I feel like there’s nothing terribly remarkable about my birth story, but it is indicative of the high level of care that I always receive with the Lone Star Nurse Midwives.

Aside from having gallbladder surgery while 17 weeks along, and a few weeks of prodromal labor, my pregnancy was pretty uneventful, and very healthy. Because of the prodromal labor (more intense than Braxton-Hicks, but tapers off before becoming full-blown labor), the midwives didn’t seem to expect me to make it to my due date. Imagine our surprise when I showed up for my 40 week appointment!

The following week, I was standing in the kitchen (right around 3 pm) making a snack for my daughter when my water broke :-O It was truly an odd sensation. Not a huge gush, but unmistakable for anything else. I cleaned myself up and explained to a very curious 4 year old what happened ("Remember how we talked about baby brother who is growing inside a water balloon in my belly? Well, that balloon broke because it's time for him to come out!").  Little One insisted that we all put on green. Green dresses for Mama and daughter. Green shirt for Daddy. I took one last picture of my baby belly.

I called the midwife on-call for that night to give her a heads up. She congratulated us and reminded me that it was a waiting game now. If contractions started and seemed to be increasing in intensity and frequency, I could labor at home for up to 24 hours. If contractions didn't start, she wanted to see me at the hospital by 6 a.m. For those who do not already know this - hospitals do NOT like for women with broken water bags to hang out for more than 24 hours without delivering the baby. They become increasingly nervous about the baby and/or the mother developing an infection once that protective bubble breaks.

Our daughter began telling stories about being pregnant with her daughter “Penny” and having her "membranes swept last Saturday". I was still slightly leaking amniotic fluid, and definitely felt a new and more intense pressure on my pubic bone.

We hung out at home for a while. No contractions.

5 pm - I decided that I wanted cookies (!? Talk about nesting…). Little girl and I made sugar cookies. Then I made buttercream icing - from scratch. Like a lunatic. Not a huge effort, but delightfully distracting.

6 pm - We decided to walk the neighborhood. There was a storm coming in, and I wanted the pressure change to have it's full effect on my laboring process. We watched the beautiful black clouds roll in, and felt a few small raindrops, but I only had a few small contractions. Not the real thing yet.

We had dinner, got our daughter packed and ready, and delivered her to her grandparents to spend the night. No contractions.

9 pm - we went to bed around . We watched t.v. and stared into space. No contractions. Husband fell asleep around 11 p.m. I fell asleep around 1 a.m. Husband woke up around 1:30 a.m. and moved out to the living room. I woke up around 3:30 a.m. and joined him. No real contractions. We stared at BBC America for a while.

4 am -My husband couldn't take it any more. "We should just get ready and go to the hospital." I agreed. We ate (lightly), finished packing, dressed and wandered to the car. Still no real contractions.

5:30 am - We checked in to the hospital, and were settled into a labor suite. No triage for me since my water had already broken. Lauren (the midwife) came in to talk about our options. Basically, my options were 1) pitocin now or 2) pitocin later (pitocin is a synthetic hormone that induces uterine contractions). She explained that since my labor had not already started on it's own, it was unlikely to do so before the 24-hour cut off. We were welcome to hang out in our delivery suite until 3 p.m. and start the pitocin then, but the longer we waited, the more nervous the pediatrician and nursery team would become. It would be more likely that they would keep the baby for observation. She also reminded us that we would be unlikely to really rest between now and then, therefore we would not get any *less* tired than we already were. We voted for pitocin now, and called my parents to join us.

6:30 am -The pitocin was started at it's lowest level (a 2).  It was supposed to be monitored and probably increased every 15-30 minutes until my body established a regular contraction pattern. Luckily for me, it was time for a shift change, and they forgot to increase my pitocin level until later. With the shift change, we lost Lauren, and gained Amy. The great part about this midwife practice is that by the time you deliver, you are comfortable with all of the midwives. It is a blessing to have any one of them deliver your baby.

6:43 am - My first contraction hit. It was INTENSE. I had to stop talking to breathe and use my low tones when each one came on. They were immediately 5 minutes apart and gradually became stronger. Because of the pitocin, baby and I were both being continuously monitored, so I was unable to leave the hospital bed to labor. I had forgotten that this would happen. I was disappointed about being stuck in the bed, but I felt like I was holding up pretty well so far...

8:15 am - A nurse came in and increased the level of the pitocin to a 4. My contractions moved to 2-3 minutes apart, and became even more intense. I could feel quite a bit of pressure in my low back, so we called the nurse back in.

8:50 am - I "demanded" that the nurse turn off the pitocin. I had decided that enough was enough of that stuff. It was noted that my contractions were consistent and increasing. The pitocin was turned off, and the Amy was called in to check my progress.

