

Self-Portrait

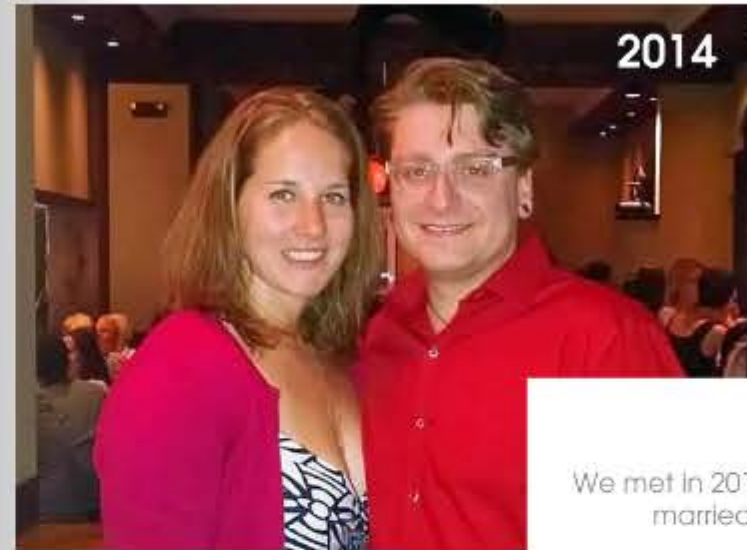


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Shawn and Michelle

Thanks for taking the time to learn about us



We met in 2014 and have been married since 2017.

We live in Seattle with our two cats: Barley (brown) and Mash (grey).



Our Story

We met through a mutual friend in our running club in 2014, while attending an event in Portland, Oregon. Conversation started flowing and we were both disappointed when we had to return to our home cities soon after.

Through daily communication, our relationship blossomed long distance between San Francisco and Seattle. We bonded over our mutual love of music, sci-fi, and craft beer.

After a year of dating, Shawn moved to San Francisco where we lived for three years. It's there that we adopted our cats, Barley and Mash, and started to grow our family. In 2017 we got married at a local brewery and soon thereafter made the decision to move to Seattle.

We're excited to share more about ourselves in the following pages of this book.





Our Wedding

We were married at a brewery in the Bay Area in front of family and friends. It was a quick ceremony, followed by hours on the dance floor. Instead of flower centerpieces, we opted for bowls of our favorite candy. We're not always the most traditional, but we like to think that our sense of childish wonder and quirkiness adds fun to the events that we plan and attend.



Our Values

We connect on a deeper level and live our lives according to our shared values and morals.

HONESTY We strive to be sincere and truthful. We don't keep secrets from each other. We respect and honor what our loved ones say.

TEAMWORK From the very beginning, we have always said that we are a team. We work together to solve problems and reach our goals.

EMPATHY We actively show compassion, and we recognize that everyone's lived experiences are different. We take the time to listen and be there for each other and our community.

ADVENTURE We try to find the adventure in everything we do.

LAUGHTER Sometimes, a good laugh (or cry, for that matter) is the best solution.

FAMILY We know that family isn't always easy, but we've learned over the years how important it is. We feel it's important to keep our family stories alive.

Things We Love to Do Together

TRAVELING We love to travel and explore new places together, in our area and abroad. We went to New Zealand on our honeymoon and Japan is our next dream location.

DANCING We love dancing, whether at a wedding or just privately in our kitchen. It may not always be the most coordinated, but it always makes us smile.

ENJOYING MUSIC Our lives are full of music. Whether it's being watched, listened to, or played by us, it's a fixture in our lives.

PLAYING GAMES We have an extensive board game collection. Shawn loves to find new and fun games - both simple (like Dixit) and complex (like Small World). And Michelle may have a bit of a competitive streak.

BEING OUTDOORS In the summer we enjoy camping in our trailer, going on hikes, or relaxing in our hammocks. In the winter you can find us skiing or playing in the snow.

STAYING IN Curling up in front of the TV with our cats is also a top activity. Shawn has seen every Star Trek show and Michelle loves fantasy and mysteries.



In front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France.



Dancing at a friend's wedding.



