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Showcase



Parisian dream

Affordable and Luxury Tents
Virginia Beach, Va.

When a chorus of awestruck "wows!" greets your ears, you know you've really made something special. Boots Daugherty, president of Affordable and Luxury Tents worked hard to build suspense throughout the late October tented wedding of Stacy Smith and Mark Gonsenhaus in Virginia Beach, Va.—hard work that paid off in spades.

"Tents enabled us to create the theme and what the clients really wanted to accomplish for the wedding," says Daugherty. The setting was the Cavalier Country Club and Golf Course, which is situated on a peninsula. The bride, Stacy Smith, is a business manager for performers in the music and film industries, while the groom, Mark Gonsenhaus, is a designer and importer of oriental rugs. Their jobs require them to travel frequently, and their 300 guests traveled from all over the world to be at the wedding. "Almost every square foot that was available to tent, we tented!" says Daugherty.

When guests' automobiles arrived at the entrance under a 20-by-20-foot peaked tent, the passengers alighted and stepped into a winding, curvy marquee more than 200 feet long. The 15-foot wide marquee was lined in white and carpeted in black. This led to the ceremony tent, a 40-by-90-foot Anchor Span, by Anchor Industries Inc., Evansville, Ind., which was hand-lined in Guilford Mills, Kenansville, N.C., eggshell sheer hand-pleated satin, with white carpeting over wood floors. The tent was square, but the cleverly-designed lining gave the illusion that the tent interior was circular. For the ceremony, the bride, groom and wedding party entered from four different areas of the room, walking toward the center platform under a gazebo laden with greenery and calla lilies. At this point, guests had only seen the inside of the tents, nothing of the land or water outside.

After the ceremony, the guests continued along another marquee passageway for 80 feet, then ascended spiral stairs to the second level of the country club, decorated in a Moroccan style by event designer Janet Bell. The Moroccan theme fit with the international feel, in combination with the wedding's Jewish traditions and French style.

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Showcase

The stairs were one of the challenges for Affordable and Luxury Tent to design and Anchor Industries to create, as they were crafted in three sections. "The sidewall was completely enclosed, 125 feet high from the top of the marquee to the ground," says Daugherty. The entire staircase was lined and carpeted to match the rest of the marquees. While the wedding party and guests were dancing and enjoying cocktails, the Affordable and Luxury Tent team was hard at work refocusing the direction of the marquee passageway. Instead of leading back to the ceremony tent, the marquee now opened into a stunning, transparent clearspan Future Trac reception tent. "I didn't really realize how beautiful it was until all the guests said 'Wow!'" says Daugherty. It was still light outside when the guests entered the completely transparent clearspan tent, just three to four feet away from the water. Previously, the guests could only see the inside of the tent; now they could see the water. The 40-by-135-foot Future Trac tent, by Top Tec Inc., Simpsonville, S.C., was specially designed for Affordable and Luxury Tents, with a clear valance instead of the usual white. The clear top was made of 20 mil material, and the sidewalls of 16 mil material. The only material that

was not transparent was the three-inch span of white near the ground that was added for strength.

The tent uses a completely kedered system. Floors were made of wood panels covered in white carpet, which was quite an undertaking, according to Daugherty. Since the tent was placed on a golf course, "the grass was really nice, and the ground was perfectly flat. We had to install the flooring just a couple days before the event so as not to kill the grass." (Normally, the flooring goes down first.)

In order to anchor the tents so close to the water, affordable, specially designed adaptors attached to the existing bulkheads that separate the ground from the water. In addition to the special tie-downs, the company had to keep in mind wind exposure and space constraints. Total setup took eight days with a six to 10 man team.

As evening wore on early morning, recessed lights in the rafters of the tent illuminated the happy couple and friends. Antique gold chandeliers and sconces (worth \$60,000 each) gave light that was reflected off the encircling water—a beautiful wedding in an amazing tent.

—Jessica Sellers

