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Josh, Alexis and Ruby

Some pictures and some stories

Welcome to our family book!

Hello there. We are Josh, Alexis and Ruby. In the following book, we've compiled photos from different times in our lives to give you a sense of who we are and what our life is like. We hope it will serve as a helpful introduction. We look forward to meeting you!

Read on to find out more about us as individuals, and as a family.

Josh

Josh's Story

I was born at Portland, Oregon's Good Samaritan Hospital in 1977. My father was a professor of art history at the Pacific Northwest College of Art and organized art-oriented tours of countries like Greece, Italy and Turkey. My mother was an executive at the catalog retailer Norm Thompson. My parents worked hard to give me a stable life in which I felt loved and supported. My family, mostly on my father's side, was close knit, stable, and loving, anchored by my incredible grandparents. My mother's parents were kind, if more reserved, whereas her extended family was (and is) opinionated and colorful. My father's family fell somewhere on the spectrum of non-religious to Episcopalian. My mother's side of the family was reform Jewish. I had a happy childhood. I fondly remember Cub Scouts, family vacations to Italy and Disneyland, swimming and karate lessons, romping in the woods with my friends at our family cabin near Mt. Hood, lots of toys, and too much TV. With middle school came the confusion of adolescence. Drawing and writing were my escapes. I remember poring over Bloom County books and competing with friends as to who could draw the best Todd McFarlane-style Spiderman.

My peers in high school would have described me as shy. I participated in art and key club, hung out with friends, listened to grunge music, drew, and wrote for the school newspaper. I started attending University of Oregon in 1995. College was a mind-opening time, but also felt like kind of a cocoon. I studied English literature, also taking courses in religion and politics. I learned a lot about the world without really diving into it. I developed a sense that the easier, smaller life I'd grown up with wouldn't be enough for me. I graduated in 1999, then headed off to Chicago with a college friend in tow. I spent a year there raising funds for human rights and environmental groups, working hard and playing hard. At the end of the year I moved back to Portland. I worked several jobs and tried to figure out the best direction forward. I eventually found out about Outside In, a homeless services organization that works with young people living on the streets of Portland. I volunteered there for two years, running a creative writing program. Through work and volunteering, I made new friends and lived the life of a typical twenty something in early 2000s Portland.

I found I missed the purpose of my work in Chicago, and I eventually found a job working to mobilize low-income communities in Portland, with a stint in Providence, RI. I learned a lot about class politics, racism and the fine art of human interaction. In 2004, during that year's presidential campaign, I served as a director in a Democratic fundraising office. It was there that I met and fell in love with Alexis. After the election, Alexis and I found ourselves with a year until she had to move across the country for graduate school. We talked a lot about the future, and I made the excellent (if I do say so) decision to move with her to Boston.

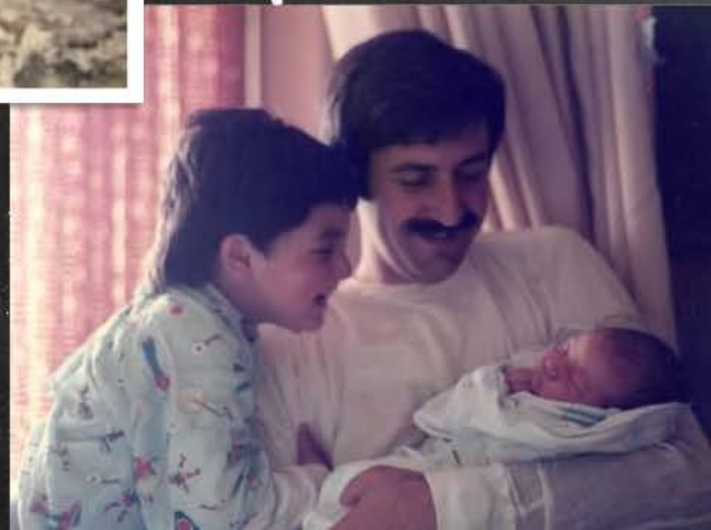
In fall of 2005 we road tripped across the country. Over the next year, I worked at a music store, we moved in together, Lex pursued her PhD, and I applied to grad schools. In 2006, I started my graduate work at Boston University, working toward my Masters in Social Work. I proposed to Lex in May 2007, and we got married a year later. Lex and I had a wonderful life in Boston. I have great memories of Saturday mornings in the brilliantly colored fall, our favorite coffee shop, and the Haymarket downtown with its huge, noisy crowds and screaming vendors.