Watching the Chicago Cubs train in Scottsdale, Arizona



At the top of Mackinnon Pass in New Zealand



Playing ukulele with Barley



Exploring a Hobbit house in New Zealand



By the Three Sisters mountains in Canmore, Alberta, Canada



Cuddling with our cat Barley



Riding a camel in Morocco



Meeting a kitten in Thailand



Our cousin's dog KC

Michelle

Job: User Experience Researcher
Hobbies and Interests: Weight lifting, reading, knitting, crafting, traveling, volunteering

Fun Facts about Michelle

I've run 4 full marathons and numerous other races, including one while dressed as a dinosaur

My first job was creating balloon arches for large events

I've traveled to five continents and hope to visit the other two someday

Growing up I was a dog person. No one ever imagined I'd have a cat, but now I'm a cat lady.

I've had the same best friend for nearly 30 years

I can squat over 200 pounds and am regularly working on my Olympic weight lifting



Competing in an Olympic weightlifting meet



Bungee jumping in New Zealand



Running a relay race on my dinosaur-themed team



Making friends with the locals



Making pasta in Italy



Backpacking in California



Exploring ruins in Morocco

Michelle's Story



I grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia with my parents and older brother, Eric. We were active in our synagogue and I was part of several youth groups. While I never considered myself to be particularly religious, I've always appreciated the community and the food aspects of Jewish culture. It was in Hebrew School that I met my best friend Lisa. We are still best friends today, even though we live on opposite sides of the country.

All throughout grade school I was part of the nerdier group. While I played some sports, I preferred to read and excelled in math and science. I still love to read and do math/logic puzzles for fun. Some of my favorite childhood memories are baking in the middle of the night with Lisa and having our experiments go terribly wrong. We still love baking together, but now our baked goods come out right. Most of the time.

My mother was born with a severe hearing loss. As a teen my family took American Sign Language (ASL) classes. At that time I didn't take it seriously, but as an adult I have come to recognize the importance of the language and taken ASL classes. It is something I want to continue learning and eventually become conversational in.

After high school I went to college in Boston to study engineering. While learning how to design and manufacture products, I became interested in observing how individuals interact with technology. This led me to the field of user experience, where I focus on making products more delightful and efficient.

I moved to the Bay Area for graduate school in 2011 and fell in love with the West Coast. It was there that I started lifting weights and got into Olympic weightlifting. I'd never considered myself particularly athletic, but it has been rewarding to see how my strength has grown.

While living in San Francisco I began volunteering with a local reading program and realized how much I enjoy giving back to the community. I've been very privileged in my life, and I want to support others so that they can excel as well.

While it's hard being so far from my family, I don't miss the extreme seasonal weather changes or mosquitos of the East Coast. Fortunately, my family is understanding and are just a text or video chat away.

I'm proud of the life Shawn and I have made together and look forward to growing our family even more.



With my mother in Hawaii



With my best friend Lisa



Giving free hugs at an event in college



Trying out modeling



Bungee jumping in New Zealand



Goofing around with Barley



A rare professional photo

Shawn

Job: Technical Program Manager
Hobbies and Interests: Games (of all sorts), cycling, skiing, watching sports, playing ukulele, cooking

Fun Facts about Shawn

I was born in an Airstream trailer, on a goat farm, in a field of thistles

I have a leg tattoo that shows the evolution of Mario Bros. games. It won an award at the Seattle Tattoo Expo.

I sing and play ukulele, our cats Barley and Mash both love to meow along when I do.

I'm scared of heights, but went bungee jumping on our honeymoon (which was Michelle's idea)

The hair on my face and head is constantly changing

My hot sauce collection is large enough that it requires its own fridge



Leading a song circle with friends



My Mario Bros. leg sleeve



On the beach in Hawaii



With my maternal grandfather at the top of Mt Lemmon in Arizona

Shawn's Story



With my dad in Yellowstone



With my uncle, aunt, grandparents, and mom



With my grandfather at our wedding

My parents were seasonal apple pickers in the Northwest, were periodically unhoused, never married, and were only together for a short period after I was born.

I spent most of my time growing up in Central California with my mom. We lived in the Central Valley early on, and moved to the Monterey area when I was in grade school. I was very close to my maternal grandparents, and spent a lot of time with them in Saratoga, CA, and later Tucson, AZ. My grandfather, who I was especially close with, and I used to watch the 49ers together, and they're still my team today.

I spent my summers with my dad, who lived outside of Boulder, CO when I was younger, and in the Pacific Northwest (Lopez and Vashon Islands), with my stepmom and younger brother, when I was older.

