

Wedding

ALBUM — 2023



*Nicole and Sam
Boyd*

Section B
Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Published by
The Monticello Express

So much in common

Diabetes – and camp – lead to future together

By **Pete Temple**
Express Associate Editor

Two things brought Macey Spensley and Matt Shofroth together: Camp Hertko Hollow... and diabetes.

Both were campers at Camp Hertko Hollow, a camp in West Des

Moines for kids with diabetes. Both were diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes as small children; Matt in 1998 at age 4, Macey in 2002 at age 5.

But it wasn't until years later, when both became counselors at the camp, that

they connected. Their relationship grew, and they are now planning to marry, Sept. 16 at the University Club in Moline.

"We started as acquaintances and became friends pretty quickly," Matt recalls. We officially

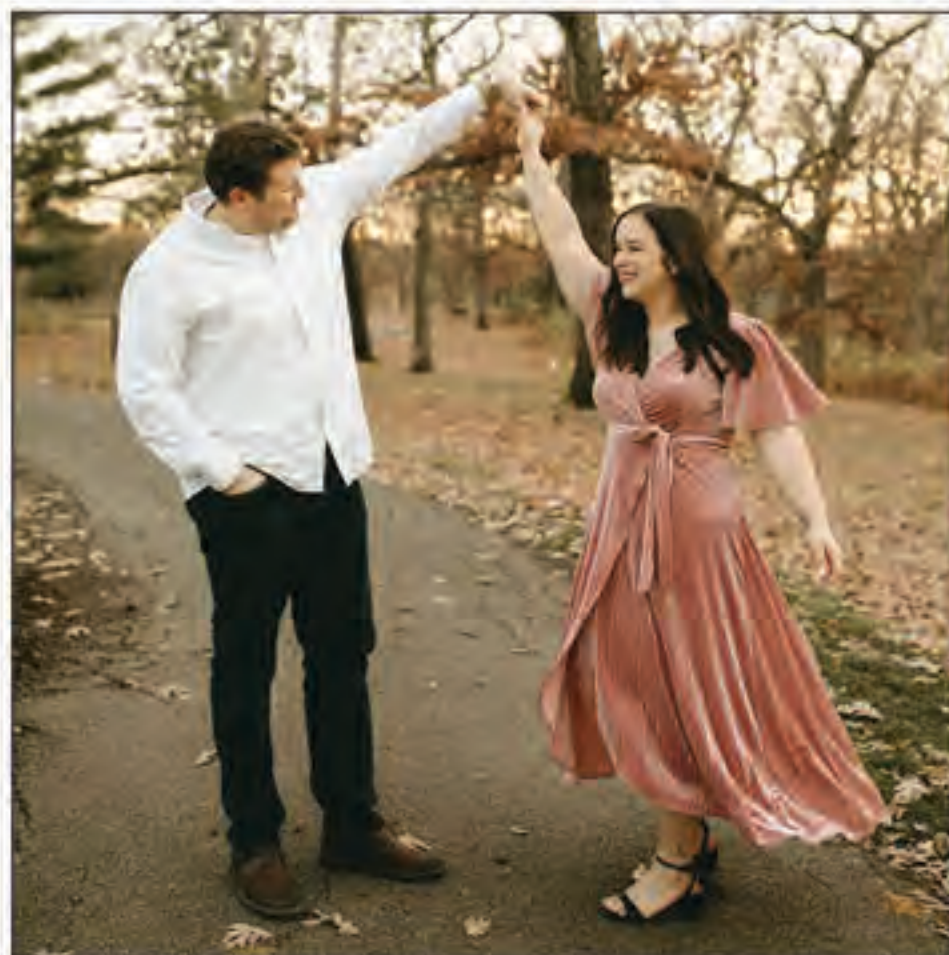
started dating three or four months after connecting at camp."

"At staff training, he asked me about an article I had written for my college internship about being Type 1 diabetic," Macey said. "I looked to my best friend Emma and told her I thought he was cute. We'd chat regularly throughout the week. After camp, we'd talk over Snapchat or text."

"He's so outgoing and kind to everyone. From the beginning, talking with him was just so
(cont'd on page B3)



Matt and Macey found they had a connection while working as counselors at Camp Hertko Hollow, a camp for youngsters with diabetes.



Falling in love while battling diabetes; that's the story of Matt Shofroth (left) and Macey Spensley. (Photos courtesy of Kyndal Elise Photography)

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Macey and Matt –

(cont'd from page B2) easy and natural. He was really down-to-earth and real with me, so I never felt like I had to try to be anything other than myself. Plus it doesn't hurt that he's tall and handsome."

"I think what I found most attractive about Macey was that she was just being herself and having fun at camp," Matt said. "From there we just seemed very comfortable with each other."

Their first date was in August of 2018, to the Riverfront Pops Concert in Davenport.

"It is a show where the Quad City Symphony Orchestra picks a popular musician and band and covers their music," Macey said. "The first year we went, they covered the Beach Boys. We've gone to this concert ever since."

In fact, Matt proposed at the 2022 version of that concert.

"Each year, we take a photo at the concert to commemorate the event," Macey said. "This time, he was much more excited to take the photo than normal. My friend Maddie was with us, so she offered to take the photo on her phone, but she was videotaping as he got down on one knee."

"It was our four-year first date anniversary and felt like a unique time to ask the big question," Matt said.

At the center of it all was their disease.

"It for sure brought us together," Matt said. "And it opened our lives to some doors I doubt we would have found without diabetes and Camp Hertko Hollow."

"For both of us, Camp Hertko Hollow has been a major source of joy," Macey said. "We each have made an incredible family through this camp. Matt's mom has volunteered there for years as well. My two best camp friends will stand with me when we get married. It's really a special place full of love."

Both of them knew marriage was the right path after they moved in together during the early days of the pandemic.

"I think that was when that first fully clicked for me," Matt said. "That would have been about two years into our relationship. It just felt comfortable being together every day."

Macey agreed: "Every time we'd hang out and then say goodbye, I would immediately look forward to the next time I could see him. Once we lived together and knew we could cohabitate well, I don't think there was any doubt in either of our minds that this was going to be forever."

