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The sweet scent of romance and business

Chris and Eliza Morris share their love story

BY COLLEEN SMITH
Editor/Publisher

When you take a six-month road trip early on in a relationship, you find out fast if it's built to last.

> For Chris and Eliza Morris, their adventure led to a nearly 30-year union, two kids and a thriving body care business.

> The Morrises say they knew it was true love right after their first date in 1993, several years after the two initially met while Eliza was attending graduate school in Olympia. It wasn't until later when she moved to Orcas that Chris asked Eliza out.

"But I knew Eliza was special from the first time I saw her book collection, by chance, when visiting her roommate's house in Olympia my first summer in the Pacific Northwest in 1990," he said. "It was full of hard-to-find Beatnik titles and I thought to myself, 'I want to meet this person!' It took a few years for fate to cross our paths properly but after our first date, we never looked back. We took a cross-country road trip several months after we started dating and have been together ever since."

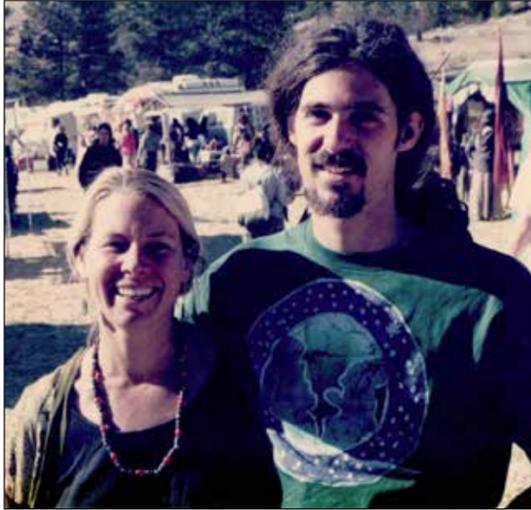
When the two returned to the Pacific Northwest after half a year on the road, they settled on Orcas, first landing at George Orser's property in a renovated barn with no insulation.

"Fortunately, after a few cold months there we found a fantastic house on Pioneer Hill Road in Olga where we really settled into our life on Orcas," Chris said. "We were a team and shared everything from that time onward. We decided to get married in 1998, and had our ceremony in August of 1999, but we were basically married since we got back from the cross country road trip in 1993."

The couple said their vows under a giant chestnut tree on friend Kaj Enderlein's property and in New York in Chris' parents' backyard under an arbor they built with Enderlein and Loren Dickey.

"We wrote the ceremony with our friend Mike Weaver from Orcas, who was the officiant at both ceremonies. Mike was amazing. One of Chris' uncles was so impressed by him that he asked if Mike had a congregation back on Orcas!" remembers Chris.

Eliza gave birth to Linnea in 2002 and Buna in 2005. Chris



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
At left: Eliza and Chris in the late 1990s at the Barter Fair. Above: Linnea, Eliza, Buna and Chris welcoming in 2021.

says their time alone together prior to having children gave them a solid foundation from which to raise kids.

"But it definitely is a big shift as anyone who has become a parent knows," Chris said. "Now our kids are teenagers, practically ready to launch on their own adventures. It is so amazing how quickly time has passed."

Eliza started Island Thyme in the mid-90s as a wintertime extension of the herb and flower farm she was running at Rainwater Farm in Olga. She had been making herbal salves and medicines as a hobby and was intrigued with the idea of making soap.

"This was before the internet was a big thing and recipes were available online," said Chris.

He found a book on handmade soap at Darvill's and gave it to Eliza as an anniversary present. She dove right in, making some soaps for the Artisan Faire that winter.

"The soaps were a big hit, and it grew from there to include salves, oils, creams, lotions and more," explained Chris. "In those days I was obsessed with design and building. We started working on Island Thyme together when our daughter Linnea was born and Eliza needed help with her growing

business. I became fascinated with it at that time and my interest and knowledge only grew from there. Eventually, around 2015, I was ready to join Eliza at Island Thyme full time with the goal of seeing how far we could take it together."

They said running a business together was a natural transition because they've always approached life as a united front.

"We realize that working together, raising children and being a romantic couple is not for everyone," Chris said. "But we came here together and carved out our niche here on Orcas together. We are both from the East Coast and our trust and belief in each other made it possible for us to create a life that we wanted. Is it easy always? Certainly not! But we will never end up strangers to each other the way many couples can be. We are a team. It's how we've always been."

Eliza and Chris say their shared interests are cooking, talking, taking on challenges, nurturing new ideas and traveling the globe — near and far.

