

Welcome

Oliver Ethan Estrada

September 15, 2012

2:31 p.m.

7 lbs. 14 ounces

19 3/4 inches

Saturday mornings are meant to be slow, and relaxing, but this Saturday was different. Although, the night before had given some glimmers of a baby to come. For weeks, pulls and pushes had made me wonder what you were up to; my body squeezing you in a nice firm “hug” and you in retaliation, kicking and stretching to reclaim your space. However, the night before things just seemed different. I had just completed my compilation of art lesson plans, complete with links to a live site so that I could update from home while on maternity leave (ha) and settled in at home.

Your dad brought home pupusas with all the sides, and we had an impromptu picnic on the living room floor since the kitchen remodel had the dining room in disarray. After finishing up our lovely Salvadoran dinner, your dad was preparing to go off to music rehearsal. I let him know that I was feeling a bit of “something” every 5-7 minutes, but it seemed to be more of a reminder I needed to rest after a full work week, rather than a sign of your imminent arrival. Just for fun, I got out the pregnancy workbook and flipped to the worksheet on timing; schoolwork on a Friday night, only for me. I spent the next 30-40 minutes writing down when I’d feel waves beginning, and was reassured that things were slow and unpredictable. However, I did have your Dad confirm that he would keep his phone on him; he would never live it down if he missed your birth.

Once he left, most likely, I immediately called Christin. Just as she was the first person to know about you from an early morning pregnancy announcement phone call that went something like “Oh, my gawd! OH, MY GAWD!”, she would, of course, be the first one to know about your impending birth. I believe that phone call was more along the lines of “I think I may be having a baby, and my husband just left for band practice. You should come over and when he gets home, we’ll surprise him with a baby.” Yes, because THAT’S how it works. Being my best friend, she came over anyway.

Now, what do you do when someone has driven long distances late at night to join you for a birth day party? You do your best to make sure the guest of honor arrives, even if they’re a little on the shy side. So Christin and I talked and laughed and concocted crazy plans to get things in motion. We decided that it would be nice to have ice for the midwives when they arrived, and what better way to get ice, than to walk to the grocery store with an empty stroller and pick some up. So we did just that! Along the way, I made sure to walk past my neighbor’s open window, and let her know I was having a baby. She expressed some doubts that it was the real deal, perhaps because I was still laughing and smiling AND walking to the store for ice! However, she encouraged us and we continued on our way.

At the checkout line, because we did in fact make it to the store with minimal distractions (hmmmm what happened to those pesky tightenings), the clerk seemed perplexed by the empty stroller. We pointed at my belly, and let her know we were planning to walk the baby out and just wanted to be prepared. Thank goodness, she didn’t let on how crazy she thought we were; it *might* have ruined my walk home.

Once we got back to the house, and put the ice away, we decided we needed another task to stay occupied. Hmmmm, let’s pull out the kiddie pool and inflate it; that sounds like a great plan. We plopped ourselves down in the middle of the nursery and stretched out the plastic pool which then left the two of us pinned nearly to the wall on opposing sides of the room. We spent the next 10 minutes or so hunting down the air valve. Note to self: it’s hidden amongst the little fishies and

seahorses along the bottom ring. Second note to self: an air pump is a much more efficient use of time and oxygen than a foot pump, which creates frenzy in the pups every time it's compressed because it sounds like a distressed animal. The only actual distressed animal would have been Christin and I regarding how long it was taking, except we had each other and fun pregnancy games to play to keep our minds busy.

The game of the night was "Pregnant, Not Pregnant." Simple enough game; I sucked in my belly as much as I possibly could at 39 + 5 weeks along and declared myself "Not Pregnant" followed immediately by hilarious fits of laughter and the complete opposite, as I stuck out my belly as far as possible and (yes, you're right) said "Pregnant." We have video documentation of this game, and at no point did I look "Not Pregnant!" I wonder what you thought of this game. Perhaps you just felt I was giving you subtle encouragement to get into line; I've been known to do that as an elementary teacher.

