

Me? A Justice of the Peace? Excerpts from “Say I Do! Wedding Tales of a Cape Cod Justice of the Peace”

by Marie Sherman

The seed was planted one day in 1985 when a colleague from Barnstable District Court casually announced, “I have a wedding to do this weekend.” I was curious and asked what he meant. He explained he was a Justice of the Peace. After asking a few questions, he suggested, “You should go for it – you’d be great.”

That evening my husband and I discussed the idea and his response was, “If you want it, go for it.” With his blessing, I embarked upon a rewarding and joyful avocation.

As a Justice of the Peace, I thoroughly enjoy meeting all sorts of people, anywhere and anytime. With my well-prepared notes, I am able to walk into a room full of strangers without a qualm. To me, this is a gift for which I am truly grateful.

There’s a first time for everything, even in the Justice of the Peace business, and this was the first wedding I performed on a beach. I’m not talking about meeting in a beach parking lot, walking across the sand, and standing in a picturesque area. Oh no...

We went by boat out to North Beach in Chatham, and then by dune buggy, over bumpy roadways of sand to an isolated cottage with no electricity or water.

A young man in a station wagon drove us to the dock and informed us that he had the solemn duty of being in charge of the keg. Another young guy and myself were amazed at how effortlessly he carried such a heavy object. We both needed to have our ears checked because he was actually in charge of the cake (in a huge box) not a keg! We had a good laugh over the mistake

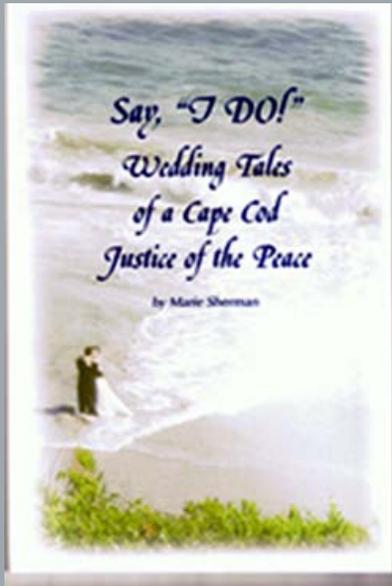
It was a perfect summer day. We conducted the wedding so close to the pounding surf that we had to shout. After the ceremony, those not involved in the food preparations sat around enjoying the sunshine. It was no small feat to haul over the incredible amount of gear necessary for an old-fashioned clambake for forty guests, which was cooked in a rock-lined fire pit in the sand.

We feasted on clam chowder, steamed clams, two-pound lobsters, roast potatoes, corn, sausage, and topped it all off with icy cold watermelon. We were a mess, but what a scrumptious way to get messy! It was a long time before we could entertain the thought of indulging in wedding cake.

Two couples took my card and later called me to perform their weddings.

It was a long day for me, leaving my house about noontime and arriving home after 8 p.m. As I was relating the wedding to a friend, she remarked, “Let me get this straight. You were paid, got a tip, and had a delicious clambake, and even hustled some business! That’s quite a day, Girlfriend!”

She was right. What a great job!



Say I Do! Wedding Tales of a Cape Cod Justice of the Peace is a delightful collection of vignettes that capture the romance, confusion and often hilarious mishaps of the Cape Cod wedding.

To order please email Marie:
jpweddings@verizon.net.



Marie Sherman retired in 2005 after nearly 24 years as a Judicial Secretary in Barnstable and Orleans District Courts.

One goal she set in retirement was to write about her true experiences as a Justice of the Peace. Out of notes taken on 1,200 weddings, Marie related the funniest weddings, those in odd locations, annoying situations, near disasters, and more.

Marie lives in Brewster and is still happily performing weddings.