

Sara Anne Austin was born to Gary and Pat Myers in Rockford Illinois on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1974. Yes to those of you paying attention I did rob the cradle, and got me a real sweet young lady in the process!! Sara is the second to youngest of 5 children. She has a younger sister, Rachel and two older sisters, Lana and Tara with Bret leading the charge of the Myers gang as the oldest and only boy. Sara grew up and spent most of her life in Rockford. At one time she was enrolled in college and studying to be a police officer with a desire to be a detective. Fortunately for me she made a change and headed into the world of medicine which led to our paths crossing. After obtaining her degree in Radiology in Illinois she went on to apply for and be accepted in the Echocardiography program at Mayo Clinic, which was quite an honor as the program was very rigorous and only accepted a few applicants each year. Sara started the program in the fall of 1998 and made the move from Rockford to Rochester. She'd be the first to admit that she had a very hard time adjusting and was very home sick. Most weekends she would head back home but thankfully one weekend she decided to stick it out and visit a local church of the same denomination that she grew up in as an attempt to meet some local people and make a few friends. Well it just so happened that there was a certain young man helping lead the young adults group that the innocent young lady from Illinois wandered into! I'll never forget the day Sara walked into the room, I can still see exactly what she was wearing and the exact way she looked that day. I was love struck and I had literally thought about her every day after that first meeting. I don't know if you'd call it love at first sight, because as everyone knows true love is more about giving and is hard work, but I mean to tell you that young lady from Illinois **KNOCKED MY SOCKS OFF!!!** Just a little side note, at the time when I first met Sara it had been a little over 3 years since my first wife decided she wasn't interested in being a wife and mom and walked out on Shane and I. I was devastated by that and hadn't so much as been on a date or had any desire to deal with relationships again. In one split second that all changed. I was a slow mover, as it took me almost four months to finally get out on a date with this young lady. We had lots of time spent together in a group setting but I was mister turtle and I suppose super cautious when it came to the actual first date. That first date finally happened around Christmas and less than a year later, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, we were married. Hey what can I say, I may have started out slow but I finished strong! This began the adventure of a lifetime for the young lady from Illinois. Sara finished her education at Mayo and was quickly recognized by the doctors and staff at Mayo as a top notch sonographer. She was offered fulltime employment at Mayo. When Sara first came to Rochester her plan was to finish her education and go back and continue her career at the hospital she had been working at in Rockford. She did in fact have a position waiting for her upon her completion at Mayo. Well I for one am certainly glad that those plans didn't quite go as planned! Sara continued to work at Mayo and was recognized by all as being very astute and particularly adapt with both the patients and doing in depth accurate studies of her patients heart's. She quickly advanced to specialize in the pediatric congenital unit at Mayo to which she was very valued by both her co-workers and the doctors. During this time Sara began the journey of being a mother to a young boy that desperately needed a mother's love. Any of you that may have been down the path of blending a family can appreciate the challenges involved, but also the tremendous fulfillment and reward. It's not an easy job to be a step mom but I would say there has never been a mom that could have done a better job of loving a son that was not her own flesh and blood as though he was. Being a step mom has been described as lighting your hair on fire and trying to put it out by pounding your head against the wall! I think my wife would attest to it feeling like that some days. We made it through the first few years with many struggles,

challenges, and even more triumphs. Sara and Shane have developed a bond that goes far beyond what flesh and blood can produce to have a very special, close relationship. I know for me personally the respect and admiration I have for her for the way she loved our son and raised him to be a wonderful young man goes beyond words. It's hard to believe that little 5 year old stinker she nurtured has become a 23 year old man that will be graduating with his mechanical engineering degree in May and entering adult life as a caring, compassionate, and responsible person thanks to the unconditional love of his mom!

