

Amanda's story (Harper's birth, 11/22/08) *Fourth time mom has her third homebirth and tells the story to her new baby of his birth.*

My dearest Harper Jude,

Though the wait for you seemed a long one, the story of your birth is actually a very, very short one. All in all...just a little bit less than an hour!

During the autumn season in which you were born, I had been having contractions and thinking I was in labor for weeks and weeks. Being my fourth birth, I was certain each time that it was about to begin. Contractions would start with a steady pattern, we'd get everybody and everything moving and into place, and then....Nothing!

Deirdre quietly said through the whole pregnancy that she thought you'd come at night – during the rare and precious hours in which a house full of young children was quiet and peaceful, and waiting for a new one. I hoped she was right. It felt like the right time of day for you to join us.

And so it was that at 38 weeks, on the morning of your birth I woke at 3:50am with a start. One very strong contraction led to another. But after so many similar mornings in the previous weeks, I still wasn't sure. I woke up your Papa anyway, who started filling up the birth tub right next to the bed just in case.

It was only a few contractions later that I knew this would be your Birth Day. The contractions were strong and steady, and everything...well, everything just felt right. I called Robin and Deirdre at 4am to let them know. Then I puttered around the house for a few minutes – pulling some meals from the freezer, showering, tidying...and assuming I had hours and hours worth of labor ahead of me.

On the way to the basement freezer for a prepared meal, I found myself stopping once on the way down and twice on the way back up. Clearly, there wasn't time for puttering – I realized I needed to let all of that go and give in to riding the waves of labor. I found a spot on a rug near the woodstove, and on all fours, I rocked and sang to you, and felt so very happy that I would be meeting you soon.

Deirdre arrived at 4:30 and I greeted her from right in that spot in front of the warm fire, not wanting to move. Just a few moments after her arrival, I felt like being in the tub would be comforting. We walked up the stairs together – stopping several times for contraction rushes. Papa was still filling up the tub – it had only a foot or so of water! But I climbed in anyway, and from seeing the focus on my face, he moved onto calling our support, and waking up your brothers and sister.

Though it all remained calm and quiet and steady, things moved rapidly once I entered the tub. In the first rush, I felt myself pushing...and with that my water broke! After that, I noticed your brothers and sister – all sleepy and wide-eyed on the bed next to me. We exchanged smiling glances before the next rush.

In the meantime, Robin had arrived, and I was aware of the quiet gathering and readying that both she and Deirdre were doing in the room. In between their tasks, they'd lend a gentle hand on my arm, or a soft voice in my ear from time to time...and I remember one particular rush that felt so strong (I think it was the last one) when I tightly gripped Deirdre's arm as she looked me right in the eye with a smile. I remembered a similar exchange from each of my previous births (she had attended two of them), and it brought me such comfort and peace.

I think it was only three rushes in the tub – the first in which my water broke, the second one that was so very strong, and then on the third – you emerged...at 4:43am. There you were! You were pink and clear and beautiful and the most perfect little one we could imagine. With a quick 'cry,' you were instantly breathing on your own and looking at me with wide eyes. Your brothers and sister gathered around the tub, and we all sang you a sweet 'happy birthday.' After a few minutes of staring at you and saying hello, your oldest brother was the one to take a peek and declare "he's a boy!". And there you were...Harper Jude.



We spent just a few minutes in the tub (it was a shallow one!), as your placenta was delivered and cord clamped by your sister. Then, everyone helped the two of us move a few feet away to the bed. Deirdre and Robin helped clean everything up a bit, and get us all settled and nursing comfortably in bed. Just as the sun began to rise, our family of six

was in our bed together, excitedly telling the story of the past hour, snuggling each other, and marveling at the wonder of You.

Happy Birth Day, sweet one.

Love,  
Mama