

## **Our Engagement Story Sam Perrotta and John Turner**

*John:*

Sam and I met our sophomore year at the 2009 President's Ball and I knew immediately that this firecracker and I should get to know each other better. We were best friends throughout our sophomore and junior year, experiencing the WFU highs (celebrating her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday lunch at Shorty's) and the WFU lows (Quantitative Analysis) together.

She finally opened her eyes and we started dating right before Christmas our senior year, when it seemed that many other college couples were breaking up. Wake Forest was such an integral factor for the beginning of our relationship that I knew there was no other place to ask her to marry me. In all honesty, I knew I wanted to propose to Sam on campus to add yet another significant life event to our Wake Forest history together. As a member of the WFU staff I knew I would need a legitimate and non-red-flag reason to get Sam onto campus on a Saturday night. Then I received an email from University Advancement about an alumni Progressive Dinner event and the light bulb illuminated.

Shana Atkins, a close friend of Sam's who has become a very close friend of mine, was my confidant and partner-in-crime throughout it all. Shana put me in touch with Laura Harrell, who jumped on the deceit-train and actually created a fake, yet unmistakably legitimate, registration confirmation email for this event. That was step one.

I told Shana I always envisioned proposing in the top of Wait Chapel, where Sam and I visited our senior year and wrote our initials in the bell tower. I just didn't know how to get up there. Enter Ken Bennett: confidant and partner-in-crime #3. Ken was integral in providing access up to the top of Wait where he... waited.

*Sam:*

We walked into Wait Chapel and it was pitch black. I knew in that moment what was going on but John, in his ever-pleasing, relentless demeanor said "You know what? I think the registration is actually upstairs!" (Ha). So, we get in the elevator and headed to the fourth floor (the highest that lift will take you). After meandering through office spaces we reach a door that most likely said "Do Not Enter." We did.

A spiral staircase and steep stairs followed but let us out on a landing floor of the chapel. Incessant still, John shakily exclaims "I think we should see if they're up in the clock tower!" A blatant lie but I figured I'd go along with it to try and help a guy out.

By this point, it's 6:10 and before daylight savings. We go up the short staircase and are now surrounded by the four clock faces of Wait Chapel highlighted by the golden glow of a dusk November sun. Breathtaking.

We get up there and pause. John's fidgeting a bit and I hear footsteps to my right. Low and behold, Ken Bennett is there camera in hand. By the time I look back, John is on one knee and

we're both smiling, screaming, and shaking. I'll keep the words said between me, John, the four clocks, and, well, Ken, but just know they were perfect.

We then trekked up to the bells.

*John:*

Sam doesn't do ladders and that's how you get up to the bells.

I said, "This is the first test of trust in our engagement, Sam!" To which I was met with a look that was part 'you're joking' and part 'I said yes?' After Ken motivationally guided her up the ladder from above, and I from below, we triumphed up to the bell level of the tower with 40-degree crosswinds pulling us up.

I knew this would be enough of a moment to remember forever, but had to make sure that we had the right people there to celebrate with us. After some pictures with the bells and successfully climbing back DOWN the ladder and the set of stairs I told Sam I wanted to take a picture with our initials from senior year on the level below. We walked down the stairs and Sam then made the most priceless face upon seeing that both our parents and sisters were waiting quietly in the tower, having flown/driven from Florida and Georgia, just to be with us.

*Sam:*

I was totally shocked and literally freaking out -- not only had John managed to propose to me in the clock tower of Wait Chapel, but he also managed to get the University Photographer there to capture every moment, and coordinated travel plans so that our families were to share our moment, and have an impromptu photo session on the quad, complete with champagne and tears.

Any marriage proposal is destined to be memorable. But when yours is surrounded by the fall serenity of this campus, and you're standing next to someone as unbelievably remarkable as John, it becomes a moment where you really question if you're still on the same planet you were on before.