In 2010, Alexis completed her PhD and took a position in Seattle. After another amazing cross-country road trip, we found a great neighborhood to call home and settled into our new city. I worked as a case manager and volunteered with a group advocating for the needs of Seattle's homeless population. I eventually earned my clinical license and took a position at the King County Department of Public Defense, working with people navigating the difficult waters of the criminal justice system.

Lex and I spent a few years traveling, volunteering, raising chickens, and generally enjoying the Pacific Northwest, a place we both identify as home. We began to talk about what it would be like to bring a child into our family. We weren't able to do so biologically, but we were OK with that, particularly as we had already discussed the possibility that adoption was the right path for us.

In December 2016, we got a call telling us to come to the hospital right away. We met Ruby's birth mom, who impressed us immediately with her wit, intelligence, and integrity. Ruby was born the next morning. She has been a source of great joy and love in our lives ever since. While the past three and a half years has had its challenges, Ruby's presence makes it all worth it. She's an energetic, extremely social kid, and we have no doubt she'll make an amazing big sister. Whatever challenges this next chapter presents, I look forward to making the journey with Alexis by my side, and Ruby on my shoulders.

Alexis



I was born the day after thanksgiving in 1981. My mom was 7 months pregnant. This says a lot. I like to be ahead of schedule. I don't like to miss out on big parties with friends, family and good food. I always try to err on the side of being grateful.

Three-and-a-half years later, my brother was two weeks late. He weighed nearly 10 pounds. My mom was not amused! But, she forgave him quickly and I thought that having a little brother was the best thing in the world. He was my partner in crime growing up and we remain very close. During childhood, I also met my life-long best friend Ella. I was involved in many clubs, sports, and was always 'on the go'.

Reading and writing did not come naturally to me. Math and science were a different story. I distinctly remember my 7th grade math teacher being a disaster, but didn't want to speak up and risk the 'nerd' label. To keep myself entertained, I kept a log of all the mistakes the teacher made, along with not-always-complementary commentary. Eventually, I was caught. My teacher called me out over and over again in front of my classmates. This was rough. At this time, I had not yet even begun to learn to control my very Jewish hair. I was spending hours each day practicing clarinet, which, combined with the fine complexion of my 13-year old self left a permanent rash on my chin. This combination did not do wonders for my teenage self-confidence. I was learning an important lesson: being in situations that didn't challenge me wasn't going to work.

I went to college at a small engineering school in Southern California. Although I love math, science and engineering academically, the culture there didn't match with my passion to make the world a better place. Although I knew I wanted to be a scientist, I decided to put my energy into political involvement for a while. I worked in Washington DC for a time, then, after graduation, got a job working on the 2004 presidential campaign. Little did I know how much this 'break' would change my life. It was working on the campaign that I met Josh.

From day one, I had a blast with Josh. He is intense and warm and kind, has an incredible sense of humor, and the most amazing heart of anyone I've ever met. I was supposed to leave to attend graduate school in September before the election, but I wanted to finish what I had started with the campaign and was curious about where things would go with Josh. I deferred grad school for a year. We finished our work on the campaign and took a three week road trip together without even thinking about the fact that if we broke up it would be seriously awkward. Luckily, we fell in love. I rented a studio apartment, taught myself to cook, got a job, and spent evenings running and hanging out in dive bars with friends. Before Josh, the idea of a life-long relationship didn't make a lot of sense to me. But soon enough the idea of living another day of my life without the man who had become my best friend and the source of so much joy, happiness, and love seemed impossible.

We moved to Boston together the following year for my graduate work. Josh started his masters in social work program the following year. We both worked around-the-clock and had very little money, but life was good. We had incredible friends, and would typically cook dinner for four, in case someone felt like stopping by. After we had both finished our graduate work I got a job in Seattle. I am now a scientist and study infectious diseases of global importance.

