

Jennifer Petkus Biography

My mother, Aiko, and father, Joseph, met during the occupation of Japan. He was a U.S. civil servant and my mother was divorced, raising my brother and sister and running a bar called the Snake Pit. She dealt black market goods and offered prostitutes accommodations.

We left Japan when I was two. My father worked at Air Force bases in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas, bouncing back and forth between the latter, my mother and I lagging about six months behind.

We were living in San Antonio and I was 12 when my father died of a heart attack. My mother raised me alone and worked as a janitor at a military hospital, as a school cafeteria cook and as a housekeeper at a parish rectory, sometimes concurrently.

I went to the University of Texas at Austin where I majored in journalism and worked at the student paper. I never finished my degree because in my last semester, my mother unexpectedly arrived from Pennsylvania. I helped her move to Denver, which had a large Japanese retirement community. I remained in the state, taking a job at the *Colorado Springs Sun* newspaper. I'd planned to finish my degree, but I kept getting promoted, from copy aide to police reporter to assistant city editor and never found the time.

After the paper folded in 1986, I worked as a consultant and helped several small newspapers make the switch to electronic publishing. I got a part-time job as a local sales rep for Aldus Corporation, the company that made PageMaker. It was not an easy job in Denver, the home of Quark XPress. I was a horrible sales rep and quit before I was fired.

I went back to consulting and also taught classes in PageMaker, XPress, Illustrator, PhotoShop, Word, PowerPoint, FrameMaker and Macromedia Director and many, many other programs that have gone into the trash bin.

In 1987, I married Jim Bates. We'd met at the *Sun* and after it died, he got a job at *The Denver Post* and is now the news editor. In 1994, we separated, citing stupidity.

During the separation, I moved to San Francisco, hoping to work in 3D animation, but returned to Denver to care for my mother. She died in 1998 of colon cancer.

After returning, I went back to teaching and consulting. I also worked for a company that made custom physical therapy exercise videos. I wrote a program that assembled the videos according to a doctor's prescription. I also shot the videos, edited them, built sets and sound booths, did voiceovers and created the website.

My husband and I reunited in 2000; we had never filed for divorce, citing remorse. I was commuting to Boulder and was a graphic designer for a web development company called Refinery, based near Philadelphia. It had opened a Colorado office in the optimism of the dotcom craze. I quit when the optimism faded and shortly before the office closed.

In 2002, I remodeled our house, doing much of the framing and drywalling myself and all the plumbing and electrical. Then I built the furniture.

My vision of the afterlife had been percolating in my head for years, even before the World Wide Web, but I didn't have the time and expertise needed to create it until the end of 2004. After building the AfterNet, I realized it needed a better hook to attract visitors, so I wrote the book, which is my first completed novel.

We have two cats and two Labradors, all very old, and no children. I am a black belt in aikido and train and occasionally teach at Rocky Mountain Ki Society. I am 48 years old.