Have you ever purchased something from a late-night infomercial? If so, what?

Ugh. I have a schedule that starts at either 4:40 a.m., 6 a.m. or 6:45 a.m., depending on the day of the week. So I don’t really do anything late at night  but of course I’ve gotten sucked into the infomercial world at other times of day, usually for beauty products that I hope will make me look younger. Ha.

Favorite writing food or snack?

Anything made of chocolate or anything I consider to be in the same family, i.e. caramel, vanilla,

cheesecake. Yum yum yum sugar sugar sugar. Just what we all need, right?

Coke, Pepsi, or?

I like Coke, but if Dr. Pepper is an option, I’ll take that every time. I’m a Pepper, he’s a Pepper, she’s a Pepper—wouldn’t ya like to be a Pepper too? No? Well, that’s okay—more for me!

Most importantly, are you a cat or a dog person?

I love ‘em all! I’m just a creature person, I think—starting with guinea pigs when I was little. My adult life I’ve always had big girl dogs—labs and golden retrievers (Shaquille O’Neal, Goo, Ellie and Skye)—and in Colorado I also had two boy black cats—Echo and Chinook. (Temperamentally, I prefer girl dogs and boy cats). Echo and Chinook, unfortunately, sensed when we were getting ready to move to California and took off. Ellie, our golden

retriever, died this past February at fourteen-and-a-half, AKA ninety-eight people-years old. Though we fully had no plans to get another pet any time soon, two weeks later this little bedraggled wet dog found us and told us her name was Lucy. (The boys don’t believe she told me that.) Lucy is a ten-pound mutt rescue dog—we think part Shi-tzu and maybe dachshund? Her body is long and she has hair, not fur, which was a requirement for our

someday-not-today-future dog, so she adopted us. She thinks she is a Rottweiler, which almost gets her head literally bitten off when she tries to start a rumble with a pit bull. She is a cute little pistol, and we are really working on curbing that yappy bark little dogs have when they’re asserting their alleged alpha status, because by all other standards she is a really good girl!

**FROM KELLEY TO HER READERS . . .**

What’s one thing people should know and/or don’t know about you?

I rehearse what I’m going to say in my head before I say it. A lot.

Are there other things you'd like readers to know about you (personal challenges you've faced that influenced you, funny stories about the writing or research, etc.)?

I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1994. I’ve now been dealing with that disease almost half my life, and it has both challenged and uplifted me, as chronic illness often does. My first doors to publication were opened due to the disease, when I was a local speaker at an MS Luncheon which was keynoted by Jackie Waldman. She wrote an inspirational series called *The Courage to Give*, so she asked me to write a story then featured in *Teachers With the Courage to Give*. This publication led me to be featured in three other non-fiction pieces, including a Simon and Schuster series by Kay Allenbaugh called *Chocolate for a Woman’s Soul*.

I feel dealing with this illness has made me a better person and consequently a better writer. I was raised in a seriously functional family, with parents who had emotionally (if not financially) spoiled daughters, AKA me. We didn’t lose family members, no one had a drug problem, people said “I love you.” I don’t know if I had much compassion or empathy, though, with all this hunkydoriness. All the aforementioned reading also sparked my imagination plus a genetic tendency toward being a worrywart, and I felt all the good fortune couldn’t last. I wasted a lot of time waiting for the other shoe to drop. When it did, in the form of a terrifying and unpredictable

disease which didn’t kill me—and yes I’m going there—made me stronger, some of those missing ingredients fell into place. I think I am much more dialed in to this world than I was before I was diagnosed, and the increased information and perspective has made me (is making me) a better writer and human.

If you ever have questions about MS, the MS Friends Helpline is open 9 a.m. to midnight EST every day:

800-344-4267

What do you hope readers take away most from your writing?

Hmm. What an interesting question. I hope they leave my writing feeling entertained and satisfied of course. But also I just want them to have a feeling about it. An emotion that comes to the forefront when you finish a story of mine. I’d love it if they left with a new idea or answer to a question.

What have you learned in creating your books?

I’ve learned that I want to do this forever.