

Kevin Story

Born Oct 19, 1975

Kevin is named after his dad Brian Kevin Williams. And his Mom is named Kristen (Kristy) Anderson Williams.

His parents met in college. She was playing in the orchestra for a play called "Stop the World, I Want To Get Off" and he was the male lead in the play, Littlechap. Every night he sang "What Kind of Fool Am I?" and she played the orchestra solo in accompaniment. After meeting in a play, they were astonished to find that each was attending college on athletic scholarships...she on a tennis scholarship, and he on track – decathlon. He liked to tell her that he picked the decathlon because he wasn't particularly good at anything.

She majored in music / piano and he majored in math. They married on graduation from undergraduate school and were both good enough and fortunate enough to receive grants from New York Universities – she from Julliard where she got her Doctorate in Musical Arts and he from Columbia where he got his PhD in Math.

They eventually moved back to his home state, Alabama where he accepted a professorship at the University of South Alabama and she accepted a position as Asst Director of the City Orchestra. She also worked part time as a music Asst. Prof. at another local College.

Kevin is their only child..

When Kevin was born, the Florida panhandle had just been devastated by Hurricane Eloise -- the worst storm of 1975. And like Eloise, Kevin arrived with an attitude, he tried to come out butt first, and his Mom liked to say that he began life by mooning the world – an attitude he persisted in displaying as he grew up.

It was clear from the outset that he was a special child, but his talents manifested themselves in unusual ways. Kevin NEVER did anything in a conventional way.

He was a gifted athlete who competed favorably with older friends from a very young age.

From as early as he could remember (and he could remember back to about 6 months), Kevin and his family visited his Grandmother every Sunday afternoon for a few hours. And since all of his Dad's five siblings did the same, There were always 25- 30 people at the gathering.

And his Grandmother also had a house on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, so during the summer months, the gathering would move to the bayhouse. And the

kids would frequently spend the night (or two or three) to be picked up later in the week.

While the kids were there it was their job to provide the seafood for the daily batch of gumbo that was the primary fare for everyone staying at the bayhouse.

They would crab off the wharf and would go soft-shelling and floundering whenever the tide was lowest – often at night with gas lights and gigs and washtubs and nets.

Until he was 12, the family lived in a house with a large wooded area behind it. He grew up very comfortable in nature and could recognize many species of trees, plants and animals. He learned how to move as silently and stealthily as the animals.

He could climb anything and was frequently climbing to the tops of trees that were 40-60 feet tall.

Kevin showed either courage or stupidity in acts of bravery from an early age. When his family was considering moving to a new home, his Mom told his Dad that she loved the home but the presence of a deep gully behind the house worried her. She was afraid that Kevin would be foolish enough to try and jump into the gully from the top. Kevin's friend Kyle overheard the remark and commented that if that was all that worried her, then they should buy the house because Kevin had already jumped.

And while he did well in school, his mind often raced off on tangents. So although he got mostly A's and B's, he was never the top student in his class. His performance on standardized tests however was nothing short of remarkable. In all of the standardized tests, college entrance exams, Graduate Record Exams that he ever took, Kevin only missed a perfect score one time.

During his elementary school days, Kevin tolerated and sometimes enjoyed learning and playing piano with his Mom. She tolerated and sometimes enjoyed his digressions into music that she had not assigned. But she was smart and aware and realized early on that Kevin had no real passion for music; so she concentrated on helping Kevin enjoy his music rather than pushing him to be perfect. In the Classical Genre, he much preferred the more modern composers like Sibelius and Dvorjak to the rigid forms of earlier artists.

As he got older (teen age) he enjoyed competing with his Dad in every possible arena. They played chess and had Rubik's Cube races. They solved math problems in their heads....did crossword puzzles and sudoku. They arm-wrestled and played raquetball.

He was a remarkable chess player, and quickly learned to beat his Dad. Kevin found that he could glance at the board and recognize very detailed and involved

strategies – both offensive and defensive – and that made the game very simple for him.

