

Dear family and friends,

We cut to the chase: we're having a baby! For real! Any second now! To the right you can see the baby's 20-week-old foot. We think this a remarkable foot. We suspect many babies would not have such a foot until, say, 20.3 or 20.4 weeks. Right on, baby.

That picture was snapped in August; baby is due January 6th, less than three weeks after Erik's brother Tom and his wife Alex kindly provided the baby a wee cousin, Blake, born December 18th. Welcome, Blake! ¹



We will take this opportunity to broadcast answers to some frequently asked questions.

Do you know the baby's sex?

No. We decided to wait and be surprised. Many people wait until birth to find this out; in order to have more time to pick out names, we plan to wait until baby graduates from high school.

What will you name the baby?

Goodness only knows. We can report, however, that at one point we ran through the alphabet saying all the names that came to mind for each letter to see which ones sounded good. When we hit "F," one of us jokingly proposed "Freud," and the baby started kicking madly, producing by far the most vigorous movement we had felt to that point. We are unsure whether the baby meant to communicate "Yes! I'd love to be named Freud!" or "Oh, for Pete's sake. I'm not even born yet, and my parents are already an embarrassment!"

What will the baby call you?

We hope the baby will call Erik "Papa"; we think that would be cute and a little quaint—a reminder of all those old novels we read. We hope the baby will call Carolyn "Stella" because it would be funny to have a baby Brando teetering around yelling "STELLA!"

How's Carolyn feeling?

By the standards of unpregnant Carolyn? Bloated and achy. By the standards of women in the ninth month of pregnancy? Remarkably good. We've been lucky so far.

How's Erik feeling?

This is not, in truth, a frequently asked question.

¹ Some of you may already have noticed this delicious irony: two of the three Olean-based Simpson men teach British Romantic literature, but it's the *other* one who named his son Blake. Erik plans to make the most of this opportunity, saying things like, "You know, Blake, the cut worm forgives the plow! HAHAAHAHAHAHA!" Reunions are going to be a blast.

Note to the note: If you get an Erik-Carolyn Christmas letter without a footnote, please report the fraud to the proper authorities (Santa?).

How do you think having a baby will change your lives?

That's hard to predict, of course, but we are counting on one thing: it's going to be a lot easier to keep the house in order with three people instead of two! We've begun to draw up a list of chores and who will take care of them:

Chore	Person Responsible
Dusting the TV	Erik
Washing dishes	Baby
Thinking of chores	Carolyn
Doing laundry	Baby
Arranging flowers	Erik
Tending the lawn and garden	Baby
Adjusting stereo settings	Carolyn
Changing baby	Baby
Procuring movie tickets	Erik
Feeding baby	Baby

Obviously, the list isn't done yet, but things are looking up on the home front!

What else do you want to tell us about your lives this past year?

How nice of you to ask! We're fine. In the work world, Carolyn's second M/MLA convention went beautifully in November, and we both continue to work on our academic writing. Erik will be working to finish his book on a research leave next year. We both got involved in doing political work as we never had before in the time leading up to the November elections; we learned a lot about the process, though we were deeply disappointed and remain deeply worried by the results. In the spirit of respecting the will of the people, however, we have begun to model our domestic life on federal policy by buying anything that glitters (credit cards are so handy!) and bullying neighborhood toddlers whom we suspect might one day taunt the baby.

Our families are well, too, though we miss Carolyn's grandmother Roma Jacobson and Roma's sister Juliana Swiney. They died a week apart last January. Both women were baby experts, Juliana a doctor and Roma a mother of ten with an amazing rapport with little ones. We wish they were here to advise us and hold the next generation.

Erik and Carolyn, please, one more question before baby arrives: last year, you reported that the cats had suddenly become mortal enemies. Have they reconciled?

The boys are a model to the nations of the world. As suddenly as they broke their peace last year, they made it again in January. See for yourself!

Love and best holiday wishes to you all—

Carolyn and Erik

