

A Lotus Birth

By, Jenny Hatch

Jenny Hatch's Pregnancy Journal

Written exclusively for the Birthlove.com website during my fifth pregnancy. The pregnancy journal of my fifth birth contains my story of a healing, wonderful Unassisted Lotus birth.



Jenny at 24 weeks pregnant

Jenny's Pregnancy Journal, Entry 1

May 18, 2002

This is my Pregnancy Journal for my fifth baby (7th pregnancy).

Birth History in a nutshell:

1st – Michelle – 8lb 9 oz - Natural "Bradley" birth No drugs – first degree tear/stitches – pitocin for bleeding after doc yanked out my placenta. Born in a teaching hospital with a 50% c-section rate in 1988, the year the nationwide cesarean rate topped out at 25%. Suffered from horrible postpartum psychosis at three months after birth.

2nd – Allison 1992 – 8lbs - First attempted UC – C-section for breech presentation. Epidural – scared after 20 hours of labor at home and went to hospital where a section was done after three hours of negotiating (fighting) with the staff. Decided a section was better than an attempted manual version with drugs.

3rd – Jeffrey 1994 - 8 lb 14 oz – Natural "Bradley" VBAC in hospital. Stayed home for first two days of this extremely long labor – hoping for UC – decided to go to hospital again because of fear. Did 15 additional hours of labor in hospital – had to fire doctor before baby born all natural – with no drugs and no tears. More Pitocin for bleeding after birth.

4th – Andrew 1996 -11lb 12 oz – UC at home after doing own prenatal care. Labored and birthed the head all by myself. Then called up hubby who "caught" baby born in amniotic sac. Cord ruptured by navel at birth/ baby not breathing, we panicked and called 911 – transferred to hospital for help with my bleeding and Andrew not breathing. Pitocin - 2 bags of blood for bleeding after birth.

5th – 1998 - Early miscarriage - 8 weeks

6th – 1999 - Early miscarriage - 8 weeks

7th currently expecting – 40 week marker is October 4th – 19 weeks pregnant with a kicker.

First journal entry –

When you cut my body, you damage my soul....

For the past year I have felt Benjamin around me. He knows the last two years have been the most harrowing of our life. Many times I have felt his spirit close by, comforting, and helping me to get through the day. We probably had about twenty times when he could have (or even should have) been conceived in the past two years, as we weren't doing much to prevent a baby, nor were we actively trying. But I was going through an intense time of remember/healing from sexual abuse (childhood molestation and adult rape) and I think he wanted me to get through the worst of it before he jumped into my womb. In January of 2002 I was tired of feeling suicidal, as I had felt

off and on for the previous five months. I asked my husband Paul and a friend who both hold the priesthood to give me a healing blessing specifically addressing the suicidal overwhelm. They did and the feelings left me – whoosh... gone... and they have not returned. It was a real miracle.

With my next fertile time, which came a few weeks after the blessing, I was feeling so much better I told my Heavenly Father in prayer that if I was well enough to carry a baby without having a miscarriage, and if I was emotionally well enough, that I wanted to conceive Benjamin right away- as I didn't want to waste one more second of my fertility. In a way I felt that living in fear of miscarriage, fear of uncontrollable emotions or suicidal overwhelm was allowing my abusers to take one more precious moment of my life. I wanted to take my life back, completely. I was grateful for the window of healing that had opened up into what I now perceive as perfect timing but I was ready to let all the angst go, and move on.

Imagine my surprise when the night he was conceived, I awoke suddenly and had the feeling that someone was falling from far away in the universe. As he fell, all of a sudden I felt this gentle fwump in my womb and I knew we had conceived the baby. The sacredness of the trust that was being given to me after such a specific prayer still overwhelms my heart with gladness and a determination that His child will get the very best of My nurture and care. It was very difficult for me to conceal my excitement to my husband and friends as the days rolled by. I knew that this baby would stay and that all would be well. As the time for my period came and went, my husband started to get really

excited. We had been through so much darkness together, it was time for some light to come into our home and make the flame of our love grow brighter.

As the past four months have come and gone, I have felt this joy in my heart that is difficult to try to quantify. I believe the best way to describe it is to encourage you the reader to think of your worst sorrow, your worst day, and your worst nightmare, and then remember the next time you felt Joy or Happiness after that pain. The law of Opposites dictates that as much as we are able to feel pain, conversely our joys are that much greater. With each sorrow, our capacity grows and this is why we should never run from our trials, but rather should embrace them.

When I liken the Law of Opposites to unassisted birth, I believe a celebration should be held for each tortured mother able to break free of the bondage and captivity of medical birth by our on-line community of mothers all over the world. She who is freed is evidence of yet another battle being won in the war between the truth of Natural Childbirth and the lies of conspiring men. These liars who are part of a 50 Billion dollar a year industry have lived deliciously off the broken wombs and hearts of Mothers, Fathers, and Babies the world over.

I first read of UC when I was a teen and ploughed through Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*. This novel about the peasantry of China gave a detailed description of a mother birthing all six of her babies alone, including a set of twins.

I felt the desire and the confidence to birth alone come fully into my heart during my first labor. I had already run to the hospital four times during the five days of gentle pre-labor before her birth, only to be sent home each time for a

"false alarm". As my body progressed to late first stage labor the day my daughter was born and I enjoyed the sanctity of being in my own bed and using my own shower to warm and soothe my muscles, at one point I turned to my husband and mother and said "can't we just do it here?" Not even an option. Our heads overshadowed our hearts and logic dictated that we go to the hospital. And so we did. Yet how different would my life have been had we taken responsibility for our birth and just quietly welcomed our child on our own bed? I sometimes wonder. Now I wish that I had followed my instincts and locked myself in my bathroom and gently caught my daughter in my own hands.

In 1989 I trained to become a Bradley teacher and read a book on home birth and discovered the League of Empowered Women – Pat Carter's elite group of unassisted birthing mothers. As I read of this group, I determined that one day I would join her league. As the pendulum has swung back and forth during my ensuing births and our interactions with the medical profession have become less frequent, I am grateful for the many lessons learned during our very gradual weaning from dependency on the profession. I know that my life would have been much less dramatic and more peaceful had we been able to quietly birth all of our babies at home. Yet I am grateful for the empathy I am able to offer to others for having walked the dark paths.

I hope that in this journal, mother's who are feeling drawn to UC will be able to read of my struggles and realize they can overcome the fear that sometimes overwhelms all of us, even someone like me, who is loudly proclaiming the beauty of UC to anyone who will listen. I

have been amazed at the various fear-based thoughts that have popped into my head during the past few months of this pregnancy. The variety and scope of these fears have been evidence to me that dark forces would love nothing more than to see my husband and I run to the doctors, paralyzed by the "what ifs???" that threaten to overtake our minds.

As I see it, the most important preparations any woman can make during pregnancy are the spiritual/emotional practices of prayer, scripture study, joyful singing, and powerful affirmations of faith that will battle the darkness that is all around. And it is a battle, as real as any described by history. Think of yourself as William Wallace (Braveheart) chanting, "Freedom, Freedom, Freedom" as you prepare for your birth. The tyrannical empire that has evolved these past two hundred years is just as enslaving as anything the British did to control and weaken the Scots during the dark ages. More so, because women's very identities, our souls, are interwoven with our physical bodies, inseparable, and when you damage a woman's body, you split her soul in two. It takes great faith to heal the split. It is a leap of faith even to understand that the split should be healed. But I want to witness that this knitting together, this healing of the breach of our souls can be done. It has to be done in order for us to feel whole/free/connected to our source, who is our Father in Heaven.

Strong souls form when there is no breach. Each empowering birth strengthens and gives courage. But we all know that the strongest knitting in the body takes place where there has been a cut or a break and a division. The

broken bone heals strongest where the break was. The cut and torn skin heals thickest where the scar forms. And our damaged souls heal stronger than ever once we are set free from the bondage that has overtaken our minds and bodies.

Women who carry the battle scars from waging war with the medical profession are the strongest and most powerful beings on the planet. They have engaged in these battles during their most vulnerable moments in life-when the fierce protectiveness that keeps our babies safe is most heightened – and yet – we have been lied to and our very natures have been betrayed as we were informed that in order for our children to live we must be cut and drugged and sewn back together. Even as we allowed the liars to take over our minds and submitted to the horror waiting in cold, sterile rooms, our inner souls screamed, "Lies, Lies, Lies" and we knew, under the layers of deception, the truth about birth. We have experienced the worst that the world has to offer mothers, and it is up to us to heal birth for ourselves and for our posterity.

I would like to finish this first entry with the scripture that is the theme for my current pregnancy. I am a Mormon, and this scripture is a paraphrased chapter from The Book of Mormon, Another testament of Jesus Christ. I have put together several verses from Moroni Chapter seven – and I read them every night before bed. I hope and pray that these words give you the courage and strength I enjoy each time I read and ponder them.

"And as surely as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is

good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be done unto you. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven?.....Nay, neither have Angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of Godliness.....Charity suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things....Charity is the pure love of Christ...pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love...."

May we all rejoice in the truth!

Jenny's Pregnancy Journal, Entry 2

June 1, 2002



Paul and Jenny Hatch

Prenatal Care???

I am sitting here waiting for my massage therapist to show up and she is ten minutes late, so I thought I would write. I am concerned about her because she is usually early.

I found her a few weeks into my pregnancy. She is a young woman, newly married, and quietly serving her clients either at her home or theirs. I feel so pampered when

she shows up with her table, ready to work on my tired body.

So far she has been my only prenatal care, not that the medical profession would consider what she does to be anything they consider crucial. Yet early in my pregnancy, I felt my veins bulging as my blood volume increased, so much so that the veins ached in a throbbing sensation that was very painful.

One day I was very concerned that varicose veins might start popping (my mother suffered horribly from varicose veins), and I felt that I should get a massage right away. I looked in an ad book that had showed up that day and found this gal and called her that same day and was able to get in right away.

As she worked really deeply on my muscles, the vein pain started to diminish and by the end of the massage I felt really good, like I was floating. I followed up the massage with some wheat grass juice both orally and rectally to help flush out the toxins she had stirred up.

I have had about eight massages since that first one, and each time I feel like I am being given a precious gift. The first time I connected with Wendy, I introduced her to Unassisted Childbirth and gave her one of my business cards with my web site on it. When we met for the next massage she said that she had spent the whole week reading about UC and was intrigued. Then she said, "It is not a very popular way to give birth is it?" I just chuckled as she explained that she had been enthusiastically talking about it to all of her young friends and they had basically shut her up with fear-based comments.

A Lotus Birth

www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"

It has been interesting discussing birth with her as she has worked on me for the past three months. She and her husband are carefully preparing for parenthood and doing lots of research before they bring their little ones to the planet. I am so proud of her efforts and want to praise her as one of the most guided, curious, and questioning young women I have ever met. She has given me great hope for the future.

I know she will be a wonderful Mother, and her babies will thrive with the effort she is putting out now to get educated and prepared for this important task of Mothering. I just called her, she is OK, I just had the wrong time down.



Wendy, giving me a prenatal massage in my bedroom a few weeks before the birth



Wow, a half hour with nothing planned. I guess I will keep writing.

I have pondered much about prenatal care these past few years. My big "A-HA!" moment came with the realization that the main purpose of all those weight gain, blood pressure, and urine tests during pregnancy are to diagnose toxemia. I figured that as long as my diet had adequate protein and I was keeping myself well hydrated and eating plenty of salt, then why go to a physician who was wasting my precious time attempting to identify a disease that I knew I could prevent?

Recently a friend was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. Not because her glucose was off, and not because she had any serious symptoms, but simply because her ultrasound showed that her baby was "getting too big". I

have known several women who have been diagnosed with toxemia with only one of the many symptoms, say swelling, and then slapped in bed for a few weeks and labeled high risk. As doctors get more controlling and use any and all excuses for labeling women with one of the big three (Toxemia, Gestational Diabetes, and high blood pressure), women are going to have to take a hard look at what exactly they have to offer in terms of "care".

It really gorks people out when you explain that you are taking responsibility for your own and the baby's health, especially when you have private insurance. During my third pregnancy, while I was busy teaching Bradley classes, taking care of my two young daughters and using the services of a wonderful private practice that enthusiastically supported my choice of a VBAC, I really started to question all of those office visits. I was very busy, and felt having to run to the doctor every few weeks was a waste of my time. My two year old was sucking the life out of me with her intense nursing during the pregnancy, and I needed every spare drop of energy to build the new baby. I focused on my diet and getting enough rest, but every time I had another scheduled appointment with the doctors, it felt like the whole day was devoted to my ten minute office visit.

As my pregnancy progressed normally and I thought some more about nutrition, my continual refusal to do any test (for gestational diabetes, amnio, and ultrasound), and all of the wonderful parenting information I was constantly filling my mind with, I started to question prenatal care for the healthy mother.

After the birth, which was a successful Natural Bradley VBAC after I fired the doctor who showed up to deliver, I vowed to myself that I would never again submit to the care of a medical professional.

I had never felt drawn to midwives and knew enough about home birth to feel comfortable doing it alone. But in my mind, the big issue was prenatal care. I want to emphasize something. I live in the state with the lowest c-section rate (Colorado). I live in the most educated county in the world (Boulder Colorado has more PhD's than any other county). I live in an Alternative Healing mecca, where homebirth is supported and endorsed by hundreds of alternative and mainstream doctors. I live in the same town as a birth center that boasts one of the best infant outcomes in the country. Whether that is because of the affluence of the families who live here, the generally higher education level, or the healthy lifestyles of the average couple, I don't know – it is probably a combination of the three. I would say that Boulder Colorado is most likely the absolute best place to have a hospital birth in the whole world.

However, even with all of that, I have no desire to partake. I want the sanctity, the peace, and the joy of birthing my child on my own bed. I want the freedom to move around during my labor without being strapped to a stupid monitor. I want to enjoy my pregnancy and not spend hours in an office waiting for my turn to pee in a cup and have my always low blood pressure checked, just in case. I know how to prevent toxemia, why should I live in fear that I will all of a sudden become malnourished?

I am proud of the professionals in my state who are conscious and working hard to help women have better

birth outcomes than the huge factory hospitals where women are being processed like so much cattle in a meat packing facility.

I have nothing personal against those who choose to become part of the birth machine as a professional. But I also am a professional. I am a professional mother. I have dedicated my whole adult life to my children and husband. Even when I was busy teaching childbirth and writing, that only took about ten percent of my time. And those were tasks I performed in my own home, usually with a nursing baby in my lap. One of the great criticisms from friends and family members as I have involved myself in the birth reformation movement is; I am so passionate and outspoken about birth, they have decided I must be neglecting my family in order to do this work. Yet in the past five years while we have struggled financially and I was forced to find employment outside my home on four occasions, no one questioned me leaving my family while I cleaned toilets as a janitor, worked as a receptionist in a day spa, taught kid dance at a health club, or tossed papers at 3 AM (that job only lasted a few weeks – it just about killed me).

The few hundred dollars I was able to earn during the hours when my husband could be home with the children helped quite a bit while we walked through the valley of financial destitution. No one questioned that work. In fact I was highly supported emotionally while I killed myself doing menial labor on top of my home duties (I did enjoy working with the children teaching dance, mostly because I could bring my little ones to work with me). The point is, when mothers are engaged in the important "Work" of

educating themselves and others to be able to stand up to the birth machine, no one is going to be standing by ready to hand them a paycheck when that "work" is accomplished. In fact, occasional bombs of societal rejection will be tossed in the general direction of the families who decide to take personal responsibility for their health or teach other's to do so.

I have experienced those bombings and the resulting fallout that has at times been so great, I wondered if I would survive mentally and emotionally. Those of us who are in tune enough to know something is very wrong with current medical dogma regarding birth, tend to be very sensitive individuals – we don't revel in being "weird" or "different". It hurts my feelings when other women get uncomfortable when I walk into a room or make a comment. I am not some dehumanized robot. I want to have friends and feel like others enjoy my company.

I now go to extremes to make sure that I surround myself with those people, books, music, and environment that are supportive of my mothering choices. It was mainly for this reason that I found it necessary to divorce myself from the birth and baby machine. Almost every time I interfaced with one of the highly paid "professionals" while my first three children were babies, whether during birth or for a "well-baby" office visit, I would leave the office in tears, feeling defensive and unsupported in my choices. Early on in my mothering, I lived for the occasional drop of human kindness that was sometimes tossed to me like a bone to a dog. This usually came in the form of a kindly older woman, a stranger, who would praise me for breastfeeding in public, or who would look me right in the

eye and tell me I had beautiful children while we sat on the bus or played at the park. I sometimes wondered if these women were angels sent from God to comfort me because I needed a pat on the back, while struggling against the tide of mainstream parenting. These kindly souls had no idea what those words meant to me as the nay-sayers, who knew and understood my lifestyle choices, were constantly looking for flaws in me and the children to prove to their own little minds that natural parenting was just so much hoey.

Now *I* am the older Mom and I make a point to say kind words to strangers who are walking the lonely path. When their eyes light up after I praise them for keeping baby close in the sling, or for nursing, or whatever, I know how they feel. May God bless all of us who are following our hearts and doing what we KNOW is best for our families. It takes great courage and faith to live the life of the home schooling stay at home natural mother.

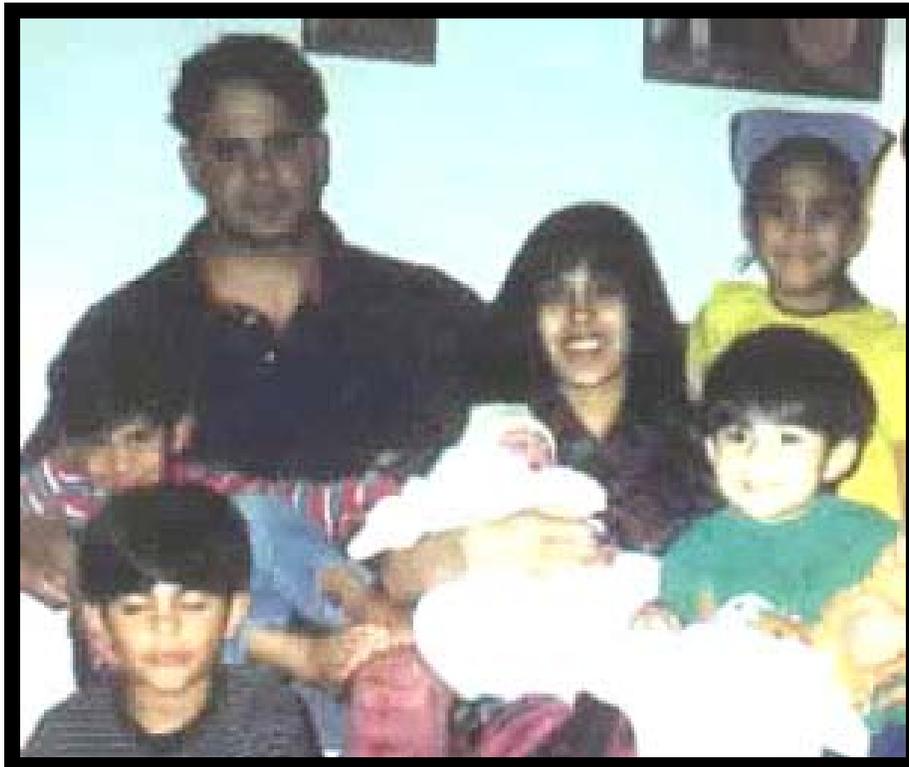
I praise my husband for walking this road with me. Many, many times he did not understand why I wanted to do or not do certain things. He didn't have the hours that I had to read and ponder, as he was working so hard to provide for our family. But, I praise him for making it possible for me to have the time to read and nurture my babies the way my heart dictated, when so many women are forced to work outside the home while the babies are small.

I love being a mother, I love feeling the gentle kicks that I know soon enough will turn into powerful thumps on my bladder and ribcage. I love the sacredness of being guided to know what is best for my baby. When other's ask

me who my doctor is, I am often tempted to tell them "Jesus". He has guided my paths and led me gently by the hand to a more gentle way. I often think about his birth, his life. So simple, yet so very sacred. When he said, "come follow me", I think he meant find Joy in simple living, in being kind and loving and gentle. I don't think if Mary were pregnant today she would give birth to the savior of the world after pitocin, epidural, forceps, episiotomy, and a yanked out placenta. I think she would seek out a quiet place where she could gently bring her son into the world. I look forward to doing the same when this child is born in a few months.

