



SFLY051114-347



SELENA AND KELLY



# HELLO!

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We are Selena and Kelly. We have been together since 2011 and married since 2017.

We live just outside of Seattle with our dog, Kona, and our two cats, Sahale and Posey.

Thank you for taking the time to get to know us. This book tells our story.

# OUR STORY



Here we are about to release captive-bred Western Pond Turtles into the wild!

We met in 2011 when Selena moved from Utah to start a job at the zoo where Kelly was working. It was one of those instant connections. We bonded over our love of animals and love of spending time in nature. Soon we knew that the similarities didn't stop there, and we saw that our values and interests built the foundation for a strong relationship.



We took our relationship slowly. At some point we realized that no one had ever asked the other for an official first date. Selena asked Kelly with a homemade puzzle that she had to put together which read, "Will you go on a first date with me?" This is a picture from our "official" first date which was a hike to Lake Serene.

# OUR ENGAGEMENT



Kelly surprised Selena with a beautiful engagement. We went on a helicopter ride which Selena thought was to view the Space Needle. She was surprised when she looked down and saw "Marry Me, Selena!" spelled out by their close friends. Afterward, we met up with our friends who surprised us both with a flash mob to the song Sugar by Maroon 5. Later, Selena surprised Kelly with an engagement by putting the ring on her cat Sahale. Cats will be cats and he was uncooperative in the surprise, which led to lots of laughs and another memorable day.



## THE STORY OF OUR TWO WEDDINGS



Kelly's father was diagnosed with an aggressive type of brain cancer (glioblastoma - not hereditary) in February of 2017. His goal throughout the year was to be healthy enough to come across the country to be at our wedding in October of 2017. When it became clear he would not be healthy enough to make it, we decided to get married at his hospital during the Great American Eclipse. We had an amazing day full of family, love, and space-themed snacks (moon pies, anyone?). The photos below are from our full wedding later that year.



Camp Kelena 2017



## WHAT WE VALUE ABOUT EACH OTHER



Kelly in Borneo, 2013



Selena in Thailand, 2014

### WHAT SELENA LOVES ABOUT KELLY

- She loves to travel.
- She believes in life long learning.
- She sees the best in everyone.
- She is incredibly patient.
- She inspires me to try new things.

### WHAT KELLY LOVES ABOUT SELENA

- She has a huge heart. HUGE!
- She listens & really hears what's being said.
- She makes sure that everyone feels valued.
- She plays tag with the pets every day.
- She has an incredible bond with her parents.

# MEET KELLY

JOB: Education Program Manager

## HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:

In no specific order:

- Playing outside (hiking, camping, learning, gardening, running, birdwatching, etc.)
- Cooking big meals from scratch
- Games with friends
- Reading
- Seeing the world!



## 10 FUN FACTS ABOUT KELLY!

1. I speak (and sing) fluent pig Latin. Eallyray.
2. I love to cook, hate to bake. (Creation versus chemistry)
3. I'm terrible at ball sports but could run or bike for days.
4. I've always felt like I am more connected to nature than most people feel.
5. I've been pooped on by a whale shark.
6. I love genuine conversation and struggle with small talk.
7. I've long been obsessed with the show 'Twin Peaks'.
8. I would love to work in a bookstore.
9. I collect pine cones.
10. I am the queen of dad jokes.



# MEET SELENA

JOB: 5th Grade Teacher

## HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:

(I have A LOT because I love trying new things - here are just a few)

- Spending time with my friends and family
- Music - Singing, Creating, Playing
- Running
- Rugby
- Sailing
- Harry Potter
- Watching drama TV shows
- Sending snail mail
- Seahawks and the Packers



## 10 FUN FACTS ABOUT SELENA!

1. I have a day named after me in my hometown.
2. I love pickles!
3. I love sending pictures of myself holding carrots to my friends.
4. I know how to play five instruments.
5. I think one of the nicest things you can do for someone is pick them up from the airport.
6. If I wasn't a teacher I would either be a secretary or a nurse.
7. I was a camp counselor for seven summers.
8. I once met Hulk Hogan.
9. I love pepperoni pizza.
10. I love playing arcade games.



# KELLY'S STORY



I was born in Richmond, Virginia. Soon after I was born, my parents divorced and my mother and I moved to Illinois to live with my grandmother, Joyce, and her mother, Goldie (three generations!). I'm glad I had the opportunity to have a super small town experience growing up: I remember spending my days playing Hide and Seek in corn that was taller than me, popping hot tar bubbles with my bicycle tires, and waiting until exactly when the street lights to come on before I went home. We only lived in Illinois until I was 9, when we moved to Colorado.

↖ This is my mom, Diane, holding me as a baby.

↗ This is my great grandmother Goldie. She adopted my grandmother (my mom's mom) as a baby. I love this picture because neither of us have any teeth!



