

Leslie's story (Cor's birth 7/16/09) *First time mom home water birth.*

On July 16, 2009 at 10:50 pm Cor Maeve Frazier was born in our home in a birthing tub. He was 21.25 inches long and 9 lbs 10 oz!

The labor was a total of 21 hours, but luckily for me the active labor was only 7.5 hours.

I had the "bloody show" at 1-1:15 am on 7/16. By 1:45 am I had my first contraction. After that I was able to go back to sleep, but I continued to wake up every hour (2:45, 3:45...). After the contraction at 5:45 am I decided to go ahead and get up and eat a big breakfast because I was starving. I made what I thought might be the last breakfast I would cook for myself for a while: 3 eggs, black beans, 2 corn tortillas, goat cheese, salsa, and fresh cilantro. It was awesome. After my contraction at 6:45 am I was able to go back to sleep until 8 am. Deirdre was scheduled to come that morning anyways, so at 8 am I called her to tell her I thought I was in early labor. She decided to go ahead and come by and do a prenatal visit and discuss what the plan would be for the day. At the time she said that I could continue to have pre-labor/early labor contractions and it could stop all of the sudden and the baby could be born 1 week from then. There was no way to know if I was going to go into active labor that day or not. We decided that I would try to get more rest and then go for a walk in the afternoon. I noticed that morning that the kicks from the baby were in the center of my stomach. I realized that the baby had changed positions. Deirdre confirmed it moved to the posterior position! I was so mad! After all that hard work of getting him in the anterior position he moved! I spent a long time after that on my hands and knees encouraging him to turn back to the most desired position.

After she left I tried to relax for a while and get some rest. Unfortunately the contractions I had kept me awake. I started having them sporadically, and they would all last for various amounts of time. I called Deirdre a few hours later to tell her what was going on, and she said that the type of contractions I was experiencing were signs of a posterior baby. After we talked I continued to crawl on my hands and knees and do whatever possible to get him to turn. Around noon (I believe) we decided we would head out to go for the walk at the Audubon Sanctuary here in town. On our way I experienced two contractions in the car, and needless to say they were not fun at all. On our way we decided to go by North Star Cafe. Dusty wanted a latte, and I wanted one of their delicious sandwiches.

By the time we got to the Audubon Society my contractions were getting to be about 5 minutes apart. We started on a path, but it seemed like every 10 steps I would take I'd have another contraction. At this time they were somewhat easy to deal with because I would just lean on something or kind of lean over and move my hips in a circular motion. I just envisioned this spiral inside that was moving the contraction through. Lucky for us there were lots of mosquitoes, so every time I had to stop for a contraction my mom and Dusty would be swatting the mosquitoes off of me. After about one quarter of a mile we

decided to turn around because I kept having so many contractions. I was ready to be in my own home by this point.

On our way back I had a few more contractions in the car. The seat belt would always lock down, so Dusty kept pulling it away from my body before it locked me into a small spot. I called Deirdre in the car to tell her we were heading home. She said that she'd stop by within 30 minutes to 1 hour.

When we arrived back at the house I ended up in the living room on my hands and knees. I was trying to turn the baby. The cats were interested in the whole situation. They were all very concerned every time I had a contraction. Squeak kept crawling under me and rubbing on me throughout contractions. She was so sweet. At some point Deirdre arrived, but by this time I was lost in the labor. From here on out everything in relation to time is a blur for me.

Dusty and Deirdre got the birthing tub ready upstairs in our bedroom. Once it was ready I headed up the stairs and got into the tub. It felt amazing. It really took a lot of pressure off of my lower back. In the water I continued to stay on my hands and knees hoping that at some point the baby would turn. I noticed my contractions were getting stronger and stronger. At some point Robin and Jackie arrived. They kept giving me water and bites of food periodically. The food really helped give me energy.

Eventually Deirdre suggested that I get out of the water for a while. I went into the bathroom and I continued to go between sitting on the toilet and standing up holding onto Dusty in the squatting position. By this time I was most definitely in transitional labor. I have no idea if I started it in the water or when I was out.

Deirdre kept talking to me the entire time. It was amazing because she understood my contractions as they were happening. She was able to read exactly what I was feeling. I am sure by the sounds I was making she was able to understand where I was in the contractions. It was very helpful to me because I felt very understood and supported. By the way I feel the need to let everyone know that I was nice during labor to all that were around me!

I have no idea when but eventually I ended up back in the tub. They drained the tub while I was out and refilled it with warmer water. I have no idea how long I was in the tub, but I was experiencing some very intense contractions. The water did help to soothe the pain. I just kept trying to picture waves running into rocks and spiraling backwards. I was on my hands and knees most of the time, and I was holding onto Dusty's poor arms. I kept squeezing them to death. Dusty says that the pain of me doing that didn't bother him because he knew the pain I was in was just a little bit more intense!