"We are also a great balance for each other," said Eliza. "We complement each other, bringing different but complementary energies to our life together. And the fact that we both love being here on Orcas has definitely helped us stay focused and keep growing as a couple. And for that, we are truly grateful."

New midwife practice opens County COVID case count rises to 111

BY DIANE CRAIG
Staff Reporter

Keepers of normal birth. That's how Blythe Parker, the San Juan Islands' newest licensed midwife sees her vocation. Parker opened San Juan Midwifery the day she received her first client, Dec. 10, 2020. In the middle of a pandemic.

A woman who possesses a deep passion for the profession, Parker believes the pandemic has underscored the need for, and benefits of, midwifery.

"Covid is having a pretty large impact on midwifery in general on the islands," she explained. "People want to avoid hospitals and any potential exposure outside the home, as well as practice social distancing. Since midwives can come to the prospective mother, we can make prenatal visits in the home."

It wasn't always so. After centuries of being marginalized by the traditional medical community, midwifery in the United States is experiencing a rebirth. Washington is one of more than 35 midwife friendly states in the country where the profession is licensed and legal. "And that number is growing," Parker offered.



Contributed photo
At left: Blythe Parker.

island. She understands that new moms want to get home, and how sometimes that can result in vital pre- and post-follow-up visits falling through the cracks. With the ability to conduct postpartum or prenatal visits in the mother's home, Parker believes she can close some of those cracks.

"I want to be able to provide families with options," she said.

Parker explained that all too often, people head to the mainland around their due date and wait.

"Obviously, birth works best when the mother-to-be is in a familiar space. Away from home, perhaps missing out on income, she finds herself in a waiting game for the baby's arrival. That can be a stressful start for some people.

"Part of midwifery care is building trust throughout the pregnancy," Parker continued. "Postpartum follow-up is especially important for first-time families," she said, noting that follow-up visits are conducted on day one, three, five, seven; then two weeks and six weeks after the baby's birth.

The islands' newest midwife spent many formative years on San Juan, and recognizes islanders' resilience and independence.

"That resilience is a big piece of why I've set up practice here. I really want to see us grow and become more sustainable," she said. "I love being present when a family welcomes the newly born. It's a profound experience and I feel incredibly blessed to do this work on the island I love."

Though traveling to and from the islands for a home birth could be seen as problematic, Parker is not concerned.

"When the word goes out that there's going to be a home birth, islanders rally. Whether by boat or plane, someone will make sure I get there," she said with confidence.

Located in Friday Harbor, San Juan Island Midwifery can be reached at 360-298-2429 and at sjmidwife@gmail.com. Learn more at <https://sanjuanislandmidwifery.com/>.

County COVID case count rises to 111

Submitted by San Juan County.

Note: Current positive case numbers are available online at the County Case Data Dashboard, at sanjuanco.com/1682/COVID-19-SJC-Data-Dashboard. As indicated on that page, these numbers are only updated after case confirmation is complete, usually daily.

It is possible that other information sources in the community may be quicker to report on new cases, but ensuring privacy and accuracy is critical for this official information source.

Since the last update on Friday, Jan. 29, total cases in San Juan County have increased from 102 to 111. Three new cases are on Lopez Island, four on Orcas, and two on San Juan Island.

Note that approximately 44 close contacts of positive cases are currently in active quarantine.

Lopez Island

There are three new cases on Lopez Island. Two cases are related and the transmission source has been tied to off-island travel.

One of the cases is unrelated to previous cases and the transmission source is unknown at this time. There is one positive case being actively monitored on Lopez Island at this time.

Orcas Island

There are four new cases on Orcas Island. Three of the cases are tied to a single household and related to international travel.

One of the new cases is a close contact of the three recent cases. There are three positive cases being actively monitored on Orcas Island at this time.

San Juan Island

There are two new cases on San Juan Island. One case is not related to previous cases. The transmission source is unknown at this time.

One case is a close household contact of a previously positive case.

Overall picture

Please review the county's recent update urging islanders to avoid high-risk travel off-island and to avoid hosting of guests from off-island, sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/View/21860/210204-Travel-Recommendations.

The latest information on vaccine distribution is available at sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info.

SJC did not receive new vaccine doses

San Juan County did not receive any new vaccine doses from the Washington State Department of Health over the weekend. There were no online first-dose reservation opportunities on Monday, Feb. 8.

Please stay tuned for updates on when the next reservation block will become available. Second dose appointments for this week will still happen as scheduled. Visit islandssounder.com or www.sanjuanco.com/1737/COVID-Vaccine-Info for more information.