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The weather also did the couple a good turn. The wedding party and guests arrived at Beards Hollow, where chairs and an arch had been set up, and just as the wedding started the skies began to clear. By the time Stephanie and Joshua said their vows the last trace of mist was gone and they stood in bright sunlight.

The minister was Sherry Morgan, Josh's great-aunt. "It wasn't stressful for either of us," Stephanie said. "The vows were really sweet, although we had a hard time keeping it together. We both wanted to laugh and cry."

After the wedding it clouded up again for the group pictures, which took about 20 minutes, and then it was time for that picture where everybody jumps. Stephanie wasn't too excited about doing it, and this is a photograph I don't do unless asked. It's all but impossible to get everybody looking good while the group launches themselves skyward. But Stephanie's mom wanted the picture; she also wanted the one where the bride is held horizontally by the groomsmen.

"I was exhausted," the bride said. "I'd been in the dress all day, and it was heavy, but I thought, 'so what?' I can pose for a few goofy pictures." Later I saw to it that she appeared to be jumping with great enthusiasm; in one picture I added a couple of feet to her leap in Photoshop.

"I came into the idea of marriage thinking that I would be content to elope," Stephanie says, "I didn't want a huge wedding. It was a small wedding, and I got to share it with everyone I love, and I got to go to a place I love. I don't believe in fate, but everything was just perfect."

Joshua is now a policeman, studying criminal justice and planning to become a federal marshal. Stephanie is a professional artist with frequent exhibitions of her work. They are planning to come back to Long Beach this summer. "It's become so much a part of me," says Stephanie, "that it wouldn't be summer without it."

Stephanie and Joshua's wedding was the only one for them, but it was No. 1,084 for me. Of all those weddings, a few stand out in memory. Theirs is one.

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