

## The Beautiful Homebirth of Sarah Grace

Much the same as my second child, I had been having Braxton-Hicks contractions thru most of this pregnancy. Towards the end, some of them were painful, and their intensity and frequency continued to increase. On Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, in the afternoon, I started with bloody show and contractions were more painful and a few times an hour. I tried to nap, as was normal for me the last couple of weeks, but wasn't really able to so I just got up and rested on the couch with my kids instead.

Matt came home about 7pm and I left him with the kids to go to David's and Target. I wanted to get out of the house and walk around as well as pick up the last few items I needed. Even though I wasn't positive, I felt like this was "it" and that I needed to be ready. The bloody show increased every time I went to the bathroom into the late evening/night and contractions were still painful, just not "regular". I would have them every 6-8mins or so, then not again for 20-30mins. I was having some significant pain around my pubic bone, so around 1130pm I called my MW to check with her about it. She said it was totally normal and to try and get some rest. I laid down on and off for 3hrs and finally fell into a restless sleep after 2am. I had contractions while I slept and at about 330am decided I'd had enough and got up. I went into our bedroom (I'd been sleeping on the couch in my office for months b/c it was much more comfortable than our bed) and woke up Matt and told him I thought it was time for baby and wanted him to start filling the tub. We both headed downstairs and he got started right away with two hoses- one coming from the bathroom down the hall and the other coming in the window from our bathtub upstairs (directly above the room where the tub was). At 4am I called my doula (Stephanie), my MW (Karen) and my birth photographer (Nikki), in that order. I told them all I thought it was time. Stephanie and Nikki came right away. I knew I needed help getting thru contractions (which at that point I had guessed were about 6mins apart) so I asked Stephanie to come right then, and Nikki lives over an hour away so I wanted to give her plenty of time. Karen told me to time them for another hour and give her a call.

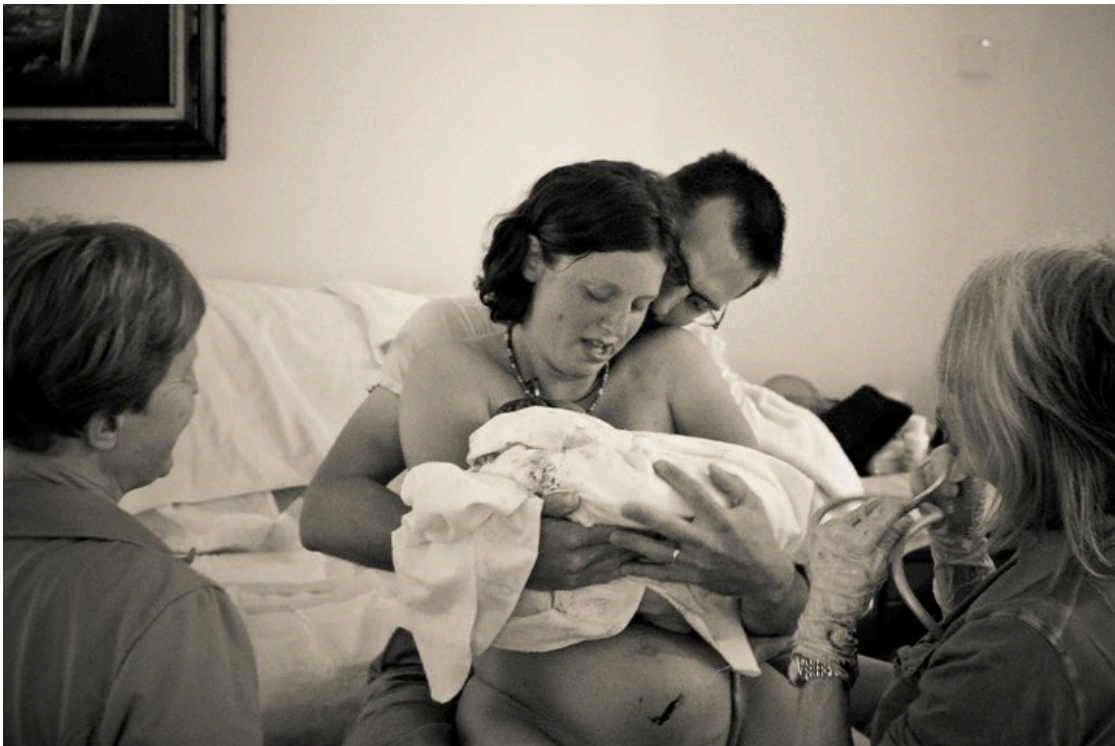
Stephanie arrived at about 430am and by that time contractions were 3mins apart. Matt blew up the exercise ball and Stephanie and I used that for a little while. She was such a blessing! My lower back was killing me, so she pushed on it pretty much my whole labor.