It also enabled them to learn more about each other.



Macey and Matt both were diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at young ages.

"We both are very family-oriented, and my nieces and nephews love him," Macey said. "We like watching basketball and football together, especially the Hawkeyes, going to the gym, biking, drinking craft beer, and hanging out with our friends."

Matt added: "We both like to have fun with our friends, watch TV series together, and enjoy our own individual personal time."

With any couple, there are surprises.

"He loves all things racing, especially NASCAR," Macey said. "He can watch a rerun of a race from 1996 and tell you exactly who wins and who crashes."

"Macey loves to read," Matt said. "It impresses me in this digital age. She reads almost every day. In a way it makes me feel comfortable with some of the things I enjoy that aren't

the most popular or mainstream."

Macey, 26, grew up in Monticello, graduating from Monticello High School in 2015. She graduated from the University of Iowa in 2019 with degrees in journalism and mass communications, as well as English and creative writing.

She recently took a job as a community journalist for a nonprofit called CultureALL in Des Moines.

Matt, now 29, graduated from Davenport Assumption High School in 2012, and went on to Scott Community College in Bettendorf, where he earned a degree in nursing. Things have come full circle for him: Matt is the programs manager for Camp Hertko Hollow, where he recruits staff, campers and organizes camp sessions.

They will be moving

soon from Davenport to Des Moines to be closer to their jobs. Their diabetes will go with them, but they will continue to deal with it, together.

"Diabetes is an all-encompassing disease," Macey said. "You have

to think about it at all times and with every decision you make. And things can go wrong even if you do everything right. We can't fix these problems for each other, but we can be a comfort to one another."

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Matt Shofroth and Macey Spensley, pictured at Camp Hertko Hollow, will be married in September. (Photos courtesy of Kyndal Elise Photography)

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Gillmore hopes to take baking skills to next level

By **Pete Temple**
Express Associate Editor

Aspen Gillmore has baked cupcakes, cake balls, cookies and bars for a number of events, ranging from a baby shower to a company that wanted to deliver baked goods to its appreciated customers.

"My orders have ranged from a dozen to 10 dozen," Gillmore said.

Now, she would like to take it to the next level: weddings.

"I think it would be fun to do one," the 22-year-old from Monticello said.

She had one chance, but it didn't work out.

"I did have one on the schedule for this year, however I couldn't do it because I'm actually in a (different) wedding that same day," she said.

Gillmore said her earliest memory of baked goods came from her mother, Tammy.

"Coming home after school, my mom would have cookies on the counter. That was probably the best memory I have from before I started getting into it," she said.

Gillmore said she doesn't remember exactly when that was, only that she has loved it ever since.

"My mom has always been a baker, so I have been baking my entire life," she said. "I love baking and cooking."

Doing it professionally came about much more recently.

"Someone just messaged me asking if I would do cupcakes," she said. "I posted it on Facebook, and then from there, people just kept asking. August of last year was my very first order, officially, for a customer."

Asked what she likes most about baking, she said, "I like testing my abilities and seeing the final result. I like seeing



Aspen Gillmore learned how to bake at a young age from her mother, Tammy.

everything that I have done, on the table when I'm done with it. I'm a perfectionist, so I like seeing what I created at the end of it all.

The largest order so far was for a local auto body shop.

"They deliver cupcakes to the insurance companies who work with them, so that's probably my biggest order," she said. "That one probably took me all day. I don't have a huge oven to throw in all the cupcakes at one time, so I have to wait until two dozen cook, and then I have to take the pan out and refill the cups. So it's a process."

For larger orders, Aspen enlists the help of Tammy, as well as Missy Henderson, mother of Aspen's boyfriend, Wesley.

"I know I have enough help," Gillmore said. "That's what we were planning on doing for the wedding I was supposed to do, just making sure I had people that would help me."

"My mom likes making the frosting while I'm doing the cupcake part, so it's kind of like an assembly line. It works pretty well."

While chocolate, vanilla, and more



Chocolate cake balls by Aspen Gillmore. (Photos submitted)

unique flavors such as raspberry white chocolate have been popular orders, Gillmore said she she will bake to order.

"I normally just let them ask me what they want and I go with it," she said. "I don't really have a set list."

Gillmore said while baking is fun, she doesn't see it as an eventual full-time job.

"I went to Kirkwood to get a two-year liberal arts degree, and then transferred to the University of Iowa," she said. "My plans were pre-dental. But I didn't really love it there, so I decided to do dental hygiene instead. I got my pre-reqs back at Kirkwood, and now I'm on the waiting list until the fall of 2025 to start

my program."

In the meantime, she works four days a week at Elite Dental in Dyersville, at the front desk. She has been there since September.

"I love it," she said. "It helps me know that I'm moving in the right direction."

On Fridays, she works the front desk at La Belle in Monticello.

On the weekends, and occasionally when she gets a day off from work, she plans to continue baking as long as people want her to.

"I like to have a whole day, to do it all at one time," she said. "I don't like to make them (days) ahead of time. I like them to be fresh."

"I never want to stop doing it, because I love baking so much."



Among the items Aspen Gillmore has baked are these funfetti cupcakes with vanilla buttercream.



A vanilla and vanilla buttercream cross.

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(cont'd on page B14)

'Letters To You' adds unique touch to any wedding, special occasion



This aerial photo of Devin and Darcy Arduser's wedding on New Year's Eve gives you an idea of the unique look Letters To You can add to your wedding reception. (Photo submitted)

By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

Knowing of Johnny Russ' handy woodworking skills, Darcy (Moore) Arduser brought an idea to his attention for her New Year's Eve wedding to Devin Arduser.

"She asked me if I could make giant wooden letters that lit up," Russ shared of how the venture began. "It just started with that idea."

Letters To You was born, allowing couples to rent 4-foot-tall illuminated letters of the alphabet for their wedding ceremonies or receptions.

Russ said following his work with the last name "Arduser," the couple weren't sure where or how they would store the letters, much less use again.

So now his business makes and rents out the letters, numbers, and symbols for indoor use.

After the initial request, Russ brought the idea to his wife, Emily, wanting her thoughts on expanding this into a business.

