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Tracy Philpot - Counselor, Poet and Cat Woman!

by Mary Glover



Tracy Philpot was born in Iowa and was adopted at birth. Her adoptive parents lived in St. Louis. She has two siblings, a brother and a sister, who both live with their families in Colorado. When Tracy was ten years old they moved to [Denver, Colorado](#) where she finished grade school, high school and then attended Pacific University for her undergraduate degree in sociology and social work. After that, she attended the [University of Denver](#) and got her Masters and Ph.D. in English Literature at the age of thirty. Tracy's adoptive parents split but her father remarried, and her mother has now been with Cheryl, her partner, for 25 years. To celebrate this anniversary they are taking a cruise up the Inside Passage this summer. All of her family still live in Denver.

Occasionally, Tracy will leave Seldovia. This year she has been traveling to Bethel to teach some classes through the University of Alaska Fairbanks – Community and Rural Development Program, which is a federally and state funded program to bring higher education to rural native communities. The classes are designed for a group of students together to complete a series of studies and acquire an AA, BA Degree, or Masters Degree. She has been encouraged by the success rate of this program and stated that she has adults from many different Alaskan villages attend her classes. She teaches three English classes: 1) Oral Communication; 2) Introduction into Academic Writing; and 3) Academic Writing in Social Sciences. Tracy states, "It keeps my brain going... I have so much fun... we laugh and laugh. We have two elders in every class because in the Native culture the elders are very respected. Their spirituality is also very important to them."

Mark and Tracy met seventeen years ago when Tracy was leaving a job. Mark came in for an interview for her position which she had to leave to attend school full-time. Tracy thought when she saw Mark, "He's cute!" Mark got the job! Her training time for the new hire was scheduled for one day. Tracy thought, "*This will not do.*" She told management she needed a week to train him.... and they have been together since then! Mark says that she's still trying to train him today.

Tracy is a published author of three poetry books: [Incorrect Distances](#) was published by the University of Georgia Press and [Distance from Birth](#) and [Original White Animals](#) were published by Elixir Press. These books are on sale at the Tide Pool Restaurant in Seldovia. Believer Magazine has just published a rave review of [Original White Animals](#) in its December 2006 / January 2007 issue which was a surprise to Tracy because she does not personally know these people. ([Review](#)) She has done readings in Homer and Denver.

Coming to Alaska began with a social studies class in 5th grade. Included in this was a study of Native Alaskan Eskimos and ever since then, Tracy dreamed of going to Alaska. This happened when Mark and Tracy were between jobs. They packed up their VW Bus with all their worldly possessions, two dogs, and headed for Anchorage. Both Tracy and Mark hold degrees in counseling and were quickly employed.

How did Tracy and Mark find their way to Seldovia? One fateful day in 1995, some friends were visiting from Denver and they decided to go to Homer and take the Rainbow Connection to Seldovia. Tracy fell in love with Seldovia. She told Mark, "This is where I want to have babies." They ran into Everett Boscacci, a Seldovia realtor, and began looking for some property to purchase. After returning to Anchorage (and seeing the cabin for only about 30 minutes) they made an offer on the property they now live on. As the distance from Anchorage to Seldovia was a challenge, they decided to relocate to Homer to enable themselves to work weekdays and spend weekends to work on their home just outside of Seldovia on Jakolof Bay Road. Tracy took a job with the Independent Living Center and Mark took a job with the Community Mental Health Center. An opportunity opened for Mark in Seldovia with the children's mental health program and they moved across the bay. Tracy went to work for Woman's Services as an advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, a position she held for nine years. The Seldovia Village Tribe was of great assistance during in this time as the SVT allowed her an office without having to pay rent for the space. It was a very workable arrangement and was a very satisfying time in her life. But as time wore on, the grant dollars began to dwindle and eventually funds for this service were no longer available. Then in May, 2005 there was an opening for the Manager at Lakeside Terrace, now know as the Seldovia House, funded by the [Cook Inlet Housing Authority](#).

Tracy stated this was a perfect fit for her. She enjoys the

Another passion of Tracy is her cats--not an everyday type of cat, but a Devon Rex. Tracy is one of two persons in Alaska that officially shows and breeds her species of cat. Tracy said these cats look like aliens, are easy to train to fetch like a dog, have low set large ears, very little curly hair. (Some people who are allergic to cats can tolerate this breed of cat. In fact, this breed is called the "Poodle Cat.") She said that she almost could not look at her first baby Devon Rex, but she quickly got over that. In the back of her mind she thought she might start breeding Devon Rex cats when she got older and retired, but then the time came when Tracy finally got her student loans paid off. Mark was going to get a sailboat (a "money hemorrhage") so Tracy decided to get a Devon Rex sooner rather than later. Breaking into the cat breeding business, especially a very selective breed, is hard, according to Tracy. She stated, "It is difficult to get another breeder to sell a cat with breeding rights... A breeder needs to keep the number of cats in her house low so that the cats are happy and healthy." Also, breeders are not supposed to breed unless they know what the breed standard is, otherwise you are "just cranking out pets for people." Tracy has shipped kittens all over the states and had requests from Hungary, Italy, and elsewhere for one of her Devon Rex kittens. She just returned from a cat show in Houston, Texas where Blue Moon and Scarlet were shown and achieved their *Champion* status. (See Front Page Story.)

Apparently, Tracy has a lot of fun with her cats. For example, husband Mark received a Cat Litter Box Birthday Cake for his last birthday. It was complete with melted Tootsie Rolls and a new scoop! Too funny for words!

Tracy also loves to knit. She has been meeting with the Seldovia Chicks with Sticks a/k/a "Stitch 'n Bitch" group that meets on Tuesday nights. It is held at either Shoreline Gift Store or in individual homes. The group has an open invitation and all kinds of people come. She said, "Sometimes guys even come." One time a man came and mended his fishing nets! Tracy makes socks, hats, sweaters, purses and scarves or whatever she dreams to do.

Tracy and Mark love their home they have built. Tracy says it has a spectacular view of the bay. They can see Homer and the Homer Spit one direction and the other direction they look at the Barabara Creek Valley and mountains. They joke about it and call it "Hippie Hollow." At times, when having friends over, they jokingly call it a "Neighborhood Association Meeting," complete with a "Sergeant at Arms" and an "Animal Control Officer"! Everyone gets a job! This comedy gave rise to Mark's infamous sign... picture and costume below. The sign was once planted in the road's right-of-way and was later removed to a location further back off the road.

Tracy always comes back to her first impression of Seldovia. She believes, "It is a great place to have a kid.... It's like a big family, even if we sometimes fight with each other. It's peaceful here."

social aspect of getting to know the residents, enjoys her co-workers and says, "It's fun."

Tracy's life does not stop at work. She and Mark have a nine year old boy named Aidan and it is obvious that she just adores him. Aidan attends the Susan B. English School and she says "He's funny and a really kind child." Aidan is taking piano lessons from Charity Winters and enjoys playing the piano.





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