A little after 5am, I really wanted to get into the tub. All the hot water in our water heater had been used, so Matt had been letting it reheat. When I started getting anxious he went ahead and turned the hoses on for a few more minutes to use what was in there but it wasn't nearly enough. I told him to get water heating on the stove and with that he filled it high enough for the heater in the tub to be turned on. A few minutes later I got into the tub and he poured more water in there while I was laboring. Stephanie stayed by my side telling me to breathe and pushing on my back to help with the pain. It wasn't long before I started feeling the urge to push but the MW wasn't there so Stephanie helped me breathe through the contractions. The pain was quite intense and I don't know how many times I said, "I can't do this", but Matt and Stephanie were wonderful! They kept me focused on each contraction individually and helped me through them.



Karen and Susanna (assistant) arrived right before 6am, just after Nikki. Karen told me to go ahead and push if that's what I needed to do and she got everything set up. My oldest, Matty, got up about 6:15am and came around to where I was in the tub. He was excited that the baby was being born and wanted to stay with me the whole time. He sat on a couch in front of me and we reassured him that I was ok despite how I was acting.

Karen and Susanna checked the baby's heart rate about every other contraction and she was doing great. I pushed for a bit in the tub but things weren't progressing as quickly as I'd hoped. I kept asking Karen if she could feel baby's head, if she'd moved farther down, etc. At this point Karen suggested that I get out of the tub and try the birthing stool. I stood up and did a couple pushes standing in the water with my knees bent. Gravity really helped and I could feel the baby more. Matt and Stephanie helped me out of the tub and onto the birthing stool where I did the rest of my pushing. Matt sat behind me supporting me the rest of the time. During these pushes I screamed....a lot. Karen helped me focus my screaming down into my pushes to send that energy where it would have more effect. It worked for some of the rest of my pushing, which was only about 20mins or so. It was incredibly painful and I made sure everyone knew by screaming it. But feeling my baby come out was an experience I will never forget. And it was totally worth every single pain I went through. Before I knew it her head was coming out and I looked down and saw her. I couldn't believe that there she was! Karen checked for the cord, which was around her neck, so she gently loosened it. I waited for another contraction to push the rest of her out but it didn't happen quickly enough so I just went ahead and pushed anyways. She came sliding out and Karen caught her. She was absolutely perfect and beautiful. Karen immediately handed her to me and a blanket was put around her. Matt helped me off of the stool and I was led to our couch where I laid down with my gorgeous baby. I was in awe. I had actually done it! There was nothing brave or pretty about it, but it was the most incredible and beautiful experience of my life.



As soon as I was settled on the couch Karen asked what I wanted to eat. I said a donut, haha! So orders were taken and Stephanie went out to pick the food up. After a little while we moved upstairs. Matt and Karen had made the bed with clean sheets and pads while Susanna helped me up the stairs. I got in the shower to clean up real quick and boy was that nice! Susanna helped me get dressed after I was out and then I got into bed. The food came so I picked out my donut (my favorite one from Bel Air Bakery!!) and Matt got a drink and plate for me. I ate my food and then Karen checked the baby and me. I had a small tear but really didn't want it sutured. I was so sore! Since it was small and not deep, Karen told me I would just need to keep my legs together for a week so it could heal well. Then she got all the measurements on Sarah. 6lbs 4oz and 19.5in long. Perfect size. After that Susanna and Karen brewed up my sitz bath tea and went over the PP instructions for Sarah and myself.



I absolutely loved having a homebirth. I never had to go anywhere, everyone was extremely supportive and helpful, no one took my baby away to do anything to her, I was in my own bed within an hour of giving birth, and my kids were there to watch their baby sister being born. If I am blessed with any more children they will definitely be born at home!