Jenny's Journal, Entry 3: Sacred Friendships

June 13, 2002



My beautiful friend Susanna the day her fifth baby was welcomed into her home.

Have you ever had a relationship with someone and you just knew that the Angels in Heaven were pleased? I have been best friends with a woman for eight years who has been my spiritual mentor and almost every conversation and interaction we have enjoyed together has been filled with the Spirit of God.

I don't say these things lightly, and not all of my friendships over the years have contained this amount of grace. In fact, early on, many of the girls who called me friend usually had other things in mind when asking if they could come over to play. I have three older brothers, all of whom were good looking. I didn't figure it out until I was an older teen, but when I was 11 or 12, these "friends" would always seek me out, wanting to spend time with me and have sleep over parties. I was too naive to realize that when they asked to spend the night and then casually said "is Jim going to be home?" they weren't seeking me out for friendship, they were much more interested in getting to know my brothers.

I have enjoyed many close relationships over the years, and consider my friendships with the women who are actively working on healing birth to be my sisters. Laura, Jeannine, Lynn (who joyously gave birth to baby Michael last week in a quick unassisted birth), Leilah, Jennifer, Laurie, Amanda, Stephanie, and especially Susanna have all dedicated time, money and great effort to aid in this healing.

When I met Susanna at church eight years ago, she was very pregnant with her second baby and as I chatted with her in the nursery that first day of our friendship, I had a feeling that a relationship with her would be a great blessing in my life. I invited her and her husband Robert and daughter Camille over for Family Home Evening one night. We enjoyed a quiet visit together and I asked her if she would be willing for me to attend her birth. I was re-certifying as a Bradley teacher and we were required to attend one birth a year.

On the night Susanna gave birth to Robert James I received a late night call from her mother requesting that I come help, as her hubby had the flu. When I arrived at the hospital I found her in extreme pain from a posterior presentation. I did the counter pressure on her back needed to relieve the back labor. Her husband did come to the hospital a few hours later and I taught him how to do the back massage, and then went home. Susanna was able to give birth naturally and that night of work sealed our friendship forever.

Over the next seven years we enjoyed thousands of hours of fellowship together. She has given birth to three more babies at home and I have had one. We taught childbirth class together and spent countless hours on the phone, mostly talking about spirituality and birth. We shared books, insights, and testified to each other whenever we discovered a new truth. We credit each other with keeping our marriages in tact. We both had many times when we were tempted to get divorced. We would try to help each other see the good sides to our husbands and

capitalize on the beauty of our marriages rather than getting lost in the fog of day to day living.

My best friends over the years have been those souls who I could completely relax and be myself with. I had a terrible profanity habit for 20 years, and if I could swear around my friends, I knew we were close. But Susanna would not let me swear around her. She very diplomatically let me know that she did not appreciate my foul mouth, and in a gentle but firm way helped me to overcome that terrible habit which is so offensive to the Holy Spirit.

For so many years I was in a protection mode of guarding myself emotionally every time I stepped out my door or answered the phone. If I ever felt comfortable enough to let down my guard, say at a La Leche League meeting or while visiting with other attachment parenting Moms, I would share some of my unique views of birth, testing the waters to get reactions and feedback from those who were more open to natural things. I give my friends credit; while most of them, even those into home birth, were not willing or interested in getting into unassisted birth, they didn't completely dump me.

With Susanna however, I was able to bare my soul and share EVERYTHING that was in my heart. This was so important at the time, as I was actively searching for answers to the hundreds of questions that plagued my mind.

As Mormons we believe that our destiny in eternity is to be mothers. The rights and privileges of sexuality, birthing, breastfeeding, and "eternal increase" as parents is going to be given as a sacred gift to those of our Father's children who are the most obedient and live the most righteous lives here on earth. This life is a probationary

time for Father to figure out "who" will be deserving of these blessings. And so this life is a test. And the main purpose and "proving" of our lives is to see how we handle family life.

I strongly believe that Father knew exactly how damaging the 20th century would be to families. I often think of my grandmother with her three torturous hospital births in the 1930's. The past century hit her like a ton of bricks and her marriage did not survive. My grandfather lost himself in alcohol and sexual addictions. How would their life have been had he been able to welcome his sons in the sanctity of his own bedroom, rather than suffer the pain of being completely shut out of the process of birth? I believe a compassionate and understanding Father will perfectly judge all of these situations individually, taking all factors into consideration when deciding who will be given the highest calling of eternal parenthood.

Yet, in my interactions with my sisters at church who know and understand these truths, I have had many confide in me that if "this", meaning medicalized birth and parenting, was what they could expect for all eternity, then they were not interested and had NO DESIRE for an eternity of mothering.

Some of the things said to me in confidence were; "if I had known what a bother it was to have children, I never would have had any", "if this is eternal motherhood, no thanks". So many of my sisters in the gospel were hurting with the physical and emotional scars inflicted during the birthing process, (as was I), that I found myself asking some very deep and pointed questions, both in prayer and as I studied.

I have asked these interesting questions of faith and belief regarding motherhood my whole life. They started when I would ask my mother questions about birth as a child and she would consistently reply that many principles were mysteries for now, but they would be answered in the afterlife. I wasn't willing to wait that long. I had Susanna as my birth confidant and research partner for the seven years she lived in Colorado. We were able to settle so many of those awful questions in our hearts that didn't make any sense. Susanna is now writing a book titled *A Christ Centered Birth* – where many of these issues will be covered in detail and our insights gleaned from years of research will be shared. Her web site is www.ecomother.com

The number one question in my mind was/is, "Why would Heavenly Father expect us as his daughters to go through so much horror in bringing forth our young? Is all this pain and sorrow really necessary?" I experienced many of the pitfalls of motherhood, and as each scene would be played out in my life, the questions just multiplied until all I had was a jumble of emotions, feelings, and trauma all mixed up in my conscious mind. As I started to sort through the various issues on my mind in a careful and logical way, I started down this road to sovereign family living and gentle mothering.

The consistent lament of my husband as he would listen to Susanna and I talk animatedly about birth at every juncture was that if Heavenly Father was going to reveal a new truth about birth, it would come from the prophet with new revelations or from ancient texts, not from a couple of

sleep deprived mothers in Colorado obsessed with the childbirth process.

We have never claimed to have the "be all, end all truth" for the world regarding birth. Mostly we wanted to find out these answers for ourselves to bless our own children and grandchildren. But we do claim to have been guided by a spirit of truth that has renewed our minds, broken down false traditions handed to us from our parents, and has enlivened us with a desire to share true principles with anyone who will listen.

I believe this has been the great purpose of our friendship. I was on the road to isolating myself from everyone in my family, my husband, and all my friends because of the distress I felt from all this sewage swirling around in my head. Having someone to talk with on a daily basis (I believe our record for phone calls in one day was seven), while I nursed, did dishes, washed clothes and mothered my little ones kept me from going insane. At times the pain of realization was so great I would call her in the middle of the night and we would just cry and try to sort out our feelings. Quite often when the phone would ring she would say, "I knew you were going to call" or "I just woke to nurse the baby and I was hoping you would call, guess what I read today?"

Leilah has done a masterful job of describing what happens when the truth is fully manifested in our minds. Her words help to vent the emotion that bursts forth when what I call the "scream" is tapped into. When a woman is able to get on this frequency of understanding – the pain that has been and is being inflicted on parents on a daily basis all over the world – sometimes the emotion of feeling

that pain is so great, the body has to shut down in order to begin processing the shock of it. To keep a perfect brightness of hope during this time of realization is so important, as well as not judging our sisters who lose themselves in hobbies, or drugs, or addictions, or anything to run away from the pain of current reality.

Sometimes I am able to tap into Heavenly Father's pain, as he knowingly sends his little ones down to situations where they will be needlessly tortured and maimed. Why does he continue to do it? I don't know. I think maybe he shuts up the wombs of some families because he knows they just won't survive the horror – not that those of us who give birth are any stronger or better than these. But he has promised us that he will not test us beyond our ability, and the soul shattering that can occur in bringing forth a child today could be much more of a test than infertility.

I do believe that in one day, literally, it is all going to stop, and medicalized birth will have the plug pulled on it by an all-knowing Father while we experience the full range of prophecies outlined in the book of Revelations in the Bible. When that day comes, I will be out on my lawn dancing for joy, screaming "Babylon the great is fallen"!!!

The challenge is; until that time arrives we have to keep the faith. Every day I try to live this charge given in the Book of Mormon, "wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, Ye shall have ETERNAL LIFE!" 2Nephi 31:20.

I know that Susanna was given to me as a sacred gift in answer to a fervent prayer given by a very lonely woman. Even though our daily conversations stopped when she moved back to California, every time we connect whether it is a week or a month later, we pick up right where we left off and I can always completely share my heart with her without fear of it being trampled to pieces.

As we enjoyed another spirit filled, comforting conversation last Sunday and I expressed to her the joy and happiness I have been experiencing since this baby was conceived and she warmly embraced me with her words, I once again marveled at the beauty and love that I am able to experience in this blessed friendship. I pray that all women can at some time revel in the oneness we have felt. We have truly been of one heart and one mind as we searched for truth together, and our relationship was never sullied by the common pitfalls of gossip, back-biting, envy, and fruitless competition that marks so many female relationships of today.

I pray that all of us in the birth reform movement can tap into this sacred sisterhood and in all of our conversations and interactions seek to obtain the great blessings of friendship and love that are ours for the asking.

Jenny Hatch – whose baby has been kicking quite delightfully as I have typed!

Jenny's Journal, Entry 4- Give us this day our daily bread!

July 10, 2002



our family with me at 30 weeks

It has been a month since I have posted an entry. I find myself very busy. My "quiet" purposeful summer of baby building has evolved into a typical "always on the go with something to do" summer. The ages of my children guarantee that we frequently have an activity facing us. Scouts, ("you HAVE to come to pack meeting Mom, I have to pin my Bobcat badge on you cause you're my Mom"), gymnastics, karate, day camp, girls camp, church parties, swimming, graduations, wedding receptions, baby showers, book club, scrapbook club, Stake temple night.

Yet, I have pushed back life to an amazing degree and my husband does most of the driving when the children have an activity, so what do I have to complain about? I'm tired, frustrated that I don't have more control over our

schedule, diet, and sleep, and I would like nothing more than to just hole up in some cocoon and have some sweet person spoon feed me and massage my tired body all day long.

My home duties have not changed in the least, I still have just as much laundry to put away, dishes to be washed, and clutter to pick up. Although I seem to always have a messy house, I wonder how our home would look if I didn't do anything. I have to spend quite a bit of time watering my roses, herbs, and wheat grass because of the drought. The dog always needs a bath (rolled in skunk spray again). I let my children wear the same outfits for a couple days (hoping no one will notice). I tend three children part time during the week. This is an easy source of income for us, but I still have to be dressed, the house somewhat picked up, and "tuned in" to a higher degree when other people's children are in my care. My daughters do most of the tending, playing with the two babies we watch, and the third child is no problem – she just plays with my ten year old the whole time she is here. But it is one more thing to occupy my time and energy.

We decided to continue with our school schedule during the summer, just three days a week. We do school Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 to noon. Today is Wednesday and while I feel like I have the time to write, I have been interrupted about fifty times to settle quarrels, switch over the laundry, feed the dog, help my daughter find her swim suit, put breakfast on the table, talk on the phone (four people called), make my own breakfast (the kids ate cold cereal – I let them have simple breakfasts on

the days we don't do school), I made up hot cracked Kamut with Flax seeds for me.

Recipe:

Crack up whole organic Kamut, about 1 cup, (I have a hand crank oatmeal maker, but this can also be blended in a regular blender, or crushed with rocks if you want the authentic experience!) I hard boil a tablespoon of whole flax seeds with a generous tablespoon of sea salt in a pan of water (quart of water) for twenty minutes, turn down the heat to low and add in the cracked kamut. I let it slow cook for about an hour. Then I put it in a bowl with a huge dollop of fresh organic butter and some brown sugar. I think this is one of the best baby and breast milk making foods we can eat!!!

I have noticed my children are much happier when they have a little structure. The weeks we have "taken a break" from our regular schedule, they tend to fight more, get on my nerves, and the house is messier because they have so many hours in the day for "free play". Our school schedule keeps them organized and focused. Here is a typical school day.

We wake up between 7:00-7:30. Paul gathers the children around the kitchen table. He teaches history for one hour. This week he has focused on the history of music. He brought home some great tapes from the library and has been using them to teach the children the different

sounds of an orchestra. I work in the kitchen making breakfast, doing dishes, and getting the day going food-wise. I usually make pancakes, waffles, cracked kamut or wheat cereal, oatmeal, or scrambled eggs for our breakfast. We almost always have a protein shake and fresh fruit with whatever I cook. I generally bake a couple pans of muffins for our "on the go" food during the day at this time as well.



Me with a 25 pound bag of Kamut, flax seeds, muffins, a bowl of Kamut porridge, and my hand crank oatmeal maker

When friends ask me what I am giving my children for food every day I generally respond that I am building them on muffins. I think they are the perfect kid food!

Muffin recipe:

Here is my recipe for great home-made muffins.
Makes 12 large.

- 2 C. Fresh flour – The first kitchen tool we purchased back in 1989 was an electric wheat grinder with a fifty-pound bag of wheat. I have used this faithful little machine almost every day since to freshly and quickly grind our grains for flour! Wheat (white or red), Kamut, Spelt, or Barley work best for this recipe.
- 1/2 C. Flax seeds – I throw these in to grind with the wheat. You can purchase fresh flax meal at the health food store and mix this with fresh flour if you don't have a wheat grinder that can process oily seeds.
- 1 TBS sea salt
- 1 TSP baking soda
- 1 TSP baking powder
- 1/2 C. sweetener – (sugar, honey, maple syrup, brown rice syrup, or Fruitsource)
- 1/2 C. Olive oil
- 2 Large eggs
- about 1/2 C. Milk (cow, goat, soy, rice, etc...) *You can play around with the milk a little. Depending on which grain you use

will determine how wet you want your dough. It takes a little practice to get the right consistency. The dough should be thick. However, even if you mess up the recipe, most kids will eat a home cooked muffin, especially if it is slathered with butter and honey.

Gently mix all ingredients together, put in muffin pan and bake for 20 minutes at 375 degrees. If you let them "rise" for 1/2 hour before baking they will be more light and fluffy.

Paul has been interweaving church history into whatever he teaches, and will stop and ask the children why the year 1830 (or whatever) was important to us as Mormons, if he comes across that date in some other history. About 8:15 we are usually eating and finishing up the history lesson, and then we clear up the table and read our Book of Mormon together. We have the children each read a verse. Then we kneel in a circle, hold hands, and have a family prayer together. We follow the prayer with "I love You's". We hug and kiss each other on the cheek and say, "I love you" to each other. It is so great to get five hugs and five kisses each morning from those I love best!

After Dad goes to work (less than a mile away), we clean up for a half hour or so – do dishes, tidy up the living room. Then we pull out our school books and get busy with Math (use all Saxon curriculum), Language Arts (Learning Language arts through Literature), and once in a while I will give a grammar, Spanish, or art lesson using the

various wonderful curriculums we have purchased. I bought most of our curriculums from either [Latter Day Family resources](#) - or the [Elijah Company](#).

My big focus this year has been teaching my five year old to read, and the older children mostly are able to do their work without my help. My oldest daughter, age 13, has been taking an 8th grade Earth Science class all year from the BYU independent study department, and generally needs a really good "kick in the pants" to get motivated to keep on task with that class. We finish up school by noon when Dad comes home for lunch.

I cook up our big meal for the day at noon. Yesterday I made home made burritos with fresh pinto and black beans, yogurt, salsa, corn and organic flour tortillas, cheese, lettuce, salad, and milk. I get the same satisfaction out of watching my children eat the foods I cook, as I do observing my newborns fatten up on my milk. The bite in all of this "cookin from scratch" is that my children would much prefer a lunchable or a trip to Macdonalds over my home made food. But our family food budget and my nutrition ideals keep me in the kitchen most days. The constant need to beat back the food advertisers and neighbors and friends always offering my kids sugar is a daily battle, and hopefully the time will come when they prefer whole foods to the packaged sugar and chemicals of the major food corporations. Advertisers understand how children think and capitalize on this when whetting their little appetites with junk food.

Our morning is interspersed with lots of eating, potty breaks, some chit-chat, and usually a trip to the park for some exercise and fresh air. Although it's been so hot, dry,

and smoky from the Colorado fires, none of us really enjoy being out too much this summer. I work with my five year old for a half hour (we do one phonics lesson, ten math problems, and a little writing practice). Then he plays with his toys and I help the older children a little.

I have been highly influenced by the writings of [Dr. Art Robinson](#) and we are actively evolving to the day he outlines as being ideal for the home schooling parent of a large family. His essays on self-teaching have been inspiring to me and I have returned to his website again and again for further insight and education the past years as we have struggled to know what is best for our children. To my way of thinking, his ideas combine perfectly an un-schooling approach with high expectations and goals. Early on I had to face the stark reality that most children (at least from what I have observed in my own family) tend to be quite satisfied with watching videos and playing play station all day long. It is the rare child who is disciplined enough to take on the task of learning math, grammar, language, science, and history. So we have slowly evolved from complete unschooling (nothing structured) to a very focused morning of learning, and it feels good for our family. This year we joined our local library's summer reading program and it has been fun for the children to get stickers and other rewards for spending time with books.

I suppose the feeling in my heart this day is that this work is difficult and challenging. At times I feel overwhelmed and just want to stay in bed all day (sometimes I do exactly that!). But when I cave to the pressure and take a day off, I have double the work facing me the next morning and so I have learned that doing a

little each day is better than nothing. I have been carefully letting everyone know of my plans to do a four-month seclusion. One month before the due date and three months after. Four months (a fourth trimester) with which to do nothing outside my home, and have little contact with any of my friends and neighbors. I have been letting people know of this intention, and quietly de-cluttering my life all through this pregnancy. This week I stepped it up another notch by leaving my favorite chat rooms on the web, and telling friends who call on the phone that I don't have time to talk. I also sent a gift package to my sister who has a baby due seven weeks after mine. I let her know that she will be in my thoughts and prayers, but that I was sending her gift early and didn't want to feel pressured to do something for her while I am postpartum.

I pulled out all the baby clothes and my supply of cloth diapers and have been washing them and sewing new receiving blankets, (I bought the flannel at Wal-mart during my first trimester, so when I had a few moments, I could do this sewing) we put it off until now!!! I want to have everything washed, clean, and ready by my 8th month so I can focus on building my child's brain, which grows the fastest during the final weeks of pregnancy and the first four months after birth.

I re-read Gail Krebs' *The Brewer Pregnancy Hotline* this past week to motivate myself with eating well. This e-book is a combination of her classics, *What every pregnant woman should know* and *The Brewer Medical Diet* as well as all the current research on pregnancy nutrition. I have a link to this e-book on my web site. Go to

www.naturalfamilyco.com for the link to the greatest book

on pregnancy nutrition ever written. I believe if this were the only book a woman was to study during pregnancy, it would be the best investment of her time and money.

I believe healthy pregnancy comes down to a healthy day-to-day life. As we work teaching and training and nourishing our little ones, a quiet daily lifestyle is the best insurance for the physical health and intellectual/spiritual well being of our children. I love the prayer in the scriptures "give us this day our daily bread". Daily bread, (I don't think Jesus had in mind a white fluffy loaf of wonder bread (wonder glue) when he was teaching the Lord's prayer) daily study, daily growth, daily love, and daily gratitude for our lives are what lead to a healthy family. It has taken me years to get to this point in my mothering, and I am still so far from the ideal I envision, that I get overwhelmed just thinking about the new skills and daily practices I want to implement into our home life (Live goats/fresh goat milk and a huge vegetable garden come to mind). But we are making progress.

By 1:00 PM I have finished the most important tasks of my day, and we slowly start to wind down for the evening. I take a nap or read from 1PM to 3PM and then we have our afternoon time of playing with friends, attending lessons, practicing piano and I let the children watch TV and play video games, and just do what they want while I cook, read, sew, exercise, laundry, internet study, or just vegetate depending on how I feel. In the evenings we have a simple supper and then some evening activities at church or with friends, tv, reading, singing, and we are in bed most nights by 10:00PM.