"I asked whether she thought it would take off," he said. "It doesn't take a lot of time, and it's fun to do."

Since starting earlier this year, Russ already has a handful of weddings booked in which his work will be on display. And, Letters To You not only caters to weddings, but graduation parties, holidays, and special occasions.

When Russ first got started, he did some research into the right dimensions and materials to use. He

also looked into the best design, or font, to use for the letters, numbers, and symbols.

"I didn't want anything too intricate," he said of using a script font versus something boxy and easy to cut out and work with. "It just wouldn't work out right."

Having a full alphabet, Russ can rent out various letters, etc. to multiple customers for multiple events at one time.

He charges \$60 per letter to rent.

Russ can deliver to a couple's venue in-town at no charge, or you can come and pick them up.

Each letter comes equipped with lights and extension cords.

"Each letter plugs into each other," Russ said of connecting them to one strand of lights.

He installs LED string lights into each letter; depending on the letter, it might take between 24, 25, or 26 lightbulbs.

"These are not meant to be outside for long periods of time," warned Russ of exposing the letters to the elements. "They're not for exterior use."

When Russ first started experimenting with making these letters, it took about 40 hours of his time. Now, he has it down to a "T" and roughly three to four hours.

"That's from laying it out, cutting it, drilling holes, and paint," he said.

Speaking of paint, Letters To You are all painted white. Russ said if someone requests a customized color, such as red or black for Monticello Panthers, those letters would have



Earlier this year, Johnny Russ created "Letters To You," creating large illuminated letters for weddings and special occasions. (Photo by Kim Brooks)



This shows what one of the letters looks like after it's been cut out and painted white, before the lights are installed. The letters stand about 4 feet tall. (Photo submitted)

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Muddy Boots offers both home-grown, imported flowers

By **Pete Temple**
Express Associate Editor

She grows her own. She orders from others.

The flowers offered by Peg Mere at Muddy Boots in downtown Monticello cover the spectrum of availability.

"I'm spoiled by being able to grow my own," Mere said. "But I can't grow everything. And I can't grow year-round. We have to be able to get flowers from the places in the world that can grow them year-round."

"We need everybody." Since Muddy Boots opened at 121 E. First St. on April 21, 2022, it has catered to all kinds of people's interests in flowers for a wedding: bouquets, boutonnieres and corsages - what Mere calls the personals - as well as arches, centerpieces and more.

"We're able to do as much or as little as the couple wants," Mere said. "I first want to know the date and location (of the wedding). Then I want to see some of their inspiration photos, what they like and don't like about the photo, so that I get a feel for what their dream or vision is for the wedding."

"Then we can start talking about what flowers they like, and what flowers they don't like."

The scope of what customers want is also part of the discussion.

"We're able to do as much or as little as the couple wants," Mere said. "If they want to DIY (do it yourself), we have bulk flowers available from the farm. If they want to do all the decorating for the reception, then we can just do the personal flowers. So it's all whatever the couple wants."

"A lot of times they want to try to cut costs. Of if they're very creative, they want to put together their own flowers. We want to help them achieve their vision for the day."

Part of the process is deciding whether they want locally-grown flowers. More than 70 percent of flowers sold in the U.S. are imported, although Mere said that number is decreasing as flower farming in the U.S. makes a comeback.

"During the summer and fall, a couple can have 100 percent locally-grown flowers, if they like," Mere said. "During late fall and spring, a combination of local and shipped flowers will be used, and for winter weddings, most of the florals will be imported."

"If you're thinking of getting married in August 2024, then in August 2023 you can see what is available for locally-grown flowers."

Some couples don't



Peg Mere grows many of the flowers she sells at Muddy Boots. (Photo by Pete Temple)

know much about flowers, but just want the arrangements to look beautiful. And some couples want specific flowers to be included. Mere can help in both situations.

"We can book a wedding from six weeks to 18 months out," she said. "If they want things all planned out that far ahead, great. If they're just like, 'No, we want to get married now,' we can help them out then too."

Mere has been providing flowers for weddings since 2017. Since Muddy Boots opened, the customer stream has been steady. "Our first wedding for 2023 is going to be in



These dahlias were all grown on the farm, to be offered at Muddy Boots. (Photos submitted)

March, and so far my last one is in October," she said. "So we've got them sprinkled throughout."

Her love for flowers, both growing and eventually arranging them, is obvious.

"I tend to think that flowers put themselves together," Mere said. "And it's just fun to see how they come together."

Mere uses the example of a late summer/fall flower that a bride may not like at first.

"But then I take a couple of other flowers that would go well with it, and she's like, 'Oh my gosh, that's incredible. Now I want it.'"

"You start putting it together with something else, and its real beauty comes out."



Muddy Boots also offers buckets of flowers - these were all grown on Mere's farm - for a do-it-yourself wedding.



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Historic Stone City church adds to wedding day memories

By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

Everything came together and was meant to be when it came to Nicole (Stevens) and Sam Boyd's wedding day.

The icing on the cake, however, was being able to hold their intimate family ceremony at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in historic Stone City.

That's where Nicole's late maternal grandparents, Claude and Shirley Green, were married on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 1965.

"Growing up, I always imagined getting married at Sacred Heart Catholic Church here in Monticello," shared Nicole, "but over the years, learning and growing with Sam, I was open to other avenues if this day were to approach our path."

Nicole and Sam's relationship, like many, started out as a friendship. They dated for five years before the couple got engaged on March 18, 2022, while on vacation in Las Vegas. Sam popped the question at the top of the Stratosphere (The Strat Hotel & Casino).

Nicole admitted they really were in no hurry to start planning their wedding at all. A few weeks after returning home from Vegas, they were spending time with Nicole's sister, soon-to-be brother-in-law, and her nephews.

"That's when the brainstorming began," she said.

She said they had no idea where to start when it came to the planning and booking of venues and vendors.

"The most important thing, we both agreed, was having good music. We both wanted DJ Johnson (Tyler Johnson) to provide that service."

Johnson had just two options for the couple: Sept. 24 and a date in November.

"Sam made the call to go with September."

Nicole also knew she wanted her hair done by Oasis Salon & Spa. They reserve their Saturdays specifically for weddings and are normally quite booked.