At some point, as you are well aware, since you were born on a Saturday afternoon, not the wee hours of the morning, we realized things had stopped. Well, what do you do when it's nearly two in the morning on a Saturday? You say "Sorry. Thank you so much for coming over. I'll call you when it's the real deal." Or something along those lines; it was two in the morning, I don't recall what was said, I just know Christin left, and I laid down. Oh, sweet sleep, I drifted to dreamland quickly and don't even remember getting up to go to the bathroom; a magnificent feat at this point in my pregnancy.

At 9:30 or so in the morning, I woke up very hungry, a common occurrence over the last 9ish months, and went to the kitchen to whip up some breakfast. No actual whipping took place, as I still enjoyed my eggs over medium at the time. I made Daniel and I both an Egg McMuffin-like sandwich with tomatoes in place of meat. When I crave tomatoes again, I will immediately take a pregnancy test, because only during my pregnancy did I want tomatoes with cheese constantly!

Your Dad was asleep when I got up, but at some point had migrated to the backyard while I was cooking, and I took him his egg sandwich. We must have sat on the back steps and eaten while admiring the garden. We finished our sandwiches and decided to inspect the vegetables and herbs in our little garden. At this point I think it was okra, okra, holy basil, spicy basil; did I mention your Dad wanted to NAME you Basil? No fear my Dear, Mama is here to put a stop to that. I had started to ask your Dad about our plans for the day, which were to celebrate both your Dad and your uncle's birthdays on September 8 and 24 respectively. I wasn't too thrilled about going to Dave and Buster's for the party because I worried about the noise, but decided we needed to think about what gift to bring instead of dwelling on things we couldn't change.

Well, guess what my party pooper, you decided "This is a fabulous day to be born, and a fantastic way to get Mama out of insanely noisy situations." Thanks love! I then experienced a wave worthy of swaying and humming and rocked and swayed while "slow dancing" with your Dad. "Oh okay" I thought, so that was different than the night before, and most likely a sign we wouldn't be attending THAT party, but instead having our own! It's unclear whether another passed while we were outside, but I decided that I was going to try sitting on the toilet for the next few waves to see how that felt. Well, let's just say I didn't not care for that at all, and decided the shower sounded like a better

solution. Honestly I think initially I just went inside to get my phone, so I could give Christin a call and let her know that not even a day later, I thought perhaps the real deal was now happening! At this point, I had no desire to walk to Kroger or even to the end of the street, and I don't think you could have motivated me to do that for anything! My neighbor was right on when she had her suspicions the night before about a baby being on its way. Well Christin, up for anything, affirmed that she would head back out our way and I decided to get in the shower before she arrived.

The hot water running down my back felt amazing, and then I just couldn't figure out how to get it to hit my lower back "just so." In the tiny shower stall, most likely original to the 1950s house, I did my best to get on my hands and knees so the water could hit my lower back. I don't recall how long I attempted that flexibility challenge before I got out of the shower, but I do remember finding some casual clothes to slip into before walking into the living room. With tears streaming down my face I announced to your Dad "I don't know why I'm crying. I can't stop!"

Ahh, in retrospect these things make so much sense, but blubbering then was just confusing. I gave your Dad a quick synopsis of how quickly things were progressing and asked him when I would get that break between waves I was promised! In childbirth class, I distinctly remember the 5-1-1 rule of 5 minutes apart, lasting 1 minute for 1 hour, and I felt even if things were progressing rapidly that I still deserved my 5 minutes in between and was being denied. There wasn't much time to dwell on this aspect before I was back in hands and knees position on the floor, except now I chose to drape my upper body on the loveseat cushions, rather than being cramped in the shower stall.

I believe I was the first one to suggest calling someone; midwife, childbirth educator, anyone who could give us their assessment of our situation. I called Christin back, and somehow through the deep, loud sounds I was making she got the clue that she might want to drive a little less leisurely, and maybe not stop at QuikTrip for coffee.