In the eighth grade, his Mom thought he ought to have some knowledge of ball room dancing, so she signed him up for the eighth grade Cotillion. Every Saturday for 8 weeks, Kevin had to submit to the most boring instruction imaginable. There is nothing worse than trying to do the box-step with a girl who is a foot taller than you.

But after the Cotillion had ended, the benefits began. The girls in his class started having boy-girl parties that usually involved music and dancing and food and socializing on Friday or Saturday nights. Kevin's voice changed, and girls became a new focus of his young life! He found he could tell which girls liked him and which ones didn't by looking at them. He wasn't sure what it was he saw, but he tested his theory and found he was right 100% of the time! What a gift!

Outside, his Dad introduced him to all the events in the decathlon; and Kevin found that he was, like his Dad, pretty good at everything...though not great at anything.

In sprinting events, he always gained at least a quarter second on the field by anticipating the starting gun...an ability his Dad witnessed many times but never understood.

He played safety on his high school football team and seemed to have an unnatural ability to know what play the other team was about to run. He was quite literally ALWAYS in the right spot at the right time. At one point the opposing coach even accused him of stealing their playbook and their signals!

By the time he was 15, Kevin was doing some pretty esoteric math on his own: Finding the quadrature of the five squarable lunes a la Hippocrates; and, beginning with the principles of Cauchy's Theorem, re-inventing the calculus a la Newton and Leibnitz.

And, while he was one of the shorter boys in his class through sophomore year in high-school, he grew 8 inches during his junior and senior years in high school to reach his mature height of 5' 11".

When he turned 16 (1991) his Dad gave him a truck...sort of! It was a 30 year-old Chevy Classic Pickup...sort of! It had tons of rust, it wouldn't crank, it wouldn't run, and the driver-side door wouldn't even open. But his Dad promised that the two of them would restore it together and it could be Kevin's as a high-school graduation present.

For the next two years, Kevin and his Dad worked diligently on the restoration, but by the time high-school graduation arrived, they had only partially finished. The engine was completely restored and ran like a top...sweet! The interior was mostly done in so far as working order was concerned, but the seats and finishes were left to do. The body work was about half done with all of the rust gone and most of the dents beaten out. But they hadn't painted it and the driver-side door still resisted opening at every opportunity.

During Kevin's senior year, he and his parents began arguing about his college plans – or lack of them. His parents wanted him to apply to MIT and CalTech and Stanford and Duke...even Harvard, Yale, or Princeton.

Kevin, however, had a growing realization that he didn't WANT to go to college after high school. He WOULD go...but later ...after he had seen the world and experienced life a little.

So he joined the Navy. And the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery test is the only test that Kevin ever took that he intentionally did well on parts and intentionally did poorly on others. Even so he scored 85 out of 100 (31 is the minimum to be eligible for duty).

He turned down several Navy specialties, like Nuclear Power, because they would have increased his service obligation from 4 to 6 years. He had no desire to be a SEAL or Diver or fly planes. He wanted to be a sailor...on a ship...not stateside. He got it. He was trained and assigned as a radar tech on a cruiser.

Only 3 months into his first sea duty he crossed the equator for the first time...

In the U.S. Navy, when a ship crosses the equator a time-honored ceremony takes place.

Officially recognized in the service record, the crossing of the equator involves elaborate preparation by the "shellbacks" (those who have crossed the equator before) to ensure the "pollywogs" (those who are about to cross the equator for the first time) are properly indoctrinated.

Kevin was inducted into the "mysteries of the deep" by Neptunus Rex and his Royal court. Members of Neptunus Rex's party included Davy Jones, Neptune's first assistant, the Royal Scribe, the Royal Doctor, the Royal Dentist, the Royal Baby, the Royal Judge, the Royal Barber, and other s Kevin couldn't remember.

As Kevin knelt before the Judge in King Neptune's Court, he was ordered to kiss the Royal Baby (the ugliest guy on the ship) A bucket of mustard was hidden behind the Royal Baby and when Kevin went to kiss him, he reached back to the bucket splattered Kevin with a handful of mustard.

