



Greetings from California!

We are excited for you to get to know our family!



Hello! We are Zac, Elena, K, and Maple.



Thank you for looking through our album! To respect the privacy of our son, we have covered his face in photos. We also have limited photos of our family and friends to respect their privacy as well.

The photo above is from a recent trip to Lake Tahoe, California, and the cover photo from the train at the Oregon Zoo.

Our Wedding Celebrated Our Relationship

In our letter we shared how we met and transitioned from friends to romantic partners. We sealed our union in 2010 with a multi-day extravaganza in Portland.

It started with a rehearsal dinner with family from Oregon, Montana, California, and Canada. The next day we held a ceremony in the Portland Rose Garden, where family and friends contributed readings and music, and we said our just-written vows together. It was an absolutely beautiful day! After the ceremony we mingled in the garden and had a reception at a local brew pub.

On Saturday we were married at the church Elena grew up attending. After the ceremony, we had dinner and dancing, complete with a live band. We were just about the last ones to leave the reception, we were having such a great time!

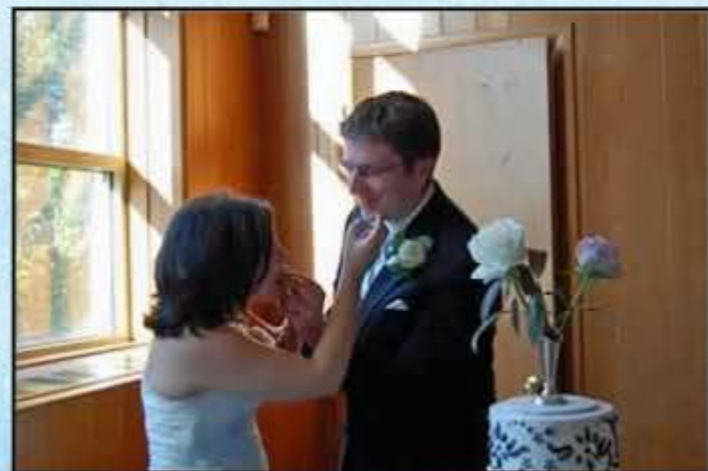
The following day we held a brunch at Elena's childhood home. The whole weekend was a great opportunity to bring the many branches of our families together. Additionally, it demonstrated our commitment to each other, the role of religious faith in the foundation of our married life together, and the importance of family.



Our Rose Garden Ceremony



Clockwise from left: Sharing a laugh before the ceremony; connected during the ceremony with Elena's sister and friend looking on; feeding each other cake; the hall ready for a party!





Get to Know Zac

I am a Paramedic and currently work full time as a Clinical Education Specialist for the 911 ambulance provider in the county where we live.

I love outdoor activities including mountain biking, skiing, sailing and backpacking. Being outdoors was very important to me as a kid and was one of the main ways I spent time with my dad growing up.

Now I get to share my love of the outdoors with my son--particularly my love of skiing and bike riding. In the picture below left, K and I took our first ride together.

Some of my other current interests outside of work are reading (both fiction and non-fiction), being politically and socially informed, spending time with my family and friends, and cooking.



Fun Facts About Zac!

*I decided to change the spelling of my name to Zac when I was in preschool. The "H" was silent!

*I have never lived more than 5 miles from where I grew up.

*I have been friends with my best friend for my entire life.

*I learned to ski when I was 2 years old.

*I met the Dalai Lama when I was performing at the World Festival of Sacred Music at The Hollywood Bowl.



Photo above: I love to sail, and here is a photo of the San Francisco Bay--a great place to sail, and easy to get to from where we live.



Above is the "Star of Life" which is the symbol for emergency medicine: below is me at work.



Zac's Story

I was born in the Bay Area and grew up with two older half sisters from my dad's first marriage.

I started pursuing Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training at night when I was in high school and started working when I was 18. I worked as an EMT for a year full time and also started my career as a Clinical Educator.

After a year, I left my full time job and started an undergraduate degree. I continued to work and also volunteered as a Ski Patroller. I eventually paused my undergraduate studies to work full time in Clinical Education and Emergency Management consulting. I went to Paramedic school after I got married to Elena and then returned to university to complete my undergraduate degree after K was born.

I became a Greek Orthodox Christian shortly after I got married to Elena. I am very politically liberal and find that my Christian faith is actually very aligned with my political beliefs. I find that having a set of values that extends beyond a Neo-capitalist/acquisitive mentality gives me purpose in life and helps guide my decisions on a daily basis.