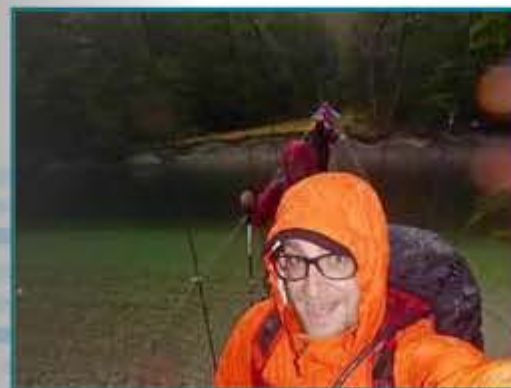
Growing up in such beautiful parts of the world fostered a love of the outdoors, and of exploration, which I still hold on to strongly to this day.

My relationship with my mother declined as I grew into adulthood. And while I will always have love for her, she is no longer a substantial part of my life.

College brought me to the city of Chicago. I fell in love with the city, its culture, food, and the Cubs. I lived there for about 10 years before moving to Seattle - close to my dad, stepmom, and brother.

I love living in Seattle. I often tell people that Seattle has "seasons lite," which is perfect for me. It gets cold enough to snow, and hot enough to have some balmy days, but we never have to deal with extremes for very long.

Family traditions are one of my favorite things, because they can be old or new! In the early 2000s, my dad and co. started the simple tradition of, during the holidays, picking a dish that we'd never cooked before, and making it together. It means there's always something new to try, and everyone's working on it together. You can see a photo here of my brother Sage and I posing with some pumpkin parfaits that we made!



Hiking the Milford Track in New Zealand



Making pumpkin parfait with my brother Sage



Meeting Klaus the owl in Arizona



With Lesley's family at her mother's memorial



Shawn and Sage



Diane and her adoptive parents

Michelle's Family

Michelle's parents and brother still live outside of Philadelphia and we try to visit them as often as we can. Michelle's mother is hard of hearing, so we connect using video calls so she can read our lips. Every week we have a video call with Michelle's parents and we try to video chat with her brother, his girlfriend, and our niece Hannah a few times a month.

We have two goddaughters from Michelle's childhood best friend, who we consider our nieces as well. It has been a joy to watch all our nieces grow up and we always look forward to spending time together.



Michelle with her dad and brother

Shawn's Family

Shawn's mother Diane lives in Tucson. She's fluent in Spanish and has always had a lot of dogs and cats in her life. Raising Shawn, she always made a point to expose the family to many different cultures and traditions.

Shawn's father Denny, stepmother Lesley, and half-brother Sage, live on Vashon Island, which is right outside of Seattle. Denny is a fantastic musician and a lifelong Deadhead. He's also a huge Cleveland Guardians fan. Despite the 2016 World Series, he doesn't hold Shawn's Cubs fandom against him! Lesley is an accomplished writer and spent years in the Peace Corps. Sage is 28 and a veterinary assistant. He loves games (video and tabletop), movies, and generally all types of nerdy media (just like Shawn). He will love playing games with his niece/nephew!



Michelle's parents, brother, his girlfriend, and our niece Hannah



Matching outfits with our niece Hannah



Playing with our niece Evie

Our Close Friends

We also spend a lot of time with our close friends, who have become our family, many of whom have come from the same running group where we first met. We regularly celebrate holidays and other large milestones with our pack. But we also appreciate all the lazy, ordinary activities that we do together.

While we may have small biological families, our child will have a plethora of aunts, uncles, and cousins from our friend group. They are incredibly supportive and excited for us to be on this journey.

We have many friends across the US and always look forward to spending time with them in their home city or hosting them for a visit.



A good friend's goodbye party



Enjoying the scenery in Alberta, Canada



We love going on fun adventures with Hilary and Magnus!
Michelle and Hilary met at the gym and are now thick as thieves



Hot chocolate in Paris with Josh and Erin



Exploring Brussels for Shawn's birthday



A Cubs game with friends from college



Hot sauce eating challenge with friends from our running club



Wine tasting in Italy



Snow day!

Our Home and Community

We chose our North Seattle home because of the community and neighborhood. We appreciate being walking distance from several parks and our small downtown strip of businesses. And we live only a few miles from downtown museums, theaters, and restaurants.

We have a great group of neighbors, living on a block that has many children and animals (dogs, cats, and chickens). In the summer, we close the streets one night a week and everyone comes out for a block party.



