

LABANQUE AT THE SEAPLANE BASE



by Anne Fullem
photography © Jeff Benzon

Havre de Grace's New Premier Waterfront Venue



By land, air and sea... brides are flocking to the new waterfront venue in Havre de Grace, created by the visionaries behind La Banque de Fleuve - Nick Conits and Kim Barth. "It was the natural progression of our growth at La Banque that took us to the waterfront," explained Nick. The almost 1-acre property is an actual working seaplane base dating back to the early 1970's, and is the only existing seaplane base in the state of Maryland today. The property also contained the Courtyard Shops and an apartment building in addition to the Seaplane Base and the large expanse of lawn along the river.

For over 40 years, even though it contained an active business, the property wasn't really open to the public. Hidden behind the shops on St. John Street and only accessible by a narrow alley, the waterfront view was hidden from most residents

and visitors to the city. Nick, a real estate developer, had been carefully watching the property for over 8 years when it became available. "When we bought the property it wasn't really inviting, despite the incredible natural views it just hadn't been maintained for visitors. It was so satisfying to be able to create something that everyone can now enjoy," said Nick. "Building the grand staircase really opened things up," he added. Anyone strolling through downtown can now see the water from the street. If a big event isn't in progress, visitors are encouraged to descend the grand staircase to the docks & deck below and enjoy the panoramic view of the mouth of the Chesapeake.

"What's great about having two side-by-side venues is that you can use both, they are mutually exclusive and they are both very different," added Kim. She would know... Kim was responsible for most of the design choices for the serene new space, which



"It's a Hidden Jewel.

We've had so many visitors since the space was completed, and they are all taken aback by the breath-taking views".

✂ Nick Conits

stands in stark contrast to the formality and grandeur of La Banque de Fleuve. Kim embraced the beauty of the natural environment and enhanced it with architectural elements that reinforce the nautical vibe and personality of the beautiful land & seascape. With a guest capacity of 300 - everyone is guaranteed to enjoy the view with ample space to stroll, mingle and dance. Dainty paths lead guests through this multifunctional space - which is separated into docks, decks and patios, making the large area feel intimate and adding to the romance of the natural beauty.

