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Vikings to play
final games in
regular season
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An easy, meant-to-be love | The Spinogattis

by Colleen Smith
Editor/Publisher

It all began with a chance encounter at a tropical resort.

Native New Yorker Jon Spinogatti reluctantly agreed to meet a group of high school friends in the Bahamas for vacation. It was a decision that forever changed his life.

As soon as Jon walked into the hotel, he saw a beautiful woman lying by the pool, asleep. His room wasn't available yet, so he sat down next to her, still in his leather jacket. He hung out for 40 minutes, hoping she'd wake up, but she never did. After changing his clothes and returning to the pool a short bit later, the woman was gone.

Jon didn't see her again until the following day, during a trapeze class, when she climbed up, grabbed the bar to swing out and immediately said, "Oh no, no, no."

"She climbed right back down," remembers Jon. "It was the first thing that really made me like her. She was just so different. She was interesting."



It rained the rest of the day, sending many people into the hot tubs, which was a welcome scenario for Jon.

"I was very grateful because

I didn't know how to get to her. But in the hot tub, now she was cornered," he laughed.

Jon decided the best way to make a good impression was to

Colleen Smith/staff photo
At left: Nicole and Jon Spinogatti.

entertain the mystery woman and her friends by holding his breath underwater and making his way around to each person, asking where they were from. He finally learned her name - Nicole - and was shocked to hear that New Jersey was her hometown.

Nicole agreed to see him later at a dance in the resort and says she played it cool at first, ignoring Jon when he came up to her that night. But then her friend encouraged him to give it another shot, and Nicole finally gave in. That same friend snapped a photo of them on the dancefloor, which Jon keeps in his home office.

"Initially he said he couldn't dance, but then he busted a move - in true Jon fashion - and everyone was circling around us," Nicole said.

After that evening, the two were inseparable. Nicole was scheduled to fly home a few days later, but Jon promised to be in

touch when he got back. True to his word, the minute he landed in New York and was heading home in a cab, he called her. Three months later they were engaged and nine months later they were married.

"We wouldn't have ever met. We were never in the same circles," Jon said. "If that trip to the Bahamas wasn't fate, I don't know what is."

The Spinogattis spent the first year of their relationship on the road with a traveling production of "Saturday Night Fever." Jon was a singer and dancer in the ensemble cast and Nicole accompanied him to major cities across the country. Their wedding was in San Francisco, attended by both sides of their family as well as every member of the show. They renewed their vows two years later in Hawaii in a private ceremony.

After a brief stint back in New York, the two moved to Los Angeles for Jon to pursue an acting career. He appeared

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L41, a prominent Southern resident killer whale, is now missing

by Ken Balcomb, Founder and Senior Scientist
Center for Whale Research

My first acquaintance with the Southern resident killer whale we designated L41 was in 1977, the year after we began the annual Orca Survey of this population that continues to this day. His mother was L11, who was one of nine females to produce new babies that year following the cessation of captures in 1976. We watched the energetic young male baby as he grew up, and we had great hopes that he and his companions would fill in the youthful cohorts of the population that had been decimated by captures between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s.

L41, with an adoption name Mega, traveled with his mom and sisters in a subgroup of L pod that became known as the L12s, named after his presumed grandmother, who was the likely mother of L11. It should be noted

that the alpha-numeric designations are not in the birth order sequence in the early years of the Orca Survey because nobody knew the population composition prior to our study. The whales were numbered in those early years in the order they were first seen, and it was only after we had all of them identified in 1976 that subsequent new babies received the next sequential alpha-numeric designation for identification. L41 was among the first to receive a designation that identified him as a member of the new "known-age" youth cohort of the SRKW population.

When he reached social maturity in his early twenties (around 1997), L41 began to father babies. And, he became the champion male breeder in the SRKW population with 14 known offspring that survive to this day in all three pods. Only J1, with the fathering of 11 living offspring in the SRKW community, has

done as much to increase the population. Very few other males have contributed one or two offspring in this population.

