



Erin, Monroe & Ben



SFLY051114-347



Hi!
Welcome to our photo book!

We are
Erin, Ben, Monroe
Ottis and Vincenzo
(you'll meet Vinny in a bit)



Our Relationship

Our journey started in 2005 when we met through a mutual friend at a Damien Marley concert in San Diego. The next day was a twist of fate. Ben lost (and Erin found) his wallet in the driveway of a friend's house. We met up for lunch to give Ben his wallet, started talking about quantum physics - you know, light stuff - and discovered our undeniable magnetic pull towards each other. There was a familiarity and comfort as if we've known each other for years.

Over the years we bonded over traveling, camping, hiking, concert going, bowling, playing cards, puzzles, cooking and just spending time with family and friends.

We were married in 2011 and in 2013 moved to Washington so Ben could earn his PhD in Mathematics. During that time we decided the PNW was where we wanted to put down roots and start building a family. It has a perfect blend of our love for nature with a west coast vibe.

We thrive off of keeping a peaceful home full of positive energy and love. Our relationship is built off of honesty, trust and an equal partnership in everything we do.

2016



2011

2010



2009



2021



2006





Our Wedding

JUNE 2011
ARISTA WINERY

& Honeymoon
ST. LUCIA & ANTIGUA



The reason I fell in Love with...

Ben

I discovered from the start that Ben has a beautiful mind. He has a gift of explaining complex theories in a simplistic way. When we met, my interests in spirituality & connectivity that I had a hard time putting into words were explained and validated.

He also has a way of finding the best answer at an incredibly rapid speed even if it's just an idea, from selecting the perfect gift for someone to helpful perspectives on hard situations.

Ben has always been a non judgmental comfort that is easy to open up to; he is a great listener, asks provoking questions and provides thoughtful advice.

17 years later, he still stands the test of time. I fall in love with him all over again every time I see how he loves Monroe, his family, life.

Erin

When you meet Erin I think the first thing that strikes you is how genuine a person she is. A rare find these days. She is always striving to better herself, and the world around her. I fell in love with her because of it. It was just icing on the cake when we found out how much we had in common.

I have learned many valuable lessons from Erin. Not the least of which is the lesson of honesty. Perhaps as she would say, honesty is not just about telling the truth to others, but about telling the truth to yourself. Living your truth. Erin is one of those people that lift you up and help you reach your goals.

17 years later and Erin is still lifting me up, amazing me with her truth and passion, and making me fall in love with her again and again.



Meet Ben



Tolmie
State Park

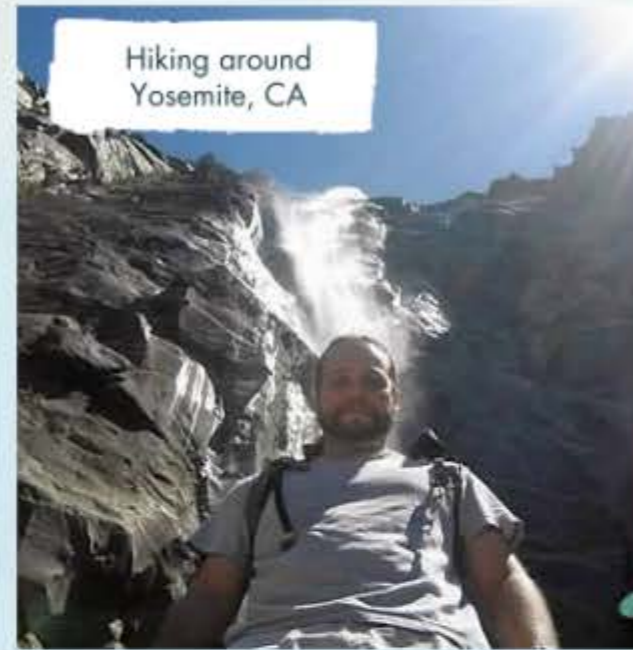


Fun Facts About Ben

1. I bake bread
2. I read at least 25 books a year
3. My high school nickname was Meat
4. Monroe says I make the best chocolate chip cookies
5. I was once mistaken for a secret agent in a foreign country



Looking for fairies
Snoqualmie, WA



Hiking around
Yosemite, CA



Coaching Monroe's
baseball practice





Ottis
9 weeks old



I was born and raised in rural Indiana. Running through corn fields, skipping rocks by the creek, catching fireflies at night, mushroom hunting, flashlight tag, and bonfires are the things I remember most. With around 20 aunts and uncles, family was a big part of my life.