"However, luck was on our side and they had that exact date in September available," Nicole said.

That date in September, the Boyds' now-anniversary, is



The Stone City church is no longer active. It's quite a process to book the church for one's wedding.

exactly one month after Nicole and Sam's niece's birthday (Oct. 24).

"He would never have an excuse that he 'forgot' our anniversary," joked Nicole. "Everything from that point on all fell into place."

Knowing that the church in Stone City is no longer active, it was a bit of a process when it came to reserving the church and getting married there.

"It was a bit challenging," Nicole said. "The hardest part was getting in contact with someone involved with the church, since it's not active."

Nicole's mom, Lisa Stevens, located a contact via St. Patrick Catholic Church in Anamosa.

St. Joseph's is looked after through the help of caretakers and groundskeepers.

The Boyds started by having a phone interview with Father Nick March. The priest then spoke with the

church's caretakers about the possibility of having the young couple's wedding inside the church, noting Nicole's grandparents also held their wedding there over 50 years ago.

"After some consideration, we got the green light to proceed and have our special day in this beautiful, historic church."

Another item the couple had to check off their planning list was meeting with Deacon Doug Bean (of St. Patrick Church) and Pre-Cana classes due to the fact they were getting married in a Catholic church.

"Sam and I started a little tradition after each session with our Deacon," shared Nicole. "We would take a detour to supper and drive by the church. It made us that much more excited for our big day!"

Not only was Nicole paying respect to her (cont'd on page B14)

Sam and Nicole Boyd were married at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Stone City. This is the same church Nicole's maternal grandparents got married. (Photos by Eleanor Kathryn Photography)

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Hendrickses blessed with intimate, special wedding



By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

After being together for nine-plus years, Tiffany Bacon and Bob Hendricks finally tied the knot on Sept. 17, 2022.

The couple dated one another for eight years; they were engaged for 10 months before their wedding day. They got engaged in November 2021; they got married on Friday, Sept. 16, 2022 (two days after Tiffany's birthday).

"I tried making it easy for Bob to only have to remember one week out of the year," she joked of having her birthday and now their anniversary in the same week.

After Bob popped the question, the couple started planning their wedding right away. While Bob wanted to wait a year, Tiffany thought, "Why wait?"

Right from the start, they both were on the same page when it came to the size of the wedding.

"We wanted a small, intimate wedding and that's exactly what we got," Tiffany said.

The Hendrickses had a "micro wedding," which, per definition, is less than 50 people.

With the out-of-town venue they chose, they were allowed up to 40 people.

Tiffany researched several places where they could hold their

ceremony, a place that was unique and different. After visiting and touring the Iris Aisle in Winterset, the couple had their hearts set.

"It was magical!" marveled Tiffany. "We walked up to the conservatory and two beautiful black doors opened to the perfect greenhouse venue!"

Unfortunately, Winterset was hit with some bad storms and a tornado over the summer, before the couple's September wedding.

"I was right on the phone calling and emailing the vendors we chose," Tiffany shared of making sure their plans were still in place.

(cont'd on page B9)

Tiffany (Bacon) and Bob Hendricks held their micro wedding in September in Winterset, Iowa. (Photos submitted)



Cheryl Gates was the couple's officiant. She performed a handfasting ceremony, which is a Celtic tradition. The couple wanted something unique for their unity ceremony.



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Hendrickses -

(cont'd from page B8)

With the ceremony taking place at Iris Aisle, the reception was held at Cobblestone Inn & Suites, also in Winterset.

Driving to Winterset via Monticello is roughly a three-hour trek. The couple visited their venues in-person once, but continued to plan the wedding via phone and email.

"It was kind of nerve-

racking," Tiffany admitted of planning remotely. "I was concerned that we were not going to have enough room at the reception. I believe I counted the chairs from the photos on their website 50 times. It ended up working out just fine."

She said it was simple to plan considering the size of their wedding.

"We decided to hold

our ceremony on a Friday so we had more options when it came to renting a venue."

Having their wedding so far away, everyone needed to plan accordingly to make sure they had everything with them when they left for Winterset ahead of the wedding weekend.

"We were on the clock as soon as we arrived at the venue," Tiffany said. "Since it was a micro wedding, we were only allowed two hours total at the venue, including photography."

They relied heavily on their family members to set everything up. Tiffany's mom, Theresa Bacon, was the florist. Desiree Bacon, Tiffany's

sister-in-law, did the makeup. The owner of Iris Aisle was also the photographer. The groom and all of the men rented their suits from Michael's Clothing in Monticello. Their officiant was Cheryl Gates of Hopkinton.

One unique and personal touch to their wedding was having Gates perform a handfasting ceremony. This is a Celtic tradition. "I wanted to do something different for our unity ceremony other than candles or sand," Tiffany said.

She researched various ideas and came across handfasting. This involves making a colorful cord using colors of significant

meaning. Tiffany also included a piece of lace within the braid from her mom's bouquet from her parents' wedding. The cord is braided to symbolize unity—all things coming together. Gates placed the wedding bands in the bride and groom's hands, and wove the cord around their hands in a figure "8," the sign for infinity. Gates also said a blessing: "Four hands. Three knots. Two people. One future."

Having an intimate

wedding, Bob's daughters and the couple's family served as members of the wedding party. Bob's daughters Emily and Courtney took on the roles of woman of honor and grooms woman, respectively. Tiffany's sister-in-law and brother, Kalvin and Desiree, were maid of honor and brides man.

"We were blessed to have our close family there to help celebrate our special day," she said.



The intricate black doors offered a great scene for wedding photos.



Iris Aisle was a special location, offering fun photo options for the Hendricks' wedding.

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After meeting in high school, long-time couple are ready to wed

By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

Their tagline reads: "Twelve years after meeting in the cafeteria at Monticello High School, Thomas Klein and Shelby Wall are finally tying the knot."

Thomas used one of the Wall family's Easter traditions as a fun and unique way to propose to Shelby on April 17, 2022. After 12 years of dating, the couple will get married on June 2, 2023.

Thomas graduated from MHS in 2012; Shelby in 2014. The couple had mutual friends while in high school and took part in many of the same activities: drama, speech, Science Bowl, and Panther Players.

