

A Very Personal Water Birth Story

Contributed by Dorothy Kirkpatrick
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From an email Dotti sent out to family and friends in April, 2001...

It is really late and I'm pretty beat, but I just had to share the best news and thank you all for your prayers. God has blessed our family again with one of his most precious spirits, Megan, born to my daughter Bethany and her husband Mitchell today at 2:45 p.m., weighing 8 pounds, 2 ounces, and measuring 19.5 inches long. Except for being a little bigger, she looks just like her big sister, Annie Beth (19 months old).

As many of you know, I arrived on March 31st, hoping to be in time for Megan's due date of April 2nd. Well, after a week of waiting I was beginning to wonder if Bethany might be following in my footsteps of being at least 10 days overdue, in which case I might actually miss the birth as I had to go back to Colorado Springs by this next weekend. Last week she made quite a lot of progress from Monday to Friday, going from 1.5 cm to 4 cm with just a few intermittent contractions all week long. So last night before bed we decided to try some Evening Primrose Oil, rubbing three capsules of oil on the cervix and putting three more capsules in near the cervix to dissolve during the night.

When we woke up this morning after an uninterrupted night's sleep, I thought, "Well, guess it didn't work." But at 9 a.m. Bethany began having contractions five minutes apart that were different from the earlier ones she'd had, and at 9:30 a.m., she announced, "I'm in labor."

I still couldn't quite believe it wouldn't quit (she had had several hours of contractions the day before), but they never did although they were amazingly short—never really lasting longer than 30 seconds to the peak.

I kept in touch with Bethany's midwife, my good friend Cathy, and reassured her I would call when I thought Bethany was in active labor. Around noon Bethany ate lunch, then a half hour later she vomited. In her previous labor she vomited quite a bit, starting at 5 cm (she is really sensitive to cervical stimulation). Since the contractions were still quite short, I couldn't quite believe she was in active labor. I decided to check her and sure enough, she was 6 cm. This was at 1 p.m., just an hour after she ate lunch! When Bethany began vomiting and shaking soon after, I called Cathy—at 1:15 p.m.—and she arrived within a half hour with her two assistants, one of which attended Labor of Love Birth Center in Jamaica with me in December. It was really good to see Gezelle again.

Cathy checked Bethany next and by that time she was 7-8 cm, so Bethany decided to try the labor pool. She and her husband Mitch got into the pool, and Mitch said it was remarkable how much more relaxed Bethany was during the contractions in the pool.

I have never seen anyone handle labor better—she was in complete control, although after the birth she said at the peak of the contractions she felt like she was losing it.

She never did though, and it was hard to tell that she was in transition, especially since the contractions still seemed quite short.

Soon after getting in the pool, Cathy checked Bethany and said she could push, all that was holding the baby up was the bag of water, which Cathy broke at that point. After the water broke, Cathy said to me, "If you're going to catch this baby, you'd better get over here!"

Then I stepped in and sure enough, Megan's head was crowning with one more push and I caught my granddaughter under the water—my first water birth—and lifted her to her parents. It was 2:45 p.m. Bethany had been in active labor for about 2.5 hours!

What an incredible feeling! Along with my own births and witnessing several of my grandchildren's births, this has been one of the highlights of my life. I am so grateful to my Heavenly Father for allowing me the privilege to be a midwife and serving my daughters and all the wonderful women I have been honored to know.

Postpartum has been uneventful (placenta was delivered out of the water smoothly), and both Mom, Dad and baby are doing very well. Mitch's mom was here too, and although she has always been skeptical about home birth, she said later on that she thought this experience was wonderful. She said she was impressed.

I am pretty tired; I just finished eating supper (never really got lunch). So I guess I'd better get to bed; there won't be as much sleep in the next few days. I will be flying home on Saturday, so I'll be in touch.

Thank you again for your faith and prayers. I am overwhelmed with the love of my Heavenly Father toward our family. We are truly blessed beyond measure.

Love,
Dotti