Our midwife, Robin, however did not answer the first time your Dad called, so he called Margie instead. At the beginning of my pregnancy, Margie was a midwife in training at the birth center, who had extensive training as a doula, so I just assumed she would be able to join us. Well, she answered her phone promptly, heard me in the background, and immediately confirmed with your Dad that he needed to call the midwife to give her an update. He confirmed that he had in fact called the midwife first, but had been unable to reach her. Margie said she most likely wouldn't make it in time based on how fast things were progressing, but reiterated the importance of him calling Robin again.

At some point, Christin let her self in through the front door unbeknownst to me with my head buried in the loveseat cushion. I know she got to work in the den setting up the birth pool that THANK GOODNESS we had the sense to inflate the night before. Meanwhile, your Dad's job was to counteract whatever forces you were creating within my pelvis. I was dependent on his hip squeezes, and once the wave had passed, and he stood up to help Christin, I would immediately call him back to me, letting him know that another one was coming. Honestly, I think it came down to just saying "Come Back!" Oh yes, that rings a bell, as does "Stop leaving me!" Now imagine these in quick succession back to back and you have my refrain over and over again when he tried to help Christin, or spoke to

Robin on the phone, or did anything other than pushing his full weight into my hip bones to help with counterpressure and moving you lower off my back and butt bones.

At some point, over the phone Robin expressed concern that she wouldn't make it to the birth in time based on my vocalizations. She asked your Dad to give her an update on whether the your head was coming down; he was able to confirm that she still had time, and you were not near crowning. She then recommended to both of us over speaker phone that I lie down in bed to help slow things down, and keep gravity from working its magic. I've got to let you in on a secret here; walking is the best way for gravity to work, so the walking I needed to do in order to get to the bedroom probably helped you descend even more.

I also walked the longest distance to the bedroom (no idea why!) going past the hallway bathroom door, where I distinctly remember telling your Dad, "I don't want to have YOUR baby anymore!" Yeah, fun memories there. The downward pressure you must have put while I was standing must have been the motivation behind that comment because up to then my ritual and pattern involved hands and knees and a nice rhythmic refrain, which while loud was very effective for mental focus. It was difficult to do all of that in transit. The birth ball that I tried sitting on briefly during this trip to the bedroom was not appreciated in the least for the same reasons; gravity definitely works!

Once we got to the bed, I had no idea what to do and laid briefly on my side, when amazingly, a midwife appeared out of nowhere. Nicole had made it to our home before Robin, and almost in no time at all Robin was there as well. They brought me the dreaded birth ball, and had me change position into...you guessed it!...hands and knees. Ahh, the satisfaction of being able to go back to what I knew was best for me AND you! They did a quick assessment and told me I was at 8 cm, and between the two of them, whispered 7-8 cm because it's not an exact science to feel how much cervix is still covering the baby's head.

Suddenly nausea hit me, for the first time in the entire birth, and Christin rushed to get a bowl. I had been nauseous the ENTIRE pregnancy and only threw up once after a 12 hour road trip, so it's fitting that even in birth I got nauseous but never produced anything.

At that point, it was clear my hormones had dramatically increased due to the sweating, nausea, and how close I was to being completely open and ready to welcome you. Robin told me if I wanted to give birth in the water, I would need to make my way there soon or change the plan and birth on the bed. Now Christin and I put a lot of effort into inflating the pool, and she sprayed the midwife (unbeknownst to me) while filling it, so I was going to make use of it. Water has always been a great sense of relaxation, and I walked into the dining room :) with the pool as fast as I was able and without removing a single article of clothing, just got in. Birth is amazing, and it's all about one track mind.