"After a few weeks, we decided to start dating since we enjoyed each other's company so much," recalled Shelby.

It's a tradition in the Wall family to hide Easter eggs filled with clues to lead their girls to finding their Easter baskets.

"The older we got, the larger and more intricate the hunts have become," said Shelby.

The hunts might take the girls around Monticello, so on this particular Easter, as Shelby scoured the community for her hidden eggs, it was nothing unusual.

About a month before Easter, Thomas sought the Walls' help as he planned his proposal. It was his idea to write out clues inside each egg that were specific memories or locations important to the couple. Some of the clues and locations included:

- Subway, where Shelby worked in high school, and where Thomas would drop her off and hang out.

- MHS. The clue read: "If you hadn't dropped your lunch card, I would have never known your name."

- Riverside Gardens, where they had picnics and went on walks.

- Thomas' old home near Jacobs Park.

Shelby admitted she became a little suspicious because the clues inside her eggs were all specific memories related to her



Every Easter, the Wall family holds an Easter egg hunt for their daughters. Last year, the event took a different turn with Shelby Wall's long-time boyfriend, Thomas Klein, chose to use the event as a way to propose.

and Thomas. When she asked about it, Thomas simply said he helped her dad write the clues.

"I had eight eggs hidden, including the last proposal egg," Thomas said. "I tried to come up with very specific memories that were big parts of our relationship and that meant a lot to both of us. Then I wrote the clue leading to where that memory happened."

One of the eggs contained a dog leash and dog treats as a way to throw Shelby off course.

"It was to make me think we were getting a puppy at the end of the egg hunt; something I've always wanted," she said.

Throughout her hunt, Shelby had no idea her younger sisters actually were not having one of their own.

"They were in on the planning and hiding the eggs for the proposal, so they were helping to set everything up and keeping everyone organized."

The egg hunt took about a half hour due to driving all over town. The very last clue led them to the Kleins' former home in Monticello. Shelby's sister, Kiley, knows who currently lives in the home and asked the owners if Thomas could use their yard for the scene of his proposal.

"They said yes, of course, and that's

where he asked while my cousin hid behind a bush to take pictures," said Shelby. "I did have an inkling going to the last clue that something big was going on, but I didn't really know it was a proposal until I read the clue in the last egg."

As they walked toward the home, there was an egg sitting at the end of a row of flower petals on the ground. The last clue read: "The last 10 years together have been incredible. I can't wait to spend the rest of my time with you. Will you marry me?"

Thomas admitted there were all sorts of emotions and thoughts flooding his head throughout the egg hunt... He was nervous Shelby might find out his plan. It was a big undertaking, so he was happy it all worked out according to plan.

"I was nervous getting closer to the final clue; not because I thought she was going to say no, but because it's a big moment in a person's life and something I've been planning for a while," shared Thomas. "I just wanted it to be perfect, and it was. I couldn't be happier with the end result."

The couple live and work in the Algonquin, Ill., area outside Chicago.

Their wedding in June will take place at the Celebration

Center overlooking the Mississippi River in Le Claire.

"It allows us to have the outdoor ceremony we want."



The center golden egg contained the last clue to the Easter egg hunt when Klein proposed to Wall. (Photos submitted)



Shelby Wall and Thomas Klein met as students at MHS. They've been together for 12 years and plan to wed this June.

Brady - Kray Wedding

Ashley Brady and Parker Kray of Wyoming, exchanged wedding vows July 30, 2022 during a 4 p.m. ceremony at Wayne Zion Lutheran Church, officiated by Pastor Wade Reddy.

The bride is the daughter of Kirk and Shelly Brady of Central City.

The groom is the son of Vic and Marcia Kray of Monticello. Rose Cook of Monticello is his grandmother.

The bride was escorted down the aisle by her father.

Nichelle McKee, cousin of the bride, was the bride's personal attendant.

The bride's dress was an A-line ball gown with triple crystal spaghetti straps on both sides with a waterfall waistline that draped over a skirt with full glitter underlay. To top it off the bodice and hem of the dress were covered in leaf lace and more shimmer. Her veil was mid length with a crystal border to match the straps of the dress. The bride's bouquet was an array of red and peach roses followed by red and white Asiatic lilies. To top it off peach snapdragon gave the bouquet lovely dimension with greenery interspersed. Bridesmaids were



Ashley and Parker Kray

Mikinzie Smith, Emily Saurve, Bailey Gillespie, Brey Hill, Dana Deterville and Brandy Nietert. They wore red fit-and-flare dresses with off the shoulder sleeves. Their bouquets were smaller versions of the bride's flowers. Groomsmen were Jacob Hoth, Carter Bronemann, Cody Ryan, Quinton Fellingner, Kyle Routhieaux and Garrett Nietert.

Ring bearers were Colt and Cash Smith, sons of Britt and Mikinzie Smith.

Ushers were Britt Smith and Ken Ketelsen.

A reception was held following the ceremony at Rustic Creek in Hopkinton.

The bride is a 2016 graduate of Springville High School. She graduated in 2020 from Upper Iowa University with a Bachelors in Science. She is attending St. Ambrose University to receive a Doctorate of Occupational Therapy. She is employed by Jackson County Regional Health Center.

The groom is a 2015 graduate of Monticello High School. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Upper Iowa University. He farms and is owner of Kray Seed LLC. He is also employed by Scherrman's Implement, in Monticello.

Michael's works with wedding parties on timelines

By Pete Temple
Express Associate Editor

Couples who are planning to marry have a variety of timelines for planning.

When it comes to tuxedo rental, Michael's Clothing tries to stick with two significant periods.

The first of those is when wedding party members get measured for their tuxes.

"As far as the bride and groom first coming into the store to start picking things out, that can be whatever works for them, but I'd say two to three months ahead of time at least," Michael's co-owner Mike Jacobs said. "It depends on how efficient they are."

Carol Jacobs, also co-owner, added: "For us it's almost better to get the measurements a little closer to the wedding than six months ahead, in case they change sizes."

Michael's will do the measurements, while understanding that some wedding party members might live in other places and can't get there. In that case, Mike said, they should not take the measurements themselves.

