

Charlotte's eyes

I could see Charlotte's eyes inside the dive mask, flitting off to follow a tropical fish as it passed between us, then returning to rest on me. Those beautiful eyes had looked much the same twenty years before, the day we met. Today, we were skin diving in Jamaica. Our first dive had been in Hawaii.

Charlotte walked into Bojac's Dive Shop Sunday morning, looking for a wet suit and needing a SCUBA diving buddy. Her shoulder-length brown hair formed a neat frame for her freckled round face, and though she was very obviously of European descent, her green eyes had an almost oriental shape to them. The locals would say she had a round-eye face, but long eyes. I had to know her name. Since she was trying to get a wet suit on over a tee shirt, I pointed out that the process would go much better over just her bikini, and offered to hold the shirt. The smile she gave me as I helped her get the wet suit on encouraged me to offer her ride to the dive site on my motorcycle. That day we flew from sixty feet down in the Pacific to my favorite trail on the rim of the Waianae mountain range, and I found out she was a Canadian on the first leg of a trip around the globe, with her next stop in Fiji. I found ways to spend every spare moment with her, and when she told me on Wednesday that she would have to leave soon, I asked her to visit the Immigration office and find out what it would take to stay a little longer.

She came back the next day and said it was impossible. She needed a sponsor who was a U.S. citizen, and that person would either have to put up a twenty-thousand dollar bond or be her spouse. I was an airman in the Navy, so the twenty-thousand dollars might as well have been a million. I could, however, marry her—if she'd have me. From one knee I looked up into the smiling eyes that would light my life for decades to come, as we grew from a foolishly adventurous young couple to the core of a family.

Once the paperwork and blood tests were done, we were married in the middle of a little stream on the edge of the forest above Honolulu. With our friends standing barefoot in a field of ginger shaded by towering bamboo, one month after we had first met, we began a new life together. We have now traveled tens of thousands of miles together, and have three children and three grandchildren. We celebrated our twentieth anniversary in Jamaica and our thirtieth in Greece, and are more in love every year.—Wayne & Charlotte Slater-Lunsford, 9/10/2008