

Kelly Luttinen – Point of Pride Transcript

[00:00:00] **Kelly:** At the end of that project, I felt a huge wave of relief that we were able to piece together a meaningful video that told ALS stories beyond just mine.

[00:00:20] **Misty:** Hello marketing friends. As a way of celebrating 40-ish years in business, our Simantelites are sharing touching, inspirational and heartfelt stories about the work they are most proud of, that made a difference at our company. I'm so excited to share this special narrative with you from Kelly Luttinen, our Associate Content Director.

[00:00:37] Her point of pride is one involving a project that became personal when it intersected with her father's battle with ALS. Let's listen in.

[00:00:57] **Kelly:** My point of pride at Simantel was creating a video to raise money for ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease, after losing my dad of the same rare disease. I'm Kelly Luttinen. I'm our Associate Content Director, and I've been at Simantel eight years. At the time of this project in 2017, I was a senior copywriter. I was on the OSF Healthcare Foundation account, which is the fundraising arm of a regional healthcare network across Illinois and Michigan, which I loved because OSF is our hospital.

[00:01:28] It's where I had my daughter, and both my mom and sister worked there as nurses. As a writer, it was my job to articulate all that could be possible if we invested in OSF's priority programs. I remember sitting in the main conference room at the end of a meeting with Lana, our very sweet client, and she started talking about a need for a new video.

[00:01:50] Ed Rapp, a former Caterpillar executive was diagnosed with ALS, was setting up an endowment for research and innovation. Lana started outlining what the project would need and I sat there feeling like ice water had been dumped into the pit of my stomach. What Lana, and probably some of my teammates at the time didn't know, was I had moved back to Peoria a few years ago because my dad was sick with ALS.

[00:02:14] I was incredibly close with my dad and helped take care of him until he passed. ALS is a really awful disease that robs you of your ability to move and a diagnosis is a death sentence because there's no known cause or cure. So, this ask really hit and what were the odds that the writer in the room had lived what she was asking for?

[00:02:36] ALS is a random and rare disease. 5,000 Americans out of 329 million people get diagnosed each year and we live in a small city so the occurrence of ALS isn't that high, and yet there I was. In that moment, I desperately wanted to leave the room and all I could think was no, no, no, no, no.

[00:02:57] But for the next week, I kept thinking about it. I felt like God had put me in the situation for a reason, and I kept thinking about how much my dad cared about research and resources going into finding a cure. And I thought about how much good the endowment could do and, pragmatically, writers always have to study what they're writing about and no one knew the subject like I did.

[00:03:21] Finding local stories to weave in to illustrate Ed's journey was going to be necessary because he still looked very healthy, so we need stories and finding them would be really hard. So, I decided I'd do it. First, I had to tell the people I was working with about my personal experience, which was hard, but honestly made me feel so supported.

[00:03:43] Every single person who touched this video brought such care to the subject and me. Creatively, I started by figuring out the tone of the video I wanted to create, because ALS is awful

and it can be a really sad topic. But the idea was to illustrate the reality and ultimately paint a picture of hope — I needed to strike a balance tonally. I found such inspiration in Sufjan Stevens's album "Carrie & Lowell".

[00:04:08] Stevens wrote it as a reflection after his mom died. And though it explores death, there's a lightness to it. It feels peaceful, introspective and accepting; and I wanted people watching the video to feel the same feeling I did as I listened to that music. Jason Adams, our motion media lead I was collaborating with completely got it.

[00:04:30] He and I like the same music and using these songs let us share emotions back and forth without ever having to explain it. I listened to that music when I wrote. We bounced a lot of inspiration back and forth. One idea I kept thinking about over and over again was home videos. They're so intimate because you're looking at someone's unfiltered life, and they were such a part of our experience with ALS.

[00:04:56] Towards the end of my dad's life, when he couldn't move, he had me put on videos and we would watch them together as a family. Home videos made sense on so many levels; they show life in the exciting times and the mundane, which shows everything ALS patients want: the ability to live normally. And recordings are so big for ALS families because you know your loved one is going to lose their ability to talk to you, so you start recording everything and keeping every voice memo, every voicemail, so that someday you'll have it when the words are gone.

[00:05:27] So with those two ideas — the tone and the recordings — I wrote the script and I did a lot of work trying to source other videos from ALS patients. Evan Milner, who Ed Rapp connected us to was doing work for Answer ALS, and he helped us secure a lot of approvals. I also just directly messaged people through YouTube and LinkedIn who are living with ALS to ask if I could use their footage.

[00:05:49] I felt such a sense of community with these people because we had or were living it, and I could say, "Trust me, I get it and I'll protect your footage". When I look back at the video, I see it as a real crowdsourcing effort in the ALS community. Ed was on board with the home movie idea and sent really lovely videos of him with his grandson Cole.

[00:06:11] The team did a great job capturing Ed's interview on site at OSF, which I sadly had to miss because of a head cold. Our team also filmed me, which was so cringy for me because I didn't want to be on camera, but as the writer, I knew it was necessary for the story. Chad Weber, our Videographer/Editor, did such a great job making it easier for me throughout filming, especially when I recorded the voiceover.

[00:06:37] He was so kind and patient; we didn't really know each other that well and here we were collaborating on this very personal project. I will always be grateful to him, the whole team, for being so gentle with me as we made this. And Chad did a beautiful job putting the edit together. There's a shot I love where a man with ALS is sitting by the window and the blinds roll up and his face is hit with sunshine and he closes his eyes in satisfaction.

[00:07:03] It was such a simple and poignant moment to select, and we made a point to cut Ed spinning his daughter at her wedding with my dad spinning me as a toddler, and I always loved the match on that motion. I honestly don't remember any of the client approvals, which is weird, but I do remember the first time we showed the rough cut to the whole team and our creative directors, Maggie and Chris.

[00:07:26] We all crowded into the edit suite. It was dark and dead silent and I cried because it felt really raw and vulnerable, and a lot of my teammates teared up. I remember Maggie not saying anything, but just giving me a big hug. We wrap the project and the client team and Ed were pleased with the final product. The Ed and Ann Rapp Family Endowment was officially started with Ed's \$1 million gift and still today brings together neurologists and engineers to find new solutions for ALS patients.

[00:07:57] And at the end of that project, I felt a huge wave of relief that we were able to piece together a meaningful video that told ALS stories beyond just mine. So that's my moment of pride. I'm proud that I did what I could for the Rapp family and our clients. I'm proud that I spoke up for the ALS community, and I'm proud to work for a place that could tell that story so well and be gentle and encouraging to me as I told it.

[00:08:32] **Misty:** Thank you so much to Kelly Luttinen, not only for her work on this project that became a point of pride, but also for her vulnerability and bravery to tell it later.

[00:08:20] If you haven't already, head over to marketing.sweats.com and check out our very special season six, where you can hear my full interview with Kelly, and other Simantelites, as they share their point of pride in celebration of our 40ish anniversary.