"If we don't do it, we need them to go to a good, reputable tuxedo shop," he said. "If (the party) has out-of-town guys, we can send the measurement cards with them."

The goal is to get orders taken and



Mike (left) and Carol Jacobs of Michael's have offered tuxedo rentals and quality service for 34 years. (Photo by Pete Temple)

measurements made far enough in advance to give Milroy's, the tux supplier for Michael's enough time to prepare everything.

"As the guys come in, we get a sheet started," Mike said. "Once we have every name with measurements, then we can fax it to Milroy's, and that order is on the books for that particular event."

"Milroy's would like to have everything in their hands, a minimum of four to six weeks ahead of time."

The second key period is the week before the wedding. Once the tuxes come in, wedding party members need to

try them on in case last-minute alterations are needed.

"Guys can start coming in as early as 1 p.m. Tuesday afternoon," Mike said. "We like to have the guys come in and try them on, the earlier in the week, the better. We do all of our alterations in-house."

"A guy who might need a different coat size, if Carol has more time to work on that, it's just helping her. But they've got up until about 4 p.m. on Friday. If we need to get a replacement ordered, we can still call Milroy's, and we'll have it Saturday morning."

Through Milroy's, Michael's offers a wide variety of options, styles and colors for the tuxedos.

"Usually what happens is the bride will pick out her dress, and she'll also order bridesmaids' and attendants' dresses," Mike said. "Once she's done that, she'll usually come in with swatches or pictures."

"We will work with them out of our catalog and samples. That's one place where I think we excel: we are able to offer them a lot of different options."

Carol added: "If they're not so sure on colors, we can order

samples in, so they can actually see the real thing."

Mike and Carol enjoy working with Milroy's, and providing the kind of in-person, small-town service they have been known for during their 34 years in business.

"With our service, and the quality of what Milroy's offers, and price, nobody can compare," Mike said. "When you get right down to it, nobody will take care of them better than we do."

Many reception halls are available for your special day

If you're looking for the perfect hall for your special wedding day, there are plenty of options in and around the Monticello area that are perfect, depending on the size and needs of your wedding reception.

During the planning, there are a lot of details and decisions to consider:

- Number of guests
- Rental cost and deposit. What services does the rental fee include?
- Whether the hall has a set-up and teardown timeframe and/or policy
- Alcohol policy
 - Number of tables and chairs provided
 - Damage or cancellation policy and cost
 - What is the parking situation?
 - Dance floor area

The person/people, club, or organization that oversees the facility you're planning to rent for your wedding reception can answer many of these questions.

Within the immediate Monticello area, there are a lot of venues to choose from. (For a complete list, refer to the directory inside this issue.)

- **Camp Courageous** - Call 319-465-5916. Located at 12007 190th St. off Highway 38.
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- **Monticello Conservation League** - Contact Marv Rickels at 319-465-5172. Located at 15214 Hollywood Rd.
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(cont'd on page B14)

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When it comes to wedding flowers, it's a personal choice

By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

"It's a real passion of mine," spoke Angie Dutra, co-owner of Century House Gifts and Flowers.

Dutra has been working in the floral business for 26 years and is still enjoying every minute of it.

In January, the long-time flower shop relocated from downtown Monticello to a free-standing studio next to Dutra's home on the outskirts of town.

Working alongside her mom, co-owner Peg Arduser, the two have been able to provide that special touch, that special "accessory," as Dutra calls it, for a couple's wedding day.

"Flowers are accessories," she said. "They're like jewelry; they pull everything together. They don't have to be over the top and lavish. Simple is OK."

When it comes to colors, types of flowers, trends, simplicity or not, Dutra said it all comes down to the bride and groom's personal decisions. There is no right or wrong; it's not about what's "in" or not.

"It's cool to have options," noted Dutra. "Permanent or not."

She offers three different options couples can go with for their flower choices: fresh, silk, and dried.

"Fresh is still the predominant choice."

Dried flowers are a recent trend, such as incorporating dried lavender into a bride's bouquet.

"It was popular years ago, and like everything else, it's cycled its way back around," said Dutra. "It's fun to see it used with different fresh flowers."

Do couples still order flowers for their entire wedding party and family members? Are there any big trends in the wedding floral industry? Are couples ordering flower arrangements for décor at their ceremony or reception?

"It's all based on one's personal decision," Dutra said.

She explained in the past, it was proper etiquette to provide flowers for everyone, wedding party and family.

"Brides are stepping out of the norm and the decision really depends on the couple."



Century House did the boutonnieres for the Ehrisman wedding in September 2022. (Photos submitted)



Darcy Arduser's bridal bouquet was done by Century House for her wedding on New Year's Eve.

Trends?

"Brides are going with their personal decision first before any trend," added Dutra. "This is where their personal tastes come in and we can incorporate their personal ideas."

Dutra did offer that it's fun to see the industry trend back to the smaller bouquets and not so much the cascading ones that can appear overpowering.

There is also not an issue anymore with whether certain flowers are "in season" or not.

"We're very global," said Dutra. "We can get what you need at any time, though there are exceptions."

Century House can also provide flowers for that added colorful touch to the wedding cake.

"It's fun to see the

artistry with the cakes," Dutra said.

While many industries were impacted by supply chain issues, the floral industry, at least for Century House, saw a minimal impact. Dutra said her business is more affected by the weather and bad crops.

"But we have many resources," she said.

She encourages couples to schedule their consultation of their flowers one year to nine months before the wedding date.

"Call us as soon as you know your date to get on the books," urged Dutra. "Certain dates can book quickly."

Century House doesn't just cater to local weddings, they also deliver to venues in Dubuque and Cedar Rapids.



Keleher's Jewelry on Main Street continues to offer quality sales and service of engagement rings, wedding bands and much more. From left are Kathy Cooper, Tom Keleher and Betty Schmit. (Photo by Pete Temple)

Keleher's keeps adapting to jewelry business changes

By Pete Temple
Express Associate Editor

Like any business, Keleher's Jewelry has adapted to multiple changes over the years.

Where once natural, earth-grown diamonds were the most popular, now lab-grown diamonds have overtaken them.

