Tabbert with Theta Chi.

"I had some very, very favorable times at UW Oshkosh," Tabbert said. "There is something very special about that University and that campus."

Buntrock and Tabbert also shared more personal experiences, which were almost eerily similar; both of their moms died of breast cancer when they were in their 20s, something they both wholeheartedly believe helped bring them together as a couple.

"We truly feel like our moms got to know each other up there and they knew we needed each other. First, we both just needed a friend, and then a roommate and then we ended up falling in love. We truly believe

they brought us together,” Buntrock said, her voice cracking.

Right before Christmas—Dec. 21, 2012—that togetherness was solidified and formalized with an engagement ring and a proposal. After the approval of Buntrock’s father, Tabbert placed the ring, inside a small rectangular box and wrapped with a bow, on a branch of their Christmas tree.

“Brooke is very particular; she likes things done a specific way...” Tabbert said. “She looked at the tree that night and out of like 60 ornaments, she noticed something on the tree that she didn't put on herself.”

“I pulled it off the tree and I saw that my hands were shaking,” she said.

And that’s when she said she knew how badly she wanted the contents of the small rectangular box to be an engagement ring.

Inside: a wish come true. And then, wedding planning began.

The idea to have their wedding in the AWCC actually started as a joke. When the Center plans were first announced—before she and Tabbert were even dating—one of Buntrock’s questions as an alumni board member was whether the facility would be open to the public.

The response from Arthur Rathjen, president of the UW Oshkosh Foundation was: “Yes, that’s our plan and in fact, you can have your wedding there, Brooke.”

Buntrock’s response: “I need to meet an alum first.”

It’s funny—and potentially a twist of fate—how the wedding reception location all came together for Buntrock and her UW Oshkosh guy. The couple's wedding planning took a new turn when they realized the AWCC would be completed this April. The couple even pushed back their original wedding date slightly to be able to book the venue on the UW Oshkosh campus.

“It’s intangible to talk about what is special to us about UW Oshkosh,” Tabbert said.

“We couldn't be happier to celebrate the start of our life together at UW Oshkosh,” Buntrock said.

Alumni Welcome and Conference Center

UW Oshkosh’s new front door—the AWCC—officially opens April 1.

The Buntrock-Tabbert wedding will be the first formal event held during the very first open weekend at the AWCC. Their wedding date is April 5; their wedding party is made up of many UW Oshkosh alumni, making it even more special for the couple to call the UW Oshkosh venue their own for the day.

"We hope this will be the first of many community activities hosted at this beautiful facility. It is fitting to have an alumni couple be our first guests, celebrating and hosting their event in our new reception hall," Rathjen said.

The 22,000-square-foot facility is open to alumni and the community for corporate events, meetings, conferences and celebrations. It's located at 625 Pearl Ave. on the UWO campus and will also become home to three University departments—the Alumni Relations Office, the Business Success Center and the UW Oshkosh Foundation.

More than 50 bookings are already scheduled at the AWCC in 2014. Plans are underway to celebrate the AWCC's grand opening on Friday, May 16.

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Alumni Welcome and Conference Center](#)