Every time I feel overwhelmed by life, I lower my expectations. I have no illusions about how our life is going to change when our little one arrives in October. The whole house will revolve around the needs of this precious being. As my children observe the daily work that is involved in the care of a newborn, I pray that they will have imbedded in their minds the sacredness and daily effort needed to provide what is ideal for a new baby. Yet I can't help but believe that our home life will continue to revolve around my kitchen, where all good things related to babies and children are manufactured. I like to think of myself as a family scientist who goes into my lab every day to mix up the potions for building a healthy child. As my daughters especially observe this most important work, I hope they can get a sense of the joyfulness that accompanies the work to provide our daily bread.

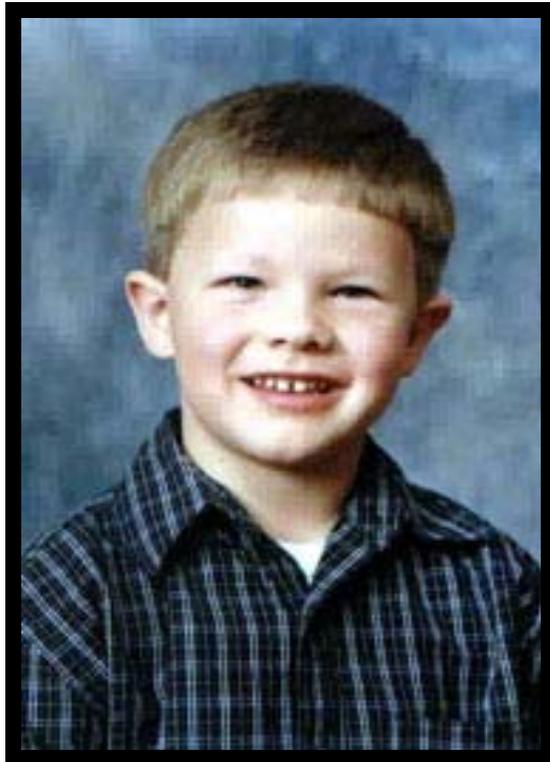
Some days it is drudgery and those are the days when I order Dominos pizza, but most days I love the feel of grains being crushed as I wind the wheel of my hand crank wheat grinder, or peel the carrots, or juice the wheat grass. I love the smell of freshly baked muffins, the soup simmering on the stove, or the casserole bubbling in the oven. I feel a sense of accomplishment and great purpose every time my family gobbles up something I have prepared for them. I love placing a freshly washed cotton outfit, which has dangled on the clothesline in the sunshine for a couple hours, on my sweet smelling, newly bathed, and aromatherapy massaged newborn.

I pray that my generation of mothers can overcome the propaganda of the those who demean and degrade our work. We have been carefully brainwashed to believe that

the daily work of raising a healthy family is less than those who become a great heart or brain surgeon, or an attorney, or a college professor or a chef. We who are growing the next generation of parents are continually pushing against this tide of professionalism.

It takes much confidence and clarity to understand that a freshly laundered cloth diaper, a breast full of luscious breast milk, gentle rocking, mommy's arms, and a lullaby are all that a baby need to THRIVE!

Andrew's Birth



Andrew in Kindergarten

Leilah asked me to write this story today. It is a different experience writing this story five years after the fact than it was right after it happened.

I had a 45 week pregnancy with my fourth baby in 1996. I know exactly when the first day of my last period was and Andrew was born 45 weeks to the day after that date. However, I also know when he was conceived, and his gestation from conception was exactly 42 weeks, because I tend to ovulate in the third week of my cycle and have 35 day periods. Anyway....

After my third hospital birth in 94, a successful VBAC that restored my faith in my body, I came across Laura Shanley's book "Unassisted Childbirth" at our local library. Laura had signed the book and I had a feeling that she was a fellow Boulderite, living in Colorado. I looked in our local phone book and there she was. I read her book in one day and that night I was talking to her on the phone. I told her how great the book was and we exchanged phone numbers. Reading her book gave me the confidence to tell my husband that I would never again birth in a hospital and that if he wanted to have anymore children with me, we were doing it at home alone. I do NOT recommend giving ultimatums to one's spouse. It created untold stress in our marriage. Rather I believe it is wisdom to gradually share the truths of self-sufficient living with one's spouse, and trust that ultimately the truth will set you free to give birth how you want.

My husband was supportive of me doing my own prenatal care. We had worked as Bradley childbirth teachers for eight years and Paul knew that I knew more

about how to build a healthy child than any MD. As my pregnancy progressed, I became convinced that I was having twins- as I was so much larger than my previous pregnancies, which had all resulted in babies eight pounds or more. I decided to eat the twins diet described in Elisabeth Noble's book *Having Twins*, which included 150 grams of protein daily and 4500 calories a day.

I was tandem nursing my one and three year-olds when I conceived, and decided to cut off my daughter. She turned four during the pregnancy and I felt like I was falling to pieces nursing her while pregnant. She was a really intense nurser from day one- probably because of her c-section delivery- and it was not easy to cut her off, but I had to. I continued to let my son nurse a couple times a day, and trusted that my high calorie diet and the focus on protein would protect the baby.

During my first trimester I was VERY tempted to go get an ultrasound to see if it was twins. The day that I finally decided to call my MD, I had a warning dream that made it very clear that if I had an ultrasound, it would be BAD, so I did not do it and instead focused on my diet.

About the fourth month I decided to radically change my diet and switched to a vegan 80% raw foods diet and used protein drinks to get most of my protein. I have since become converted to the Weston Price way of thinking and am doing my current pregnancy based on the principles of his book *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*. I believe my high soy diet contributed to my baby's thin cord, and my postpartum bleed that reduced me down to a 4.7 hematocrit after my UC. I also did not have enough nutrient-dense foods in my diet, and although I am sure I was not iron or

protein deficient during this pregnancy, getting those nutrients from supplements and soy protein may not have been the best choice.

Anyway, I was very disciplined in my diet and was eating literally all day long. I drank a quart of fresh juice every day (carrot, celery, parsley, chard, kale, spinach, and beet tops). I also have a wheat grinder and used it daily to freshly grind my grains, beans and seeds to be slow cooked as hot cereal. I ate organic wheat, rye, kamut, spelt, oats, barley, flax, sesame as well as aduki, black, red, white and pinto beans. I felt this variety would give me a whole range of nutrients and they tasted great. The rest of the day, I was munching on fresh organic produce, seeds and sprouts. Every night I drank a two quart bottle of water with liquid minerals and sea salt in it. This nighttime hydrating was essential during our dry hot summer. I had a great energetic pregnancy, and when my colostrum came in it was pure white and very liquidy, like nectar. I wondered if the sticky, thick yellow colostrum of my other pregnancies was because of dehydration. My two year old gulped down the colostrum like milk and loved the taste of it.

I started contractions almost the minute I was pregnant and continued throughout. Towards the final weeks I believed I was in labor about a thousand times. We had the hottest August on record in Colorado, and I sweated through with no air conditioning. My husband bought me a pool from Toys R Us, and every night we would fill it with tepid water and I would go out on our deck and lay in it for hours to take the weight off my body and cool down. I had quite a few people express fear about our plans to birth alone. We didn't tell my husband's parents until afterwards, and my

parents really tried to be supportive, but I know they were scared.

As each day slowly went by I was so ready for the baby. I was frustrated, because I would sterilize my bathroom thinking the birth was imminent, then a few days would go by and I would have to do it again. I finally got down to the wire and knew that we were close, I had been having tons of pubic bone pain- could really feel the ligaments stretching, and my contractions would come every night for the last six weeks, regular for five or six hours every five minutes. This experience really made me wonder about all the women on bed rest for "premature" labor, and especially those who ran to the hospital with the first twinge and then gave birth to a three pounder after a "failure to progress" labor.

The day before Andy was born, I went to my chiropractor and he gave me a good adjustment and an acupuncture treatment to align everything. He also gave me a blue and black cohosh tincture to help jump start labor. I went home and took quite a bit of the tincture throughout the rest of the day. (Later I learned that these powerful herbs can cause a hemorrhage if not gradually used during the last few weeks of pregnancy). This day of use was the first time I had ever taken either herb, and I know they contributed to my short fast labor, and also the extreme bleeding afterwards.

The morning of Andy's birth Sept. 7, 1996 Paul and I awoke and made love twice. A steady rhythm of contractions began and I just knew in my heart that Andrew was going to be born that morning. I had visualized a late night six hour labor in my cad pool. I ended up with a three

and a half hour labor on a cloudy Saturday morning. As I contracted, I vocalized in a loud AHHHHHH that easily moved the energy up and out of my uterus and allowed me to do this labor painlessly and alone. All of a sudden, I felt like squatting and Andrew rushed down the birth canal. I felt him crown in that one major movement! I waited five minutes and then felt like I should stand in a standing squat. As the contraction came on his head slowly emerged from my body. I called to Paul to come into the bedroom. He did and surprised said, "That's a head... it looks funny, oh I know, the water hasn't broken yet" I asked him to wash his hands. He asked our older children if they wanted to watch the baby being born and they said no they wanted to watch Saturday morning cartoons. My son Jeff who was two did come in and see Andy emerge from my body. Later he would go up to the neighbors and say "Andrew came out of Mom's butt".

During the final five minutes of the birth I could feel Andrew doing this back and forth motion with his shoulders and kicking hard with his feet. He was so ready to come out and he was trying to help! Paul came into the bedroom, and I felt like I should drop down on all fours. As the contraction started, Andy just slowly emerged completely encased in the sac. Paul gently caught him. Then the cord ruptured right by his navel and the sac broke spilling fluid all over the floor.

Andy was pink and beautiful but he was very floppy, and was not breathing. I was so surprised as I had felt him moving seconds before. He just lay there quietly not moving or anything. I tried a little finger swipe and puffed a little into his mouth. Then Paul took him and gave him a

blessing and commanded him to breathe, but nothing happened. Paul said, "Jen I am in over my head I am going to call 911". I told him I was not going to sit there and watch my son die, and supported him calling for help. I kept working on him, not really clued into the fact that I was bleeding my life away- literally gushing blood all over the floor. I just kept puffing into his mouth and trying to do a little Heimlich maneuver.

Literally within seconds of Paul calling 911 we heard a pounding on our door. A volunteer fireman named Shawn who lived a few blocks away from us had heard the call come in over his radio and he decided to just come to our house to help rather than check into the firestation first (which was also less than a mile away from our home). Shawn bounded up the stairs after the girls let him in. I handed Andrew to him and he said he just "knew what to do" even though he had never been taught this technique. I call it "Shawn's suck and spit baby survival system". He put his mouth over Andrew's mouth and nose and hoovered him with his own mouth and then spit out the fluid, which he said was clear, and just a little bit stuck in his throat. Then he gave Andy three puffs of air and he opened his eyes. I truly believe that if Shawn had handed the baby back to me and left we would have been just fine.

But by the time he got Andy going, half our town's fire and police departments had shown up at our little townhouse and Shawn handed the baby off to the EMT's. They immediately intubated him and took him to the hospital. I was sitting naked in my room in a pool of blood, and seven firemen came into my room to "help" me. They inserted an IV to my collapsing veins, as I was going into

shock and then brought up this chair and bumped me down the stairs to the ambulance.

I arrived at our local hospital and spent the next three days doing all in my power to get myself and Andrew home. The fact that he and I were both home by the next Tuesday was a miracle of amazing proportions. If you want to read the details of my hospital experience, our adventures with social services, and our eventual bonding after a very frustrating beginning, go to my and get my book "A Mother's Journey" to read about not only these experiences, but all of the ups and downs of our journey to unassisted birth. I don't have the time or the gumption to write it all again.

Andrew weighed 11 pounds 12 ounces, was 23 inches long, and had a 15 inch head. The fact that I birthed him with three pushing contractions, no tears and no perineal damage was an amazing witness to me of being able to birth in the position I wanted. I am still committed to UC, despite our traumas and the harsh treatment by the powers that be. Even though these past five years have been a challenge because of the fallout from his birth (people throwing it in my face and telling me my life choices were a threat to my children etc...), I am still determined to birth at home alone. There is no going back to the hospital after feeling the freedom of being in control of my own pregnancy and birth.

I hope that this time things will go well, and if they don't we will just deal with it. My husband is again supportive of me doing my own prenatal care, and we plan to have an educated friend come over during the labor to help us out if we have problems after. This is the

compromise that both of us can live with after five years of discussion.

I hope I haven't scared anyone from UC. Andrew's birth taught me that even with all sorts of physical, spiritual, and emotional preparation, we have no guarantees of things going perfectly.

I look at this perfect son and I just feel gladness now. He is my joy. I have read other difficult birth stories, and the Mothers always seem to talk about how that baby is their most obedient, well behaved and loving child. This has certainly been the case with my jolly giant. He has continued to grow at an alarming rate, passing up his older brother in weight and size. The loving, peaceable spirit he has brought into our home has far outweighed any discomfort and trauma surrounding his birth.

*[Another note from Leilah: one way to reduce trauma in babies is by **never** cutting the umbilical cord just after birth. (Jenny didn't, but this is important to note here.) Meconium, excess fluids- respiratory problems brought about by these can be prevented by not forcing the baby to breathe too soon by cutting the cord.]*



Jenny's children with Liberty, the family dog

Jenny's Journal, Entry 5: "Labor" Day

September 2, 2002

Today is my blessing way.

I feel so good. Jeannine and Rico Baker are coming to help with the ceremony. They just happened to be in Colorado this weekend for an herb conference and we scheduled the party around them being here. Laura and David Shanley are also planning to come as well as many birth friends, friends from church, and neighbors. I also had a call from a gal who is thinking about Freebirth. She and her husband had contacted Laura and she gave them my number. As I chatted with Nadine last week for an hour, I had the feeling that it would be good for her to come to the party even though we have never met. I hope she does come.

The baby has been so active this month. I don't remember having a child who moved this much in the third trimester. We have been working hard to reorganize our living space. We put the girls down in the basement and switched bedrooms with the boys. We had a crew of six men from church over to help with odd jobs last weekend and a group of ladies came to help me clean and organize the bedrooms. I was so grateful for this help. It gave me the mental boost I needed to really get serious about deep cleaning and we even painted our bedroom. I put a whole bottle of essential oils in the paint to help with off gassing and was faithful about wearing a paint mask with essential oils dropped over the mouth portion to protect the baby.

My dear friend Marlene and her son came by yesterday to help with washing the windows and putting up drapes. I had taken everything down to wash and iron and it felt so good to get that project finished. I don't think I have ever felt this prepared before giving birth in terms of my house, my children, and my life. The physical and emotional support of these wonderful friends has made this possible. It is amazing to me how willing people are to lend a hand if they just know that you need a little help. Paul has been pulling 75+ hour work weeks since July and I was getting nervous about all the work we had planned to do before the birth. Finally I just decided to ask, and the response was amazing!

We had all three of the older children tested last month because of state laws regarding home school. It is so hilarious to me that they only have to get a 13% on the standardized test to pass along to the next grade. I told them about this and said not to sweat the test. I figured even if

they answered the questions randomly they would pass. They all had Father's blessings from Paul the night before we began testing at the Boulder Sylvan Learning center. He has given these blessings at the beginning of the school year for the past few years. The next morning I fed them a good breakfast, encouraged them to do their best and reminded them to pray if they came to a particularly difficult question.

Over a week and a half span they were tested three times, in Math, Reading, and Writing. When I went in to get the results, I was amazed to learn that all three children are above grade level and my oldest daughter did perfectly on her 7th grade Math test. I suppose amazed is not the best word, as I know the children are smart— it's just that we had never had them tested by anyone before, and you always wonder as a home schooling parent how well they are doing academically. They did the California Test and we plan to continue using the services of this center for as long as needed. We have to test them every other year and send the results to the district.

Early on as I was getting educated about home school, I never felt like I would care what the "powers that be" said about my children's intelligence or test results or whatever as my study of educational research had taught me that the education establishment was just so much cock and bull. But that was before we experienced all the questioning from family and friends over this choice. It is a "little" validating to have a piece of paper to show to the naysayers proving that our children are not being academically damaged by our efforts and that they are in fact doing better than over half of American school children.

Today is the final day I plan to be "out". I went shopping to get the food and flowers for the party and said to myself, this is the last time I will be in a grocery store for a LONG time. I plan to stay home for the next four months, literally not go anywhere and have minimal contact with anyone. I am very curious to see how this goes. I have told all of my family, friends, and neighbors of this intention, I am just curious to see the response from them when I actually do it.

I need to run, I am going to bake several dozens muffins this morning before the party begins at 10:00AM. I feel as prepared as possible for things to go well with my birth, post partum, and bonding with my child. It is a good feeling and I pray that this 4th trimester goes according to plan. I feel no fear, just simple curiosity to see if my vision of how it could be lines up with reality.

Jenny's Journal, Journal Entry 6:

My Blessing Way

With commentary on the Primal Mama Lifestyle from my experience and perspective, By Jenny Marie Hatch



Laura Shanley, Rico Baker, Jeannine Baker, Jenny, Paul, and Shelly Hatch

Sunday September 8th, 2002

Yesterday I called Jeannine Parvati Baker to integrate what happened during our blessing way last Monday (labor day). She offered this to me as a final gift before the birth of our fifth baby in a few weeks. We had intended to talk for thirty minutes, but went way beyond that time, and she said it was her gift to the baby and I to have a chance to chat freely.

The timing was interesting to me as yesterday was the sixth anniversary of my first Freebirth. My son Andrew turned six yesterday, and I called Jeannine asking if we could talk during that time, as it was the exact moment that I was in labor, on a Saturday morning, six years ago. She agreed and we had a wonderful discussion. I realized as we hung up the phone that our conversation ended right about the time I had a quick five-minute transition and started pushing Andrew into the world – about 9:30 AM. He was born after four pushes at 9:52AM.

This pregnancy has been a healing time for us. We conceived in January. My husband Paul has known for years that if we had another baby I would want to do my own prenatal care, as I did with Andrew six years ago, and was not surprised when I did exactly that for the past eight months. What was a surprise to me however, was how my life organized itself to allow me to use Jeannine and Rico as my Shamanic Midwives, much the same way that Laura and David Shanley were my mentors during Andrew's pregnancy. I don't know why I have been so blessed to have these pioneers as such an intimate part of my life. But I will take what I have been given and just say that it has

been exciting to develop deep friendships with these souls who are working so diligently to heal birth.

I first discovered Unassisted Childbirth in 1989 when I read about Pat Carter's League of empowered women, and I determined then that one day I would join her league by giving birth alone. How exciting for me to be able to have deep and passionate discussions through email and on the phone with these wonderful sisters while pregnant, being mentored and encouraged by those who have lived such amazing pioneering lives and then been passionate enough to write and share of their experiences!

We transferred to the hospital shortly after Andrew's birth for help with his breathing and my bleeding. Laura believes my background in musical theatre called for a dramatic birth and Jeannine has also expressed that a need for drama expresses itself through those types of realities. I don't know why I had such a wild time after that birth, when all I wanted was a quiet bonding with my child after his entry into the world, but the trauma of the firemen, ambulances, helicopter, and Newborn Intensive Care Unit resulted in me questioning everything about our life.

As we struggled through this time, made more challenging by Paul experiencing debilitating panic attacks, horrible food allergies with a gluten intolerance that caused us to give up vegetarian eating, and terrible financial difficulties that required me to work outside our home off and on for a few years, I experienced a sort of valley after our peak empowering experience of taking personal responsibility for the health of my beautiful son during his gestation and birth.

I have thought long and hard what this "valley" of darkness after Andrew's birth was all about. A scripture comes to mind when I think of this time. It is from the Book of Mormon and says:

"And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that FAITH is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your FAITH" *Ether 12:6*

I believe now that this time was the trial of my faith. Sometimes God gives us enough light and truth to encourage us to take a different path, but then he lets us struggle somewhat as we learn by our own experience to know the bitter from the sweet. As we struggled through this time, I learned to embrace my family and friends who had lifestyles different than ours. From what I could see, many who were living a mainstream life were doing a fabulous job raising loving, intelligent children. While our children participated in public school for the first time, I roasted my first pot roast, and we immersed ourselves more fully in American culture by participating in Halloween trick or treating, and other types of activities that I had formerly deemed too "toxic" for my children, I was forced to take a step back from my ideals and wonder how much "purity" and "wholeness" was really necessary to raise a close family.

It seemed to me that the discomfort our lifestyle brought upon others, who then expressed their distress to us

in a variety of ways had to be a fact in all of these decisions regarding how "alternative" we were going to be in our home life.