I'VE ALWAYS HAD TWO FAMILIES,  
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.



I spent summers and some holidays in Virginia with my dad's side of the family. These are some of my most vivid memories, looking for crabs and learning about birds with my grandfather (which definitely influenced my career choice!), reading and sailing with my dad, and playing on the beach with my amazing grandmother.





I was always excited about everything I learned about in class (until I was a teenager). Even though I know I asked way too many questions as a child, my family always nurtured my curiosity. Today that is still a big part of who I am. The only camp I ever went to was space camp, but I've worked at lots of camps as an adult and am looking forward to providing that opportunity for our child.

Some of my childhood was pretty non-traditional since I grew up as an only child with my mother who is disabled, and my father's side of the family lived so far away from us. I did go through some rough patches as a teenager, but overall these experiences helped me find my own strength which has helped me throughout my life.



You can laugh at those bangs. I did. Even all of these years later, "doing my hair" is not one of my skills.



From both sides of my family, I learned that travel is one of the best ways to learn things. I look forward to passing this on to our child.

The picture on the left is of my grandmother, Joyce, and my grandfather, Al, who took my cousins and I on trips around the US in their motor home.



My love for nature and animals led to me getting degrees in Wildlife Biology and Zoology. However, I learned early in my career that providing learning experiences for kids and adults was something I was really good at and was really rewarding. Through my work at the zoo I was able to travel to Borneo three times to teach teachers about research methods and conservation. Borneo is such a special place in my heart. The people are incredible and the animals are fascinating. We plan to take as many opportunities as we can for our child to experience different cultures and learn about the world.



I left the zoo in 2016 to work for an organization focused on salmon recovery. Now instead of teaching about animals all over the world, I get to engage kids and adults in learning about how connected salmon are to our history and how important they are in our ecosystems. Even if you don't love fish, salmon are still super cool.



I feel satisfied with what I've done for my career, and when we adopt a child I'm looking forward to being a mom as my main role!



# SELENA'S STORY

I was born and raised in Wisconsin. I lived with my older brother, Phillip, my mother, Susan, and my father, Keith. My mother worked as a LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) with Veterans who had Alzheimer's. My father worked as a Boiler Maker, a skill he learned while serving in the Navy. I love that both of my parents have taught me how to be kind, hard-working, giving, respectful, and to have SISU. I hope to give our child the same values.

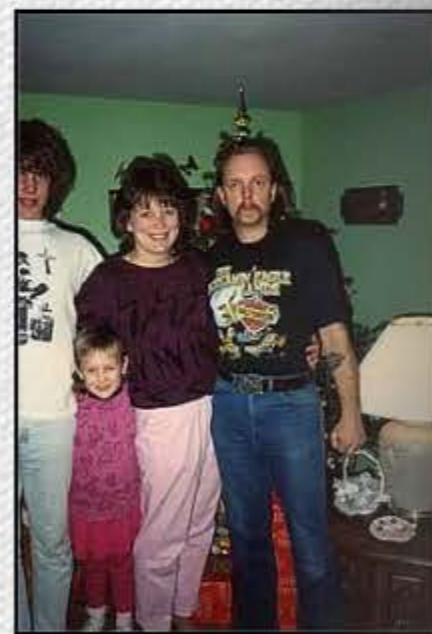
*Sisu describes the power that enables individuals to push through significant hardships.*



Age 2



Me with my brother Phillip



Christmas at Grandma and Grandpa's house



Age 9: All I wanted for Christmas was this rollerblading doll. When I got her and we had matching shades, it was officially the best Christmas. (This is still one of my favorite pictures.)



Age 8: Loved Disney's Beauty and the Beast



Age 10: TaeKwonDo



Age 15: Varsity Soccer

Growing up, my parents supported activities I was interested in. My father and I joined Tae Kwon Do together. I have a black belt. My mother and I started to attend a UCC church. They enrolled me in yearly soccer programs. They allowed me to gain my independence by going to summer camps of my choice (band camp and church camp). They listened to hours of me playing the trombone. All of this with patience and grace.

My parents and I have a strong relationship. I want to have the same with our child.





My father in front of the sauna.

Some of my favorite memories of my childhood were taking road trips during the summer. The place we visited most often was Mackinac Island in Michigan.

My family always made holidays so special. My mother would color Easter Eggs with me, we would break the wishbone every Thanksgiving, and my brother would dress up as Santa Claus and with the help of my parents, make my Christmas magical as a young child. I want to create traditions and special memories with our child.

My father's heritage is Finnish so I grew up believing in the word Sisu (determination, perseverance, etc...) and 'taking sauna.'



My parents, Keith and Sue, in front of the Mackinac Bridge.



My mom, dad, and I on the LaCrosse River Boat.