Above: Looking sharp on my wedding day!
Below: Paddling around a lake in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco with K.



Clockwise from above left: With my dad on my wedding day; with Elena and my maternal grandparents; with my two sisters celebrating my undergraduate degree; hanging out with family friend Keith; celebrating a birthday.



Get to Know Elena

I am a public health consultant, and absolutely love the field! I am motivated by issues of justice and equity, believing optimal health is something that should be available to all.

I love to spend time outdoors away from my computer. Hiking and swimming are among my favorite activities. Since we live in the San Francisco Bay Area, I have a choice of several all-season outdoor pools, which is fabulous!

Traveling and experiencing different people, places, and cultures is something I love to do, but with the responsibilities of work and family I haven't done as much traveling as I used to. Luckily, the SF Bay Area has an incredible mix of people, and so I can experience lots of cultures without going too far.

I am kind of an introverted extrovert, in that I need time for reflection and quiet, while also enjoying being out and about in the world. I love to read, as it helps me re-charge on many levels. I will read just about anything!

Being a mom is also a passion. It is so amazing to be with a new person and support them as they grow into themselves! I became a mom later in life, which has let me treasure the experience of parenting and family.

Pictures from right top: A fun day at the Portland Japanese Garden; celebrating K's second birthday.



Fun Facts About Elena

*I have traveled to/lived in 20 countries on four continents. The picture to the right is me with my luggage before departing for a semester in Spain.

*Years ago, I went to the demilitarized zone on the Korean peninsula. I have included a photo (bottom right) I took looking across the DMZ to North Korea.

*I speak three languages: English, Greek, & Spanish.

*I am left-handed, which definitely proved challenging in school when lots of desks were right-handed!

*I like to do needlework/cross stitch when I have the time (not much lately!)

*I have a pair of skeleton earrings that I wear every Halloween (see photo at left).



Elena's Story

I was born and raised in Oregon, one of four children. My parents came to the U.S. for my dad's continued medical training after they had met and married in Canada. My parents agreed to raise their children in the Greek Orthodox Church, so that has been a focal point of my family life and upbringing.

My parents still live in the house I grew up in, which is amazing as I am able to share that part of my childhood with my husband and son. My son even gets to play with my old toys, as well as the toys of all of my siblings, which is pretty awesome!

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest gave me a deep appreciation for trees and the beauty of nature. I also see weather as no obstacle to getting outside (unlike many here in California who only go out if it is sunny), and am teaching our son to have the same mindset.

Case in point: K's muddy shoes from a recent hike!



Above: In my father's study.
At right: Celebrating my first birthday.
Below left: K opening the door when arriving for a visit to see his grandparents in Portland!



Top left: Showing off my hand print in Canada at my maternal grandparents' vacation home.
Top right: Standing in front of the village house in Greece where my father was born.
Below: Me with my parents, two brothers and sister when I received a graduate degree.

Growing up, I spent every vacation in either Greece or Canada visiting family. I started traveling as a toddler, and these experiences have had a huge impact on my sense of self. I am lucky in that I got to know all of my grandparents in their home countries, and the feeling I have of being a child of immigrants is really strong.



I love learning and school, so I obtained graduate degrees in public health. I feel so fortunate to have had these opportunities to continue my education, and particularly to discover my passion for public health. It was my pursuit of higher education that brought me to the SF Bay Area.



Get to Know K

The birth of our son was transformative for our family. He made a surprising entrance to the world, as Elena was in her last week of work when K decided to arrive early!

After his dramatic arrival, it should be no surprise that he is now drawn to acting and musical theater. He is an outgoing and thoughtful child with a love of Legos, Minecraft, Star Wars, skiing, swimming, and playing with his friends.



Clockwise from top right: The view from the ferry as we leave San Francisco; flying kites at a local park; swimming with pumpkins at our local pool; running through fog with a friend at a science museum; the sun shining on Emerald Bay in Tahoe.

Get to Know Maple

Zac and K had been lobbying for a dog for a while, though Elena had been resisting as she: a) knew nothing about dogs, and b) felt certain she would end up taking care of the dog (too true!)

We read the Puppy Place book series by Eileen Miles during the school shutdown, and that finally convinced us that having a puppy would be great!

We settled on a mini Australian shepherd (fun fact: they are actually from the U.S., not sure why they are called Aussies) as the right size and temperament for our family. She is very people oriented and also enjoys a good run in the park with other dogs.