At the end of the labor (but at the time I didn't know it was of course) I started to question whether or not I could continue. I thought about how drugs would be really nice, but then I reminded myself that women have been birthing babies for thousands of years naturally. If they can do it I know I can. I thought of the women I had spoken to throughout my pregnancy and their birth stories. I really thought about one of my friend's the most. She was doing a home birth, but when she was finally 7 cm she stayed there for at least 1 hour. She could not let go and allow her body to open up further. When Robin felt me and told me I was 7 cm I told myself that this was now the time to concentrate and really submit to the contractions. It was so hard to do. All I wanted to do was fight them, but I tried really hard to embrace them instead. Within a short amount of time I was 9 cm. Then my water broke. It felt good at first, but then the pressure of Cor's head was worse because the fluid had created a little bit of cushion previously. Robin told me I only had just a little bit of my cervix in the way still and then the baby would be ready to come down.

I was so anxious to get him out as soon as possible. I knew that the sooner I got him out the sooner the pain would be over with. I began to feel the urge to push. Deirdre guided me on how to push. I kept feeling after every push, and I could feel his head coming lower and lower. It was very empowering to know that I was in control of the situation. Robin later told me that I pushed for 47 minutes, but it only felt like 15 to me. I was completely lost in the moment. I kept going between being on my knees leaning over the tub holding onto Dusty and squatting and holding onto Dusty. It was very intense. After each contraction I would sit on my bottom and try to catch my breath. I was sweating like a pig! Throughout the entire labor everyone kept giving me water between contractions. I do not know how women go through labor without food or water. I would not have been able to perform without either. This is a hospital practice that I do not understand...and enemas. I cannot imagine experiencing the cramps from an enema while experiencing even the mildest of contractions.

Well, obviously eventually he came out. Getting his head out was extremely painful. Robin guided me at the end because she was feeling me the entire time. She told me when to push and when to stop for a second to prevent tearing. After his head came out I had to rest again before pushing out the rest of him. By this point I was in another world already. After he came out it is all a blur. He turned at some point during the labor because he came out anterior. Dusty told me that Robin handed him to me, but my Mom told me they told me to pick him up myself and that I grabbed him. I am guessing that I

reached down to grab him out of the water and Robin helped me. I couldn't even process the moment. All the pain was instantly gone. I felt very alert but unable to comprehend my surroundings.



They told me to sit down and lean against the edge of the tub. Dusty told me that he ran around the tub to get to where I had sat down. Together we held him. I remember one of the first things I did was see what sex he was. I just kept looking at him and then looking around with the "what in the heck is going on" expression! Dusty said when he first came out that I looked completely dazed and was looking around the room. The entire first 30 minutes of Cor's outside life were a daze for me!

Shortly after we started checking out Cor the midwives had me get on a birthing stool because I couldn't push out the placenta the way I was sitting. It felt really weird to birth the placenta.

Some time after that I ended up getting onto the bed with Dusty and Cor. We cuddled up. Robin assisted me with getting Cor to begin breastfeeding. I didn't have enough hands at first to get him to do what he needed to do. He wouldn't open his mouth wide enough. We spent the rest of the evening on the bed. The midwives brought me some lentil soup to eat. After the first 2 hours I started to crash. I was completely exhausted from the labor. I struggled to stay awake. I really wanted to stay awake to absorb the cuteness of our son. At about 2 am they did his [newborn exam] to make sure that he was okay. He passed of course.

When they weighed him all I could think is how in the heck I got him out of me! That was after two poops too! I forgot to mention that shortly after he came out at some point when he was sitting on me he pooped! It was a nice gift. I think of it as his way of saying welcome to motherhood!

We went to bed around 3 am. The first night was nice. Dusty, Cor, and I all cuddled. Dusty said he didn't sleep but a few hours because he was so nervous about Cor being safe. I, on the other hand, slept a lot. I only woke up to nurse Cor, and I was able to nurse and sleep at the same time. The next day we spent a lot of time in the bed together snuggling up.

I love being a mom. It is the best thing in the world.

If I were to give advice to any expecting mother it would be:

- Talk to as many women as possible about their birth stories. When I had negative feelings during labor it really helped to remember the women I talked to who had expressed similar thoughts. It allows you to validate your feelings and then let them go quickly.
- DO NOT look at a clock...ever! I intentionally never asked the time even when I really wanted to, and I have to say that was the best decision I made.
- Eat food and drink lots of water no matter how nauseous you may feel because you will probably not be able to perform without the energy.
- Trust your body.