

Jessica's story: Birth story for Violet (born 5/26/09). *First baby, born at home, postpartum transport for third stage issue, and back home again a few hours later. [Note from the midwives: Retained placenta is a infrequent occurrence (0.8-1.2% of births) that can necessitate more help from the hospital.]*

I'll never forget the day you were born. Your birth was amazing, and powerful, and changed our lives forever.

You arrived 11 days before your due date, after a seven and a half hour labor. It all started when my water broke in the shower around 11:00 a.m. I called one of our midwives, Deirdre, and she said labor could begin anytime in the next couple of days, but I had a feeling you would be here soon.

Bill went to get supplies and by the time he got home around 4:00 contractions were beginning, but they were sporadic in time and strength. For some of them I would sit on the birth ball and he would rub my back. As they got a little more intense I got in the shower. I leaned back on the handrails when I felt a contraction coming. I said "Ohhhh" with every contractions and thought "Open, Open." I was nervous and excited to get to meet you! Bill had set up the birth pool that morning and we started thinking about filling it, so I got out of the shower to conserve hot water.

There was no good position. I could not imagine being comfortable. Bill gave me updates on the pool and eventually there was enough water for me to get in. It was hot! It also felt really good on my belly. Bill put a bumper pad on the side of the pool for me to lean on, and I spent some time that way and some time leaning back. He tried to remind me to keep my focus and steady my breathing, but I didn't listen. I started getting sweaty and feeling thirstier than I ever had in my life. I promised myself that when labor was over I would drink everything in the fridge.

The contractions started getting intense and very close together. I was making a lot of noise and pushing against the walls of the tub. I felt out of control and scared of how long this would last. I knew I had only been in labor for a few hours because the sky was just starting to get dark. I remember Bill calling the midwives to say they should hurry, and I wondered what was taking them so long. This was transition, and it was the worst part of labor for me.

Just before Deirdre arrived I realized that the contractions felt different and that I might be pushing. I trusted my body to do what was right. Deirdre arrived around 7:30. She said I was almost completely dilated but I had a lip of cervix left and I should try to not push for a few contractions by breathing shallowly. I didn't think I had been pushing much but it was incredibly hard **not** to push. She kept listening to your heartbeat as well, and it was good and strong.

Robin, our other midwife, arrived around 8:00 and they recommended I get out of the tub and try laboring on the toilet. Bill said if I had the baby on the toilet we'd have to name it

John. It's a good thing you weren't born there. I had a towel around my shoulders and I kept biting it as I pushed.

The direction from the midwives was so helpful. They suggested different positions, and let me know that everything was going well. They also helped massage me and hold me up so Bill could see what was going on, and they helped remind me to breathe deeply between contractions. More than anything they were a presence of competence, calm, and love. I felt safe doing whatever I needed to do to give birth. I think I went through about six or seven different pushing positions because I would get tired of one and ask for another. At one point I was hanging all my weight off Bill because it felt right. I probably should have warned him first. I sat on the birth stool, leaned over Bill's lap, hung from the banister, and leaned on the couch. I had a goal and with each push I would try to get a little bit further. For the last half hour or so I could feel your head pushing down and then sliding back. Then suddenly it stopped sliding back. The pain was surprising because it made me realize that while pushing had been hard work, it hadn't really hurt. But even at the end the pain was manageable and I knew that the only thing I could do was to keep going.

Suddenly there was a baby being lifted onto my stomach and rubbed with towels. You were slick and warm and solid. I was in a daze, but I remember checking to see that you were a girl. I looked at Bill and asked him what he'd like to name you. Violet? He nodded. It was 11:29.



Bill got to hold you while I sat on the birth stool to push out the placenta. But it didn't come out. I felt a little foolish sitting there, suddenly more self-aware and naked, not knowing what I was doing. I got two nasty tinctures to drink to speed up recovery, and still there was nothing. Robin offered to see if she could reach up and feel the placenta, but she couldn't get it out. Deirdre tried too, but it hurt and just felt wrong, and I made her stop. They recommended we go to the hospital, and I agreed. Deirdre and I went in the first car. We got pulled over for speeding on the way there, but the cop let us go when he saw me in the back seat in my bloody bathrobe, sniffing oxygen. At the hospital they wheeled me up to L&D where the nurse started an IV and called the doctor. After a few minutes they also gave me Nubain to help with the continued pain of cramping.

I uncooperatively laid on my side and watched you while they got everything set up. You were so beautiful. The medication made me a little woozy, and I was ready for this part of the night to be over. It was after 1:00 when the doctor arrived. They gave me a

towel to bite down on while the doctor reached in twice to pull out the placenta. It was over quickly. Then the doctor numbed me and stitched my second degree tear. By this time I was smiling and joking. The doctor recommended I come back for an ultrasound, but she didn't argue when I wanted to take you home.

In the early morning hours we were tucked under blankets on the couch, eating hamburgers Deirdre made for us, and admiring you. I will never forget your birth. The homebirth felt very right to me, and I'm so grateful to have such positive feelings about the entire experience. It was a powerful and amazing day, and at the end of it all I felt so strong and peaceful. Our time together began at home, naturally, with loving arms to welcome you and hold you. Welcome to the world, Violet.