For some families, this rejection and scrutiny could weaken the ties that bind us together and cause a breach in our intimacy as a couple. One of Paul's constant laments in the early year's was, "why do we always have to be the weird ones?" I believe this time of reevaluation was a chance for us to integrate and process the trauma that had troubled our marriage. Paul's perception over the years was that I would rush from one book to another, take a flying leap into the unknown with him and the children quietly standing by flustered and uncomfortable. He told me once that every time I returned home from the Library with a stack of books, he would cringe wondering what was next.

As I raced from natural childbirth to vegetarianism to not immunizing, to pushing all the beds in the house together, to breastfeeding a four year old, to unschooling, and finally to the mother of them all.... Unassisted Childbirth... he was left wondering what sort of an irresponsible nut case he had married?

As we have talked, negotiated, and become more accepting of each other as a couple— the give and take needed for our marriage to survive has required both of us to sacrifice some ideals. Paul has always thought unschooling was a bunch of hooey, and so we teach the children four hours a day of structured home school. I will never be comfortable giving birth in a medical environment, and so has done his best to support me through this pregnancy, even after a "botched" UC. I cook a more mainstream diet, and we are more focused on

teaching our children correct principles and letting them govern themselves, than we are in controlling every aspect of their lives.

The confidence I feel NOW in regards to all of this primal mothering is more quiet and clear, with the sober understanding that this lifestyle, while wonderful in most ways, has its drawbacks and pitfalls. Some of these pitfalls are the loneliness and feelings of isolation the family may experience. A lack of community for our husbands and children is also a very real phenomenon. We mothers may feel supported, validated, and nurtured by friends from all across the world in our vast internet outreach, or in mothering circles in our community. But our husbands and older children may not, and this lack of support for our partners may lead to a divorce. Our children may also feel they are "missing out" by not attending school, and our husbands may be flat out rejected by peers who feel uncomfortable with these life choices. Men are already isolated in our western society and to add one more layer of isolation may tip the scales over to a family breakup.

Most truth in life is so surrounded by warfare that often it is difficult to clearly see and quantify what it is exactly that we are doing as parents. The ultimate payoff may not be felt for years, or even generations. But through the quiet, purposeful daily practice of nurturing, teaching, and loving our little ones in a very conscious way— we are battling all that is evil on the planet. As I have renewed my testimony and faith in the truths surrounding primal parenting during this very conscious pregnancy, a quiet yet firm confidence has welled up in my heart. This is the right lifestyle for US! And with loving compromise every family

can determine the principles and practices that are important to them! One of the ceremonies that I knew I wanted to manifest in this pregnancy was the Blessing Way.

Early in my pregnancy, I was clear that the greatest gift I could give to my husband and children was the experience of the blessing way. I felt somewhat shy and embarrassed to organize my own ceremony– but had a very clear vision of how I wanted it to go. I felt confident that if I did nothing else during this child's gestation– the feelings and power associated with a family blessing way would be the most important "prenatal care" we could experience. So, being the little red hen that I am, I set out to create the ceremony that would serve our family best.

I contacted Jeannine and asked her if she and Rico were coming to Colorado at all during my pregnancy. She told me that they would be in town over Labor Day weekend. It was perfect! Labor Day! Symbolic and also a day when Dad's would be off work! She told me that they usually get up to \$1000.00 for conducting these ceremonies, but that with our young family she wondered if \$300.00 would be too much? I assured her it would be fine. For the same price as an unnecessary ultrasound I was going to be blessed by the very pioneers of blessing way who would perform the sweet ceremony for my husband and I!

I spent the summer dreaming, planning and visualizing how I wanted the celebration to go. Being a Christian, I knew it would be important to have the Savior's spirit in abundance at the party and I also knew that sacred hymns and prayer would be the best way to invite his spirit. I also

understood that the ceremony and the feelings attached to it would be a potential pattern for how my birth would be and was concerned about the "wrong" people attending. After a few weeks of pondering on "who" to invite, I decided to trust that whomever came was meant to be there and that I should just invite everyone I knew.

I mailed out 95 invitations two weeks before the party. I invited almost everyone I know in Colorado. I gave out an additional 50 invitations to my church community the day before the party. I sent quite a few invitations out of state to various family and friends, knowing they would not be able to attend, but hoping they would be with us in spirit. My best friend Susanna wrote me the week before and promised that she would be praying and with me in spirit during the ceremony. I had planned and conducted a blessing way for her four years ago, here in Colorado before she moved to L.A. It was the first "baby shower" I had ever attended where I felt the spirit of the Lord and angels in attendance. I was hoping for something similar with mine.

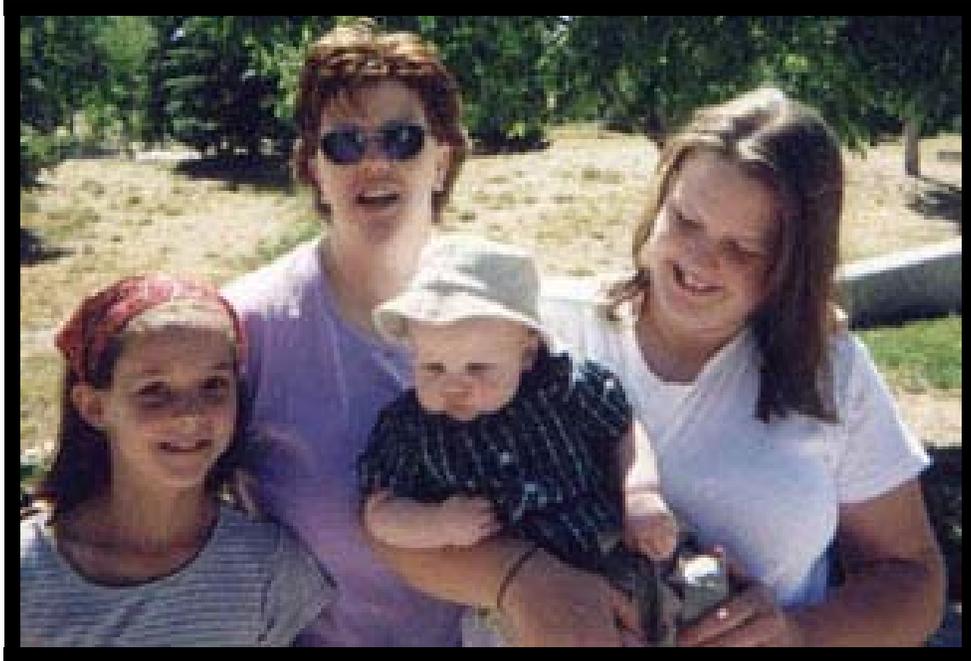
It was scary, exciting, and overwhelming thinking who might attend, would there be enough food? Would people judge me for not doing a traditional baby shower? I let all of that go, and trusted that it would be perfect...and it was!

The morning began with a shopping trip to get the fruit, flowers and ice. Then I cleaned, napped, bathed, and dressed for the party. Jeannine, Rico, and Halley came at 8:00AM and pitched right in and helped with food preparation and loading the car. I will never forget Rico washing grapes and strawberries at my kitchen sink while I

baked muffins. It was just so homey and natural to have these wonderful souls in my home! I showed them my herb garden and my newly painted bedroom, which had carefully been prepared for our new baby. Jeannine was so complimentary of my efforts; it just made me feel good, and nurtured.

We drove up to the park about 9:30 and set up all the tables, chairs, and food. Then I prepared my alter with a picture of Jesus, and a few meaningful things to me— a bag of wheat grass, a jar of Kamut, Wheat, and Flax seeds, and a sample cloth diaper. We had requested that no one bring gifts, but rather donate to our cloth diaper fund. Our friends gave generously and I was able to order all of the diapers needed for this new little one last week!

Soon after ten AM friends started to arrive. We ended up having four fathers attend in addition to Paul. I was so pleased that they had taken the time to come. As each family arrived I had a feeling again, of perfection. This was my tribe, my family, our support, and the very souls we were destined to bless the way with!



Allison, Lori, Dylan and Shelly



UC birth pioneer Laura Kaplan Shanley

To invite the spirit of the Lord, I had asked my son Jeff to offer the opening prayer, but he declined, feeling shy in front of the group. Then I asked if anyone felt guided to say the prayer, and my friend Nancy, a Doula, said that she

would be honored and proceeded to offer a wonderful prayer of thanksgiving and protection for our family as we welcome our new baby.

Then Rico described how the blessing way came to be practiced in our modern age, and Jeannine described the purpose of passing around the yarn which we all wound around our wrist's symbolizing community and unity and support for our family. As we wound the string I sang the opening hymn, acapella. I chose this hymn because I have sung it so often the past year as I mourned the death of my older brother. Dave's first child was born a few months after his death and it was sweet to have my sister in law Lori and her son Dylan at the party!

We sang this song at Dave's funeral, and it has brought me much comfort this past year since his death— and it fit in perfectly with the blessing way theme. Here are the lyrics.

*Come thou Fount
Come thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace.
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above,
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of thy redeeming love.
Here I raise to thee an alter,
Hither by thy help I'm come.
And I hope by thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.*

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood.
Oh to grace, how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be.
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it
Seal it for thy courts above.
Here's my heart, oh take and seal it
Seal it for thy courts above.*

While I sang Jeannine noted two hawks flying overhead, gracing our party with their energy and spirit. As I finished the song, we broke the strings and tied them to our wrists to be a reminder to pray for the baby and the birth.



Ceremonial grooming

Then Jeannine and Rico did the ceremonial grooming. Letting down my hair, and noting coming wisdom evidenced by my first gray hairs. Paul noted that he must be very wise, as his head is covered in gray and we all laughed. Then Rico massaged Paul's shoulders and expressed to him his love and confidence in his abilities as a husband and father/provider. Jeannine and Rico then demonstrated their hand mudras individually and then together facing us. The symbolic hand motions are indicative of the life walk that we all make first as individuals and then as part of a family. They are beautiful to watch and touching to observe such intimacy performed by a couple as much in love as Jeannine and Rico obviously are.

Then they anointed our feet with a bottle of Young Living's Dream Catcher essential oil blend. I had used this oil throughout the pregnancy and felt it would be appropriate for the blessing way. As Jeannine massaged and touched various reflex points in my feet, I felt a wave of loving energy wash over my body and the baby started to kick quite excitedly. Rico worked on Paul and as they massaged I asked that my friends start going around the circle telling who they were and how they knew our family. This was the highlight of the party for me and I really enjoyed hearing everyone tell how they had met our family and what our relationship was. Many touching things were said and I found myself tearing up as expressions of love and acceptance were conveyed to Paul and I.

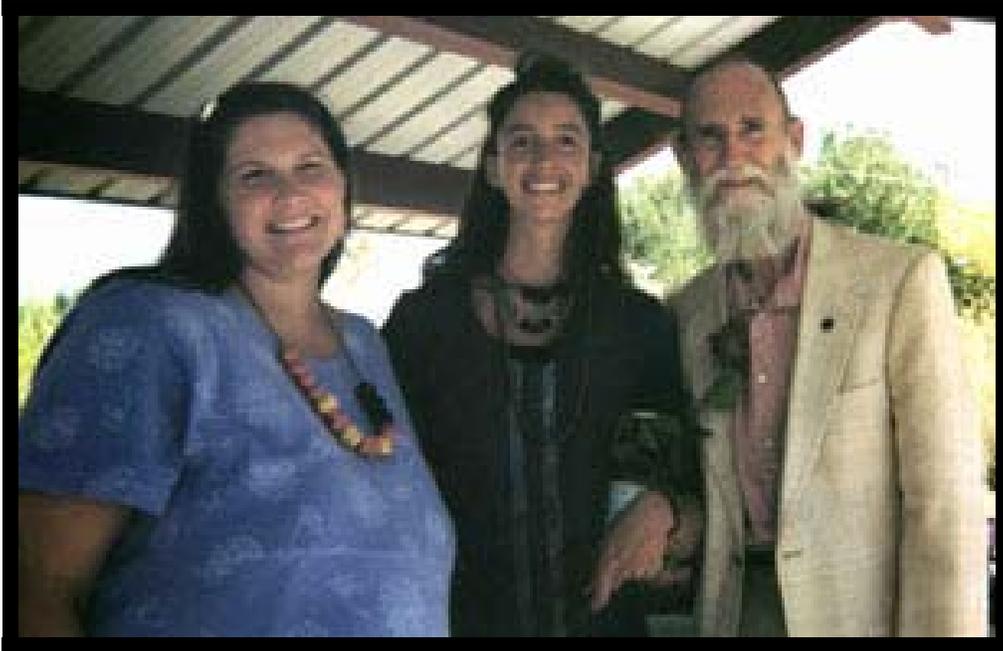
To finish the ceremony Paul and I sang a hymn together with him accompanying on his guitar. We sang Jesus, Lover of my soul. Here are the lyrics....

*Jesus, lover of my soul
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer water's roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me oh, my savior hide,
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into thy haven guide,
Oh receive my soul at last.
Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee.
Leave oh leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.*

*All my trust in thee is stayed
All my help from thee I bring,
Cover my defenseless head,
With the shadow of thy wing.*

As we finished the song, I had a feeling of love enter into my heart, from the circle of friends that had gathered and for my sweet lover and eternal companion, Paul. We finished the party with a feast of fresh fruit, muffins, and fruit juice and just visited and took pictures. Everyone was gone by 12:30 and we gathered up all of our belongings and went home. It was a beautiful and sacred moment in time for my family, and me and I will never forget the love conveyed and the happiness and joy that manifest during the party.

I feel that from this moment until the baby arrives we have been blessed, sanctified and set apart for the important task of welcoming our child into our home. Coming as it has after so much sorrow, warfare, and questioning of our choices and beliefs has made the joy experienced that much more intense for us



Jenny, Amy and Rico

We have made the decision to hire a Doula to help with my post partum care this time. Amy Thompson specializes in the Ayurvedic Mother/Baby protocol of massage, special post partum cooking and will care for me for the six weeks following the birth. She is also a Reiki Master Teacher, a Certified Yoga Instructor, Massage Therapist, and graced our Blessing Way by attending. I am confident this care will be the absolute best investment in my health that we have ever made.

My prayer for all of our families is that as we walk down this primal mothering path we will be patient and loving as we learn new principles and truths and gradually implement them into our family life, with the understanding that it takes time to learn line upon line the precepts that will strengthen and nourish our children. I have a dream that by the time my children are grandparents

these practices and this lifestyle will be firmly entrenched into our world as an ideal way to live family life without all of the distress for those of us who choose it. With the humble understanding that each couple has to decide for themselves which path will serve their children best.

The ultimate principle in all of this is LOVE. Cherishing and accepting our little ones— and then launching them on the paths that will hopefully lead to the fulfillment of all their dreams!

While I am content to live and let live with those who disagree with my views on birth, nurture, and education, I feel passionate enough about holistic parenting to believe that it will be the path that leads to the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in his 65th chapter of the Bible.

Lord knows the cult of death, destruction, and hurt associated with the Chemical/Medical model of parenting will NOT lead to this prophecy being fulfilled.

Remember, Isaiah saw our day....

"And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and

mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord." *-Isaiah the Prophet*

Until the day when children are no longer killed, hurt, or live a life of days, cry, weep, or are destroyed.....

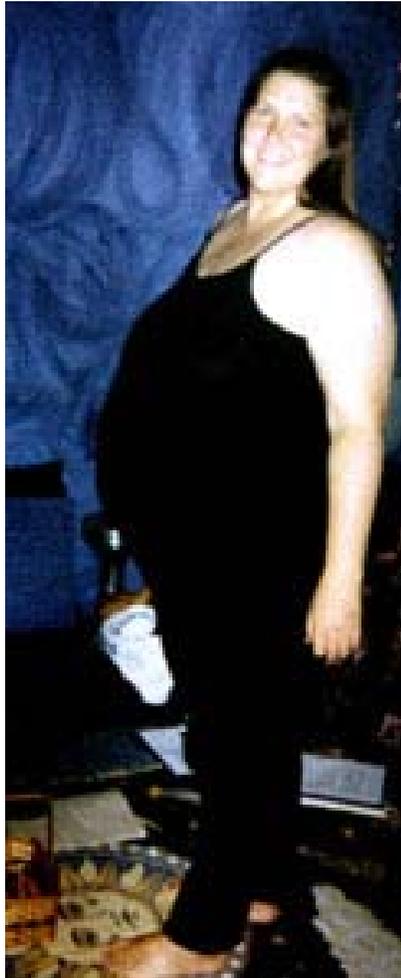
Jenny's Journal, Entry 7

9/29/02

It is Sunday morning. I am sitting here eating a huge plate of food left over from last night. Rice, broccoli, onions, garlic, ground turkey, Monterey jack cheese, lots of salt and olive oil, and my favorite, sweet potatoes, all mixed together in a sumptuous feast that nourished me last night and now again during this late morning snack.

Our society is so weird. My size is one of the reasons I turned to unassisted childbirth. As in all aspects of my life, I figure my body knows what it is doing when it balloons up to 260 pounds as it has with all of my last three nurslings. For the last two I was tandem nursing and

producing upwards of a couple quarts of milk a day for my hungry babes.



Jenny in Yoga Leotard 30 weeks pregnant

It has been a challenge for me to live in health conscious Boulder Colorado while being a supposedly "obese" mama. Even during my two and a half year hiatus from pregnancy and nursing when I was practicing Yoga a couple times a week, working out with weights and doing

aerobics every week, I never dropped below 240 pounds, even though I lost many inches on my body and everyone said I looked fabulous.

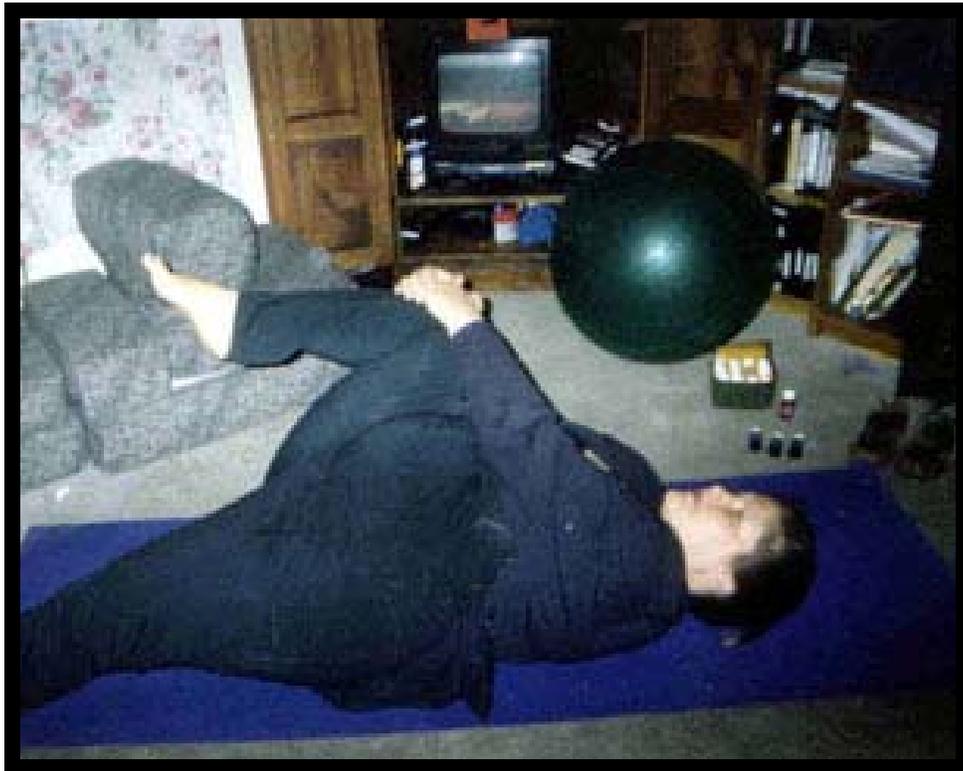
Others assumed that I spent my days hidden in my closet snarfing Oreos and ding-dongs. The most judgmental were the various Yoga teachers I had contact with during these years. Every time I would walk into Yoga class with my big ol' bum hanging out of my plus size leotard, they would look at me with such judgment in their beady little protein deficient eyes. (Apologies to all Yoga teachers, some I had were very kind to my plus size body). Inevitably they would assume that I was a beginner, and make some stupid comment about how amazed they were that someone of my size could be so flexible.

