

# Love driven

NASCAR power woman Kelley Earnhardt marries L.W. Miller in an intimate hometown wedding

By Amy T. Wiegand • Photography by Irresistible Portraits

Kelley Earnhardt and Leslie “L.W.” Miller, a modified racecar driver, had lived and mingled in the same spaces, but it wasn’t until a casual run-in at a Waffle House that they actually met.

“As soon as I met her, I knew there was something special,” says L.W. about his new wife – who also happens to be the vice president and general manager of JR Motorsports.

Five-and-a-half months later, on an ordinary weekend morning, L.W. pulled out a ring from his nightstand and asked her to be his bride. “I wanted it to be right and got advice from everyone on where and how I should propose,” he says. “I carried it in my pocket for three weeks and even took it on a trip to Key West, but in that moment, I knew it was right.”

Over the next several months, Kelley enlisted the help of professionals to get her wedding plans under way. When considering whether to keep the wedding local, she says, “I could have 1,500 or more on the guest list and fly anywhere in the world, but we wanted an intimate family gathering and we wanted to support our community. Mooresville is home and we wanted to be married at home.”





More photos online at [carolinabride.com](http://carolinabride.com)



Immediately, Kelley enlisted her good friend Shawna Robinson to help her think through the ceremony and reception. Shawna, the lead event planner and founder of Happy Chair says, “Kelley and I met to go over her vision and she just allowed me to take things and run with it. She knew what she wanted and gave me the creative freedom to bring it to life!”

The ceremony was held at the family church, St. Mark’s Lutheran in Mooresville, where Dale Sr. and Teresa Earnhardt were married and had been attending with their children since the early 1980s. Escorted by her brother, Dale Jr., Kelley walked down the aisle in a classic, white strapless gown. “I wasn’t sure if I should ask Jr. to escort me. The dynamic of a race family is so busy and he has so much asked of him.”

But Kelley soon learned after texting with her little brother that he wanted to be involved in the whole affair – he point-blank texted her back: “I am walking you down the aisle!”

The wedding party consisted of cousins, friends, siblings and children in the Earnhardt

family. All were elegantly outfitted in black dresses and black tuxedos. The ladies carried pomander balls of hot pink roses crafted by Stacey Abernathy of Willow Branch Flowers and Design. Kelley carried the same vibrant flowers, but bouquet style. “I leaned on Stacey’s expertise to tell me what flowers worked for the season based on price, availability and what would work with the arrangements I had envisioned,” says Kelley. “She did an amazing job.” In addition to decorating her event, Stacey suggested adding a sentimental element to her bouquet. Kelley wanted to incorporate her dad at the wedding, so Stacey pinned a silver framed charm of Kelley and Dale Sr. onto the back of her bouquet. “It was my way of having Daddy walk me down the aisle, too.”

On the wedding day, photographer Karen Goforth of Irresistible Portraits suggested that Kelley and L.W. take special time to see each other before the ceremony and to also take photos before walking down the aisle. “By doing this,” Kelley says, “we were able to get over being nervous and we were better able to focus and

enjoy the ceremony.”

Keeping in form with their love of engines, Kelley and L.W. zipped to the reception in a 1965 Riviera. While waiting for the newlyweds to arrive, guest mingled at a pre-reception where they could preview a video memory montage of the couple, their friends and family. Soon after, guests filtered into a ballroom decorated by hand – down to the last bead – by Shawna Robinson of Happy Chair. Stacey Abernathy of Willow Branch Flowers and Design recalls that Kelley looked to her daughters Karsyn and Kennedy for inspiration for her wedding décor and flowers. “She wanted the girls to feel a part of the wedding day. With that in mind, Kelley decided to use a hot pink color scheme – pink being her girls’ favorite color and, of course, a touch of zebra.” Shawna worked hard to implement that in her décor using a black, white and hot pink palette with a mix of textures, from grosgrain ribbon to faux zebra rugs. Drema Brice of The Icing and The Cake created a fondant tower of delicious cake to coordinate with the fun, funky inspiration.

## Cover story

Once settled in to the delightfully fun yet comfortable atmosphere, Kelley, L.W. and guests feasted on the creations of Annette Newton and her team at Tasteful Impressions Catering. From stuffed mushrooms to roast beef and beautifully displayed vegetable trays, Kelley was pleased and noted that “the chocolate fountain was a big hit!” She says she let the professionals work their magic. “I stayed flexible with my vendors, looked to their advice and everything was really perfect.” Speaking of perfect, Kelley went on to say that DJ and owner Scooter Abrams of One Stop Live! Entertainment had his process for entertainment down to a science. “Our reception flowed perfectly and he played a great mix.” Kelley and L.W. kicked off the reception party with Alabama’s “Forever is as Far as I Go.” Randy Owen, the lead singer for Alabama, was one of Dale Sr.’s close friends, and the lyrics resonated with the couple. “We couldn’t decide between that song and another,” Kelley says. “‘Smile’ by Uncle Kracker is our song, so we had One Stop Live! play that for the last dance.” Smiles were abounding! Dale Jr. even noted, “I love seeing her happy.”

Kelley and Dale Jr.’s mother, Brenda Jackson, says, “She deserves this happiness; she gives so much of herself.”

Even in her wedding, Kelley and L.W. gave back. As the party came to its finish, each guest received a poem regarding a donation to a local animal spay and neuter clinic. “The day is about the two people and it should be about what you want,” Kelley says. “We wanted to tie in our personalities, the things we love and the things we are passionate about. We love animals and we love our hometown of Mooresville.” 



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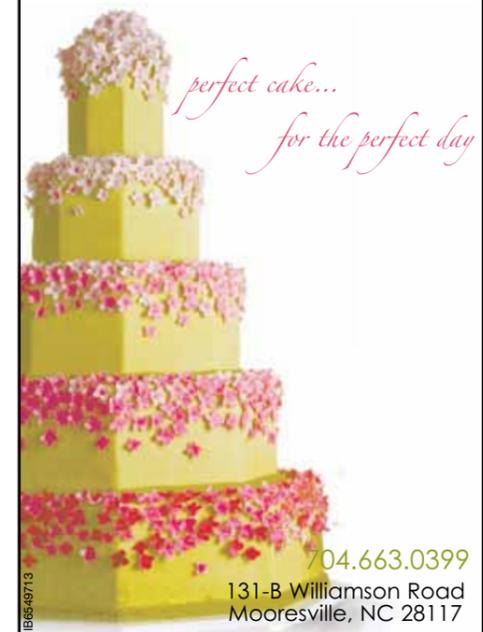
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