



Melissa



Hi! I'm Melissa. I live in Olympia, Washington.  
I like reading, drawing, photography, crochet,  
cooking, and travel.



I want to be a parent because I think all kids need  
people who will love them for who they are and help  
them be the best version of themselves, and I want to be  
that person for a child.

# Fun Facts About Me



I played the flute in middle school because I wanted to be like Ian Anderson from the band Jethro Tull.



I was a photographer for my college newspaper.



I won a heavy metal knitting contest, where you knit or crochet onstage with a metal band. (The dark aura around this trophy was added later. ...Or was it?)



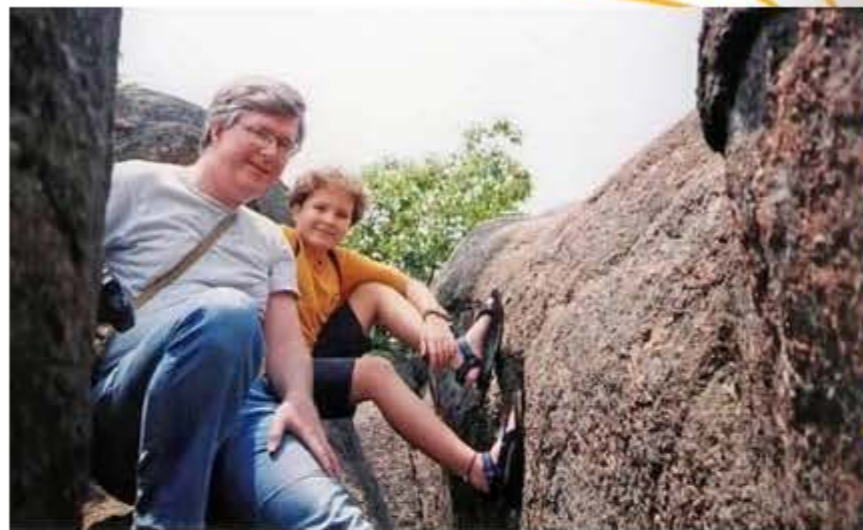
I've been to the southernmost point in the continental US (Key West, Florida) and the northwesternmost point (Cape Flattery, Washington).



I also visited the northernmost university town in the world - Tromso, Norway - and saw the midnight sun.

# My Story

I was born in Orlando, Florida. My parents divorced when I was 2, and my dad raised me as a single parent. His parents also lived in Orlando, so I spent a lot of time with them growing up.



I liked living near so many theme parks. My parents met while they were working at Disney World, and I went there a lot with my dad.



We moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when I was 13. I was really excited about seeing snow for the first time. We also drove to the mountains and beaches a lot.



We had friends in Maryland and family in Missouri, so it was easier to visit them. We went back to Orlando twice a year to see family there, so we've been on a lot of road trips! Traveling is definitely something I'm looking forward to doing with my own child.

In high school, I got involved in theater, and I liked making and building things.  
I read a lot of books, especially fantasy and sci-fi, and I liked to draw.



Taking a bow with the other stagehands.

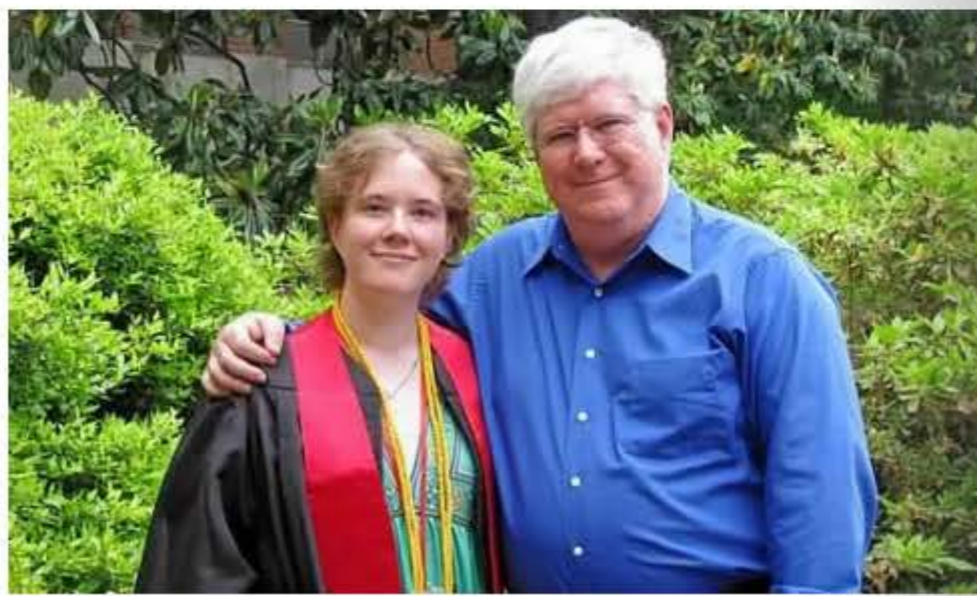


Wearing my handmade chainmaille vest to the Renaissance fair.