They knew nothing about me, and the fact that I have practiced since childhood and have a complete movement background (musical theatre was my major in College). I applied for a job at a local health club to teach a pregnancy yoga class for couples, but when the manager of the club, who had seemed very interested on the phone after reading my resume and application, took a look at my body, you know, that head to toe, hmmm, it was all over in that first moment. My defense mechanisms are very powerful and I just walked out of that club saying to myself, "their loss".

At the beginning of this pregnancy I purchased the Bikram's Pregnancy Yoga video off the web. For thirty bucks I had a great workout to do in my own space without anyone judging my body. At the beginning of my pregnancy I had dreams of doing the workout every day, but reality translated into me doing the complete tape about once a week. It was a great way for me to nurture my mind

and body, in the sanctity of my own home and without all the "skinny moms" looking at me in disgust, as had been my previous experience in other pregnancy yoga classes.

I started out this pregnancy weighing 265 pounds and right now today I weigh 260 pounds. Each time I practiced I would give myself a complete aromatherapy rub down, drink lots of water and really get my muscles warmed up. The baby loved the workout, and occasionally my older kids would join in. These workouts combined with walking and a little swimming have been the mainstay of my exercise regime. I also practice yoga at night when I wake up to pee, as it helps me get back to sleep if I do a few postures during the night.



Jenny Practicing Bikrams Yoga during pregnancy

I also rejoined the pregnancy exercise class I took with my last pregnancy. The other moms who take this class are mostly first time moms who are just starting their pregnancy adventures. I have gone to extremes not to advertise my lifestyle this time, with the help of my wonderful teacher Leslie, who has known of my UC plans since the beginning. Last week one of the ladies got right in my face and asked me how I planned to birth, and I said "at home...alone". There was this stunned silence in the room and then this gal said, "hey, to each his own" and changed the subject. I thought that was really nice of her. I haven't felt any negativity in the class since that night, more just a sort of curiosity. So many of the moms in this class have been induced in the last two months that I have been attending, it has been heartbreaking. Two moms have had five pound babies, and one who was told her child was four pounds and needed to be induced because it wasn't gaining good enough, gave birth to an almost seven pounder after her induction. These medicos just can't seem to get it right. It has been good to rub shoulders with other pregnant women in a great class, taught by a really sweet woman.

Well, Paul just took the kids to church, so I have three hours to myself. Before he left we started filling up the pool on our deck and I put my current batch of wheat grass in the sun. It is a beautiful fall day. I am almost 39 weeks. I feel happy, excited, huge and very ready, but am prepared for this pregnancy to go on for another six weeks if need be. I'm off to take a wonderful sun-bath and dip in the birthing pool!



Jenny Hatch with daughters Michelle and Allison

Jenny's Journal Entry 8

10/12/02

Today I am 40 weeks plus five days. I am waiting for my massage therapist to show up and thought I would write for a while.

My family is out running errands, and my ten year old who was told to stay with me "in case I go into labor" is out walking our dog. She is so sweet, my little Allison. She made me breakfast in bed this morning. Toast– with lots of butter and jam, fresh strawberries, Organic Yogurt, a bowl of cottage cheese and a large glass of milk. We just put together a vegetable beef stew for later in the day. Onions, garlic, beef stew meat, four different kinds of potatoes, adzuki beans, carrots, and my own broth concoction made from Bragg's liquid Aminos, oat straw tea, flax seeds, potato peels, and all the peels from the onions/garlic. I let the broth hard boil for twenty minutes, then poured it over the vegetables and meat into a large covered crockery dish and it will slow bake in the oven all day until we are ready to chow.

It is cold today. If I have the gumption I'll make some bread, or maybe just some muffins or biscuits to eat with the stew and that is our food for the day! Saturdays are nice, we just eat and have no schedule and I will get a massage!

My massage therapist, mentioned in another entry is pregnant! Wendy told me a few weeks ago that she is expecting and so we had our last session together and my post partum Doula Amy has taken over the prenats. Just for giggles I added up how much Wendy cost me for the nine months of her care. I had twelve sessions with her. Most lasting 1 and 1/2 hours and all costing \$70.00 – (because she came to my home and set up her table here) -

\$850.00. Since she has been my main prenatal care, this is quite a bargain compared to the money I could have spent on medical care.

We have a \$2500.00 deductible with an 80/20 co-pay for our health insurance. So if I had done prenatal care these past nine months, it would have cost at least \$2500.00 dollars out of pocket, not to mention the additional co-pays for tests, etc... We haven't used our health insurance in a few years for anything, and so had nothing paid on the deductible. In a fit of concern in my 7th month, I did go to my General Practitioner for a prenatal visit. It was during a week of fear, when I wasn't sure if we could handle a UC. I had a complete blood workup, a urine and blood pressure check. Everything was normal. No anemia, no infections, no high blood pressure (120/80) – no protein spills in my urine. Two hundred bucks out of pocket for all the tests!

I knew in my heart everything was fine, but I wanted to hear from my doctor that he would refuse care if we did it alone. He confirmed that if I refused to have prenats with him, he would not be willing to "get out of bed" to come help with my birth as he knew the only reason we would be at the hospital would be if there were major complications and he didn't feel this was fair to him. I agreed that it was a bit of a stretch for me to expect him to come help with any problems if he had not been tuned in ahead of time to any potential problems through "proper" prenatal care. I just wasn't willing to spend the money for what I perceived to be a bunch of useless tests and procedures. I'd rather get a massage.

I do think it is pathetic that if we should need help I will once again have to deal with the morons in the

Emergency Room. Even my doctor agreed that it was a terrible backup plan as these people rarely see childbirth complications and really don't know what they are doing. Ultimately I believe my most effective "backup" is my faith in the Savior, and I trust him to take care of me through any problems or complications that may arise. I really don't know how it is going to go. I have a feeling that it will be perfect, but I trust that should some unperceived problem arise, we will be guided to know what to do.

Allison and I went shopping the other night. I know I had this great intention to stay home for the whole time before the birth, but on that day I was feeling so cooped up and needing to get out, I decided to go. I told Paul that morning that I felt the need to go somewhere, do something, yet I didn't want to see anyone I knew, and I was concerned about giving birth out of my nest. Total cabin fever. I have been cooking these great nutritious meals, doing three major loads of dishes a day, laundry, nesting cleaning (you know, under the fridge, scrubbing the grout in the tub...stuff I never do), and taking lots of walks and naps.

But on Thursday, I needed a change, so we went shopping to a grocery store and Wal-Mart. We were gone about three hours. It was great to fill up my cart with wonderful fruits and vegetables from the recent harvest, and search for bargains, and buy a treat. For me, a treat means ice cream or chocolate donuts. I have had these sugar pig-outs about once a month my whole pregnancy. The rest of the time I do great on whole foods and fresh vege juice and wheat grass and all my supplements, but once in a while I feel the need for some major comfort

foods and I just go with it. I ended up eating five milk chocolate covered Entenmanns donuts over the next twelve hours.

When we came home from the store, I watched the new episode of E.R., the local news, and stayed up so late I couldn't get out of bed the next morning. (Just so you know, these are all perceived "toxic" activities that I have shunned during most of my pregnancy) Friday morning my best friend from college called and we chatted for two hours while the children watched TV and fought and ate more donuts for breakfast.

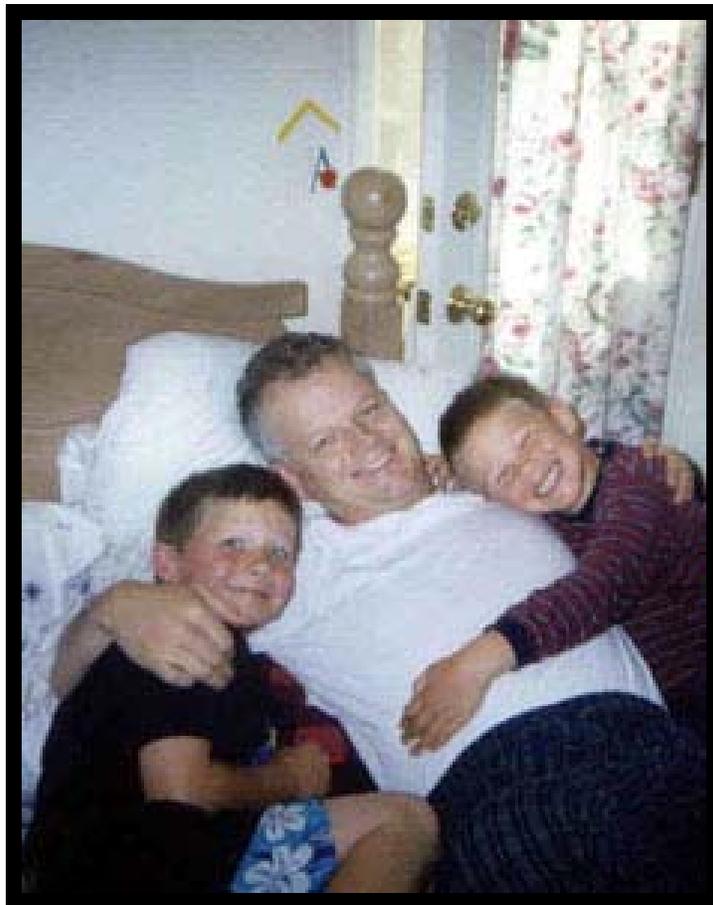
This was a good experience for me. Sort of like a scientific experiment. It is a great reminder why I don't do this every day! For the past two days, my nose has been running, my glands are swollen, my left ear feels all liquidy, and my emotional state is somewhat evil. I have ligament aches, the baby has hardly moved at all, and a general scent of bad BO is all around me.

As I feel this toxic mass moving through my gut, I feel a determination to make it through the rest of my pregnancy without the need to abuse my body with crap. I don't understand why I can't just relax and do this lifestyle without feeling like I am being a martyr. I LOVE how I feel when I nourish my body the way it needs to be nourished. I LOVE the sense of purpose I get from cooking whole foods. I LOVE shutting down my brain to the fear based thoughts that are ever present in the media. I LOVE the sense of empowerment that I feel when I take charge of everything that goes into my body, my brain, my psyche, my energy system and my babies.

Why this "need" for seeming "comfort"? There has been nothing comforting in what I have felt the past two days, except doing the opposite of what I have been doing. I suppose we all need a change of pace once in a while, and there is purpose in that. But I still wish I could settle in and do it "right" every day of my life. Amy should be here any minute, and I need to go get ready for the massage. So I will say goodbye for now.

October 21, 2002

Why I STILL believe in the Bradley Method...



Paul and the boys (Jeff and Andy)

Last night we had a "dress rehearsal". I awoke yesterday morning (Sunday) with pretty heavy, short contractions that did not stop no matter what I did. So I putzed around the kitchen and made breakfast, and a casserole for supper, then I went upstairs and for the first time in this pregnancy saw some bloody show. I continued to contract and have the pinkish show all day long, but my contractions never went more than 35 to 40 seconds even though they were coming every 3 to 4 minutes. Paul and I pulled out our *Natural Childbirth the Bradley Way* book and looked for the type of labor that has this sort of a beginning. As we read and reminded ourselves how to time contractions, when to get excited, and when not too, and continued to deal with each contraction as it came, and they were making me stop everything and notice them, I was grateful for this wonderful book that has been my "bible" for labor since I first discovered it 14 years ago, three weeks before I gave birth for the first time.

We had taken a hospital based Lamaze class (obedience class—Doris Haire's term), and as my due date was quickly approaching, I felt this increasing sense of unpreparedness. I prayed to know if there was more to learn, which actually strikes me as being kind of funny now, and I felt guided to go to a library across town where I had a library card, but hadn't been to for years. As I perused the birth books the titles "*Husband coached childbirth*" and *Natural Childbirth, the Bradley Way*, caught my eye and I picked up and borrowed both books. Luckily I didn't have much to do those final three weeks before the birth, and I read Dr. Bradley's book once and the Roseggs book three times.

Paul and I also practiced relaxation every night and he listened as I read to him various parts that I felt were relevant. I started my labor with a bloody show five days before my daughter was pushed into the world. As we contracted through those five days of gentle pre-labor, I was grateful for all this time to practice the relaxation with Paul. By the time I was in true labor we were functioning like a well-oiled machine. He would gently touch my head and say relax your forehead, and the rest of my body would go limp as he looked for areas where I was holding in tension, and gently massaged my back.

My mother also helped when she was at the hospital with this back rub that felt so great I didn't even feel the need to ask for drugs. As I proceeded through transition with this first baby, I experienced the emotional self-doubt signpost so clearly articulated in the Bradley Materials. This is the most fumbled part of many labors. The moment when the mother looks at everyone and says, "I just can't do it", is a sign that pushing is just around the corner and yet most husbands and labor support are uneducated about this phenomenon, typically interpret it as a sign that drugs/procedures/epidural are needed pronto.

I am grateful that we were able to read about it, and when I looked at my mother and Paul and said those famous last words "I just can't do it anymore", having completely forgotten their ever was something called the self doubt sign post, they got right in my face and cheerfully said, "you did it, pushing is just around the corner" and it was! I honestly believe that if they had not done that for me, my labor could have stalled with drug administration, or I could have allowed myself to be pushed

into "hurry up" procedures that I had effectively refused for hours.

Shortly after this my doctor showed up and broke my water without my permission... may he burn in hell for that and yanking out my placenta... but other than that I had a completely unhindered, drug free, spontaneous birth with a slight tear and no episiotomy. The Bradley Method is/was directly responsible for this.

We were so empowered by this experience that when Michelle was nine months old, we attended the Bradley teacher training and spent a year certifying. We then spent eight years teaching the various couples who came to us. As I interacted with those in the birthing community here in Boulder, I felt varying degrees of hostility from nurses, labor assistants, doulas, doctors, and couples themselves, especially some women who hated the term "coach" that we use in Bradley. As these critics would share their views with me and say things like "birth is women's work" and "women don't need anyone telling them how to birth" etc... I just thought, "hey, to each his own".

I still don't understand the hostility that the method brings up in people. All I can assume is that they have not read the materials, taken the classes, or experienced a Bradley birth for themselves. I love the fact that for my three previous natural births (and the twenty hours at home of my c-section) I had "trained" hands on my back. My husband knows exactly how to massage my back to give me perfect relief, and it is because of the Bradley Method. He is also able to identify about where I am in labor based on my "symptoms".

With someone like me who has a tendency to "labor" for weeks before the actual birth, this is crucial, as unnecessary energy can be wasted during those last few weeks if one becomes too excited or gets too involved in a pre-labor moment.

During an unassisted birth, this is not such a big deal, as you can just relax into the moment and not worry about calling the midwives or trying to guess when would be the best time to go to the hospital, and if it peters out, you go on with life, as I have done today.

But if one is planning an assisted birth, it can be very frustrating and downright dangerous to "call in the troops" too early, as everyone is excited and these pre-labor moments can be turned into an augmented situation, especially in the hospital, Especially if a woman has reached the 41 week milestone. (FYI – I am 42 weeks today!) If a woman has a "pleaser" personality, as I used to have, these pre-labor events can lead to many interventions and her determination to force the baby out, no matter what, because she may feel responsible to perform.

I remember watching a woman in labor shortly after I had my c-section. I was in the hospital for four days and watched this couple go through the process of labor and birth. As I was attempting to walk as much as possible after the surgery, I walked the halls with them a little bit. This woman had short contractions coming every five minutes and her husband was walking by her side holding a stop-watch and a clipboard, timing her. She made a few comments about how everything would stop if she stopped walking. I thought about going up to her and telling her she really wasn't in labor, as one of the basic tests of knowing if

it is real is to change your activity and if things stop, it is not real labor.

A few hours later the door to their room was closed, and I have no idea what happened during those hours, but I soon observed a nurse running down the hall with an oxygen tank and later I saw the beautiful boy she had delivered in the nursery hooked up to a breathing machine. Almost a day after the birth the nurses wheeled her down to the nursery and she tried to nurse her very sleepy son, while I was nursing my daughter. She looked so tired and thrashed I just felt bad for her. This experience remains a visual in my mind of the dangers of showing up at the hospital too soon.

My most extreme example of this in my own birthing history happened during my third birth. I was approaching the dreaded 42-week mark and my doctor wanted to do a non stress test. For the sake of good communications and keeping the peace, I agreed to do this, as well as an ultrasound. While I was being monitored during that hour I had the typical pre-labor contractions I had experienced during most of my pregnancy. This was the first pregnancy that I had nursed through and I am certain that extra nipple stimulation from my little sucking leech Allison was the cause of so much uterine activity. This was also my VBAC pregnancy and birth and as my uterus stretched and grew I was grateful my body knew to contract to help heal my scars and aid in the growth of the muscles.

One of the nurses came into the room to check the strip during my non-stress test. As she noticed the activity of the contractions she said, "you are in labor". I said, "No, these are the same contractions I have had all through my

pregnancy." She spent several minutes trying to convince me why I should check into the hospital that day, and that I was most certainly in labor. I later found out that this nurse was the head of the childbirth education department at our local birth center. I was surprised that someone like her who was attempting to teach couples about birth, was so ignorant of what constituted real labor. The contractions I had on that strip were coming every five minutes, but none of them lasted for more than 40 seconds, I was able to chat and laugh through them and I had no other signs of labor – no bloody show, no dilation, no labor diarrhea, etc...

A few days later when I checked into the hospital for the actual birth, after two days of sex induced labor, I was dilated to a four and completely effaced. When I pondered the two and a half DAYS of hard contractions that had precipitated our decision to enter the hospital, labor that would not let me sleep, labor that came steadily every four to five minutes for hour after hour after hour of that birth, and then was followed by an additional 15 hours in the hospital– where I experienced a three hour transition, and four hours of pushing before my non drugged VBAC boy entered the world.

As I contemplated the nightmare that most likely would have resulted had I entered the hospital too soon, I was so grateful for our Bradley education which was so effective in helping us decide "when" to go to the hospital and for the gentle hands of my sweetheart who was my real live walking talking epidural. Even now when I think of the three-day massage Paul so readily provided during that birth, I get emotional thinking about his work and his effort. In Bradley we teach that a successful labor should

leave the husband more tired and sore than his wife. This was certainly the case with Jeff's labor of Love.

During transition, which went on and on and on, and I had to face so many demons in my mind: fear of c-section, fear of psychosis, fear of depression, fear of what my doctor thought of me as I had just fired her...all these fears...Paul asked me what I wanted him to do, as I was just standing in the shower crying. I asked, "Will you pray with me and sing to me?" He said a prayer for us, and then he started to sing primary songs. "I am a child of God, and he has sent me here". As he sang to me during that darkest of moments, I felt a spirit of light and love enter into my heart and into the room. He sang for about an hour, gently, sweetly, right into my ear, while the shower water beat on my back and I cried. We still had five hours to go with that birth, but that was the darkest moment and he "coached" me through it without losing his head and getting lost in his fear.

He quietly left the bathroom soon after this and when I came out he was literally passed out on the floor. He had been up for three nights straight—working just as hard as me. I also went to my bed and fell asleep for an hour and we were blessed with a nurse, who when she came in and saw us asleep, quietly left. That birth was our VBAC triumph and even though it was one of the most difficult experiences of my life, we did it together and it made our marriage stronger. Our Bradley training and background was directly responsible for it being successful.

Before Paul and the kids went to church yesterday, they filled up the birth pool in my bedroom and I took a short nap, and then got into the water. As I went through

the afternoon alone contracting, passing more bloody show, and experienced the wonder of "is this it?" I was reminded of all of my various labors. I spent the afternoon banishing fear from my heart. A fear based thought would come into my head and I would quickly run a scripture, the words of a hymn, or a belief suggestion through my mind and the fear would leave. As this happened about ten times I had this continual back and forth of fear/faith...fear/faith.

When Paul arrived home at four PM everything picked up and the contractions started coming every three to four minutes, and they took all my concentration to deal with them in the water. I stayed in the water for a total of five hours, only leaving to poop and I got in the shower once. As I experienced a very loose stool, and then passed my mucous plug, I truly believed I was in real labor. I even had a few contractions that lasted 50 to 60 seconds and even felt a little pushy.

Paul was taking care of the children, putting supper on the table, bringing me raspberry tea, checking in with me, as I continued to contract. He came in at one point and timed the length of the contractions, something I was not in a place to do, for about an hour. He said, I don't think this is real labor, because even though they are coming so close together, most of them are only 40 seconds. Soon after this everything stopped.