Maple's happy, energetic demeanor keeps us all laughing and smiling!

Photos from top: Maple as a puppy; hiking with Zac, K, our friend Keith and his dog Dino (not pictured); taking a break on a hiking trail; Maple loves the sun!



Our Home & Neighborhood

Our home is a friendly, welcoming space, with lots of child art on the walls as well as books and other reading material in every available space. Our lot also includes a garage with a terrific long-term tenant in the apartment above, and a studio that we have turned into K's Lego heaven. Right now the back yard has a lot of concrete, which we are going to be working on in the coming year to turn into a green space that supports birds, bees, butterflies, and socializing by people!



We live in a terrific urban neighborhood. We actually used to live down the block, and liked the neighborhood so much that when it was time to buy a house, we wanted to stay in the neighborhood.

Within walking distance, we have a modern library branch (we are heavy users!), a public swimming pool (ditto!) and several parks, as well as stores, restaurants, the post office, and K's school. Zac's sisters and their families live a block over, and our block is one full of families with children ranging from toddler to high school. Our block has an annual block party (sometimes we have two if feeling ambitious) and there is a strong sense of solidarity in our neighborhood. People really look out for one another. It is a wonderful place to raise children.



Left: View of the Golden Gate Bridge from a local dog park. Maple is taking in the view!



Above: The play area in a park close by, and below a branch library blocks from our home.

Our Family Traditions & Favorite Activities



Many of our traditions start with those connected to the Greek Orthodox Church, and we are developing new traditions as well.

For example, at left, Zac and Elena got the lucky coin in the St. Basil's bread on new year's day in 2010, an auspicious marker for an important year!

The other photo to the left shows us wearing paper crowns and showing off a toy that came in our Christmas crackers. Opening Christmas crackers is a tradition from our Canadian family.

Every year we celebrate Hanukkah with Zac's father, sisters, and their families, eating yummy food like latkes and small jelly doughnuts covered with powdered sugar.

During the early years of the pandemic, we discovered family camp as a great place to have fun with other families and enjoy new activities, like archery, rock climbing, and the zip line (photos at right). We now see friends there every year!

Skiing and snow time at Lake Tahoe are high on the list of family activities during the winter. Even Maple joins the fun!



Because of the pandemic shutdowns, birthday parties had to change, or not happen at all. Consequently, we started a new tradition, now in its 5th year, of going big with balloons at home!



Another favorite activity is catching shows at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. We saw "The Three Musketeers" in the outdoor theater and now are hooked! We plan to head there annually.



We spend every Thanksgiving with Zac's family here in the SF Bay Area. Sometimes the weather is mild enough that we have Thanksgiving in the back yard, where K enjoys relaxing on the hammock!

We have recently started a new tradition with close friends to go to a Christmas tree farm to cut down our own tree. This is a lot of fun; after the tree cutting we head to our friend's house for dinner. Zac does the literal heavy lifting, while K and Elena provide important input on tree selection!



Dreams for Our Child



Raising a child is a privilege and labor of love. Our son had a clear personality from day one, and it is amazing to watch it blossom as he grows. We look forward to having a different experience with a new child, and to be amazed by the unique person they are and will become over time.

Our new child will be immediately swaddled into our cozy home, spending the early days in walks, cuddles, and, of course, reading! There is a tradition to take a new child to church at 40 days for a blessing, so our child will quickly be welcomed into their church community.

As our child gets older, we will have outings to story time at the library, playing in the pool, visiting the zoo, exploring area parks (one nearby has a creek in which you can throw rocks!) and other fun activities.

We will envelope our child in their loving home community of family, friends, and neighbors, and also travel to embrace our connections with family and friends that live farther away.

Our ultimate dream for our future child is that they feel loved and cared for, and that they know we are here to support them in growing into the adult they will become.

Open Adoption Aspirations



Our hope over the course of our adopted child's life is that they grow to be happy and self-confident, with a strong sense of self and the internal knowledge that all of their family members love them and are key, trusted parts of their life.

We hope that our child's birth family is an integral part of the life of the person they brought into the world, and that they have healthy, independent relationships with both their birth child and with us, the adoptive parents.

Ultimately, we will be thrilled to see our adopted child move into adulthood, and glad to have been on this child-raising journey with the birth family, because the respect, care, trust, and honesty between the families support our child to blossom into the person that they are.

In our dream scenario, we all become extended family who have as our center of focus our spectacular child.

Thank you!



Thank you for taking the time to learn about our family. We wish you well on your life's journey.