"Lab-grown diamonds have been very popular," owner Tom Keleher said, adding that nine out of 10 of the store's sales involve lab-grown rather than earth-grown diamonds.

"The younger people that are coming through the door are asking for it now. Even national chains are selling a lot of them."

Asked why, Keleher said: "Cost is probably number one. And quality. You're getting better quality when you're coming to lab-grown."

Where once the idea of a silicone wedding band - designed for men such as farmers and factory workers who work around dangerous equipment with their hands - was a rarity, now it comes free with the purchase of a regular wedding band.

"We actually give them one when they buy," said Betty Schmit, who works with Keleher and Kathy Cooper at the store. "A lot of factories do not allow you to wear rings."

"Everybody goes out the door with it now," Keleher said.

And where once there were just a few styles of engagement and wedding rings, now people come up with their own ideas.

"I would say everything is custom nowadays," Keleher



A UPS driver referred to only as McCabe (left), posing with Kathy Cooper, delivered his own engagement ring to Keleher's for assembly. (Photo submitted)

said. "They come in with a picture on their phone."

His two longtime employees agreed.

"They don't want anything that looks like somebody else's," Kathy Cooper said. "They want it completely different, so it is their ring."

Schmit added: "They'll want something different to set it apart and make it more unique."

The number of companies Keleher's orders from is almost as extensive as the number of style options for customers.

"We have companies from New York to California," Keleher said. "We do have our top five companies. We can order from them and say, 'We need this style,' and most of the time they have it."

"When we find the best price and the best delivery, that's who you go with," Cooper said.

In addition to the rings, Keleher's offers

a variety of items for weddings.

"If the groom wants a gift for the bride, we do sell diamond earrings," Schmit said. "And the lab-growns aren't just strictly in bridal. They're in pendants, they're in earrings. It's gone into every facet of jewelry."

Keleher's, in business for 29 years, continues to be a popular place for wedding jewelry. So popular, in fact, that it recently had its UPS delivery driver as a customer.

The driver, known as "McCabe," had been working as a substitute delivery person for UPS in this area.

McCabe wound up ordering an engagement ring from Keleher's.

"We just formed a friendship," Cooper said. "And our friendship came to that."

"He actually delivered his own ring," Keleher said. "I put it together, but he delivered it here."

Fellinger's 'Treasured Weddings' now serves her own family

By Kim Brooks
Express Editor

June Fellinger started her business, Treasured Weddings, in Monticello in 1998 following her own kids' weddings.

Treasured Weddings offers couples the chance to rent wedding décor, table linens, backdrops, etc. to add a unique look to the ceremony or reception. Not only does Treasured Weddings rent out such items, but Fellinger and her crew will also provide the set-up if needed.

With Fellinger's kids getting married, she said they started collecting various wedding décor items and they didn't know what to do with everything.

"That's how it evolved," she said of reusing wedding decorations, décor, lights, and linens wedding after wedding.

In 2010, Treasured Weddings added tuxedo rental to the business.

"That gave me the opportunity to offer better deals to the bride and groom," said Fellinger of a one-stop-shop. "And it's still that way."

Twenty-five years now in the wedding business, Fellinger said it's simply something she loves to do.

"It's always nice to walk into a hall, decorate it, and turn around and look how nice it is," she shared.

Fellinger admitted, though, the cleanup process can be a bit daunting.

Fellinger doesn't do this work alone; her husband, Paul, has been assisting for several years, as have their grandkids.

"Marissa (Recker) has been helping me since she was 8 years old," recalled Fellinger.

And now, five of the Fellingers' grandkids have either gotten married or will be married themselves, giving her the chance to contribute to each wedding in a unique way.

"That's the nice aspect," she said of being able to help decorate her own grandkids' weddings and help the guys pick out their tuxedos and accessories. "They thought enough to come to me."

When it came to the grandsons, she said the boys were easy.

"They just rolled with the punches."

Fellinger has two granddaughters' weddings this summer, and said each bride is doing something unique and different.

In terms of the services offered through Treasured Weddings, couples can rent: linens, a lighting

system to suspend from the ceiling, table centerpieces, decorative arches, backdrops, and accessories such as wooden crates.

"And I keep adding to it," offered Fellinger. "I own all my own linens."

In the past, Fellinger could take on multiple weddings in one week/weekend. Now, she limits it to one or two.

"I've had to up five weddings," she said on one occasion.

She urges couples to book with her "the sooner, the better."

She said brides typically bring photos and ideas to her from Pinterest in terms of what their wedding themes and concepts are.

Fellinger schedules an initial consultation with each couple to see and hear what they want for their wedding day and map out the reception hall.

Another service she offers is assisting with the layouts and floor plans of the reception hall, though the couple will have to rent tables and chairs from another service.

In setting up a lighting system, Fellinger said it's nice to be able to have access to the reception hall the night before so she's not rushed. She prefers to utilize her own crew of helpers, those who are familiar with the setup. "It allows us to just concentrate on the job," she said, rather than bother the bride and groom for help. "It's all secondhand to us. We do what is necessary to make sure it's an enjoyable day."

Treasured Weddings doesn't just provide services for local weddings. Fellinger has traveled to Clear Lake, Palo, even states like Minnesota and Wisconsin.

When it comes to renting tuxes, she urges the groom and his groomsmen and family members to come in for an initial measurement at least a month before the wedding date.

"The orders take between one week and 10 days," she offered.

The orders come in the Monday before the wedding. Fellinger said for the guys who don't live in the area, she can have the clothes and accessories sent directly to them.

She said it's important to try on the tuxes right away so she has time to make any necessary modifications, whether that include shortening the pants or lengthening the coat.

"I always have backup shirts here," she added.

Having worked with many brides and grooms over the years, not to mention her own family and friends,

Fellinger has taken notes of many trends, likes and dislikes.

"Each bride and groom are different, even with my own grandkids."

Treasured Weddings started in 1998 following June and Paul Fellingers' own kids' weddings. Now, they're offering wedding décor services for their grandkids' weddings. (Photos by Kim Brooks)



In 2010, Fellinger started offering tuxedo rental as part of her business.