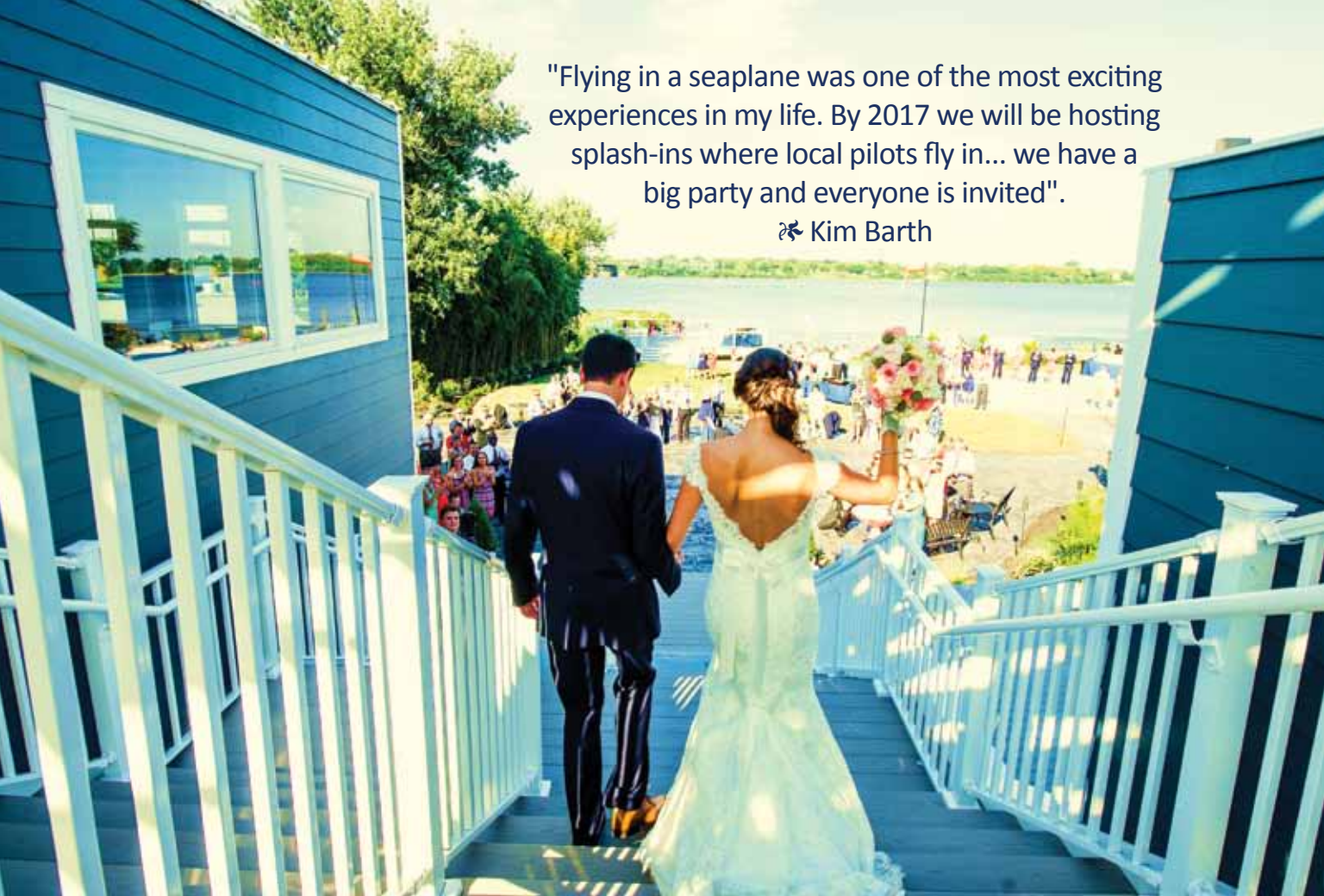
Brides can grandly arrive to their weddings in a horse drawn carriage or limo, a boat or a seaplane. How many venues can boast that? If you arrive by land... a grand staircase leads down to the beautifully landscaped lawn and manicured gardens full

of colorful flowers and your awaiting guests seated on the oversized patio. Beyond is the deck, lined on one side by a 2-story wall of bamboo it extends over the river offering glistening views of the Chesapeake Bay - creating a beautiful backdrop for photos or dancing the night away.

Boating is big sport in Harford County, but few venues offer dock side weddings. Brides arriving to the Seaplane Base by boat, veils flowing behind them, will disembark on a 150 ft - double wide floating dock, making an entrance their guests will never forget. The bride and her party elegantly traverse the long pier to arrive on land and take their positions in front of the Bay for the ceremony, as guests look on. The view of the river and sky seem to go on forever in both directions. As a resident of Havre de Grace, I can testify to the vibrant pink

"Flying in a seaplane was one of the most exciting experiences in my life. By 2017 we will be hosting splash-ins where local pilots fly in... we have a big party and everyone is invited".

✿ Kim Barth



and orange skies as the sun sets over the Chesapeake Bay. Once the sun sets, the river is aflame with the reflection of twinkling candles and torches.

For brides with a truly adventurous spirit, try swooping out of the sky to land gracefully on the water... then taking a small boat to the dock. Talk about building suspense - I can't imagine a more dramatic way to make an entrance. At the moment you would have to hire your own seaplane - but Nick and Kim have big plans for turning Havre de Grace and the Seaplane Base into a thriving hub for this extravagant sport.

"It's all about awareness, and what we can do for the aviation community and what they can do for us. There are a finite amount of pilots with seaplanes and it's our job to attract them to Havre de Grace," explained Kim. "We are bringing two worlds together. Imagine a family enjoying a sunny day in Havre de Grace - when their young child spots a seaplane in the water. The family goes to investigate and the child gets to talk to the pilot... suddenly two worlds have collided. Maybe the child was inspired by the experience. That's what we are trying to accomplish here."

For more information, check out their website at: labanquedeffleuve.com