I moved to CA with my mother and brother in the 4th grade. We moved around a lot from LA to San Diego and many places in between. My free time was spent playing sports, roller blading, going to the beach, hiking, and a hundred other activities.

Growing up with a single mom gave me a unique perspective on what it takes to carve out a life. I am always inspired when I think about how much effort she put into making our lives better. She really taught me the value of hard work, self reliance, and integrity.



Playing cards with
Uncle Mikey



Sailing in
San Diego, CA



Farmers Market
with buddy Patrick

I think most people would describe me as a pretty calm, agreeable person. I love talking and theorizing about our place in the world and metaphysical concepts like space, time and matter. The things I value most in people and myself are love, good intentions, and the genuine desire to make the world a better place. Sometimes love is all you need and it's the little things in your everyday life that bring you the most joy, not the expectations. Something I certainly wish I had learned earlier in life.



Chihuly Garden and Glass
with Cousin Levi, 2014



Rome, Italy

Meet Erin



Rome, Italy

I was born and raised in Minnesota with my sister (whom I am close to) and my parents who are still married to this day. I grew an appreciation for playing outside, lakes, shucking corn, four seasons, sports, and a large extended family. Check out my awesome '90s New Kids on the Block dance costume.. oh yes!

At 12, I moved to California. Here I learned the value of being yourself and having inner peace. At San Diego State University I discovered my love for painting and majored in Graphic Design.

I currently work remote as a Finance and Communications Manager for a student success center at a university that supports mostly first generation, low-income and/or those with disabilities. It's always been important that my work serves those I care about and not corporations; I am determined to leave marks of love and not greed.



1990 turtle races with my dad



A few of my cousins, Aunt Karen & sis



My sister Melissa



Niece and Goddaughter

I grew up Catholic but my own personal journey leaves me with a strong spiritual belief in God, just not the institution or any label put there by humans. I have had the honor of being my nephew and niece's Godmother, however, and take pride in guiding them through their religious journey. Isn't our holy moment adorable?!



Although I am a bit introverted I love meeting new people and gaining new experiences (this is Michael Franti and I in 2012 at Street Scene in San Diego). The most important things in life to me are living with integrity, honesty, peace and love.

If it isn't obvious by now, I love art and creating things! Crocheting is my jam (check out my Bernie Sanders doll on the next page - super proud of that one) but I am down for any type of crafting...

one of my favorite paintings I've created (Bob Marley)



Fun Facts About Erin

- 1 Ben calls me Butterfly (see next page why)
- 2 I'm addicted to lifting weights
- 3 I love organizing (yes, I'm weird)
- 4 My motto is "Live to Love. Love to Live."
- 5 Collecting crystals and tarot bring me peace
- 6 Led Zeppelin is my all time favorite band
- 7 I'm a Hufflepuff
- 8 Plants are invading our home & it's my fault
- 9 Odd numbers make me feel more balanced and I refuse to have this list end with the even number 8



Anita

Josefina

Some of my favorite people are Anita, Josefina and my best friend of 20+ years, Jen. Anita is my reliable and centered friend full of strength. She gives the best advice and pep talks! Josefina is my soul sister. She's the most compassionate person you'll ever meet and can calm me down in a moment's notice. You can also trust her with your deepest secrets. Jen and I are connected beyond belief. We can read each other's minds, knowing exactly what the other one needs without even speaking. She's my fun, loving, pee-in-your-pants-funny, unconditional sister!

Most of all, they let me be my weird self.

The time a bird landed on my hand when I pretended to be a tree. whaaaaaat...

The Law of Attraction

I'm not sure if it's the Irish blood or the taurus in me, but I've always been extremely tenacious and loyal. Although these deep rooted traits have helped me gain important things in my life, it can also be a downfall. I have had a hard time giving up on things or people even if they aren't healthy for me. Over the years I have learned to let things go if the Universe is telling me "no"; the Universe tends to unfold as it should. This is why Ben calls me "butterfly."



Florence, Italy

Father-In-Law Ralph
MoPop Museummy sister, mom,
& grandmaBiking with Ben's mom
in Vancouver BCJen and I, 2008
Yosemite, CA

Anita

Jen



1st fish with
Uncle Jamie



Grandma



Grandpa & Addy
(snowman's arms)



Uncle Mikey



Cousins!
Christmas 2021



best buddy Addy



long time family friends
Thanksgiving 2021

Meet Monroe

Our spunky, smart, sweet son is the center of our universe! He's so silly and surprises us everyday. The best part of Monroe is his kindness and awareness of others' feelings.

Monroe really loves sports! His favorites are baseball, basketball and soccer. This past season his team won the Championship and he scored three goals in one game! We were those crazy parents screaming on the sidelines...