When Amy checked me, I was only 5 cm dilated (and had a bulging forebag of water?!). I had expected a lot more in the way of dilation. She mentioned that she expected the rest of my labor to progress quickly, and said that she would check in on me soon.

My contractions increased in intensity again. I had my support team (Husband, Mom and Dad) raise the head of the bed as high as it would go. Then I draped my laboring self across the top and held on for dear life. Low tones were harder to maintain. Amy came back into the room and asked if I wanted to labor on the ball for a while. Since the pitocin was off and the monitors on me and baby looked good, I was now allowed to leave the hospital bed!

After quite a bit of maneuvering, I was on the ball and leaning against the bed. Amy spent about 15 minutes watching me handle contractions, said I was doing a good job, then she excused herself to check on other mamas and to check in at her office (across the parking lot). Soon after she left, the contractions increased in intensity again. I was having a much harder time controlling my breathing and using any kind of tone. Something that Amy said earlier while watching me came to the front of my mind: "it's just the baby coming down." I began repeating "It's not scary, it's just the baby" on a loop during each contraction and visualizing our boy moving down and out safely. I was holding Don's hands across the bed and my mom and dad took turns applying counter-pressure to my low back... at least I think that's what was happening... all I know is that pressure was being applied, and I managed to yell "NOBODY BREATHE ON ME!" at some point... sorry, guys!

Contractions started coming with almost no break, and I felt my legs straighten me to almost a standing position. I found out the true meaning of pressure, and I yelled "I'm PUSHING" - because I was. Completely involuntarily. My mom raced out into the hall to find *someone* with medical knowledge to join us in the birthing suite - anyone! She found a nurse, and the room was soon bustling as the nursery nurses and the l&d nurses rushed to prepare the room.

A nurse told me that I needed to get back up on the bed. I told her no. I said that I couldn't. I looked my husband in the eye and told him that I couldn't do this. It was too hard and it hurt too much. I knew that I was in transition, and it felt like it was happening FAST. I could feel our son moving out of my belly and preparing to make his entrance. I was trying to get on the bed, but the contractions were only seconds apart, and I felt unable to move during them, so I had very little time to make adjustments to my position before a new one hit. I made it onto the bed on my knees then held on to my husband’s neck and screamed into his shoulder for a few contractions. I knew that Amy wasn't back yet, and all of a sudden, I was 1) bound and determined not to have that baby with just some nurses that I had never met in attendance, 2) terrified that he was moving to fast, and I was about to tear, and 3) um... really afraid that I was going to poop. Ridiculous. All of it. If the baby is coming, there is no stopping it. Still, I held on to my husband and refused to move from that spot. I changed from just screaming into his shoulder to yelling “NONONONONONONO" at everybody at a pretty high volume.When queried as to why I was freaking out, I said "I'm SCARED. This is too scary."

That's when Amy made it back. She very calmly let me know that she was there, and asked me why I was scared. I told her that I needed help. She said "I'm here to help you." It was as though a switch was flipped - I stopped yelling at everybody, and moved into a half-reclined position on the bed. I freaked out again when they tried to hold a monitor on my belly for a moment to check on the baby - I had no idea how much the *outside* of my belly hurt until then!

I actively pushed for two contractions, and he began to crown. Amy asked me to wait. I told her I would try. I held through 1 or two contractions, then she told me I could push again. On the next push, his head delivered. My mom said that visually, it was stunning - Baby Boy had a nuchal arm (a hand that stayed directly next to his face during delivery) so he came out with a fist punched into the air like Superman - it was sharply painful. On the next contraction, the rest of his body was delivered, and they handed him to me!

My first though was "he's so LITTLE!” I had forgotten how small they are when they get here. I held him for several minutes until his umbilical cord stopped pulsing. Daddy cut his cord, and Tiny Guy was wrapped up and handed to his Daddy. He looked directly into Daddy's eyes and said "huh-WOW, huh-WOW" I said "I know, buddy! That was FAST!" From turning off the pitocin to holding our son, it was almost exactly 1 hour. My fears about tearing proved real. Amy stitched for quite some time. My fears of pooping were groundless ;-)

My support team snapped pictures and stared in awe at that beautiful baby as he was weighed and measured - 7 pounds, 7 ounces and 19 3/4 inches long.

I managed to trigger a 'Code Yellow' (Fall Alert) in the entire Labor & Delivery Ward, but after that, the remainder of our stay was uneventful. Just a tiny bit of resting, a huge amount of staring at my new baby, and an intense amount of bonding. All of it eased and aided by the truly wonderful staff of St. Luke’s.

All in all, it was amazing and scary, and full of intense, incredible emotion. And worth every minute.

