

## The Story of Aila

2/19/10- I have my 39 week appointment with Deirdre and Hannah at 2 o'clock and head back to work at the MMC Radiology department afterwards. I am happy to head home at 5, and am looking forward to the weekend.

2/20/10- On Saturday morning Caleb and I go to yoga class and afterwards have a big brunch. We remark that this could be our last weekend brunch just the two of us! What a crazy thought! We spend some just us time together and then I decide to take an afternoon nap. When I wake up I am having some intermittent contractions, but I have had some like this before that have always petered out, so we don't get too excited. But, I figure, might as well try to keep things going, or at least make a little change in my cervix, so Caleb and I head out to do some yard work. I walk around and pick up sticks, squatting whenever I have a contraction. We do that for about an hour, and then decide to go on a walk. We head out down our road and do about a mile and a half walk, enjoying the bright sunny day. Contractions continue, but are still not regular or painful. We get back to the house and make some lists and head out to town to run some errands. About half way through our shopping list at Hannaford, I realize I am leaning on the cart during contractions and needing to concentrate on them. Caleb suggests I start timing. Contractions are 3-5 minutes apart and 30-40 seconds long. We decide we better hurry up and get the shopping done. We get home and start cooking dinner, although I spend a fair amount of time in the living room on the exercise ball and on hands and knees. After about an hour and a half of timing contractions, we decide to call the midwives. It's now about 7pm. Caleb talks to them, and we decide to check in again in a couple of hours. There was a little bit of miscommunication, and with the thought that I was having false labor someone suggested a bit of wine to mellow things out, which I jumped at, because the thought of easing those muscles just a tiny bit sounded great. I had a half glass and promptly threw up. No more wine.

Things were progressing and I was walking a loop around the house now, leaning on sink or bureau or counter with contractions. Soon I felt the need to shed my clothes from the day and put on a comfortable jersey dress. Caleb was encouraging me to eat a bit of banana or some yogurt, but I only had a few bites. He gave me sips of juice or vitamin water or coconut water after contractions.

Caleb spoke to the midwives again twice somewhere between 9 and 11, and we all decided it would be good for them to come over. They suggested I try to get some rest if possible. I just kept doing what I was doing, and they arrived just after midnight.

Hannah took my blood pressure and pulse and listened to baby's heartbeat. Deirdre told me I was doing an amazing job, which made me feel relieved and good. Caleb chatted with them, and said he thought I was good just doing my own thing, and so they set everything up and went upstairs to a bed we had made for them.

By this time we had the house warmed up, and candles lit in most of the rooms. I was in the zone! Caleb has a small white drum on the wall in the bedroom that to me looked like a full moon. There was a candle flickering in front of it, and for many of my contractions I focused on that. I drew power from it, and kept saying to myself, 'it's not pain, it's just sensation.'

I worked through contractions for another couple of hours. At some point I changed into just a tank top and put a towel between my legs. I made trips to the bathroom every so

often and labored a bit on the toilet. I was getting bloody show now, and maybe lost my mucous plug. In between contractions I would flop over onto the bed and cover up with a blanket and fall asleep for a minute or so, and then another would come, and I would HAVE TO get up! Feet on the floor and leaning onto the bed, squirming my legs and hips around. I kept thinking, 'Those poor women in the hospital who have to stay laying down on their backs the whole time. I don't know how they do it!'

Over and over again, and I was moaning, and just felt like I was in a trance. Caleb was right there with me the whole time giving me sips of cold liquids.

And then around 4:00 things started to feel different. The contractions were more than intense, and starting to get a little painful. I could feel something in my back. Caleb suggested getting in the shower. We had gotten a handheld sprayer the week before. Caleb got the shower warmed up, and I got naked and got in. He held the sprayer on my low back with the contractions, and it felt very good. I was feeling things changing, and said we should go get Deirdre and Hannah to check me. I wanted to know where I was at.

I reached down myself while he was up getting them, and I could feel a bulging bag, and thought the edge of my cervix, but was too out of it (in a good way) to tell how dilated I was.

Hannah came down first and tried to find baby's heartbeat, but had some trouble. This made Caleb a bit worried at first, but then we realized that baby was probably moving on down! I told Hannah that I felt pushy at the end of the last 2 contractions. She asked 'just at the end?' and I said yes, but then the next contraction felt like a hand came down from above that tried to crunch me down into the Earth. Hannah had been trying to find a good time to finally check me in between contractions when I yelled, 'It's coming!' I think that was when my water broke, but it was hard to tell being in the shower. Deirdre was there by then, too, and checked and could feel baby's head. Contractions seemed to space out a little bit, but every one was like someone had taken over my body. SO STRONG!! In between was like floating and everything was fine, and then CRUNCH!! I think it was only 4 or 5 contractions, I was braced in something like a warrior 2 pose with one foot at either end of the shower, and I tried to slow down a bit, but couldn't and then woosh! out came Aila into Caleb's hands, with Hannah's right underneath his. It was only candle lit, and she got wrapped up so fast that we didn't even get a chance to see if she was a boy or a girl. But there she was on my chest, eyes open wide, and they brought the birthing stool into the shower for me to sit.

I was having trouble trying to greet her and deliver the placenta at the same time, so Caleb cut the cord and took her onto his bare chest while I delivered the placenta. I think it took about 10-15 minutes. Deirdre gave me some herbs to drink, because I was bleeding a bit, and the bleeding slowed down. I got to rinse off in the shower, and then climb into bed as a family. Aila latched right on as soon as I took her back onto my chest. It was absolutely amazing!

As it has been every day since.