

The Home Birth Story of Caroline Mae Shank  
Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 7:25am  
8lb, 2 oz, 21”

Caroline's birth story actually begins a few days prior, during the week of our Vacation Bible School. Of course, this was the year we were directors, and we had several visitors (including Grammy Cater) around as well. The Wednesday of VBS, I was very pregnant, and started to feel very sick in the evening. After sending Sherwin and the older kids off to VBS, along with Grammy Cater, who was staying with us during this time, the evening wore on, and I became very sick. I felt like contractions were starting. Even a sip of water turned my stomach, and the contractions were increasing steadily with the illness.

“Oh Lord,” I prayed, “I can't have a baby feeling like this, I'm just so sick and weak!”

Thankfully, close to midnight, a call to Midwife Robin brought some relief through the form of sipping icy vinegar water. I sipped my way through the night and thankfully, contractions ceased. Thursday was spent resting on the couch and recovering. Thursday evening was the last night of VBS but a night of bed-rest for this mama!

And blessed rest it was, because early Friday morning, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, around 4:30, I woke up feeling very uncomfortable.

I used the bathroom and around 5:30 nudged Sherwin saying, “I think contractions are regular. Maybe you should get the kids up?” Our plan was to wake up kids and send them down the road with Grammy Cater, to Pappy and Grandma Shank's house.

Well, Sherwin rolled over and said, “Let me know when it's serious.” A few minutes later, I really shook him. “Sherwin, it's time; get the kids up!” (Contractions were coming about every 7 minutes.)

He called down to Mom Cater that it was time to go and then started rounding sleepy kids up.

I asked Sherwin to call his dad, to let him know the crew was coming. He replied, “I'll call Dad after you call the midwife.”

About 6am, the contractions were every 5 minutes, so I called Robin. She calmly replied that she would be on her way in about 20 minutes.

Hanging up the phone, I still heard kid commotion in the basement. I stood at the top of the steps and called down, with urgency, “Please get the kids out, NOW!”

Finally, a few minutes later, I saw Grammy pulling out of the driveway with the kids. The walk down the steps really urged things along and now contractions were every 3 minutes. The thought crossed my mind that Midwife Brenda had gently reminded me not to ignore the first stage of labor. *I think I'm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage by now*, I thought ruefully.

Sherwin decided to check in with midwife Brenda, since she was a bit closer than Robin. “Yes,” she assured him, “I'm about 15 minutes away.”

I settled into my birthing mode: on the ball, rocking; sipping water; listening to soothing instrumental music; meditation on my verse cards; praying. I realized I was hungry and knew if the birth was to go well, I would need to eat something for strength. I told Sherwin this, but I had no suggestions of what to eat at this stage of labor. He sprinted to the kitchen and returned to my side with the perfect solution: trail mix! I added nibbling to my breaks, which by this point were very brief.

Brenda arrived about 6:30 and gently greeted me. I smiled, pained, but so happy to see her. “I think we're going to have a baby this morning.”

She laughed, “Yes, we are!” She began her tasks of setting up, and allowed me to have the peace and quiet I needed.

Robin and Titi, a student midwife, arrived a few minutes later. I think we greeted one another but I was in serious labor mode by now. It was very important to me to concentrate and pray.

At this point, I knew only Jesus would carry me through the pain to the joy of a baby on the other side. I knew he understood this agony from his words in John 16:21: “Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer

remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world.”

I called for Sherwin; he just needed to be close. I was still on the ball, leaning against a desk. As Sherwin sat nearby, I managed to whisper: “Water.” He moved to get the water bottle, but I was able to choke out: “Broke.”

Everyone flew into action! The midwives needed to check Baby's heart rate and at that moment, I gathered all my strength, leaned again the desk, and stood up.

I was crying out now, and began to bear down as I stood: this baby was coming by 7:30 I resolved, glancing at the clock. It was 7:20.

I concentrated every bit of intensity as I cried out, this baby was coming! But Brenda gently asked me to slow down. Slow down!?

I steadied my breath for a moment or two and then crying out again, I heard the joyous announcement, “The head is born!”

Another push and Sherwin, with Robin's assistance, welcomed our baby to the world at 7:25! Sherwin handed the white squealing bundle to me as I gasped out praises and asked, “What do we have??”

He laughed, “You tell me!”

Joy flooded me as I triumphantly announced, “A girl! Caroline Mae is here! Thank you Jesus, she's here!” (Caroline Shank was Sherwin's great grandmother and Mae was Linda, his mother's middle name.)

Caroline was a bit sleepy at first, raspy in her breathing, but after some vigorous assessment by the midwives, she took to squalling, which cleared her lungs easily.

Now, with sweet little Caroline snuggled close to me, I took to the bed to rest. Sherwin cut the cord after about 30 minutes. Caroline was an energetic nurser and finally, the placenta was delivered.

I was able to shower and when I came out, the room was clean and ready for resting. Then, what a delight, as I rested in bed, Robin treated us all to a deluxe coffee, egg, and bacon breakfast!

An hour or two passed but the feelings of elation, joyfulness, and just overwhelming thankfulness settled deep into my heart. We had the pleasure of announcing Caroline's arrival to our children first, and then our other family members and friends.

A beautiful home birth, yes, but the privilege of another sweet blessing in our family would mean eternal thankfulness for Caroline Mae Shank. Thank you Father God!

Isaiah 54:10

“For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,  
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,  
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”  
Says the Lord who has compassion on you.