The royal barber was next. He had electric clippers that kept shocking Kevin as he cut his hair. After that came the 'Royal Bath.' Kevin had to say Shellback three times as they were dunking him.

Running the gauntlet was the final stage of the exercise. A tarp was spread out on deck and greased with graphite, over it about a foot was strung a cargo net. Kevin had to crawl along the tarp for about ten yards with Shellbacks paddling him and another at the end with a fire hose to drive him back just when he thought he was through. When it was all over Kevin proudly realized: Now I am a Shellback."

His ship visited ports around the world. When he wasn't on duty, he found himself off-roading in the desert, scuba diving in the Mediterranean and going to a Broadway show in New York City. He visited the near East and Far East... Singapore, Hong, Kong, Tokyo, Bangkok. He lived in Hawaii for 6 months.

During one visit to Singapore he nearly got himself killed in a bar fight at Chengdu Charlie's. When he got back to the ship, drunk and 3 hours late, he was busted (again) from Petty Officer back to E-3.

He visited a tattoo parlor in Brazil, but changed his mind about the tattoo when he saw how dirty the needles were.

He lived the sailor's dream of having a girl in every port. Tall and tan and young and lovely...

He showed a remarkable calculation ability as a radar technician. He found he could plot a trajectory in his head before the computer could display it. He was promoted (again) to Petty Officer.

Near the end of his service obligation, he found himself in a Casino in Monte Carlo where he stood and watched the roulette game for about ten minutes. To his own amazement, he realized he somehow knew where the ball would stop well before it did... Round and round she goes, where she stops only heaven and KEVIN KNOWS!

He proceeded to put his entire wad \$300 down on number 17 and ...WON almost \$10,000. Shaking a little now, on the next roll, he put the entire \$10,000 on number 11 and... WON \$300,000! Becoming a little chicken, he quit after two bets.

It took him longer to fill out the paper work to get the money deposited in a Swiss bank account than it did to win the money.

Then Kevin went out and got drunk. When he got back to the ship, drunk and 3 hours late, he was busted (again) from Petty Officer back to E-3.

When Kevin's 4 years were up, he returned home briefly to mend his bridges with his parents... not that they were still mad. But when he told them he had been accepted at the University of Chicago and was going to major in Math, they were really excited and happy for him.

While Kevin had been to the far corners of the earth, he was unprepared for Chicago weather. The presence of Lake Michigan causes what Chicagoans call "lake-effect weather" and what the rest of us would call cold, crappy, rainy, drizzly, snowy, dreary, not-fit-to-live-in weather.

The women at the university helped the ex-sailor to forget his girls-in-every-port, but he didn't find any individual that made him want to consider a serious relationship.

And unlike his earlier education, he was now completely focused on his math education. The results were astonishing. Not only did he make perfect scores and straight A's in every math course he took, but by the time he was a sophomore, he was working with his professors much as a grad student would by helping them on their own advanced research projects.

He graduated with honors – a ceremony that his parents attended with pride – and accepted a free ride in graduate school at MIT.

He breezed through his coursework in grad school which included:
Lie Algebra and Lie Groups,
Partial Differential Equations,
Geometry of Manifolds
Differential Geometry

...and quickly moved on to work alongside his professors in some very advanced fields of mathematics. He defended his Dissertation with ease.

After graduation, he moved back to Alabama and worked mostly freelance for the US government and for various theoretical physics groups.

He also resumed occasional work on his truck, and sometimes his Dad would come over to kibitz and point out what still needed to be done.

The engine still ran like a top...sweet! The interior now had a bench seat and the dash was restored though not yet polished. The body work was almost complete and a preliminary paint job was applied. But the driver-side door still resisted opening at every opportunity.

One day, after a really intense (and fruitless) afternoon trying to solve a fourth degree differential equation in an 11 dimension Riemannian manifold, Kevin decided to head to a new bar that had just opened up the day before just outside of Fairhope called the Outside Inn...