

# Jeb's Birth Story

I awoke the morning of January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015 pregnant with baby #4 and I was uncomfortable... but it would be the last day of discomfort in that pregnancy. But I didn't know that so I had planned a day of homeschooling, friends, and sledding. The Bosworth family visited for lunch and the kids had some fun sledding. Jamie joked that it was good they came over so we could be pregnant together for at least one day. (She had just announce their own pregnancy about a week or so prior.) I laughed, but was wondering when this baby would come.

Sherwin & I had filled our schedule and sledding was the last event on the calendar before baby's arrival. This pregnancy was very different from our other ones because we were planning on a home birth. Our first two babies had been born in a PA hospital under the care of a midwife, and had been great experiences. Clayton, baby #3, was born after we had moved to Maine, and was delivered by an OB in the hospital. It had been a frustrating experience with the doctor and Sherwin & I had to question if we had more babies, did we want our experience to be like that one? So even in the hospital in 2012, we were already thinking about other options.

We joyfully welcomed another pregnancy in 2014 and had to decide what our birth experience would be like. Perhaps the Lord was directing us toward home birth because just a few months prior, the Labor and delivery unit in Sanford closed down. Babies had to be delivered in Biddeford with new providers. So I began researching home-birth. There were several options, such as lay-midwives (too scary), birthing centers (too far to drive), and then certified midwives. We were delighted with our choice of Sacopee Valley Midwives. We met with Brenda in her home office and talked birthing and family. We left feeling confident in our choice. We went on to meet the other midwives, Lindsey and Robin, through office and home visits. Once, when I was very sick, Jody, the CNP in their practice chatted with me over the phone and was able to prescribe what was needed. We loved the competence of the midwives and their focus on this pregnancy as a family event.

My biggest concern was, "Would I be able to deliver a baby at home without any drugs at all?" (My previous babies were natural, save a small IV dose of stadol.) But here, at home I would have only what I could provide for pain management. So, I became very proactive in researching home birth pain management options. I read about breathing techniques, imagery, essential oils, exercises, and even did prenatal chiropractic care. In my arsenal, was also a key ring with laminated scripture cards to encourage and strengthen during my time of focused meditation. We had also had prayer; our own prayers, but also that of our family and friends. Thankfully, I am in a supportive community that celebrates childbirth and even home-birth. God had provided all I needed for peace of mind and thankfully, that evening, I did have peace of mind.

During our 5pm supper time, I was very uncomfortable and, after eating, laid down a bit to try and calm the Braxton-Hicks, or so I thought. After a few minutes I felt better and joined the family in the living room. As I headed toward the kitchen, discomfort gripped me again along with the thought, "Maybe this is it! Could our baby be born tonight?" It was about 7pm and I decided to sit down and see if there was regularity to the discomfort. I decided that yes, about every 15 minutes or so, there was increased discomfort.

We had made previous arrangements for childcare of our older children. I didn't want them in the house while delivering a baby! But it was nearly their bedtime when I told Sherwin that I think labor is starting. We decided to put the kids to bed, thinking this could be an all-night event. Perhaps the Horst's could come get the kids in the morning if things really picked up? We tucked them in soon after 8pm, letting them know we might have a baby that night, but we weren't sure. They were very excited of course, but everyone in our family had been anticipating the arrival of baby #4, that it seemed surreal to us all. After the kids were settled, I realized that labor was definitely starting. A few final things needed done in the basement guest room, our delivery suite, and so I gathered the final items and trudged downstairs. As I walked down the steps, I decided I was not leaving this basement without a baby. I double-checked the guestroom closet, which had been transformed into a birthing supplies closet. The green and yellow clothes were ready; the bassinet was set up; the bed was prepared. I was satisfied with the preparations as another contraction came and I recognized it was time to call the midwife. It was 9pm. I knew I had about 3 minutes or so before another contraction hit so I sat on my birthing ball, next to the bed and called the midwife. Except in my flurry, I accidentally called Mom in the phone directory. Oops. I told her I needed to go, call you later. Ha. Mom was suspect, which I suppose was fine, since I had her prayers then.

I did get Brenda, the midwife, called and she said she would be over soon. "No hurry," I told her, "This could take all night." In retrospect, I don't know why I thought this baby would take all night. Isaac had been a 30-hour ordeal, but he had been the first. Corinne was delivered after a 5-hour labor. Clayton, only took 4 hours. But I knew that I shouldn't

bank on another short labor, especially since all the other babies had been born posterior.