We will greatly miss L41 as an important breeder and as a prominent indicator of the L12 subgroup that now rarely ventures into the Salish Sea. In 2019, we only saw the L12s twice - once on Jan. 11 in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, and once on Aug. 11 off Carmanah Point Lighthouse on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island. It will be extremely difficult to monitor the demographic vigor of the L12s if they do not come into the study area and if this indicator male is not present. We are hopeful that L41 is alive somewhere and returns to the subgroup, but he did live to a ripe old age and fathered more baby whales than any other whale in the community.

He had a good life.

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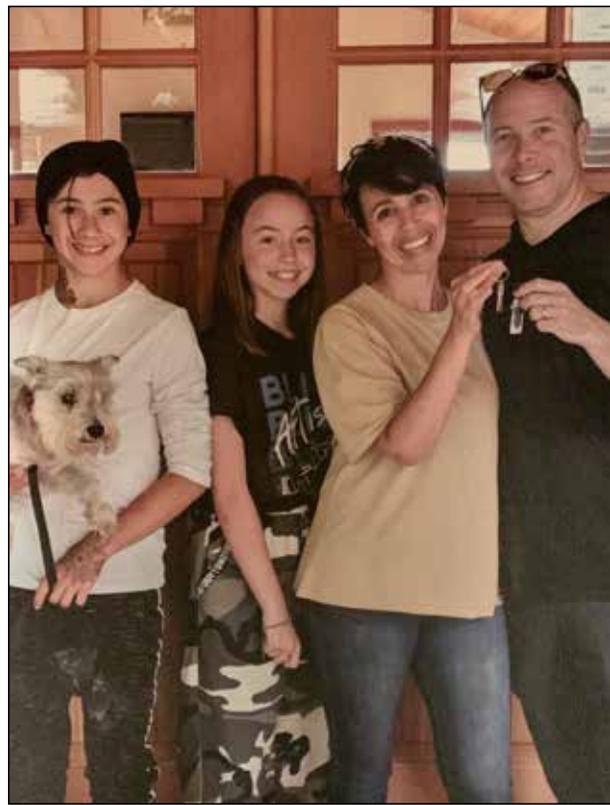
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Contributed photos
Far left: The Spinogattis on their wedding day. Left: Jack, Kate, Nicole and Jon with the keys to their Orcas Island home.

“We couldn’t think of a reason to stay in Vegas,” said Jon, who has been a real estate developer for the past decade. Although having children drastically changed their relationship, the two approached life the way they always had: as a team. “Even in those early years when it’s the hardest, I always knew he had my back and I had his,” remembers Nicole. “We never have jealousy, we never have insecurities and we never fight. ... We can talk to each other. I just have no worries.” Jon says their 12-year-old daughter “came out of the womb age 35” and is an old soul. He describes Jack as outgoing, creative and artistic. The siblings are best friends, helping each other with homework and spending most of their free time together. The Spinogattis play cards and board games and love to cook. Nicole and Jon also make time for date nights at home and always have one show that they are binge-watching. “We are all homebodies,” said Jon. Added Nicole: “Basically the entire day we are just waiting to get back to the house and get back into our pajamas.” Once their kids are in college, Nicole and Jon plan to travel again. “As long as we are together, we can be anywhere,” he said.

LOVE FROM 1

years together, the couple decided to bring a child into their romantic bliss. “We had a great time for five years. It was the golden age,” joked Jon.

in Martin Scorsese’s “Wolf of Wall Street.” After five

After some initial difficulty becoming pregnant, Nicole gave birth to Jack, who is now 14. They wanted to give him a sibling but assumed it would be another long and difficult process, so they decided to give it just one shot. “And then we got pregnant with Katie!” said Nicole. In 2008, the family moved to Las Vegas, where Jon’s parents lived. They saw Orcas on an HGTV show about beachfront homes and decided to vacation on the island in 2016. During that first trip, they bought a house and became full-time residents two years later. Nicole is the director of development and community engagement at the Funhouse Commons.

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