It's at this point, everyone established their places; Christin boiling/microwaving/pouring water into the pool since we hadn't thought to raise the water heater temp (who knew?), Robin and Nicole getting their gear and doppler ready, Daniel in the pool with me. Was there anyone else there? Well, not yet. In a moment of clarity after a few more rushes in the water and Robin saying based on my little grunts, she felt I could begin pushing, I said "Call my mom!" Everything had escalated so quickly,

and at this point she'd get there just in time for the good part without all the waiting around. It was perfect! Christin called frantically, not providing many details but relaying enough that my mom knew to jump in the car immediately without delay. Meanwhile, I resumed my task of bringing you down and into this world.

While in the pool, I suddenly heard a POP and asked if anyone else heard it as well. Robin let us know that it was most likely my membranes and that was confirmed when Robin encouraged us to look as parts of them floated in the water. Yep, birth knowledge and discovery even in the midst of birth; one never stops learning.

I recall once I began bringing you down that it would be comfortable, comfortable, and with a bit more effort it would feel very unusual and not very pleasant. It was at that moment, I would get lots of motivation from Robin and reinforcement about that kind of pushing being very productive. However, I let her know that I didn't like it at all, and then would rest until the next time. I finally got to enjoy the leisurely break between waves for the first time since the whole process began, or so it seemed.

It was also then that I was encouraged to feel your head, since you were "right there". I remember telling Robin that from her words I expected to feel more of your head, rather than just a wrinkled, pruned scalp. Since only 15 minutes or so had passed, I know now that this was great progress, but I was expecting you to come down even quicker since you had been so low throughout the last month of pregnancy.

With another wave, I brought you even lower and began feeling a lot of pressure in my bottom; my exact words, "My Butt! My Butt!" In fact during your entire birth I never cursed which is utterly shocking, and "my butt" was the most crass. :)

During one of these points, my mom arrived, which I noticed but couldn't give any attention to at the time. In between pushing, I said "Hi Mom!" and felt very composed; based on the pictures Christin took, she wasn't. Mamas feel for their little ones, even when they're birthing THEIR own little ones. She remembers me saying "I don't want to do this anymore" and it must have been in this moment, Robin whispered in my ear about pushing past, and giving all my effort. Errr, I had been thinking I could eek by with minimal effort, which in retrospect may have been possible, if I was willing to wait longer for your birth day to begin. I asked "Is there any other way to do this?" and while I meant different positions, I was told everything was going well and my baby would be in my arms soon.

Once I fully committed to pushing towards the oddest sensation of my life, and trusting those in the room that my bottom was being adversely affected by my complete efforts, your head was then in view, and then in your Dad's hands. Now birth videos had me convinced babies slithered out at this point, but not you with your broad barrel chest. No, you required very strong work at this point as your chest was actually wider than your conical head. Everyone's hands were on me at this point

giving me strength and encouragement; my mom and Nicole each had a hand placed on my shoulder, Robin supporting you and I, and your Dad ready to catch when you burst forth.

And then you did, a wrinkly purple baby floating in the water. Robin told Daniel to hold you for a second before bringing you up to allow you to adjust briefly. My words reveal so much about my mindset as the first thing I said was, "It's a baby!" I had almost forgotten what all that work led up to. I had been so caught up in moment and the intensity that I was surprised to see a baby! I recall my mom saying throughout my life that during my birth she said "I don't care if it's a monkey, get it out!" I understand her sentiment now; your mind can absorb only so much at a time, and my focus was on getting "IT" out and into the world.

Your dad placed you in my arms, and I could not believe it. Where had you come from? How had you come from me? How did that just happen? You were a perfectly formed baby! We still didn't know whether you were a boy or girl, so we all took a peek and no surprise at all (I suspected all along), you were my son! I couldn't even imagine a name for you at that point, you were so squishy looking and swollen, but you were MY baby even though you looked JUST like your Dad. Grandmommy said it was actually a little disconcerting that you looked identical to your Dad, minus the squishy purple part.

I don't even recall your first cry, only the little saliva bubbles you skillfully formed. You were close to my heart and in my arms, and I knew all was perfect just that way.

Sincerely,

Taylor Rhodes-Estrada

The Mama :)