Making a redwood top at a folk art festival.

I went to NC State University and studied electrical engineering and philosophy. I really liked thinking about weird ideas in my philosophy classes, and I ended up studying philosophy in grad school.



I also studied abroad in Ireland for a year in college, and I really loved it there. I go back whenever I can. I'd planned family trips before, but this was when I gained a lot of confidence as a solo traveler.



I still love seeing new places and meeting new people!



After grad school, I really wanted to teach. I didn't get a university job, so I decided to teach high school math.

I worked at a boarding school in Massachusetts for a year and then got another teaching job in Tacoma, WA.



I made friends with some other new teachers, and we liked exploring our new home together. We took trips to the Hoh Rainforest, a tulip farm, and the beach.



I love the Pacific Northwest! There's a big variety of things to see and do, it's a really pretty area, and I like the weather.

I also liked living in a city like Tacoma, where there was always something going on and plenty of interesting places to walk to.

# My Personality and Interests

I think my most fundamental personality trait is curiosity. I like getting to know new people, and I'll learn about anything. One of my neighbors says I'm "easily amused", but I think it's the world's fault for being so interesting.

I like math, programming, and art. I enjoy making things by hand. I crochet all the time. I cook a lot, but I don't usually make anything fancy. I'm learning more about baking and gardening.

I read a lot, and I have a lot of books. What I enjoy most about reading is getting to live inside another person's head or in another world for a while. I like learning about other people's perspectives and thinking about new ideas. I've read a lot of fantasy and science fiction, but I also like fact books and personal stories of travel or adventure.

I have a lot of math and puzzle books because I enjoy the creativity involved in math and problem solving. I think mathematical proofs can be beautiful as well as interesting – in fact, I have a tattoo representing a mathematical theorem because I think the proof of it is really pretty.



I use reading as an escape and as a source of weird ideas to think about, but I also use it to learn more about what the world is like and what I can do to make it better.

I read about current social issues and the needs and struggles of people who are different from me, and I get involved by going to protests and writing to my representatives. I know I could do a lot more, and I'm looking for social justice groups near me that I can connect with.



I'm not religious, but I have a strong moral center. I think empathy and creativity can save the world. I also love the sense of awe and wonder I get from being in nature and learning about the amazing things the universe does.

I want to do something that makes a difference, is interesting, and that I feel like I'm good at. I've rethought my career plans several times to pursue these goals. My current job, working from home as an editor, fits my goals pretty well, and it gives me the flexibility that I'll need as a parent.

I struggled with romantic relationships for a long time before I found out about asexuality. When I learned that it was possible not to feel sexual attraction, that explained a lot about my experiences. I used to think there was something broken about me. Now I'm a lot more involved in the asexual community and I've met a lot of people who feel the same way I do.



I also never really felt comfortable being called a girl. I didn't feel like being a girl defined who I was or shaped my personality. When I was around my asexual and queer friends, I felt like I could figure out my gender because I knew they would accept me and use any pronouns I asked them to. It turned out that they/them pronouns felt right to me, and now I consider myself nonbinary.

# My Dad's Story



Hi! I'm Vince, otherwise known as Melissa's dad. We recently bought a house together, and part of the reason is that Melissa was planning on having a child and I wanted to be present as a grandpa.

As a parent myself, I know how important it is to support and encourage a child in all their interests and life goals, and I look forward to helping Melissa in their new role as a dedicated parent.

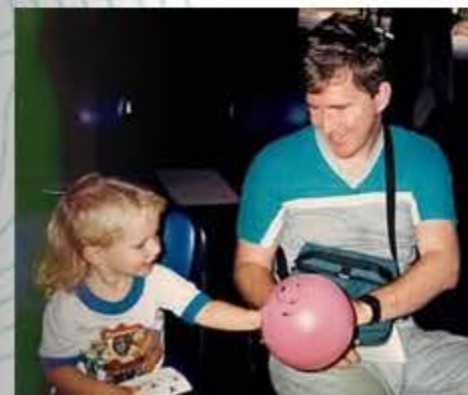
I grew up in St. Louis as one of five brothers in a typical suburban middle-class family. My brothers and I had friends in the neighborhood who we'd ride bikes and play baseball with. We took annual vacations as a family, and although money was tight sometimes, we got to see places like California and Niagara Falls.



I went to college to become a secondary school math teacher, but my interest in art and photography took me to Disney World in Orlando, where I became a graphic artist. There I met Melissa's mother and got married, and eventually Melissa came into our lives.

I didn't know what my child's interests or abilities would be, so when I was thinking about who I would be as a father, I chose a simple goal: I wanted my child to be happy they were born.

Other goals spilled out of that, since I realized that people are happier when they feel safe and supported, have self-confidence, can explore and set their own goals, care about others, and know how the world works well enough to navigate through it and do the things they want to do.