We love to host, whether it is dinner parties, game nights, or grilling on the patio in the summer. Nothing brings us more joy than to fill our house, or backyard, with music and laughter. And to provide our friends and family with a good meal.

Our backyard has a large patio and several garden beds in which we plant with fruits and vegetables during the summer. And we have a triple hammock stand, so multiple folks (and animals) can lounge together.



Our family photo wall



Some of our Mario themed art



Our ketubah, the Jewish marriage contract, that we signed at our wedding



Hanging in our hammocks in the backyard

Barley and Mash

These are our girls, Barley (brown) and Mash (grey). We adopted them from the Berkeley Humane Society in 2016 and 2017.

Barley can be a bit surly to new folks, but is a chatty lap snuggler once she gets to know you. At night she can be found curled between our pillows or doing zoomies around the house.

Mash loves attention and demands belly rubs from all who enter the house. Her signature position is a big stretch. She is happiest when being held on someone's shoulder.

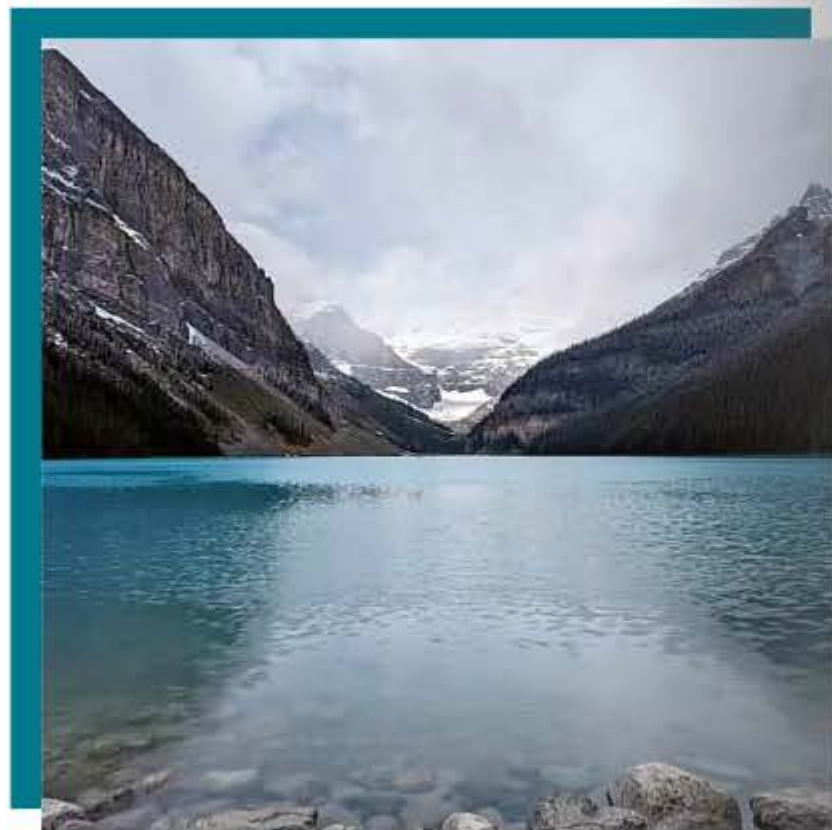


Dreams for Our Child

Above all else, we hope that our child will feel loved and supported by their entire family constellation. We hope that they will always know they can depend on us. We will do everything in our power so that they will have a happy and healthy life.

We will expose our child to many different cultures and help them see the beauty and value in all of them. As they grow up, we will empower them to explore their identity, and hope to enable them to have all opportunities available to them that they choose. And we hope they know we will support, value, and accept them for being their authentic self.

We look forward to sharing our sense of adventure with them, and delighting as they bring their uniqueness to our home and family. We will celebrate through all of their milestones, and be by their side through any hardships.



Adoption Aspirations

We come into the open adoption process with open hearts and open minds. We have a lot of love to share with a child and with their birth family.

We recognize that it will not always be easy, but we hope that it will be rewarding for all involved. We look forward to creating a lifelong relationship with our child's birth family that is built on respect, honesty, and transparency.

We look forward to welcoming our child's birth family into our lives and co-creating a relationship. This is a new experience for us and we will be on this journey together as a team.

We hope that our child knows that they will be loved unconditionally. We will make sure they know about their heritage and culture, and have the freedom to explore it. They will never question that they are wanted and loved.





Thank you
Thank you again for taking the time to learn more about us. We hope it helped give you a better sense of who we are.