We gathered the children together in the living room, and discussed with them what had just happened, told them a few memorable stories from their own births, and although they were disappointed that the baby hadn't come out, they were reassured that everything was "normal". Then we had a sacred time together. Paul gave me a

priesthood blessing, we sang two hymns together, The Spirit of God and Choose the Right, and then Paul blessed and gave me the sacrament. Our bishop at church had given him permission to administer this sacred ordinance in our home as long as I stayed home before and after the birth.

We then kneeled in a circle and said our family prayer and it was so sweet to spend these few minutes together reveling in the spirit that we had invited. We also talked to the children about how sacred this time was, and asked them for suggestions for what we could do to make our home more spiritual and loving for our baby in these last few days before the birth and after. We told them that angels like to come to births and we wanted to be sure to have our home ready to welcome these spiritual visitors.

We all went to bed about ten PM and I continued to contract off and on throughout the night. At three thirty I woke up and read for an hour, (reading Jane Austin's Sense and Sensibility– I LOVE her humor!) then made more tea and my favorite labor drink based on a recipe by Adelle Davis from her book, Let's Have Healthy Children. In the chapter for an easier delivery, is the recipe for the nutrients needed to make labor more comfortable. For this drink I heated up two cups of whole milk to scalding hot, added in about 1/2 cup of pure cream, then I added in 3 tablespoons of mineral essence –a liquid mineral complex containing essential oils and every mineral known to man, and about four tablespoons of liquid calcium magnesium. This wonderful vanilla flavored supplement is great tasting and a natural pain reliever. I also took two Master Hers multi vitamins and two Super Bs – b-complex supplements

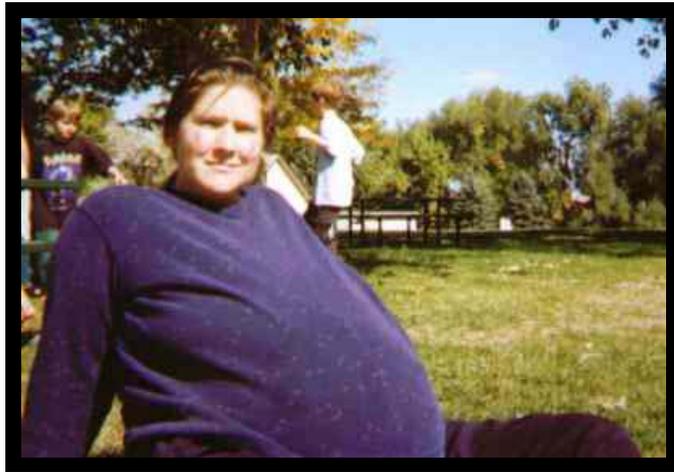
Over the past 24 hours I ingested this drink and the supplements three times. The rest of the time I drank raspberry tea with honey, and water with fresh lemons squeezed in. I didn't eat any solid foods for about 24 hours. At four this morning I again went into an intense period that lasted for a couple hours. As the contractions picked up in speed and intensity, I again thought, I am in "real" labor. I stayed in the birth pool, which Paul had mostly emptied and refilled from the hose connected to our kitchen sink, for about four hours.

As everything picked up and I felt more and more sure I was soon going to be holding our child in my arms, I loudly vocalized with each contraction. The children were in and out of the room, curious to know if the baby was out, and wanting breakfast, etc... Paul did his best to take care of their needs and support me with drinks and more hot water, then he fell asleep about 7AM. I chuckled to myself how much this reminded me of Jeff's birth when he was asleep on the floor of the hospital room, but I was glad that we were home and he was resting in OUR bed. I waited for a few more contractions to see if I would have transition symptoms. I felt a little shaky and even squatted through two contractions. Then I felt tired and all of a sudden I woke with a start. It was 8AM and Paul was still asleep. I was not having any contractions and decided to shower all the pee that I had peed into the pool in the past four hours off my body and my hair. When I came out of the shower, Allison and Paul were sitting on the bed talking and they just looked at me, like "did you have the baby in the shower?" I said, "Everything stopped".

A Lotus Birth

www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"

I have spent the rest of today eating, napping and doing a little housework. I decided to write this entry with the hopes that those who are getting close to birth will have a sense of what is normal in childbirth, rather than what has been imposed on us by medical beliefs. It is completely normal to have many periods of rhythmic steady contractions that come every four to five minutes in the WEEKS before a normal birth. I don't like the term "false labor", as there was nothing false about what I experienced the past twenty-four hours. Lots of things were happening. I am opening up as evidenced by my bloody discharge and mucous (have NOT done any vaginal exams though) and my breasts feel heavier with all this hormone activity—getting ready to nourish my child.



A few days before the birth

A Lotus Birth

www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"



This picture was taken about six hours before I went into labor



Jenny and Paul the day of the birth

I feel like my hips and pubic bone did some major stretching, and we had a nice chance to "pretend" with the kids by turning off the phone, talking with them about what real natural childbirth is like, not talking to mom, or asking questions while she is having a contraction, and my girls really enjoyed making tea and massaging my feet. The spiritual activities we enjoyed together last night will stay with me forever, and I feel better about having a quiet, quick birth alone in my bedroom or bathroom knowing that the children (especially my girls) have experienced some facets of natural labor ahead of time.

All in all I feel great. I am going to my exercise class in about a half hour, and even though I am tired from lack of sleep, I am determined that this child will not be born before it is ready.

Announcing the Birth of Benjamin Johnson Hatch



Three hours after birth

**Born at home into his Daddy's hands on
October 25th 2002
9 pounds 8 ounces
15 inch head (Yes I felt every inch as I was
pushing!)**

My water broke at exercise class last Monday night October 21st. Water leaked steadily for 72 hours.

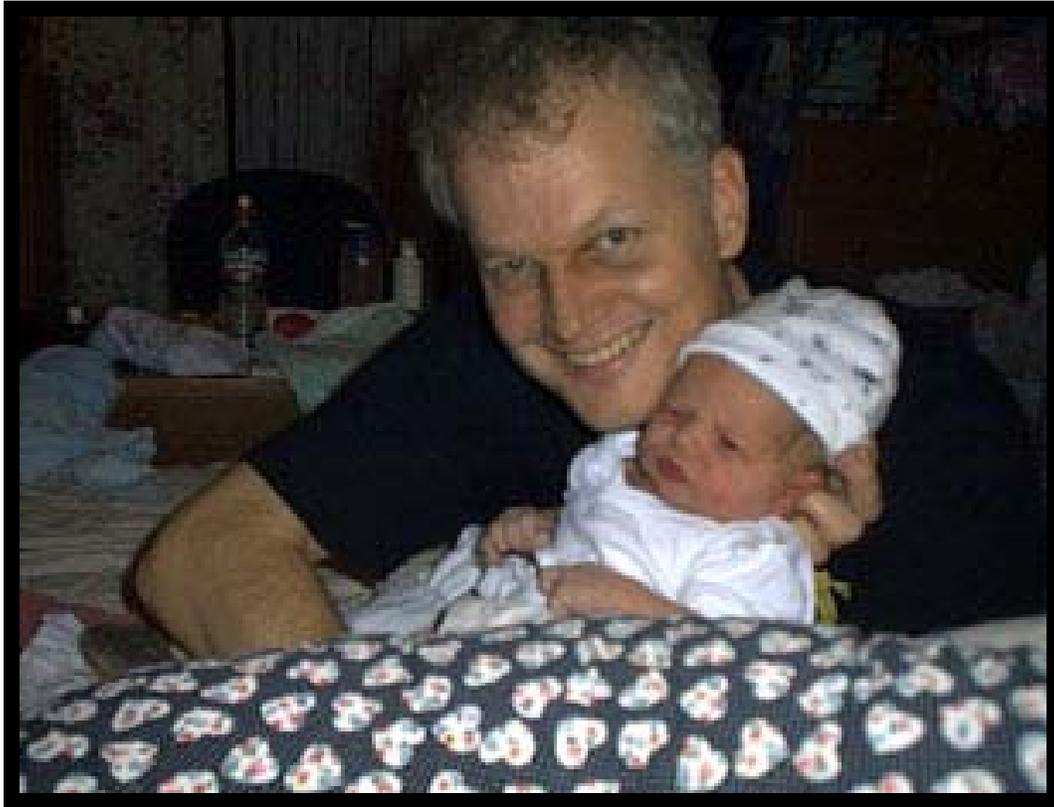
My labor kicked in exactly 72 hours from when the water broke, at 42 weeks 3 days on Thursday night. I labored in the alternate Bradley pose in my bed with legs

supported as five hours of the labor was all in my front ligaments– which **was** comforting as I figured he was not posterior. I was concerned that with little water and posterior presentation, I would be in for a very painful labor. I have never labored without the water, and it was very difficult.

I felt transition contractions turn into pushing contractions two hours before he was born. I stayed in my semi supported position on my back, with legs pulled back, to push. Paul helped by giving me a blessing, bringing hot washcloths to put on perineum and he sang to hymns to me.

About an hour before the birth, I felt like I should Squat next to the bed. I used my birth ball between contractions, and had my first painful birth. As I pushed I felt each millimeter of movement was a milestone. I will described the pain as INTENSE and very dry– not like my slippery baby in water bag births (remember I pushed out a baby two pounds bigger in THREE contractions with no real effort or pain). The pain was very new and real and I had moments when I didn't think I could do it. Paul gave me another blessing during this time and helped by rubbing my back with deep counter pressure.

On the third to last push, I felt him rush down the birth canal and crown, and the pain was overwhelming to my body. Then Paul grabbed the bulb and as he presented, sucked out his nose and mouth, then with the final contraction I pushed him into his Dad's hands in a standing squat, leaning over my bed, in about the exact same place that I birth Andy six years ago.



Paul with his baby!

He started to breathe right away, Paul and I were both sobbing. I lay down on my bed and he started to nurse, I passed the placenta in fifteen minutes, then I nursed for two hours, while the children came in and we took tons of pictures. Then I took a shower and we cleaned up the bed and the baby and took a bunch more pictures.





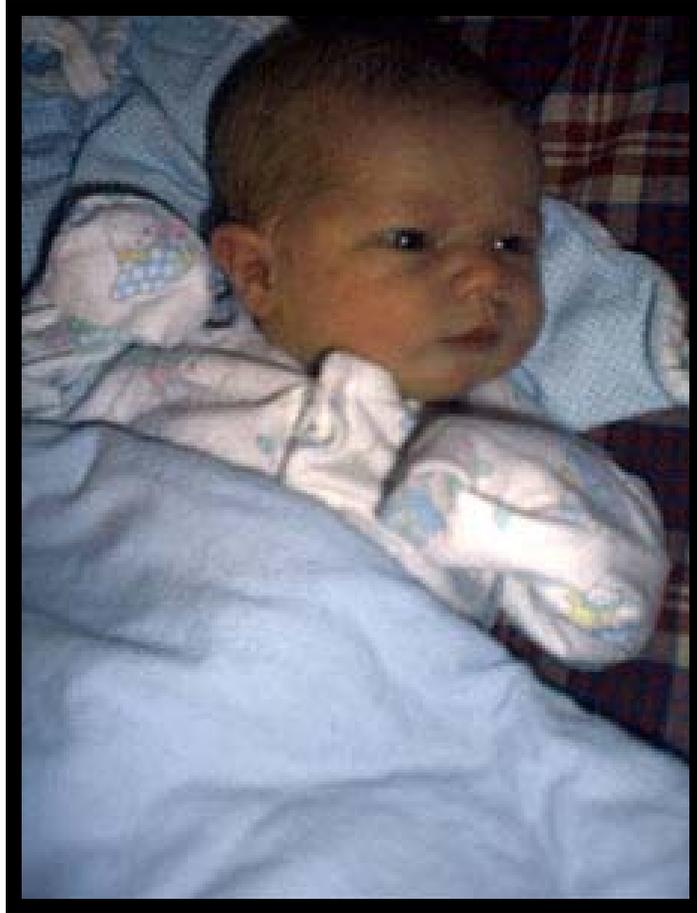
A Lotus Birth

www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"





One day old



Two days old

We did not cut the cord and as of today– 72 hours later it is still attached in a lotus birth. We have been amazed and gratified by this experience and want to praise the Lord for his goodness to us!



Three hours after birth

I have been relearning the painful joys of post birth contractions— which were worse than the labor— two days of this— Paul gave me another blessing to help, and breast pain, which is finally subsiding today, and all the hormonal shifts, weepy for a day or two and have had very bad back pain. But I did not tear my bottom as he birthed, and the pain is quickly turning into joy as the moments pass.

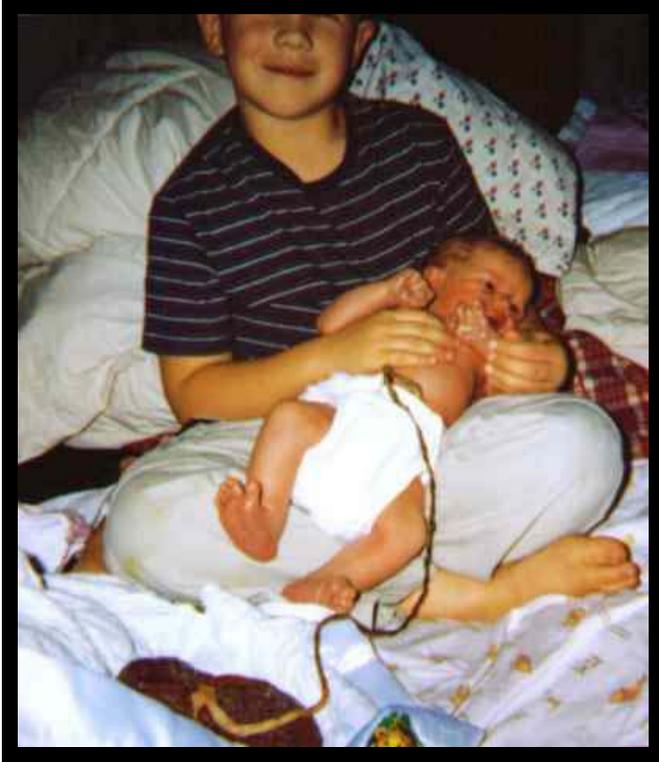


Two days after bith

After a c-section and three painless natural births, it has been interesting to experience real pain– I don't know that we would have wanted this birth on video as a testimony to unassisted birth, people might run screaming. But the Lord is good and has helped us with every pain issue that has come up.

Love, Jenny

More Lotus photos:



Andrew holding Ben



Ben cried for the first time in the minutes after the cord detached.





Benjamin – A Lotus born baby!



***Jenny with my two massage therapists, Amy and Wendy –
one week after the birth***

Jenny's Journal– three and a half weeks

On this beautiful Monday morning I feel like shouting to anyone who is interested... "I AM FREE!!" The joy that fills my heart is bursting to overflowing. Our living room is a mess– the mix of bedding from Paul's nighttime nest (he takes Benjamin for at least one sleep cycle a night so I can get my dream sleep), school books, breakfast dishes and cheerios on the floor, coats, shoes, socks, newspaper mess, and the scent of pot pies burning in the over fill my nose with overwhelming scent. I just asked Paul to take a picture with the digital camera, for me to include with this post. Nothing changed, just us, as we are at three and a half weeks postpartum.



Hatch family at three and a half weeks

I have been thinking all week about Heavenly Father. With Christmas approaching and the reality of Christ's simple birth displayed all over the Christian world in song, theatre, movies, plays, and our yearly family tradition of acting out the Christmas story on Christmas eve— Shelly and Allison switch off who is Mary every other year and Jeff and Andy generally play all the rest of the roles— Joseph, shepherds, wise men, angels. In the past few years we have used dolls to depict baby Jesus, but this year we will have a live baby to enjoy during our nativity play.

I have been wondering if the Master of the Universe in the form of our Heavenly Father was trying to send us a subtle but clear message when he chose to send his only begotten son into the world under the most humble of circumstances. As I prepared for my birth by keeping myself spotlessly clean and avoiding the infection I was so concerned about because my water broke three days before the birth— a few times as I obsessed about cleanliness, I was forced to think of my sisters in other situations who give birth under the most raw realities. Then I thought of Mary laboring to birth the savior of the world in a barn surrounded by the sights and smells of animals. With my modern education, I wouldn't dream of birthing around an animal, in fact I banished our dog from the upstairs bedrooms during the final weeks of my pregnancy and hardly let her see the baby until he was a few days old, out of fear that the "dirty dog" who loves to eat other animals' poop, might get my baby sick.

But I wonder if our heavenly parent was trying to send us a message when he decided to let his child be born

without a doctor, anesthetic machines, scissors, knives, and a supposedly "sterile" environment. As GOD, he could have provided the most lush situation for his son— perhaps an older experienced mother, a palace with lots of servants, midwives and doctors scurrying about to help Mary with her birth. Instead he chose a woman who was little more than a child in age, she was traveling, she and Joseph were poor, and she ended up giving birth in the most humble place.

My own mother had to nurse because of my parent's poverty. I am so grateful mom and dad were in school and broke when the babies started coming. Because my beautiful mother had to nurse, a pattern was established that continued for the remainder of her eight babies. We all enjoyed the blessing of a mother who fed her babies mother's milk, and her legacy continues today with her six married children— all of my siblings have embraced natural parenting to one degree or another— and all of my nieces and nephews enjoy the love of parents who are gently nurturing them and mothers who are home. This brings me much joy.

I have had quite a few friends call and ask me if it is true that Paul and I really gave birth all alone. In response to one friend asking me why we decided to give birth alone I said, "I can trust my husband to go the distance with me. I know that he will not try to hurry things along because he has a ball game that he wants to watch, or another engagement planned. I know that he will not pull out a pair of scissors and cut me because he is impatient, I know he will not pull on my child's head or do things to try to hurry me along."

While I was birthing Ben, Paul pulled out a stack of cloth diapers and some olive oil and helped me by bringing me those diapers, well-soaked in hot water and the oil to place on my bottom. I had no fear that he would abandon me. He was concerned at my distress and a few times asked, "what can I do?" One time I asked him to sing to me, another time I asked him to rub my back, and towards the end when the effort to push caused the sweat to pour off my body like a flood, I asked him to turn on the ceiling fan as I was so hot, then he pulled out a water bottle and sprayed water all over my head and back to help me cool down. He was the perfect birth attendant. And he was all I needed.

I think I will finish this post by sharing the one scary moment for me during the birthing process. During the birth I had no fear. I had horrible pain, overwhelming sensations in my back and my hips, and some fear that I would tear as he crowned. But for me the scary moments were right after the birth. Because of the way our last UC went with everything quickly descending into chaos and fear with baby not breathing and me bleeding my life away, I had to face a few demons in these moments right after the birth. The first fear was quickly overcome as Benjamin sucked in his first big gulp of air within a second of being fully born. As I laid down on the bed and latched him on to my breast, the second fear of me hemorrhaging was starting to be dealt with as I felt my uterus start to clamp down with the effects of nursing. (FYI – I did NO fundal massage, I didn't even touch my tummy after the birth). With one huge contraction I felt my placenta plop down into my vagina and I felt a little bit of fear, what if the placenta detaching

meant more blood than we could handle alone? Paul lifted up the blanket and looked at the placenta and said he could not see any excess blood coming out. I was relieved, and trusted that my continued nursing would take care of things.

But all of a sudden I started to shake all over. I know this is normal as I have had this reaction with most of my babies— either from the physical effort, hormonal changes or whatever, I knew that shaking was normal, but as we were alone I felt fear creep into my heart. Then I became very cold and thirsty. I was very pale and pictures taken at this time show a general dusky look about my face. Paul had already given me a few blessings during the labor to help me with various issues, but it was this experience that was the most profound. I felt myself overtaken with the cold, shaking and fear. I asked Paul to give me another blessing. As he did a warmth entered my belly that was so real. I felt this warmth go into my limbs and up to my face. As this warmth overtook me, I started crying. I don't know what was happening in my body at that moment, but Heavenly Father did, and he fixed it. Every time I remember this moment, the feeling of freedom, empowerment and excitement I feel for unassisted birth grows. It makes me think of the wonderful statement from Carol Balizet's book *Born in Zion* in which she states, "what if something went wrong and all I had to depend on was GOD?"

As I thought of the blood/pitocin cycle I was thrust into during my first birth, when the doctor yanked out my placenta he caused a terrible bleed that was dealt with by a few shots of pitocin in my leg- research has taught me that

this can set up a situation in the mother where more hormone is needed with each recurring birth to not only get things started but to also clamp things down after the birth. Check out this article if you want to read up on it. [click here](#)- go to commentaries and hit pitocin for an interesting insight into why pitocin creates a troubling situation for the mother of a large family.