December 3rd, 2016 we received a call asking us to come to the hospital, and we met Shayleen. The next morning, we met our amazing daughter Ruby. I was instantly in love with her. Her eyes were wide open from the first minute, and she really hasn't looked back since. I sometimes call her my second soulmate. I love the life Josh, Ruby and I live, and I'm excited to grow our family.

Our Wedding

June 2008 was a month of near continuous rain in Portland. But on the 8th, the sky cleared and the day shone bright and perfect. On that day, we were married. Flowers were forgotten, the bakery that was to make our wedding cake went out of business, and music wouldn't play over the speakers. We picked some flowers, someone brought a guitar, and all of it, every wonderful nuance and hilarious flaw, was perfect. It set the tone for a wonderful life together.

Friends and Family

Clockwise from top left: Ruby with her birthmom Shayleen at her third birthday; Lex's grandparents Jerry and Fran; Lex's dad Ken with Ruby and cousin Fiona (named "Fina" by Ruby); The photo we are saving for Ruby and Fina's album cover; Lex's mom Lauren; Lex and Ruby with Grandpa Jim and Grandma Nancy at Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood.

We consider our friends as family and our family as part of our community. Both are a huge part of our lives, and we look forward to introducing another child to a lot of amazing, warm-hearted, sometimes slightly goofy people.

Gatherings with friends and family

...a little gardening, a good burger and lots of time with grandparents.

Our grandparents are very important to us. They provided us with wonderful childhood memories and served as incredible role models. We take great joy in watching Ruby develop close relationships with her grandparents.
We are also very grateful that, in addition to our parents, she has her birth family in her life.

Though our grandparents are no longer with us, they will continue to be a huge influence on the way we build our family.

Home...

Wherever we've lived, we've always been able to make our house (or apartment) into a home. That is, a place of comfort and security for us, and where others feel welcome, safe, and appreciated.

...and Community

We live in a wonderful neighborhood near Seattle. We love it here! We feel we have the best of both worlds - we are 15 minutes from downtown Seattle, and the neighborhood has a culture of friendliness, great neighbors, great food, a lot of cool local businesses. At the same time, we enjoy lots of nearby parks and woods to walk through just across the street. We chose this location in part because of the schools -- Ruby already visits them when walking or riding her bike around the neighborhood, and likes to remind us she will go to school there soon.

Fun and Traditions

We travel nationally and internationally. We love national parks and Ruby has already enjoyed the North Cascades, Bryce Canyon and Zion. We have a particular love of the American southwest, and frequently travel there. Our backyard chickens went to stay with friends when we moved, but we have plans to raise new chicks with Ruby.

Traveling, marching for women, Bryce Canyon, and table set for Passover.

The beach in Hawaii; the streets of New York; Grandpa and Lex showing off their mutual love of cooking (and giving each other the same Xmas gift).

More travel: in Morocco, Fiji, on the subway with cousin Fi, and a plantation on Kauai that makes beautiful, beautiful coffee. So much to see and do in the world. And, of course, it's just as much fun to come home.

What open adoption means to us

Before adopting Ruby, the concept of open adoption was, despite plenty of reading and discussing, purely theoretical to us. Since becoming Ruby's parents, we've truly learned how important it is to us, and to Ruby. Ruby loves hearing the story of her birth, and there is joy in her voice when she talks about her birth mom, Shayleen. We now see Shayleen a few times a year either in California where she lives, or here in Seattle. Ruby loves to talk about how her birth mom was able to attend her third birthday! When a recent trip to visit Shayleen had to be canceled because of the Coronavirus, it was hard on everyone and Ruby suggested we Facetime right away. We love that Ruby is proud to be adopted, and comfortable talking about it.

We hope in considering your options, you make a decision that gives you a sense of comfort and safety. We also hope that your decision reflects your values, as the decision to pursue open adoption reflects ours. We promise to offer love and support as parents, and to respect the bond you and you alone share with your child. That stance best reflects who we are, as individuals and also as parents.

Well, that's us.

The main takeaway: we're three people who enjoy our life so much we don't feel right keeping it to ourselves. We hope to meet you soon!