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Boys -

(cont'd from page B7)

maternal grandparents by getting married in a Catholic church, but her late paternal grandmother as well, Norma Stevens.

"The Stone City church really encompassed all of the values I wanted to be able to honor," Nicole said.

She added, getting married there gave her the feeling of "it's meant to be."

"It's not necessarily the church in this area to get married in. It's a smaller church, but absolutely beautiful!"

So beautiful in fact, the church required no decorating at all.

"We just took in the historical beauty; and trust me, it was more than enough."

They did add a welcome sign for the aisle, purchased from Lisa Stark, owner of The Rustic House. They also made flower arrangements for both the wedding and reception.

They honored members of their families in various ways. Nicole was gifted her Grandma Green's wedding ring; her something borrowed. All of their grandparents (Claude and Shirley Green, Norma and Bill Stevens, Randy Harms, and Leroy and Glenna Boyd) were honored via special readings.

The Stone City church is small, so the Boyds invited immediate family and close friends only to their ceremony, about 80 people in all.



There was very little decorating needed inside the historic church in Stone City for the Boyds' wedding.

For the reception at the Monticello Eagles Club, "we wanted all of our family and friends from near and far to join in the celebration of our new journey as husband and wife."

The couple enjoys a good time!

"Our wedding day was a dream come true! We had an amazing day with family and friends."

The couple also thanked their parents, Dean and Lisa Stevens and Loren and Kim Boyd, for helping make it an extra special day.

Directory -

(cont'd from page B4)

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(cont'd from page B11)

- **Monticello Golf Club** - Call 319-465-5225. Located at 528 N. Maple St.
- **Coonhunters Lodge** - Call 563-543-6857. Located at 18344 Eby's Mill Rd. near Scotch Grove.
- **Chisel Point Event & Retreat Barn** - Call 319-432-4322. Located at 7731 148th St. in Scotch Grove.
- **Jones County Equestrian Center** - Call 319-465-3275. Located at 700 N. Maple St.
- **The Z-Barn (Zimmerman Barn)** - Call 319-480-6678. Located at 19243 Stone Bridge Rd.
- **Riverside Gardens** - Call 319-480-1450. Located at 441 E. Third St.
- **Monticello Pocket Park** - Call 319-465-6640. Located (downtown) on E. First Street.

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McCrea - Reuter

Kelsey McCrea and AJ Reuter of Cedar Rapids, are pleased to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding.

Kelsey is the daughter of Tom McCrea.

AJ is the son of Tom and Teresa Reuter of Anamosa.

Kelsey is a 2012 graduate of Cedar Falls High School and a 2016 graduate of the University of Iowa.

AJ is a 2011 graduate of Monticello High School and a 2015 graduate of Coe College.

A Dec. 31, 2023, wedding is planned at Ashton Hill Farm in Cedar Rapids.



AJ Reuter and Kelsey McCrea

Lough - Stahlberg

Jason and Bridgette Lough of Bloomfield and Mark and Becky Stahlberg of Monticello are pleased to announce the engagement and upcoming wedding of their children, Jordan Lough and Lane Stahlberg.

Jordan is a 2017 graduate of Davis County High School and a 2021 graduate of the University of Northern Iowa. She is an elementary teacher at Hudson Schools.

Lane is a 2016 graduate of Monticello High School and a 2020 graduate of the University of Northern Iowa. He is an elementary teacher



Lane Stahlberg and Jordan Lough

at Dike-New Hartford wedding is planned in Schools. Waverly.

A Sept. 30, 2023,

Wall - Klein

Shelby Wall and Thomas Klein of Algonquin, Ill., are pleased to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding.

Shelby is the daughter of Gene and Donna Wall of Monticello.

Thomas is the son of John and Maureen Klein of Center Junction.

Shelby is a 2014 graduate of Monticello High School. She received a Doctorate of Chiropractic from Palmer College of Chiropractic.

Thomas is a 2012 graduate of Monticello High School. He received a Bachelor of computer Science degree from Simpson College.

A June 2, 2023, wedding is planned at Mississippi River Celebration Center in Le Claire.



Shelby Wall and Thomas Klein

Spensley - Shofroth

Macey Spensley and Matthew Shofroth of Norwalk, are pleased to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding.

Macey is the daughter of Mark and Darcey Spensley of Monticello.

Matthew is the son of Lisa Caffery and Eric Shofroth of Davenport.

Macey is a 2015 graduate of Monticello High School. She graduated from the University of Iowa in 2019 with a Bachelor's degree in journalism and mass communications and English and creative writing. She is employed by CultureALL.

Matt is a 2012 graduate of Davenport Assumption and a 2018 graduate of Scott Community College. He received an associate's degree in nursing. He is employed at Camp Herko Hollow.



Matthew Shofroth and Macey Spensley

A Sept. 16, 2023 The University Club in wedding is planned at Moline, Ill.

Bone - Ellison

Andrea Bone and Tanner Ellison of Monticello, are pleased to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding.

Andrea is the daughter of Kathy Bone of Monticello and Mark Bone, also of Monticello.

Tanner is the son of Michelle Stephen Seigel of Tahlequah, Okla. and Vaughn Ellison of Monticello.

Andrea is a 2013 graduate of Monticello High School and a 2017 graduate of the University of Northern Iowa. She received a degree in elementary and middle level education. She is employed by the Monticello Community School District.

Tanner is a 2010 graduate of Maquoketa



Tanner Ellison and Andrea Bone

Valley High School employed. An Oct. 7, 2023 wedding is planned at Bradley Drive in Monticello. He received a degree in biology. He is self-

Fellinger - Kraus

Madison Fellinger and Clayton Kraus of Monticello, are pleased to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding.

Madison is the daughter of Tim and Carrie Fellinger of Hopkinton.

Clayton is the son of Ted and Sarah Kraus of Monticello.

Madison is a 2019 graduate of Monticello High School and a 2023 graduate of Mount Mercy University. She is employed at Strawberry Hill Elementary.

Clayton is a 2018 graduate of Monticello High School. He is employed at Monti Plumbing, Heating and Electric.

A Dec. 16, 2023 wedding is planned at First Presbyterian Church in Monticello.



Clayton Kraus and Madison Fellinger

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