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Cover Bride:
Natalie Slayton Carson



Love ... and The Joy of Text!

Linda Johnston Photography by Tommy McCart, assisted by Justin Woods

iddle school teacher, Slayton, and Joshua Timothy, a sales manager for Alltel, became husband and wife on July 29, 2006. Natalie, who doesn't fit the stereotypical teacher mold, and Josh is more creative than many business majors. Add to the mix volleyball, cell phones, Carolina Panthers, Rascal Flatts and a touch of orange, and you'll get an idea of all the fun and turns leading up to the couple's special day.

Natalie moved many times during her childhood. Following her father's job, she lived in Arkansas, Missouri and North Carolina on numerous occasions. Since she was born in Little Rock and attended high school there, she considers it her hometown. After she graduated from college, she moved back in with her parents, making her home in Charlotte, for the third time. Josh grew up in Jacksonville, Fla. When he came for college, he landed at Southern Nazarene University in Oklahoma City. Natalie, a volleyball player in high school, met Josh on a recruiting trip to the college. They were dating other people, but Natalie was eventually awarded a full

volleyball scholarship to Southern Nazarene, where she enrolled as an education major and became a volleyball standout. She took a job at Abercrombie & Fitch to earn her spending money.

During Natalie's senior year, Josh joined Abercrombie & Fitch. She dropped in one day



for a visit, invited him to a Halloween party, and before they could say "Boo!" the two had bewitched one another.

"I knew Josh was different," Natalie says. "I always told myself that I wasn't going to fall for the 'big show.' But he never put on a show. He was so honest and real from the first time we went out. Most people get those giddy 'new love' jitters when they first fall for someone. You just want to be around that person all the time. For me, that feeling never went away with Josh."

Christmas vacation that year came way too fast, and the pair realized they would be apart for a month – she in Charlotte, and he in Jacksonville. Just before the break he told her he loved her, in the best way he knew how – via a text message.

"He couldn't bring himself to say it over the phone," Natalie smiles. "But he would text me the sweetest messages. I felt the same way but was afraid to tell him because it was still early in the relationship. Then we were apart for four