My brother Phillip



After graduating high school, I went to the University of Wisconsin-Platteville to study Elementary Education and German. While I was in college, my brother died in a car accident. This was one of the hardest events in my life. He was my best friend. Through the support of family and friends, I began to heal. One of the best decisions I did at that time was join Rugby. Rugby allowed me to channel my energy through the sport and introduced me to a supportive friend community. After college, I lived in Tennessee working as an environmental educator. Then I moved to Utah to work in Wilderness Therapy. Finally, I found my home in Seattle.



One of my favorite memories in Rugby: the first time I scored a try.



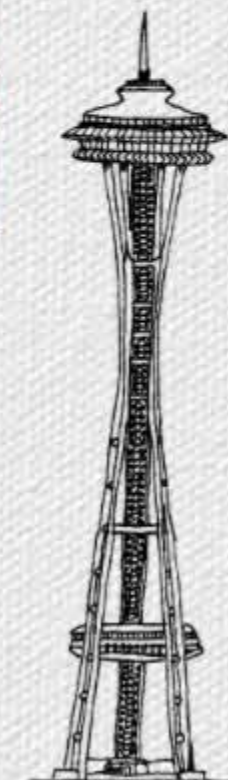
In Tennessee, I taught kids Environmental Education.



While working in Utah, I learned how to make a fire using a bow drill.



My two friends Irina and Abby helped me move to Seattle from Utah.



# BLENDING OUR FAMILIES

We are so thankful to have become a part of each other's families. While we are spread out, our connection is genuine and strong. As Kelly's dad often said, "We may have a small family, but it is a great family."



Spending time with Kelly's dad and our second mom, Joan, in the hospital



Kelly's mom teaching Selena how to make Kelly's favorite dessert

Kelly joined Selena's family for a cruise!



Selena and her parents with Kelly in Haiti



Selena showing Kelly's mom her patch collection



With Kelly's niece, Amanda, & her partner, Manny

# OUR FRIEND COMMUNITY

We have been blessed with such a supportive, loving, and compassionate friend group. They are family and have celebrated the big and small events in our lives. We are grateful for this community and we feel so lucky to have them be a part of our child's life.



Jen, Kaden, Nolan, and Chris



Ashleigh, Cecil, Gina, and Ted



Kathie and Ben

Some of Selena's favorite humans, Jennifer, Kate, and Erin!



Jumping with Jenny!



Kelly's dear friend, Chris



Jenny, Katie, & Paul



Dave & Donna, some of Kelly's dad's best friends who are now like family

Selena's teaching community!



Some of Kelly's favorite humans, Patti, Gina, Melody, Julie, Kathie, and Janell



# OUR PETS



SAHALE  
BORN IN 2007

Likes: Paper bags, licking butter  
off of popcorn, Kelly

Dislikes: Sudden movements



KONA  
BORN IN 2008

Likes: Food, squeaker toys, greeting  
people on walks

Dislikes: Baths, hot weather



POSEY  
BORN IN 2012

Likes: Sleeping in front of the  
fireplace, exploring

Dislikes: Almost all food, getting  
out of bed in the morning



# WE FILL THIS HOUSE WITH LOVE



Our forever home

We looked for a house for a year. When we saw our house we knew it was meant to be. We enjoy filling our house with friends and family, friends for dinner, game nights, sleepovers, music, and love.



Our first home project painting a chalkboard wall that we use to welcome friends and family as they visit



Our backyard



Our frontyard



Our favorite room in our house: the Beep Beep Room. It came painted like this and we love it. This will eventually be our nursery.



The 'welcoming committee' - the pets are so happy she's home!



Friends over for a Harry Potter birthday for Selena!



We spend a lot of time in the winter reading in front of the fire.



5 Acre Woods, a park by our home where we love to walk Kona

# FAVORITE TRADITIONS



We have so many and are always adding them! Some of our favorites are camping in Leavenworth every Veteran's Day, decorating the Christmas tree while watching Elf, carving pumpkins with our friends, Seahawks games, Friendsgiving at the lawn bowling club, running the St. Patty's Day Dash, getting sushi on special occasions, movie and pizza nights, and hiking to sunny places by the water in remembrance of Kelly's father on his birthday. We are looking forward to creating our own as a family, and to celebrating days that are important to our child's birthfamily!

# DREAMS FOR OUR CHILD

We have had long, important, and beautiful conversations about our dreams for raising a child. Through the process with Open Adoption & Family Services, we've explored our childhoods; what we loved, and what was missing.

Our dreams are that our child has a positive and affirming childhood, during which they have boundaries but also agency to gain confidence to become their own person. They will be surrounded by love and have a strong sense of belonging. They will know their unique story, and their life will be full of opportunities to learn about and hopefully, to be with their birth family.

We know raising a child is not easy. Through trust and communication we will overcome challenges together.