After I hung up with Brenda another contraction came and before I knew it, contractions were coming one after another. I was thankful for my birthing ball, big water bottle, contraction timer, and especially my scripture cards. As a contraction came, I focused on breathing, inhaling Clary Sage essential oil, and slowly exhaling. The timer was set and I concentrated on the verse I had just read, rehearsing it over and over in my mind for the minute or two of agony. When the contraction ended, I chugged water, inhaled more Clary Sage, and read another verse in preparation for the next contraction. When Brenda arrived at 9:30, I was no longer timing contractions, because it felt like there was barely a break. She told me later that when she arrived, she timed me as having 90 second contractions with a 30 second break. I was in my zone. The zone I enter is serious concentration. I do not like to be touched, poked, prodded, even spoken to during that zone time. Which is why I think I had resorted to Stadol for my prior deliveries because at this point in labor no one leaves me alone in the hospital! But here, at home, I was completely zoned and focused. At 10 the other midwife, Robin, arrived. I hardly greeted her, but I was happy she was there. Two midwives meant all was ready for baby.

During the brief breaks between contractions, I slumped over onto Sherwin. I listened to my soothing instrumental music, took cleansing breaths and prepared for another stronger contraction. He was the best thing I had in my birthing experience. He knew what I needed without me having to state it. He would quietly hand me water or encourage me during a break. What a blessing he is! At about 10:25, supposedly, I don't think I even knew it, the student, Hannah, slipped in. Soon after that, such a mighty agony came over me that, while still squatting on the birthing ball, I laid over on the bed. I was spent. I can't do this anymore, I cried in my mind. But outwardly, I was silent. I was overwhelmed. Brenda's soft voice broke through my zone: "We need to get you into a delivery position. Do you want on the birthing stool or the bed?" Yes, all the way up to this point, from the time she had arrived to now, she had only checked me once. She was satisfied with her check and I was able to focus, concentrate, and labor, uninterrupted until now. I remember feeling out of control for a moment, "I don't know!" I cried, "What should I do?!"

My blessed husband spoke, "On the bed, let's get her on the bed!" And as I clambered from the ball to the headboard, my water broke and I moaned with a push. "I need to push!" I wailed.

Brenda, Robin, Sherwin, and Hannah were all quietly and peacefully flying around me, for they realized this baby was coming now! "Just a minute, slow down," Brenda calmly instructed.

Breathing carefully, I was able to get a grip on myself and the headboard of the bed, just in time for the next push. Brenda cried, "There's the head!" and a moment later, "A boy, you have a boy!" That after-baby rush filled me with joy, exaltation, and triumph! "Another boy! What? Really?!" He was here! He was safe! We had done it. Sherwin proudly handed the squalling, small, red, bundle of sweetness to me.

I cradled him close to nurse as the midwives unobtrusively did their work. They did not cut the cord. Not until the placenta was delivered. I nursed him. He is a mighty nurser! the midwives observed. Still the placenta did not come. The midwives suggested I move to the birthing stool. Baby boy was nursing fantastically but still no placenta. Brenda showed concern after about 30 minutes of no placenta. We tried a few different maneuvers and finally the placenta was delivered. The cord to baby had remained uncut for nearly 45 minutes. I was able to shower in my own shower in our guestroom. When I came out of the bathroom in my own comfy jammies, a clean, warm, quiet, peaceful bedroom awaited me, with a sweet baby swaddled on his daddy's chest. The baby had been cold, he was so little, only 6 lbs, 10 oz, that he needed swaddled. I had a cold baby before. Corinne had been placed in the warmer next to my hospital bed for two hours before I could nurse her. I remember aching to hold her as she laid there. There was no ache for this baby. As long as he was skin to skin, he was with us, the people who loved him the most. I snuggled in bed, a bed in my own home, with my sweet baby and husband next to me. The sweet, joyful, peaceful triumph I felt was verbalized in thanks and praise to my Father God, to Jesus, and His Spirit, for this experience. It will always be remembered as perhaps the best memory I have.

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Postlude: The next morning our children took turns coming to the basement to meet Jeb. They were exuberant and joyful as well. They took turns bringing trays of goodies to mama and baby. Perhaps Isaac would bring breakfast, and have time with Mama and Jeb. Later, Corinne would bring hot coffee and snuggle in with us. Those next two days the children spent the days with friends, and their evenings with us. Those two days I did not leave the guest room. I snuggled with my sweet baby and family. I slept and rested. I spent time on the phone reliving the experience. And I prayed, thanking and praising my Lord for another baby, and for the blessing of life.