

# Why American couple went for Maasai cultural wedding

Linda Roseman, 54 tasted goat meat for the first time in Narok

By ROBERT KIPLAGAT

It took her 10 years to respond to a marriage proposal.

And when she did, there were terms and conditions. Linda Roseman, an American, wanted her wedding done according to the Maasai culture.

The 54-year-old came to Kenya in 2014 to work with Asante Africa, an organisation that helps improve the living standards of widows, children and promotes education in Maji Moto, Narok South.

She worked and interacted with the Maasai community for several months and the more she learned the Maasai way of life, the more she fell in love with their culture.

She was not sure how her fiancé, Mike Fairley, would take the condition, so his reaction blew her away.

"Mid-air on our flight (to Kenya), I accepted his proposal to be his wife and revealed to him that we shall be doing it as per Maasai culture. He was elated."

The retired banker said she was happy to re-unite with the friends she had made while in Kenya as the wedding held in a Manyatta was purely to bring them together.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

She said it was at Maji Moto that she got a chance to taste goat meat for the first time in her life. This coupled with the friendliness, warmth and the beauty of the Maasai was too much to resist.

"We have been living together for 11 years and after the first year of our relationship, he proposed to me but I took my time. Having worked in Maji Moto and created a 'family' there, I wanted to bring my American family and unite them," Roseman told *The Standard*.

Since Roseman knew her way around in Kenya, she sought help in planning the wedding. They contacted Amy Gibson, a freelance international events organiser, to organise the day every woman dreams about.

"I met the couple through a friend when I first came to Kenya for a climate change event in Nairobi. They informed me that they wanted to do a typical Maasai wedding and I took the challenge and since she knew of a venue, it was easy," Ms Gibson said.

Gibson told *The Standard* she organised the wedding with the help of Maji Moto Maasai Cultural Camp officials, who are Roseman's friends.

The day finally came. Adorned in traditional Maasai regalia, complete with bracelets and red ochre on her cheeks, Roseman was the most beautiful 'Maasai' bride in recent history. Mr Fairley also had red ochre on his head, just like any Maasai moran.

Though they were not accompanied by their relatives save for the brides 21-year-old son from her previous marriage, the couple



Americans Linda Roseman and Mike Fairley during their wedding at Maji Moto Maasai Cultural Camp in Narok South. (PHOTOS: ROBERT KIPLAGAT/STANDARD)

underwent all the required cultural processes and Roseman became Mrs Fairley.

Fairley, who had never been to Kenya before, said he was a happy man after his decade-old marriage proposal was accepted. He termed the experience as joyous and relaxed, adding that they were surrounded by beautiful people.

## CULTURE APPRECIATED

The groom, who lives with his family in California, said what is important is the experience and getting to know the rich Maasai culture better.

To ensure their friends are familiarly in America don't feel left out, the couple will hold a civil wedding once they are back to their country. Maji Moto Maasai Cultural Camp

wife -Linda Roseman

founder and cultural ambassador Salaton ole Nitutu said the admiration of their culture by the American couple was a sure sign that Kenyan cultures are being appreciated across the world.

"What happened today is a true Maasai wedding. It's a beautiful ceremony where the family visits the girl's family, then later the girl's family comes to the boy's family, payment of the bride price in terms of cows, decoration of the bride and the groom," Mr Nitutu said.

Elders blessed the couple with freshly uprooted grass, which symbolises fertility and the beginning of a new, prosperous life.

After the ceremony, the party began, where attendees enjoyed a traditional brew, known as Enasho and roast meat, among other Maasai delicacies.

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