Monroe also really loves playing Mario Odyssey and brain games like chess, Dao and puzzles. He also loves to camp, hike and make smores in the summer with his family and dogs. He adores his cousins Jackson, Mylee and Emma and has a new best friend Addy! They just had their first sleepover party recently and it was a blast!



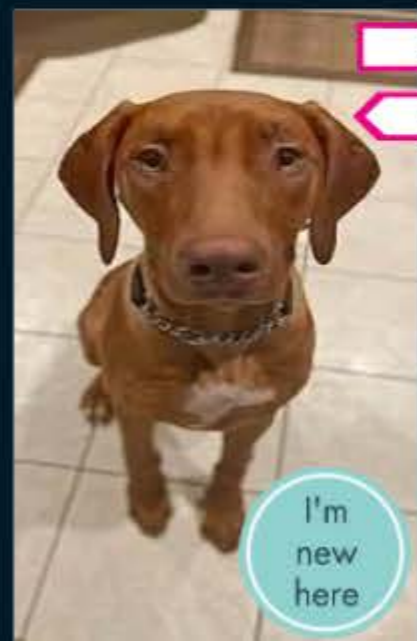
cousins Jackson and Mylee
Laguna Beach, CA

Ottis & Vincenzo



These are our Rhodesian Ridgeback fur babies!

Ottis is 3 years old and Vincenzo "Vinny" will turn 1 in Aug 2022. Ottis is our snuggle bug and Vinny is our crazy ball of entertainment! They bring us joy and love every day!



Ottis

Vinny

I'm new here



Our Home

We recently moved to the west side of Washington. Our neighborhood rocks and we really do love the PNW! Monroe made friends in a pinch and the neighborhood families are very welcoming and culturally diverse. We also have beaches and forest trails in abundance!



Both sets of our parents are moving close by and we cant wait to spend more time with them. Erin's parents just bought a home by the Puget Sound and is just a short walk to the beach (pictured left with Ben's parents).

Monroe loves to hit up the parks nearby, one of which is in our neighborhood forest. We also have a new daycare within walking distance, perfect for visiting on lunch breaks (when the grandparents aren't hogging the kids).

Our Favorite Traditions



Christmas 2021



Corn maze and Halloween 2021



Vampire Monroe 2016



Shaggy and Scooby Doo



Hiking Strawberry Mountain



Thanksgiving 2017



Halloween 2020



Every year we celebrate our favorite holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas with family and friends. This time of year is a bit nostalgic for us as this is when we met and fell in love. Plus, you know, FOOD!

We are also super DUPER into Halloween! Vampires, zombies, trick or treating, corn mazes, hot cider, costumes and pumpkin carving - I mean seriously, what more could you ask for?!

We also go camping and hiking in the summer and try to hit up at least one new spot every year! Every few years we also go to the Cherry Festival in Traverse City, MI for the 4th of July. It's full of classic Midwest fun like carnivals, parades, bingo, lake swimming, tubing, fishing, and the best ice cream you'll ever have in your entire life (made from cows that graze on the property).

It's our hope that we can make some new traditions with our child's birth family, we are always excited to try something different and unexpected!



Cherry Festival Traverse City, MI



Lower Lewis River Falls Gifford National Forest



July 4, 2021

Dreams for our child...



soaking up the sun
in Vancouver, CAN

Just like anyone else we want our kids to have the resources and means to go after their dreams, but we think it is just as important that they do it with a sense of pride, integrity and perseverance. We want them to be comforted, loved and emotionally supported as they make their way through the world. For us it's about educating, opening doors and encouraging them to forge their own path.

We will strive to provide our children with the resources and community support that will help them reach their goals. From both of our backgrounds we know how important it is to have mentors with legitimate answers and programs that provide guidance with their best interest in mind. Ultimately we believe the best thing we can provide our children is constant, unconditional love.



playing with otters
at San Diego Zoo



Legoland 2019
San Diego, CA



hiking with cousin Levi
Iron Creek, WA

We think traveling provides an amazing educational value and we cherish the thought of showing the world to our children. We plan to provide them with the opportunity to figure out what they are passionate about through diverse hands-on experiences and believe they will gain lifelong friends by doing so, as well as value the time they spend with family.



jammin' with buddy
Patrick



jellyfish at
Vancouver Aquarium

It's important that our children have the ability to interpret and manage others' emotions in a positive light, discover the value in how people live and develop the ability to communicate easily with people. We believe the more you see in this world the smaller this world seems to feel and the more similar its inhabitants appear to be.

