



THE EYES HAVE IT

A JET-SETTING EYE DOCTOR AND HIS NEWLYWED WIFE RELISH
SIMPLE ROMANTIC PLEASURES OFF FLORIDA'S PANHANDLE

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The most romantic moments are often profoundly simple.

Just take a few key ingredients—champagne (a no-brainer), candles (ditto), cheese, a nice tablecloth—and the stage is pretty much set. Add an easy-to-prepare but scrumptious main course—stone crab claws, say—and you’re good to go.

Such was the scenario on Bret Fisher’s most recent birthday, with one other special ingredient: It happened on the Sea Ray 340 Sundancer Bret bought last summer. This is the third consecutive Sea Ray he’s owned, and the third he’s bought from Treasure Island Marina in Panama City Beach on Florida’s panhandle. An eye surgeon and father of two, Bret likes to be on the boat whenever he has time. “It really does help take away the stress of the busy work week to get out there and relax,” he says with a smile.

This particular outing went just as planned, thanks to its orchestrator, a lady who answers to the title of Sergeant. Specifically, that’s Sgt. Katie Fisher, now that she’s tied the knot with Bret earlier this year. They set off from Bret’s slip at Treasure Island Marina, drove a short way out to Shell Island, their favorite nearby destination, and dropped anchor. Out came the candles, Bret’s favorite stone crab, and a quiet night over the waves and under the sky.

Since upgrading from his previous boat, a 240 Sundeck, Bret and Katie can spend the whole night on Shell Island or wherever they go. And they can do so in comfort, as the 340 is equipped with a generator, air conditioner, an incredible sound system, satellite television and three flatscreen TVs. This summer they’re planning to make their first trip together down the Florida coast. “If we get at least as far as Sanibel and Captiva, I’ll be happy,” Bret says. Eventually they hope to venture all the way down to the Keys.

Bret and Katie met through mutual friends just two years ago. Katie is a local Air Force recruiter who once handled computer network security for the Air Force Academy. Bret spends his days conducting micro-incision cataract surgery, LASIK surgery, lens implants and glaucoma treatments. *Aqueous*, the moniker for the Sundancer, is the word for the fluid that circulates in front of the eye. “It’s kind of an inside eye-doctor joke,” he explains.

When Katie first caught his own eye, Bret was drawn to her brains as well as her sparkling oculars. “She’s well read, well educated and we talk about a variety of things,” he says. When they reach Shell Island on a typical weekend, Katie likes to pull out a good book and read under the sun. Perhaps because her grandfather hailed from Moscow, she has a penchant for classic Russian literature, histories and period pieces. Recently she devoured *Anna Karenina* largely while lounging on the boat.

Katie grew up in Denver, a town not much known for its boating life. On one of their first dates, lifelong seafarer Bret took her out on the water, and she found it a great way to see and experience Florida. Ever since, boating has been a big part of their relationship. “I just love the water, being on the waves,” she says. “Not so much the swimming for me, it’s just getting out in the middle of nowhere, and the rocking sensation, the clear blue water. The whole atmosphere is so relaxing.”



Bret and Katie soothe their senses when relaxing together on the bow of the Sundancer or listening to the roar of its powerful engines when they open it up on the water.



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When Bret’s children join them, the pace is more lively but always plenty of fun. Claire (10) is “very energetic, adventurous, a little comedian,” Katie says. And she describes Kyle (12) as laid back and good-humored. “They’re both just really good kids.”

Shell Island is a barrier island that is only accessible by boat. The kids love exploring its beautiful white sand dunes, and while swimming or snorkeling offshore, they’ll sometimes spot a bottlenose dolphin or two. But their favorite activity, by far, is jumping off the stern of the boat into the water. “It’s hysterical,” Katie says. “They try to do flips. They’ll get their friends up there and they all rate each other on who does the best dive.” For Kyle’s twelfth birthday, about a dozen of his friends joined them out on the island. Bret set up a tent for the boys, and after a long day of snacking, swimming and diving, they were free to revel in their boyishness while Bret, Katie and Claire camped soundly aboard the *Aqueous*.

Whether by boat or by air, the family is often traveling, and that’s another commonality that brought Bret and Katie together. Despite being in the Air Force, Katie isn’t a pilot, but Bret has that angle covered. He owns and flies his own plane, a Cirrus, which he enthusiastically describes as “a high-performance, four seat, single-engine plane that is a very modern aircraft. It’s all-composite with advanced avionics, electronics and safety systems.” Frequently he takes the Cirrus for out-of-town business trips. “Besides my primary practice in Panama City, I work with a couple practices in Alabama doing laser vision correction, and I fly there whenever I do surgery.”

Sometimes he’ll travel to teach other eye doctors or present research. He’ll fly his own plane if it’s within the region, or he’ll take a commercial flight if it’s as distant as, say, Vancouver. Either way, he’ll typically build a vacation around it and bring the family along. They look forward to visiting Korea this September, when Bret will give a presentation at the University of Seoul. “Katie lived in Korea for a year when she was stationed over there, so she’s going to show me some of the places she visited and lived. We always want to experience the local culture.”

No matter how far and wide they travel, rest assured they’ll look forward to those peaceful comforts of Shell Island back home. Many other Sea Ray owners congregate on Shell Island, so many that it’s become informally known as Sea Ray Row. “We’ve met tons of new people, and we share a common interest,” Bret says. “I also get to see which boat I want next!”

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