I would rather have a righteous priesthood holder, who has faith in Jesus Christ, and utilizes his priesthood for good rather than the most educated, credentialed birthing professional on the planet. This is safety and it is what provided me with PERFECT healing after my birth. No doctor or midwife could have dealt with whatever was happening in my body the way God did. His perfect grace gave me an immediate healing, so much so that by the time we were three hours from the birth, my cheeks were pink, there was a glow in my eyes and I felt so good I stood up and emptied my very full bladder with no pain, and then took a shower with no dizziness, no excess blood loss and I was able to enjoy our first night in relatively little pain—that all came the next three days in the form of after birth pains and sore nipples. I also want to add that Paul gave me blessings again for both of the afterbirth contractions and boob pain when they left me writhing in pain and tears.

All told I had about six priesthood blessings from my lover and the Lord's perfect healing power entered into my body and my heart and gave me relief in various and sundry ways. I took no drugs at any point in the past ten months, heck, I haven't taken any drugs in years. I used my faith in the savior, coupled with my husband's priesthood to bless my body.

Paul and I were talking a few days after the birth, and he said that while he was grateful everything went so well, he wished there was some happy medium between midwife and complete unassisted birthing. I told him that we had the perfect medium in the form of our God, and I reminded him of what happened right after the birth. Perhaps because he didn't feel the miracle in his own body, he is not as aware as me of how profound a healing that was for me. But it was real and good, and I want to thank my Lord and Savior in a public way for giving me every answer to every prayer offered during this whole process.

I realized the other day that I was waiting for the other shoe to drop. We have been so conditioned to "bad things" happening around our births, I was sort of waiting for something to happen to mar the beauty and perfection of this experience. I went to church for the first time yesterday and as I felt the loving acceptance and joy from my ward family, I realized that part of this healing that has taken place for Paul and I has been for our fellow travelers in Christ to accept us and our lifestyle in a very real way. Not once has anyone expressed rejection towards us and our birth, just curiosity and joy. I have even felt a fierce protectiveness from certain friends, which has been amazing to feel. Especially since one of these friends is an older lady who works as a social worker!!! She saw Ben's cord all black and still attached at day three when she came over to help out with home care, and was simply curious about it, nothing weird. I shared a simple article on lotus birth from the mother magazine with her and that was it!

Is it possible that our tragic adventures with parenting are over and any more children we might bring into the

world will just come gently and easily the way they were meant too? It is a nice thing to think about, and EXPERIENCE!

I hope to share other insights from our birth in the coming weeks, I don't have time right now.

The Freedom to Fail and Thoughts on Death...

Journal entry 13 – Saturday December 21, 2002

Here we are at eight weeks post partum. Ben has been a joy and we are anticipating happy Christmas and New Year's celebrations. With the success of our beautiful unassisted birth, I have been thinking much of past failures. We have had many failures in our married life. We have had blunders of misjudgment, looking beyond the mark, and attempting to run faster than we had strength. A few specific problems that come to mind are overwhelming debt, a seven year old that had not been taught to read, who was being persecuted by peers for her deficiencies, and of course, our botched unassisted birth in 1996.

We have had some people criticize and judge us for these failures and it has been difficult to bear the load of shame and guilt, especially regarding those that pertain to our children.

I would like to comment on failure....

It was Christmas time eight years ago when I traveled home with Jeff to spend the holidays with my family. I had just given Paul my ultimatum that if he wanted to have any more children with me, we would be birthing at home and alone. When I walked into my parent's home the tension

around me was like a physical force. One of my brother's had told my family that I had drawn a line in the sand about birth with my husband and they had taken it as evidence that I was going crazy again. Having suffered from post partum psychosis after my first baby, I didn't have too much credibility as a sane person and my family saw my obsession with unschooling, not vaccinating, and unassisted birth as evidence that I was going crazy again.

I remember talking with my siblings one afternoon about these topics. We were sitting in my parent's living room. Most of us were married with young children and babies. As we talked, the conversation became heated as I attempted to articulate what was in my heart to them. I had not yet coined the term Family Sovereignty (go [here](#)), and I was passionately trying to convey the jumble of ideas and words that were rolling around in my head and on my tongue about family freedom. My brother, who was in Law school at the time, was expressing his dismay at the idea of homeschool and the concept of un-schooling in particular and said something along the lines of, "well, who is going to hold these parents accountable if they fail? I mean, what if their children grow up as illiterate, non-contributing members of society?" As I tried to defend my supposedly indefensible position and my own words were twisted and used against me during our debate, I just gave up in frustration with the words, "We parents are fed up with being bullied into practices and procedures that we know are harmful to our children, and we are just not going to take it anymore."

I felt a condescending tolerance from my siblings as we finished up the debate. Our parents had raised us to

speaking our minds and share opinions and insights in a thoughtful and articulate way. Always respecting the views of others even if they seemed wacky. But at the end of this conversation, I felt like I had poorly communicated what was then rising up in my soul like a tidal wave of feeling. I felt as if my family was laughing at me for my heartfelt beliefs. But it went beyond laughter a few days later when my parents told me they thought I should get my tubes tied and not have any more children. My mother said she believed that I had been brainwashed by Laura Shanley and they were very concerned that I was going to ruin my marriage.

No one seemed concerned about my marriage being ruined if I had another hospital birth. No one seemed to understand that the fully documented incompetence of the public schools could potentially ruin my children academically. No one seemed to care that my children could be permanently damaged by being vaccinated.

This heated family debate was a turning point for me. I looked inward and spent the next few years reading, teaching childbirth, and formulating in my own mind the "debate". To me, the heart of these issues was my brother's question. "Who is going to hold these parents accountable if they fail, and if society has a bunch of illiterate, sickly, unproductive, do-nothings to deal with who is going to "FORCE" these non-conformist parents to conform to societal standards of parenting in regards to birth, education and health care?" Who indeed?

I have to laugh thinking of the medical profession, the education establishment, and the governmental powers that be judging me when they are accountable to NO ONE and

who research has shown are controlled and manipulated by the most powerful global companies on the earth.

Companies that live and prosper off the illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, and ill health of families the world over. I have a vested interest in the health and intelligence of my children for they will be raising my grandchildren. I have yet to meet the parent in my home birthing, home schooling world who has the attitude, "I want to raise a bunch of sickly idiots who have no ability to care for themselves and have nothing to contribute to society." It just has not happened. However, based upon my interactions with various institutions, I am not so certain that others' interest in my family goes much beyond the dollars attached to my womb, my children, and my family being involved in their money making scheme's.

The only way to break up the monopolies in health care and education is for enlightened parents to simply reject what they have to offer us and forge a different path. I am nursing my sweet boy as I type this and as I look into his crystal clear blue eyes, see his smiling face and think of the daily work of nourishing, cleansing, and balancing my body with nutrition, exercise, and vast amounts of spiritual food in order to nourish him, I feel somewhat angry at those professionals who would accuse me of being a neglectful parent because I reject the overpriced birth services and educational theories and practices they would force/entice/coerce me to use.

Failure? I am less afraid of failure than I am of being deprived of my right to fail.

In a free society ***WE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TO FAIL IN ORDER TO SUCEED!!!***

We cannot have it any other way. The law of opposites is not a theory, it is not wishful thinking, it is THE LAW that governs the universe.

I want to share a long passage from the Book of Mormon because it is the absolute best articulation of this truth that I have ever come across...

Lehi speaking to his son Jacob....

"For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

Wherefore it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

And if ye say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these

things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither is the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

And now my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

Wherefore the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

And I lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

And After Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden to till the earth.

And they have brought forth children, yea, even the family of all the earth.

And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while still in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

And now behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were

created; and they must have remained forever and had no end.

And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

But behold all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

ADAM FELL THAT MEN MIGHT BE; AND MEN ARE THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE JOY!

And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

And now my sons, I would that ye should look to that great Mediator, and hearken unto his great

commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom.

I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation, and I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet. And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls. Amen."

2 Nephi 2:11-30

I believe we are here on the earth to learn to know good from evil. The main way we learn to know the difference is by our experiences in life. If we are forced to only live the kind of life that the corporate powers that be dictate is acceptable to them and the rest of society, they we are living a lie, and are being compelled to live the materialistic chemical lifestyle that makes lots of money for those in power, but leaves the family deprived of ultimate health, intelligence, and freedom, not to mention, financial stability.

Death...ultimately in life, especially the sovereign life that we have chosen to live, the greatest fear for parents is the fear of death.

I had a year of death in 2001.

Early that year a dear LDS friend died of a bacterial infection after a miscarriage. She was the mother of five home schooled children, was a LLL leader, and homebirther. I can't tell you how rare it is for me to become friends in my community with a Mormon mother who is into this lifestyle. We met at our Friday homeschool support group. Our friendship was immediate and I felt such a kinship with Michelle. When she died, I was left spinning emotionally. I could not understand why Heavenly Father would allow this sweet and perfect mother to die so needlessly when she had so many young children to nurture.

I just saw her children last Friday at our Christmas party. Her husband has continued to homeschool and work from home- fortunately he had a computer job that enabled him to stay home- and while the whole family still looks a little sad, they are going on with life.

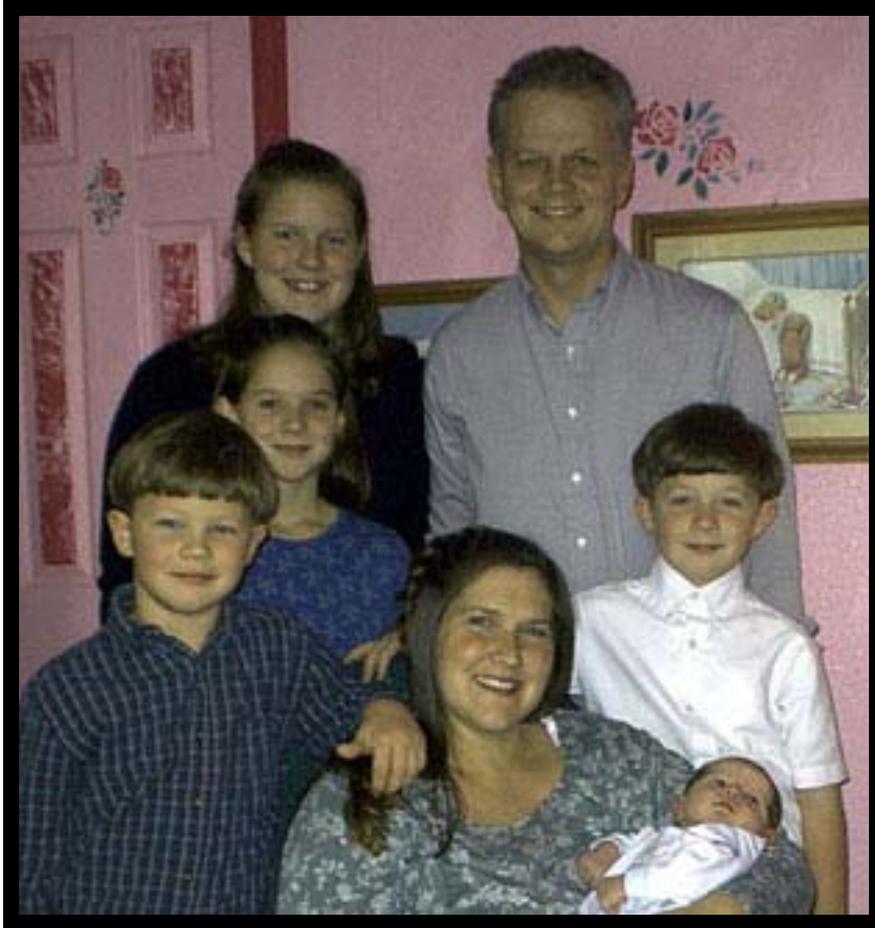
The summer after Michelle died three older ladies who were suffering with cancer died. I was close to one of these church friends and while the deaths were not unanticipated, they were losses just the same.

At the end of the summer I received word that my brother Dave had died. I was so dumbfounded and shocked that he was gone that I went into an emotional tail spin that only really stopped the month I conceived Ben last January. Because of these five deaths last year I was forced to spend many hours trying to settle things in my own mind about life and death and the purpose of our time here on earth. I don't have all the answers regarding death, but I do know that a fear of death is the one great impediment to parents claiming their sovereignty in regards to home birth.

The question we all have to ask as we prepare to birth alone at home is this, "Should we have the "failure" experience of our child dying, or even dying ourselves as mothers, does this mean that we have to throw all of these ideals out like the proverbial baby with the bathwater? Or in the name of "sovereignty" do we muster our faith and take the leap that lands us safely into the world of Freedom?"

We must have the right to fail. Fail at birth, fail at breastfeeding, fail at educating, fail at anything and everything we try....for if we don't we are nothing more than slaves. Those are the thought in my head this beautiful December day.

My Unassisted Birth Story



Benjamin- one week old

I had many contractions during my pregnancy but five days before Ben was born things changed, and I had some contractions that came every five minutes that were really hard and opened my cervix enough that I started to pass some mucous plug with lots of bloody show. I was excited and felt happy that after so many years of hoping for another baby, my empty arms would soon be filled.

That afternoon my contractions picked up and I thought I was in true labor. Physically they took all of my energy. Emotionally I found that I had a battle on my hands. The battle can be summed up as a type of spiritual warfare. It was not just my battle. My husband Paul also

experienced five days of his own fight. For him, the fears swirled around his issues with the powers that be. We had an unassisted birth six years before that resulted in a transfer to the hospital.

The most critical post birth complications are Baby not breathing and Mom bleeding. With this birth we had both problems crop up, and decided to call 911 for assistance. I am grateful for the help we had after our birth, and for the learning that resulted from not having things go well. Had everything gone perfectly, we would have missed a great opportunity these past six years, the opportunity to learn more. I did much research on bleeding issues and Paul took an infant CPR class. These efforts comforted us and helped us to feel more prepared this time around. Even with these preparations and our deep religious faith, the five days before Benjamin's birth was a time of trial. Our faith in natural childbirth and unassisted birth in particular was put to the test.

After the birth Paul said he thought those five days were for him, to battle it out in his mind. To determine the type of life we were going to live, and whether or not we would cave to the pressure- mostly internal pressure (but based upon a fearful reality) to conform to society and live a mainstream life. Or if we were going to overcome our fears of being labeled and/or prosecuted as "medical neglecters" by doctors and social workers and live the life we have felt guided to with home birth, home school and what I term "Family Sovereignty" as the ideal for our family.

Happily our battle resulted in a perfect outcome on all levels; emotionally, spiritually, and even though I had a

difficult time physically— I was much more concerned about the long term affects of this birth on my psyche, my marriage, and my relationships than I was on the short term physical pain.

I hope my insights will be helpful to those of you who are preparing for an unassisted birth. We must understand that Laura Shanley is right, and it is our beliefs as mothers that largely affect our birth outcomes. Our husbands and families beliefs also deeply affect us, as well as anyone else we decide to invite into our home to assist us with the labor.

Because I can't control how others feel about birth and only have control over my own mind, I was drawn to unassisted birth as a means of SAFELY welcoming my children without having to deal with other people's fears. I felt this negativity during my three hospital births, especially from the medical people around me. I studied Quantum Mechanics in college and didn't understand why these so called scientists hadn't embraced these same truths in their physics classes. But perhaps their obstetrical educations had deprived them of the truth surrounding belief.

If I learned nothing else during my first solo birth, I learned that birth for me was easy, unhindered, and smooth when I was alone. (I called Paul up to help me during Andy's birth in 1996 only after I had pushed out his head).

On Sunday night, October 20th 2002, my contractions completely stopped and we enjoyed a quiet spiritual evening with our older children. We talked to them about birth and told them stories from their own labors that illustrated the true nature of natural childbirth with its many

stops and starts. We sang and prayed together and all went to bed excited, but willing to wait.

The next day, I again had a long period of pre-labor that lasted for hours. I passed more mucous plug and felt the contractions really getting strong. It had been a full moon that night and I enjoyed watching the moon go down out of my west facing bedroom window as I contracted in the birth pool during the early morning hours of Monday. I heard the children start to wake up and felt things slow down and then I fell asleep in the water. When I woke up everything had stopped.

That day I went about my normal routine but Paul decided to work from home. He ended up working from home all week. This was one of the happiest weeks we have ever had. We decided to let the children take the week off from schoolwork and spent hours playing at the park, walking, and cooking/eating together. On Monday night I walked to my exercise class and as soon as I sat down on my mat, my water broke. It was all over my pants and the mat, and I decided to go home. Once home, I again felt excitement/nervousness that my baby would mostly likely come soon. None of my previous labors had started with the water breaking and so this was new for us.

I was surprised how much fluid spilled out of me over the next 72 hours. It was a lightly tinged green color and smelled alive, like a fresh rain on autumn leaves. I noticed that each time I ate, drank, or walked the fluid came out in a gush. I used cloth diapers to catch it and was really surprised that my body could leak so much without going into labor. I mourned the loss of my water birth. With the membranes ruptured and water leaking all over the place I

knew it would not be wise to get into the pool. I really focused on staying well hydrated, nourished, upbeat, and rested. I also asked my doula to come give me a few massages and bring me wheat grass juice. I used the juice to help keep my blood clean, hematocrit up, and to nourish the baby.

My daughters gave me a raindrop therapy each of those three days. (If you want to order the raindrop therapy kit go to www.youngliving.us and use my member number 29526 to get this fabulous aromatherapy kit!) This is an essential oil treatment that is an overall boost to the body. I did it to help prevent infection and to give me energy. We made the decision not to tell anyone that my water had broken. We told the kids, but asked them not to share the news, and they didn't.

I had a few contractions but nothing regular for the three days my water was broken and that was a blessing as the uterine activity of Sunday had really tired me out. I took lots of naps and spent most of my emotional energy working on my thoughts, keeping them pure. It was very powerful for me to run the lyrics to some of my favorite songs through my mind. I will share the words from one of these songs. The music helped me to stay focused on my child and not get lost in fear, the greatest of which was the fear of a prolapsed cord.

Paper Dream - Reprise 2 (From the musical Saturday's Warrior)

I take some paper in my hand, and with a pencil draw a man,

The dream of what I'd really, really like to be.

*A man with courage in his brow, whose licked his doubts
and fears somehow,
A Warrior of great nobility.
But who am I? Just a wandering kid, a cipher on the wall,
Not even brave at all.
And where's my dream like his that I would fight for?
And where's my cause like his that I would die for?
But still the paper's in my hand and every day I sketch the
man,
The dream of what I'd really like to be.
A man with courage in his brow, whose licked his doubts
and fears somehow.
A Warrior of great nobility.
A brave and noble fiery youth, who's not afraid to die for
truth
Whose tall and straight but best of all he's free,
He's free.*

I ran the words to this song through my mind a hundred times over those three days, and each time they gave me strength and courage.

I also sang hymns, quoted myself scripture and belief suggestions and realized that during this time it was crucial that I stay mindful of my thoughts every waking moment. Each time the fear would come into my heart: fear of infection, fear that I would never go into labor, fear of prolapsed cord, and fear of someone learning that my water had broken and might try to convince me or force me to be induced, I would just switch the negative thoughts to positive and run the words through my mind, usually the words to the above quoted song. A few times I went down

to my piano and played the music of this song, and each time I started to cry as I thought of my warrior son who was soon to be born. It was a comfort to me to cook and clean and stay focused on my housework as a way to distract myself from the reality of the situation. (Two full weeks overdue and water broken) The day before I went into labor I found myself cleaning under my stove and scrubbing it all over. I thought about deep cleaning my oven, but I decided to save that task for another day.

The day I went into labor was just a normal day. I went for a walk, had a massage, tended my nephew and cooked and cleaned. We took a few pictures and my visiting teachers stopped by. About 5PM I came downstairs to make a milk shake with calcium/magnesium and minerals and then I decided to check my emails. I was writing to my friend Veronika Robinson when contractions really picked up. As I typed out my email to her, I told her I thought I might be going into real labor, and once finished I headed upstairs to my bed. I laid down in a semi-reclining position with lots of pillows supporting my back, my arms and legs. I contracted for two hours with little noise, but as things picked up in intensity, I started to vocalize loudly.

As the contraction would start I would start a low moan that gradually became a loud AHHHHHHHHH! This very effectively moved all of the energy in my uterus up out of my body through my mouth and made it so I was able to handle the first five hours of this six hour labor very effectively on my own.

Paul and the children were in and out of the room a few times asking me if I thought this was really it, I was in my own space and was rather vague about my progression.