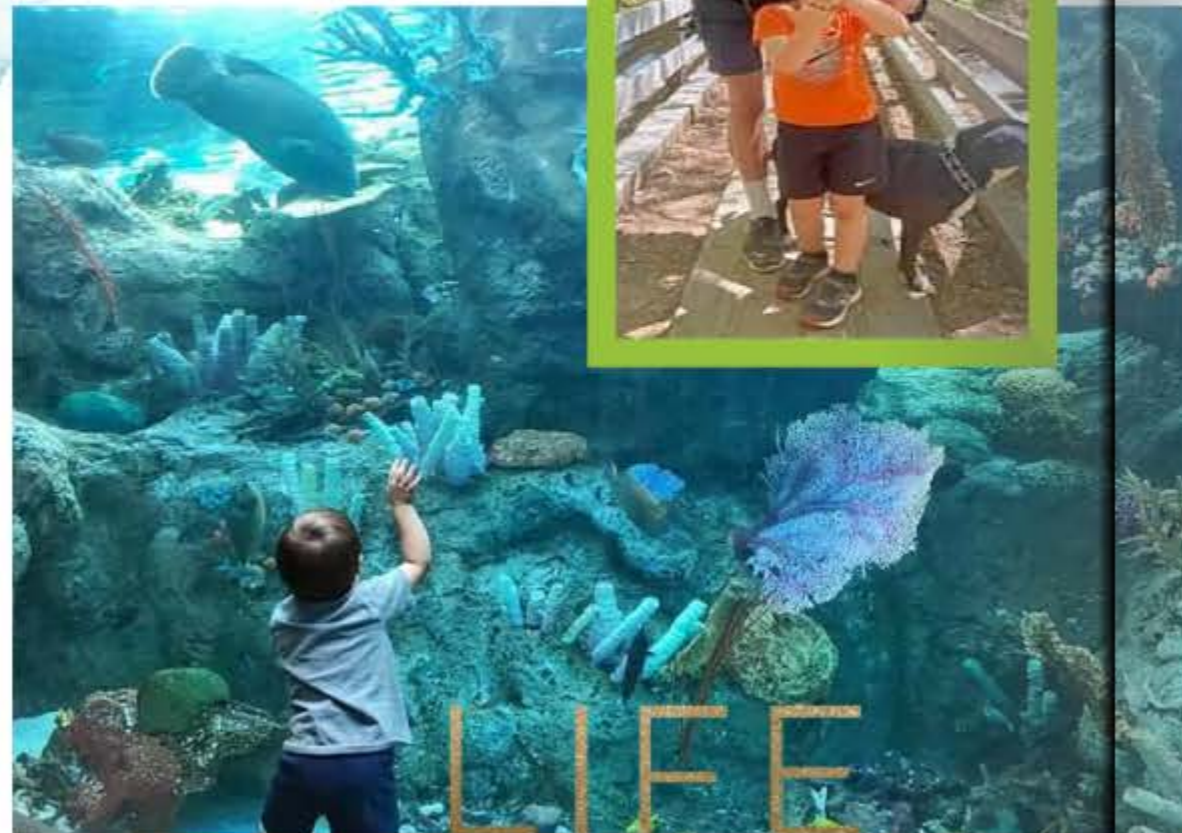
Finally, we hope they see the beauty in honesty, integrity, and kindness. To respect and treat all humans like family. After all, we all share this home.



Lake Powell 2010



Disneyland 2019



hiking with
cousin Levi



train ride in South Dakota



Grand"pie" Ralph - the music man!



swimming with cousins Ryan,
Jackson, Mylee and Amber



learning piano

is beautiful



Snoqualmie River



Uncle Mikey
Vancouver, CAN



family dinner with Grandma,
Aunt Chrissy, cousin Levi,
and friend Melissa

Open Adoption Aspirations

Throughout this process we first chose open adoption because we wanted to provide the healthiest option for our child and equally so, the birth parents. Later as we heard first hand from adoptees' stories, we fell in love with how a well-fitted relationship with birth families could integrate within our family. It expanded beyond the importance for just the child(ren) and birth parents, we want both sides of their family to be one without sides.

Anything less than open adoption never felt right for us and when we found OA&FS their reputation, material, and staff eased any of our worries. Every story is different, but we hope to lay a foundation that is comfortable for everyone to be open, honest and trusted. We appreciate transparency in each other and find it to be an invaluable part of any relationship. We also find it equally important to build the best relationship that considers everyone's values.



hiking in our neighborhood
with Grandpa

Monroe's 1st Bday with
Grandma & Grandpa