Let's fast forward a bit in the life of this young pioneer woman to the early spring of 2001 when her crazy husband began to get the itch for some country living. Little did Sara know then that the girl that grew up in a large city with all the modern conveniences was soon going to be beginning the adventure of a life time out in the middle of the hill country of Fillmore County without so much as a driveway or running water. It took a long time to find a little patch of land we could afford to stake our claim to but in the fall of 2002 we closed on 40 acres of bare land in just about the center of Fillmore County. By May of 2003 Sara was pregnant with our little Sami and we were moved into our little 20' camper pulled inside our 3 walled shed. If you read my bio you already know about our "summer of love" in the camper so I'll skip most of the details on that. There is one little story I have to share during that summer though. It was late August and Sara and I had gone for a little walk up our driveway. Things were progressing very slowly on the new house. It was very hot, Sara was very pregnant, and very uncomfortable. The driveway had been built but it was surfaced with very course aggregate to help establish a solid base, which made it difficult to even walk on comfortably. I'll never forget, as we were walking along and talking about some of our struggles and how she was feeling, she stopped and looked at me and with tears in her eyes, simply sobbed that she just wanted to be able to go for a walk on a normal sidewalk around the block! I think this story sums up Sara in such a beautiful way, her absolute patience, kindness, and selflessness. Here she was in the midst of the blazing hot August summer, very pregnant and very uncomfortable living in the sticks, inside a partially built shed in a tiny little camper trailer, with a bathroom that was quite a bit smaller than most closets. She would work all day and when we'd get home from work we'd all put our working clothes on and swing hammers or put up sheet rock, or dig sewer lines or any number of other jobs it takes to build a house yourself. And in the midst of all her frustration all she asked for was a concrete sidewalk to walk around the block on! That is my Sara and that is why I can truly say I married the jewel of the universe. If I were her I would have said, "Buddy your flippin' nuts! I'm going to go live with my mother, give me a call when you have a house with running water and a real bathroom!!" We made it through that summer and grew very close, both emotionally and physically!! Ha-ha. Finally the day for Sami's birth arrived, well actually she was 5 days late, stubborn little sweetie wanted to arrive on HER timing. Some things haven't changed a bit with Sami. Christmas day 2003 brought us a new little bundle of joy into the world. After Sam was born Sara went back to work at Mayo, but her heart ached to be home. While she is extremely talented and gifted as a Cardiac Sonographer her heart's cry was to be a stay-at-home mom. We both had a deep desire to have a large family and we talked and prayed about how to make ends meet with only one income in a two income world. Before Sami's 1st birthday we had a plan put together and took a step of faith that we could make it work for Sara to be home fulltime. We haven't looked back and have never once regretted our decision. Sara has done such a magnificent job keeping our family afloat during some of

the most challenging times. This is roughly when our farming adventure began. Once again the idea man had the notion that we could raise a “few” extra animals beyond what we were doing for ourselves and maybe be able to supplement our income a bit. Well we’re still working on the income supplementation part but the farming has grown enough that “it” can at least pay a few of the bills! It’s been 12 years since Sara began her farming adventure, and I think she’s seen and done just about everything. She has corralled escaped bulls and cattle, chased pigs out of her front yard, walked into the garage unaware that a massive cow had taken up occupancy in the garage after escaping from the trailer, helped castrate pigs, calves, and lambs, butchered chickens, put up miles of fence, battled with predators, gotten pretty good with a shotgun, backed up trailers, loaded cattle by herself, always gets stuck helping her hubby with his farm jobs, drove tractor, and this is just the short partial list of her outside farm talents! I haven’t even touched on the myriad of work she does for the farm inside. Everything from newsletters, to building our website, keeping up on the hundreds of emails, packing orders, hauling the market trailer up to the cities and running the farmers market booth, to working with our processors and numerous other tasks. During our monthly delivery week she does most of her work during the middle of the night when all sane people are still sleeping! I’ll get up at 4am and she’s been at the computer for several hours working on emails or invoicing, or taking care of other office work when there’s peace and quiet in the house. I must say that Sara Austin is a truly amazing woman. I haven’t even mentioned that after our little sassafras Sam was born there were several heart aches of miscarriages and one still born baby. Those were hard days, and after a complete normal and perfect pregnancy with Sam we couldn’t understand why we were having such a hard time with expanding our family. Finally Sara became pregnant again with Caleb and everything seemed to be progressing along well. Caleb was due to arrive in mid-December of 2006. Suddenly in the middle of the night on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Sara sat straight up in bed, her abdomen rock hard, she knew something wasn’t right. She woke me; we quickly made arrangements for Sami and Shane and raced to the hospital in Rochester. Within mere minutes of our arrival at the birth center Sara’s room was filled with doctors and staff and then emptied as they rushed into the ER for an emergency C-section. Talking with the doctor afterwards we found out that she and Caleb were likely only minutes from both being lost. The doctor explained that Sara had experienced a complete placental abruption and it was a miracle that they both made it and survived the whole ordeal. But by the grace of God my wife and son are with us today. After Caleb came Mister Joshua in July of 2008, once again arriving early and by a somewhat emergent C-section. The years have flown by since those baby days and now Sara has added educating our children to the already long list of things she accomplishes each and every day. She is a true pioneer woman and my very best friend in the world. I hope you enjoy interacting with her and can also see what a very special person she is and how we are all so blessed by her each and every day.