Paul did bring me a couple of hot, wet cloth diapers to place on my bottom and I used my oils: Gentle baby, Valor, Panaway, and Myrrh to help my body stretch and prepare. At one point I was all alone, as Paul had fallen asleep in the children's room on the floor while reading them stories, and one by one they also fell asleep. I used the toilet a few times to keep my bladder empty but always returned to my position on my back on the bed. At one point I sang the song "When You Believe" from the Prince of Egypt out loud. I had chosen this song to be the theme song of the Unassisted Childbirth movement back in 1998. The words are perfect, powerful and were a great strength to me as I approached transition. I was battling a fear that one of the reasons I bled so bad with my last birth was because I had squatted during pushing, and so I was determined to push the baby out on my bed in the semi reclining position. I continued to gush amniotic fluid during the labor and focused on staying well hydrated with a water bottle by my side.

During transition, which only lasted a few minutes, the contractions were one on top of the other and I was VERY loud with my vocalizing. Paul woke up during this time and came in and asked me how things were going. He wanted to know if he could do anything to help and I asked him to sing me hymns. So he sat down on my rocking chair and pulled out the hymnbook and started singing. He sang for the first hour of my pushing. I cannot emphasize enough how powerful an activity this was. It had the combined effect of inviting the spirit of the Lord into our home and calming my spirit. Paul sang "When Faith Endures", which

was the hymn that I had chosen to be the theme of our 2001 Unassisted Childbirth conference....

I will not doubt, I will not fear. God's love and strength are always near.

His promised gift helps me to find, and inner strength and peace of mind.

I give the father willingly, my trust, my prayers, humility.

His spirit guides, his love assures that fear departs when faith endures.

I was starting to get tired after an hour of pushing on the bed, and I prayed and asked God which position would be best for me to effectively push the baby out. I felt that I should stand and squat during my contractions. In prayer I expressed my fear of bleeding and I felt a calm assurance that I would not bleed too much. So I stood up. As the next contraction came on I squatted down deeply by my bed and pushed! I felt the baby inch slowly down with each push. In between contractions I sat on my birthing ball and rested.

As his head moved down, I felt an increasing pain in my back, hips and pelvis. I have had three painless vaginal births and so this was new for me. I have determined that the difference was pushing with the water bag intact compared to not having much water gushing along with that fifteen inch head. It was like birthing a brick. As his head worked it's way down I felt so much pain I wondered if I could do it. Never did I even consider going to the hospital or using drugs, but I did have a few moments of self doubt, wondering how big the baby was, and what if it was breech or posterior? I continued to have the fear of a

prolapsed cord and as this fear worked in me, I just felt determined to get my child born.

I pushed with everything I had using the Bradley technique of breath in, breath out, breath in, breath out and then deep breath in... put chin on chest, hold breath and PUSH!! It was very effective combined with the full squat. During the last few contractions I felt this heat overtake my body and sweat was just pouring off me. I asked Paul to turn on the ceiling fan and then he poured water all over my head and back. I told him to put some panaway on my back and he tossed about 30 drops of it all over my back and hips. Then he rubbed my lower back during the contractions in a very effective counter pressure. It didn't take the pain away, but it did make it possible for me to do it.

On the third to last contraction I felt Ben's head all of a sudden move in a big way through the birth canal and I reached down and felt his head crowning. I was concerned about tearing, and thought about asking for a hot compress, but decided I wanted Paul behind me ready to catch rather than in the bathroom getting me a cloth. Paul pulled out the bulb syringe and prepared himself.

With the second to last contraction I pushed out his head, and then with the final out came his body. These contractions were closer together and he was born quickly from the time he crowned. Paul sucked out his nose and mouth before he was completely born and then caught him. As he passed Ben to me through my legs I turned to look at him and saw him leaping for joy. I have heard of many men fainting in the delivery room, or having a fear of fainting while their wives give birth, but I have never heard of a

father jumping for JOY when the baby is safely born. Paul did and it is my favorite memory of the birth.

I passed the placenta within fifteen minutes with a large plop, and then bled a little. We used prayer and blessings during this time to help with my pain and various post birth symptoms. The children started to wake up, and one by one they came into our bedroom. We took many pictures and had a joyful three hours bonding with our 9 and 1/2 pound boy. Then the children all went back to bed and Paul and I fell asleep on our bed with Benjamin nestled on his chest. After our wedding day, this day was the happiest, most fulfilling day of our life!



Laura Shanley, my friend and mentor, came to visit a few days after the birth

Final Entry for Birth Journal

January 15, 2003

Today I finished up my post partum work with Amy. She has come now since the week of my birth to work as my Doula. Her care was the traditional care of India developed by Martha Oakes, who worked as my doula with my last baby. I hired Amy early in my pregnancy to do this important work.

I mentioned early in this journal that I experienced a post partum psychosis after my first birth in 1988. The very month we conceived Ben in January of 2002 was the month that the media was skewering Rusty Yates as being the cause of his wife's post partum psychosis. Some in the media claimed him not changing the babies diaper's caused his wife to go psychotic and kill all five of their children.

Paul and I heard quite a few allegations of why this mother went crazy, and to us, all of those reasons were bogus.

Women go crazy because they have been molested and raped. Women go crazy because they have experienced birth torture and watched their babies be poked, prodded, and cut. Women go crazy because they don't get enough sleep. Women go crazy because they have too many demands on their bodies and minds and cannot keep them balanced. Women go crazy because they are afraid. Women go crazy because they don't have proper understanding of their true needs post partum. And women in our society are at risk because of the perfectionism we all have to deal with on a daily basis.

The guy on TV who claimed that the reason Andrea went crazy was because she gave birth without epidurals, or the psychiatrist who claimed that Andrea would not be a

threat to society as long as she kept on her medications and didn't have any more children. I personally believe the many drugs she was on contributed to her psychosis. And who knows what triggers and stressors were working away in her mind?

With all the talk in the media, the concern for us as a couple was that with my previous history of psychosis, and all of the extra trauma and stress of memories of being sexually assaulted coming into my head, that I was a prime candidate for a post partum incident. I believe the numbers are one woman out of a thousand experiences a post partum psychosis, but once a woman has had one, the numbers go to 1 out of 6. For many women those statistics are just too frightening and so they opt not to have babies.

I detail quite a bit about my recovery from psychosis in my book *A Mother's Journey*, my story of healing after Post Partum Psychosis.

All I can say is that for Paul and I everything was heightened for this birth and this baby. It was really a "do or die trying" time for us. I hired Amy perhaps with a bit of fear and trepidation as my motivation knowing that the aryuveda mother/baby program has as one of its goals the prevention of post partum psychosis.

However, I believe all women should have this care. It is difficult for me to share the details of this care even now, because I know that so many women need it, and deserve it, but do not have the financial means to get it. I know one of my big frustrations over the years was knowing I could do a certain thing for myself to make me healthier, but I was continually frustrated because I didn't feel like I had

the money or more importantly, the support of my husband to get what I needed.

I want to share what this care entailed and what it meant to me, in the hopes that every women can strive to create this sort of a post partum for herself, because ultimately it will be her baby that benefits the most from it, and the family at large.

I am deeply concerned that as the unassisted birthing movement really revs up, women will get the impression that having children is no big deal, "see all those UC moms on the internet dropping babies every day with no help" and they will not understand or be prepared for the realities of life with a small baby. No matter how well your birth goes, how empowered you feel by it, it is an amazing outlay of energy caring for a newborn. As I type this I hope I can do it justice after my night of being woke up four times to nurse Ben, and my day of homeschool and caring for my family. I am so exhausted at times I just cry. But I am determined to write this final piece for this journal "in the moment" because I want to write it remembering clearly how it feels.

Amy came and gave me five massages the week of the birth. She gave me a massage a few hours before I went into labor and was back at my house nine hours after the birth to work on my tired body. She gave a ninety minute massage each time she came and if my calculations are correct she gave me 35 massages over the past 13 weeks

The five weeks after the birth she brought me hot food every day except sat and sun. All vegetarian fare and very easy to digest. I will give recipes for two of my favorite things:

Cooked Cereal

Boil 4 C. Water with
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp Flax Seeds
Add in 1/2 cup cracked cereal (any kind will do)
Lower heat and let cook for 1/2 hour
Add in 1 tbs butter and sweetener of choice

Mother's Milk

Boil 2 1/2 C Water with
2 Cinnamon sticks
4 Cardamon pods
1 tsp Nutmeg
4 Cloves
2 tsp ginger or fresh diced ginger
5 Peppercorns
Hard boil for 10 minutes
Add 4 1/2 cups milk
1 tsp Tumeric
Bring to a boil, then turn off heat
Add sweetener – honey, sugar, maple syrup etc...

Ben is crying so I must go nurse.
(later)

He is asleep now, but I am determined to have this finished within the hour so I can get back to bed. So I will not edit it twelve times as I am used to doing. Sorry if it ends up being a little wacky, but I am tired!
Points I want to make.....

1. Anyone who has had a friend give birth who is from India, is sometimes amazed when that woman's mother shows up to help after the birth, with a maid or two to help out and they end up staying for three months. I have heard of several women in America who had this type of care. We in the "new" countries of the US and Canada are often amazed and intrigued with this level of care and seemingly overkill. Generations back in our family histories, we heard stories of great grandma who lived on the farm and birthed 14 children and worked every day of her life on the farm, and breastfed and cooked and cleaned for all those children, and never was sick a day in her life.... all these legends floating around. Or the stories of women working in the field who just drop a baby, tie it to her back, and goes on working.

These are interesting stories, but not grounded in reality. A new mother's body is just as delicate as her newborn, and during the initial six weeks post partum, a sacred window of opportunity opens up for each woman after each birth, where if she is cared for and nurtured and enabled to heal with nourishing foods and massage, a great rejuvenation can take place. But if she is not able to get this type of care, the opposite can happen and the body can age faster, become more depleted, and most men perceive the beginning of the end of their marriage as occurring sometime in the post partum period.

2. Post partum care is the black hole of women's health care. There is an infrastructure in place to help women when they crash and burn and it largely amounts to drugs,

electroshock, and warehousing in a mental hospital of the crazed woman, but there is not much else out there, and prevention is almost unheard of in our society.

3. Correct understanding of the true needs of women post partum will revolutionize our society.

4. Women themselves will have to be the ones to get this care as no one in the medical profession has any incentive to implement it, as there is no money in prevention.

5. As we learn how to care for ourselves properly with nutrition, rest, and massage, we will go from just surviving our post partum's to truly thriving during them.

The differences I have felt this time around with the care are:

No breast infections, a very happy, healthy baby who has not even had the sniffles even though everyone around us in our community is sick.

I am tired and I cry sometimes, but I do not have that out of control emotional state that really freaks my husband out.

I have not been psychotic.

I have not been manic.

I have not been depressed although I have had memories of being raped come up during the massages. I just looked at the memories and noticed them and then they were gone.

With all of my post partum periods I have had feelings of wanting to hurt my babies. When that fatigue kicks in, and I am so tired at night there have been times when I felt

a desire to just toss them out the window. The fact that all of my children lived through that new baby time is evidence that I never acted on those thoughts. But the mothering world and the Oprah audience were done a great disservice when on her post partum psychosis show Oprah made the case that women who had those homicidal thoughts were psychotic and needed psychiatric care. I would say that almost ALL women I have talked to over the years in a heart to heart fashion who have shared with me their struggles during that sleep deprived time have claimed that they had moments of wanting to hurt the baby. True psychosis is differentiated by a complete break with reality, In which the mother does not know she is crazy, and it generally takes on a religious tone, whether or not the women is religious. I was saddened to think how many women may have run to the psyche profession to have their heads shrunk after watching that show simply because during the overwhelm of new mothering they struggled with those thoughts.

Before I had Benjamin, I believed that the struggle I had with my thoughts, particularly after my last unassisted birth, which was overwhelming homicidal thoughts towards my son Andrew, was largely because he was taken away from me right after the birth and I was not able to breastfeed and bond with him for 28 hours. Imagine my surprise when after my empowered beautiful homebirth with Ben, after a couple weeks with little sleep and still recovering from the birth I had a thought of wanting to drop him. I started to cry when this thought came into my head, mostly because my theory was smashed to bits. It was then that I decided that no matter how your birth goes, and

no matter how much help you have post partum, sleep deprivation and the demands of mothering can bring those thoughts into your head. I shared with Amy my struggles and it helped to confide in someone during that time. Since that week I have had those thoughts off and on and I use them as a stress barometer to let me know that I am doing too much and need to rest and eat and sleep. Ben is a happy, healthy boy, but I am one tired mom and my prayer in sharing this information with whoever is reading is simply to encourage you also to be smart in how you live your post partum months.

Imagine a world where we all had three months after the birth where our wonderfully educated family and friends and our "village" all came to our home for three months to bring us food, nourishing massage, and cared for our older children. For three months all we had to do was stay in bed and nurse our babies. I had this intention before the birth, but by the third week I was back at church, I was in the grocery store by the fourth week, by the fifth week I was doing school and laundry and trying to make sense of my kitchen. Even then I felt like I had been totally pampered and babied and felt guilty for all the money I spent and the friends who knew what I was doing with the doula care, while supportive, didn't seem to express any kind of a desire to have that care for themselves.

One of the things Martha Oakes taught me as we socialized during my fourth pregnancy was that in all of her research of post partum healing, not just in India but in cultures the world over, their was a surprising similarity of care. Massage, oily foods, heat, watery overcooked foods that were easy to digest, lots of digestive herbs, rest, and

lots of time for recovery. The thing is, people in indigenous cultures knew that if the mother did not get her proper care, the baby would most likely not make it, as breastfeeding was a do or die experience. No formula manufacturer was waiting in the wings to back the mother up. Oh, perhaps a nice woman in the village would take over the care of the baby if the mother had a breastfeeding failure, but extreme efforts were put out to ensure that the mother could nurse her own baby. This is also detailed in Weston Price's book *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*.

If we are going to do this primal mothering all the way, my challenge to those of you who are feeling called to live this lifestyle, is to do it all the way. Don't just survive motherhood, thrive with it. I feel sad that it took us five babies to get to the point in our marriage where we were willing to create this space for me to heal. We implemented some of the principles with each of our babies, and as the years have clicked by, each healing experience after birth has gotten better than the last. I hope and pray that by the time I have my next baby I am able to work through whatever impediments are in my mind now and grasp my whole three months after the birth as my time to fully back away and heal. I did three weeks and for me that was big, but I just couldn't seem to overcome the things in my mind this time to allow myself that space. It is not even three months and I am completely immersed back into my life.

I pray that my granddaughters will know and implement these things with their babies. I want to be ready to teach and help them make it real. I believe healing the post partum time for families will cause a great shift in our society towards healing.

***This was the final entry in my Birthlove journal. I decided to add a little more information to this book to give a little bit more information on placenta and cord care.

Benjamin's cord stayed attached for six days. During that time we felt it was very important to keep him in my bedroom, wrapped up with his placenta. Every time I changed his diaper, I changed the diaper on the placenta. It was no problem to keep it wrapped up with him in a receiving blanket. The weather was cold and the placenta was easily kept in place when I swaddled him up in the blanket. I put the placenta by his lower back.

Once I picked him up from the bed and the placenta fell out of the blanket and was hanging by the cord. I thought for sure it would break, or cause Ben pain, but I quickly caught it and put it back in the blanket, with no upset, and it did not come off for a few more days.

For navel care, I carefully washed around the cord on Ben's tummy with gentle soap and a cotton cloth. Then I would put a few drops of Frankincense on the belly button and work it in with a cotton swab. This helped to keep any discharged cleansed and encouraged the drying up process.

The placenta continued to drain over the six days, and I found myself sniffing it often while I nursed or just held the baby. I loved the scent- it was so hormonal and earthy. It gave me a calm feeling during the six days after the birth to sniff it and just relax. I continued to put salt and essential oils on the placenta as I changed the diapers.

A few times my older children or my husband would complain about the scent of the placenta, but I just told

them we were not going to cut him away until it fell off naturally. The complaints were mostly lighthearted joking, but I could tell they were getting annoyed with having to be so conscious of the placenta when they picked up Ben. I feel this is one of the most important reasons to leave the cord attached. The whole family is forced to treat the baby more gently, and more carefully with the placenta to think of, and it encourages the family to be aware of the true needs of the baby.

I had a friend from church come over when Ben was three days old to help my children get ready for church. She came up to my bedroom while I was in the bathroom and saw Allison reading Ben a story with the cord hanging out of the blanket. I had been concerned about anyone seeing the cord, or coming into my bedroom without me being able to cover it up, but as she came while I was in the bathroom, I didn't have time to do damage control. She asked Allison what that black thing was coming out of the blanket and Ally said it was his cord. She didn't say anything to me except "hi" and went downstairs to make the children breakfast. Fortunately I had a copy of *The Mother Magazine* in my bedroom, which had the excellent article written by Sarah Buckley on Lotus Birth. It contained pictures and had a wonderful text that was a nice description of lotus birthing. I asked Allison to take the magazine down to my friend and let her read the article.

She told me later that she appreciated reading the article, as it helped her to understand what we were doing. I recommend anyone planning a lotus to have something like this on hand to share with curious family and friends, it was a real help during a vulnerable time. I didn't have too

many friends over during those six days, and most knew of the Lotus, but this one friend is more main stream and also works for social services, and so I was a little concerned about her take on things.

As the time drew near for the cord to fall off, I could see that it was literally hanging by a thread that final day. Ben was enjoying a newborn massage and caught his foot on the cord and was kicking his legs really fast. I thought for sure that would cause the cord to break, but it stayed connected for a few more hours. Later in the day, I was getting ready to change him when I noticed that it had detached. I called out to the family that Ben's cord was off and everyone came running to see. We all were talking and laughing and it was a joyous occasion. Everyone wanted to hold him without the cord attached and I asked Paul to take the placenta and put it in a Ziploc baggie in the freezer until I could do something with it.

Before I put it in the freezer, I cut a two inch piece of the placenta off with a knife and put it in a bottle of essential oils. It was the same bottle of Dream Catcher blend from Young Living that Jeannine had anointed my feet with at my blessing way. I shoved the piece into the bottle, and sniff it occasionally when I feel weepy or sad. Once Paul tried to put some dream catcher on, and realized the placenta piece was in the bottle and he was upset to have that scent on him – it is very strong. But I just leave it in the bottle as my own medicine – powerful hormones to help me when I am sad.

The feelings of loss that come to a mother once she gives birth, and watches her baby quickly grow and change are so horrible, any help is good to manage those feelings.

That womb scent from the placenta is a perfect antidote to the feelings of pain and loss most women feel upon giving birth. Breastfeeding also helps the mother with these feelings of sadness at being separated.

I have felt these same feelings of loss as my children reach various milestones in life. It goes way too fast, this time while they are little. As the days click by more and more quickly, the sense of wanting to make time stop, just for a minute, and embracing the sweet and happy times we share is so real, so important. Then life revs up again, and before we know it they are grown, and don't need us as much.

A few weeks after the birth, I dug a hole in a large planter that holds a lovely rose bush given to me on Mothers day from my husband. It has blossomed just beautifully this season, and I am enjoying the roses right now as I type. I love thinking of my little dried up bit of life, giving life and nutrients to my roses. It makes me feel happy knowing that my placenta is serving my family and my life, rather than being sold to a cosmetic company.

I love that my child received every bit of the cord blood he deserved, rather than having half or a third of it kept in the placenta and cord and cut away from him to be used for some other purpose. Every drop that he extracted from that cord, or that dried up into the little bit of essence served a purpose for our family, for our life and made the circle of Benjamin's conception, birth, and Lotus birth complete.

I pray that every family has the opportunity to experience a Lotus Birth. It is a beautiful and sacred practice that keeps the family quiet during a time when

A Lotus Birth

www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"

quiet and peace are healing and encourages the mother to bond more intently with her child.



Jenny and Benjamin, first feeding – seconds after the birth



*Portrait of Ben by my dearest friend Susanna – go to her
web site www.ecomother.com to get your own baby
portrait drawn!*



Hatch Family during Ben's pregnancy

A Lotus Birth
www.naturalfamilyco.com "Healthy Families Make A Healthy World!"



Logo of the Husband/Wife Homebirth movement!



www.naturalfamilyco.com

*Thanks for reading my birth journal.
For more great stories, quotes and
wisdom, become a member of the
birthlove community on line at
www.birthlove.com*

*Love,
Jenny*



Benjamin 2 months old