

Michelle's story (Nathan's birth 8/2008) *First baby, home birth.*

Our son was born at our home in a birth tub after a day or so of labor, with the help of our two homebirth midwives, my sister, and of course me and my husband - everyone was such a huge help in the process and we are thrilled everything went well and our baby is happy and healthy (as am I). It was quite a process. My water broke (slight trickle) during the women's marathon of the Olympics on Saturday night (fitting!) which led to some contractions throughout that evening and my poor husband rubbing my lower back every time. They disappeared with the morning light so with guidance from my midwives on keeping sanitary, we just proceeded with our planned day - went to my husband's soccer game, enjoying the sunshine and time with friends on the sidelines, out to a mani/pedi date with another friend, and then to family dinner with our cousins. Now, we hadn't spread the word at this point so as not to alarm anyone, especially my dad as he was worried enough about our homebirth plan. But all went well. Anyway, after a big Mexican meal, we headed home. With nightfall contractions started again, closer together and throughout the night. In the morning, they slowed again, so my midwives came over and took me for walks around the backyard, then a drive over to a nearby island and a walk around there (well, only partly around and back) - the whole time clinging to someone's neck and breathing through each contraction and even stopping to pee behind a bush (!). Labor sped up after that and a regular pattern of contractions got started. This is where time and reality started to leave me - we basically spent the whole next 12 or so hours in our house, walking around, trying to move my hips in circles to "Percussions of the World" music while walking around the house clinging to various people :), spending time in the shower, leaning over the bed, sidelying on the couch, squatting in various places - it was insane. Finally, mothers will understand me here, we hit "transition" which is essentially the worst of the worst where the cervix isn't fully dilated but you want to start pushing and you feel like you've been doing this for eternity but you still don't see any end in sight. It was then that I started to "lose it" and said so! Getting desperate and making deals with God and asking about maybe going in to the hospital to get some pain medicine after all! But then we got in the tub! My sister and husband filled the birth tub with hot water (this is basically a huge inflatable kiddie pool - we'd set it up in the cozy corner of our kitchen - no joke!). Getting in there was much better - I finally got some relief between contractions (the midwives think the baby may have been a little crooked coming down, possibly with a hand up near his head for a while, as I had a lot of pain in my abdomen even between contractions for most of the active phase). The heat of the tub helped me nap between contractions (quickly, of course). Finally the urges to push started - that was frustrating until his head stopped sliding back and actually made it under my pubic bone. Once he was down there the pain essentially stopped. I even looked up for the first time and saw my sister and asked how SHE was doing. She said later it was like I "was back" - I'd been looking miserable and had my eyes closed most of the day until then! I also said something to the effect of "oh, I like this part!" at that point, because that's how I felt - I could feel his tiny head, all wrinkly with hair, and could feel it coming down with each push. I'll spare you the real details of the crowning, etc but essentially it was "super-pushing" as my midwife put it - pushing through what seems like an impossible stretching and suddenly on one push a head popped out, one of my midwives quickly pulled one coil of the cord from around his neck and out came his

body all at once! He was a little floppy in the water but the midwives grabbed him and started rubbing him down and soon he was crying and wiggling. They put his little hat on and handed him back to me in the tub. Everyone was gushing with excitement at that point! My husband was the one to look down and announce he was a boy. I'll also spare you the details of a retained placenta issue and my midwife's heroic acts (going in and getting it!) and the clean-up process :) but it was all so amazing. Anyway, he started nursing right away and we all went to bed around 4am. I'm amazed that my midwives do this for a living - they even had to go on to another birth right afterward! My sister described the process later as "partly wonderful, partly horrifying" which sounds about right to me. Thank you again to my sister, husband, and wonderful midwives for spending that whole time with me - I wouldn't want to have done it without you!