I knew I needed to always be truthful, always explain why things happened, always encourage, and always assume my child was capable of doing what they set out to do. Before Melissa was able to speak, I would watch to see how they interacted with the world. When they were older we talked all the time, but I would never talk down to them. I respected what Melissa had to say and treated it seriously.

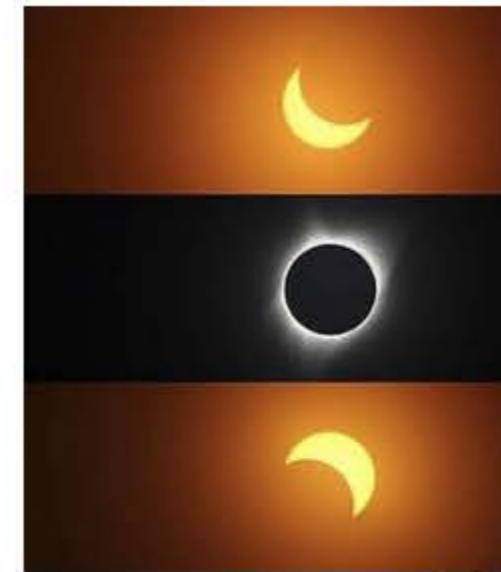
Sadly, Melissa's mother left us one week before Melissa's second birthday. It was unusual in those days (and even today) for a father to get sole custody of a child, especially a girl. I fought hard for sole custody because that would be best for Melissa, and the courts agreed. Melissa visited their mother every other weekend and for several weeks in the summers.

That was the start of my role as a single parent. There were some challenges in taking Melissa from diapers to diplomas, but it was an exciting part of my life.



At 18, Melissa moved out to start college. I'd been working as a computer programmer for years and eventually moved into a network security management job.

When I retired, I continued my lifelong hobbies of writing and photography – some of my photos are included here.



I eventually decided that since I could live anywhere in the country, I may as well live in the same city as Melissa.

It turned out to be cheaper to live in one house than in two apartments, so after spending 20 years apart in different cities, states, and countries, we got the band back together.

# Our Home and Neighborhood

We bought a house in a brand new development near a much older neighborhood full of families and gardens. We were the second people to move in, but now that the construction is over and the houses are full, we're meeting our neighbors for game nights and walks.

The kitchen is a lot bigger than the apartment kitchens we're used to!



We also have a yard for the first time in decades. We're gradually adding more plants. We want the porch to be a space for reading books in the sun and relaxing by the firepit in the evenings. We have cabinets full of games in the living room.



Most weekends, we walk to the farmers' market downtown. We also like walking around the harbor and looking at the boats.

We always keep an eye out for parks and other things to see (and bookstores and coffee shops of course).



# Family and Friends



We have family all over the country, and we see them whenever we can. I have six cousins on my dad's side, and two are adopted. Our favorite family activities are going to parks, playing games, and just hanging out and joking around. These photos show some fun times I've had with my family.



We hosted three exchange students at different times during my childhood. As an only child, getting to have "sisters" was a great experience. I'm really glad I got to learn more about the rest of the world at a young age.

We still keep in touch with them, especially Irma from Lithuania.



We have friends in North Carolina, Maryland, Massachusetts, and California who we've known for years. We like to spend holidays with them. I also hang out with a bunch of people in the queer community around Seattle and Olympia. We meet up regularly online, and we like to play games, go hiking, and have picnics.



Christmas in Germany with old friends from Orlando.



Delicious home-cooked Thanksgiving dinner with our friends in North Carolina.



Getting lunch with my queer friends in Seattle.

## Traditions



We like to make up traditions or change them to fit us, and I look forward to creating new traditions with my child and their birth family!

We used to have Fourth of July gatherings at my grandparents' house in Orlando. The tradition was to play card games until it was dark enough to set off fireworks in the backyard. None of us took the games seriously, and it was always a lot of fun.

We have a tradition of getting a "mascot" for our road trips – a small toy we can set on the dashboard. We started this tradition when I was little and we would get toys with kids' meals from fast food restaurants.

Halloween is my favorite holiday, and now that we have a house, we celebrate by handing out candy to neighborhood kids. Thanksgiving has become a time to try out new fancy recipes, and we always watch the Mystery Science Theater 3000 Turkey Day Marathon.



## Dreams for My Child

I've known for a long time that I wanted to be a single parent, and my plan was to have a baby through artificial insemination. Even though it didn't work out, I'm glad I tried it, because it was an interesting and life-changing experience. It made me confront the reality of having a child, and it made me even more sure that I want to be a parent.



I want my child to understand themselves and be happy with their life, no matter who they turn out to be. The part of parenting I'm looking forward to the most is finding out who my child is and helping them be whoever they are.



I want an open adoption because I want my child to know all sides of themselves. The more people there are in my child's life who love and care about them, the better. I've gotten a lot of joy and strength from my connections with family and friends, and I'm excited to get to know my child's birth family and help my child make connections for themselves.

Most of all, I want my child to know that they are loved.