

Kim & Robert of Downtown's Hotel Ranola

Kim and Robert Livengood are the owners of Hotel Ranola, a boutique nine-room hotel located in the core of downtown Sarasota at 118 Indian Place. Call 941-951-0111, or visit www.hotelranola.com.

Kim and Robert, are you both from here?

Kim was raised locally and went to Sarasota High, while I (Robert) am originally from Philadelphia.

What is your educational and occupational background?

Kim graduated the University of Florida in '90 with a degree in magazine journalism, and she went on to publish *Eclipse* magazine from May 1991 until she sold it to *Creative Loafing* in 1998. She also opened Willow 506 (named after our now 10-year-old daughter, Willow) boutique in 1999 and sold it in 2007. I graduated from Temple University with a degree in communications. I then worked in Los Angeles for eight years in television production, working with Dick Clark Productions, "Road Rules" for MTV, "The George Carlin HBO Specials," etc. I also sold real estate for three years in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

How did you two meet?

We met when I moved to town 10 years ago through mutual friends. After being friends for many months, we dated on and off for five years until marrying in October of 2004 at the home of Kim's parents, Barry and Judy Alexander.

When did you open Hotel Ranola, and why?

We opened up Hotel Ranola in January of 2007. We love the urban trend that is happening in downtown Sarasota and wanted to be a part of it. We wanted to create an environment in which we would want to stay if we were visiting Sarasota. People are tired of cookie-cutter hotels and are looking for a little different experience.

Tell us a bit about the unique building.

The building was built in 1926 as the Ranola Apartment Hotel. It's been an apartment building for the past few decades, until we converted the first two floors into our little nine-room hotel. The third floor remains apartments.

We kept the original charm of the era and added modern décor. Kim and I decorated the rooms on our own. The rooms are comfortable and spacious, and of course guests really enjoy the city experience, being able to walk to all of the fabulous restaurants, shops, and theatres.

How do you like working with your spouse?

We enjoy working together. We have different strengths that seem to balance each other. It's also important to compromise! When we were setting up the business, we were also building a new home. We lived in a small cottage with one bathroom for the three of us. If you can survive all that, you can survive anything! Working together forces you to bring your work home with you. Luckily, we love our work, and it also allows us some flexibility... so it hasn't been a problem being married and working together. We look forward to whatever the future may bring. **PC**



photo by Ellie Parnes