



FAMILY AFFAIR

AFTER 17 YEARS AND FOUR STATES, MSNBC'S THOMAS ROBERTS, HUSBAND PATRICK ABNER, AND ROXY THE DOG ARE FINALLY HOME

BY DEBORAH L. MARTIN PHOTOGRAPHY JOSHUA MCHUGH

I married the homecoming king," says Thomas Roberts, Emmy-award winning host on MSNBC. "It was a little bit of a scandal," says Patrick Abner, who works in pharmaceutical sales, specializing in HIV drugs. Roberts continues, "He was a junior, he stole it from a senior guy, and he was out. It was 1994 and it was a big deal."

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—THOMAS ROBERTS**

Roberts and Abner met at a party in North Carolina. Roberts was working for the NBC affiliate in Virginia, and wasn't fully out at the time. "Some friends invited me to a party for a guy who was moving to Philadelphia. It was Patrick." Roberts wasn't sure he could go to a gay party, but this was before the internet and Facebook. "My friends said, 'Who is going to know?'" A month later they ran into each other again in New Orleans, and Roberts invited Abner to Virginia the very next weekend. "I'm not a spontaneous person," says Abner. "But I went."

After a year of long distance love, the pair was ready to settle in Philadelphia when CNN called. The decision to move was a no-brainer, they spent seven years in Atlanta. After a brief sojourn in LA, they moved to

New York when Roberts was offered a job at NBC. In 2008 he took over the desk on NBC Nightly News, becoming the first out anchor on network television. In 2015 he won an Emmy for his coverage of the fight for marriage equality, and as of this summer, Roberts has taken over the weekend evening anchor chair as part of MSNBC's newly expanded programming.

The couple's New York digs reflect their busy lifestyle. "We picked this place because we are committed pet parents," says Roberts. Two terraces are perfect for their lovable pup, Roxy. The **CONTINUED ▶**

Roberts (RIGHT) and Abner thought the custom marble and reclaimed wood kitchen island would be too big for the apartment. "Once we saw it in here, we realized that large-scale was better," says Roberts. The pendants are vintage, from France.



apartment is filled with art and objects they have collected in their travels. The painting over the sofa, by Derek Kaplan, was a gift from Roberts for Abner's birthday. And in the hallway, a large-scale photograph of a Sable Island pony by Drew Doggett was a gift to Roberts for his birthday. Says Roberts, "We were searching for something to fit in that space and I wanted to do something creative." Abner interrupts, "Actually I was creative first," but the photograph was too pale for the sunlit living room. It took them awhile to get the scale right in the smaller city space.

Roberts recently received the Point Foundation's Point Impact award for his positive impact on the LGBTQ community. "We are people who have successful professional AND personal lives. That isn't open to debate by folks who want to take it away." Abner adds, "We never intended to be role models but I'm glad young people out there can look at us and see that it can work out." Roberts continues, "I think everybody wants to be as real as possible, and people should be free to have that authenticity. We aren't perfect; we fight like any normal couple." Says Abner, "He leaves dishes in the sink. It drives me crazy." Roberts laughs. "He doesn't make the bed. I like to return to a nice room. The pillows on the sofa have to be arranged." **EX**



The Hell's Kitchen apartment is filled with pieces the pair has collected over the years. Abner rescued Roxy (OPPOSITE, BOTTOM), A pitbull-rottweiler mix, from the streets of Los Angeles. In the alcove (OPPOSITE, TOP), a charcoal drawing by Oskar Stocker purchased at auction in Vienna hangs over an antique chair that once belonged to Roberts' great uncle in Maryland. Roberts' Emmy (ABOVE) holds pride of place on a 1950s Spanish painting scaffold that serves as an entertainment center. The brilliant blue painting by Derek Kaplan is a focal point in the sunlit living room.

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