

Ayla Noel Batchelder's Birth Story

By Sara J. Marchessault



August 15, 2009
11:35am
6 pounds, 4 ounces
19 inches

Preface

The story of Ayla's birth begins in the year 2002. A good friend of mine was getting ready to have her first baby and was interested in taking childbirth classes. She needed a partner and I was ready and willing. We took a course in the Bradley Method, which is a philosophy and technique for natural childbirth. That was my first labor and delivery experience and it was one I will never forget. The labor was hard, but incredible to be a part of. My friend was able to use the techniques learned in class to relax, focus, and allow the baby to come when she was ready.

One reason I was eager to assist my friend was to learn more about what I considered to be the mystery of birth. Having a baby is something that many women covet and a huge majority of us experience at one point or another. Today we have options that allow us a plethora of choices, from how we conceive to where and when we deliver. I daydream about the countless women over the centuries of human history that brought babies into the world without all of our modern day choices. Whether it's been alone in a cave, with a group of tribeswomen, or with a mate, the process of birth has been completed over and over...and yet when it's our turn it's new and exciting, and more than a little scary. I wanted to learn as much about the mystery of birth as I could. I read and gathered information to be an effective coach for my friend, and in so doing, laid the groundwork for my own experience.

It's important for me to acknowledge here that childbirth is different for every woman. Today we can have a baby naturally, with pain medication, or via c-section. Some of the interventions we have are necessary for the health of mom and/or baby. In most cases, women make a choice about how they want to deliver their baby and then wait to see if their plans become reality. For me, the process has almost been a rite of passage. I love that I am female in this life and I think my body is an amazing gift. I wanted to experience labor and delivery in the most natural way possible to see what my body was capable of doing. I also believe this choice was the best for Ayla. At the end of the day, it's a matter of personal preference. Every woman is different and will choose what she wants for her and her baby.

This story will be told in two parts. Part one is Ayla's birth. Part two details the two hours after Ayla's birth, which was occupied with the expulsion of the placenta. Since this is my story, of course it's being told from my perspective. Others who were in the room may write their own version of the details of Ayla's birth.

Dear Ayla,

It's August 27, 2009 at 7:22am. You have been in my arms for the last hour and a half and we have been enjoying some quiet time while Daddy gets some sleep. I just put you in your bouncy chair and turned on the music, which you love! Your eyes are wide open and you are looking around the room with intense interest. A peaceful calm radiates from you as you start to explore your world. Being near you makes me feel calm as well. At 12 days old you can't speak a word, but your father and I manage to know what you need and keep you happy. In fact, all three of us are blissful!

I have been working on this story of your birth document for several days now. The narrative of how you moved from my womb and into my arms is of course very meaningful to me. You were my first experience carrying, laboring, and delivering a child. I have wanted to try this for years and now it has happened! We prepared for your arrival for months in advance, and thankfully, all that meditation practice paid off. But, I know I didn't do the work on my own. Thank you for doing your part for a smooth labor and delivery. Your birth experience is exactly what I wanted and planned for both of us and that happened because each of us (you, me, and your Dad) was willing to go with the flow and let nature take its course.

In case I forget to tell you when you're older, thank you for choosing to be a part of our family. I am so glad that it was you who I brought into the world. I can already see elements of your personality shining through and look forward to continuing the parenthood journey as you grow. We will learn a great deal from each other and I know we'll have a great time learning it!

When I was a little girl we had several birthday traditions in my family. We always got to pick a special meal on our birthday, including whatever crazy combination of cake and ice cream that we wanted. When it was our birthday we didn't have to do any chores that day – woo-hoo! In the last decade or so, Mom started a new tradition of calling me at the time I was born and singing happy birthday. Also, my Mom always told the story of our birth on our special day. Once I reached adulthood, I heard the story of my birth less often, probably because our celebrations changed to more adult-like dinner parties, which are still a lot of fun, but not always the place to discuss labor and delivery. You will find as you grow that not everyone is as comfortable talking about these things as we have a tendency to be in our family. I have many fond memories of listening to my mother talk about how challenging labor was and how happy she was when I finally arrived. In that spirit, I hope that you can keep this document so that you always have a record of what your birth was like. While there were certainly some challenges, you are more than worth every single one of them. I am grateful to have you as my daughter.

Love,
Mom

Ayla's Birth

It was Friday December 13, 2008 and my alarm was going off at 5:30am. I hit the snooze button and shook myself out of a very bizarre dream. I had broken my thermometer that I used to determine fertility and was trying to fix it. Of all people Brian's brother, Tyler, was helping me put the thermometer back together. Once it was fixed, Tyler told me to remember that it probably still wouldn't work, that I couldn't trust the response it gave me. That was a weird one. I reached for my whole and working thermometer to take my temperature before getting out of bed. It was 97.4, which for me, means no baby and to look for my cycle to begin later that day. I started out that morning frustrated. I was so sure that I would have conceived. We had passed the due date of our first pregnancy, which ended in miscarriage. I was positive that once I passed that due date, I would be ready to move ahead. This was the first cycle after that due date, and we were waiting to see if I was right.

That evening I felt awful; moody and emotional, but my cycle hadn't started. The next morning, Saturday, I took my temperature again – 98 degrees. What was this? That weird dream flashed through my mind as I wandered into the bathroom, took a pregnancy test, and watched as my positive result surfaced! And that was the day we knew Ayla was coming.

The pregnancy was fairly easy. Around week five I started spotting, and it didn't stop until week twelve. I was told I had a small tear in the teeny-tiny placenta that was growing which caused the spotting. In January I was told not to run anymore, which was the first strange adjustment I experienced. The pregnancy progressed normally after that, the placenta having healed itself. Honestly I didn't enjoy being pregnant as much as I thought I would. It was hard for me to slow down, to feel tired all the time, and to have mood swings. I have never really been affected that much with pre-menstrual symptoms, and that's what I thought pregnancy felt like; having PMS all the time.

We started childbirth classes in June. Brian would be my coach and we were preparing for a natural delivery. In class we met several other couples that we would like to get to know better. We practiced positions for labor and delivery, and just enjoyed thinking about her coming.

With a due date of August 21st, we set out to finalize who would be in the room with us as part of our support team. We gave this a lot of careful consideration and chose:

Brian – husband, father, coach, and ultimate supporter of natural childbirth

Mom, aka Nana, aka Faith – my mother was invited to the birth for moral support and encouragement

Cetta – our doula; I met Cetta about a year before Ayla's arrival and discussed partnering with her doula organization as a life coach. Brian and I decided to hire Cetta for additional support and so that I could experience first-hand the services provided by her organization, True Blue Doulas.

Carol the Midwife – our OB's office staffs three midwives, one of which would be present at Ayla's birth; we liked them all and luck of the draw sent Carol to us

KT – our labor and delivery nurse, she was the one person I didn't hand-pick beforehand, but then again, maybe I did. I knew I wanted a nurse who supported my ideas of natural childbirth, and she was absolutely perfect – I definitely got what I wanted.

This team created the support I would need as we moved into labor. I feel compelled to add here that I could not have asked for a better combination of people. They were all in sync with what I was trying to accomplish and let me do my thing!

Friday August 14th did not start like any other day in my ninth month of pregnancy. I awoke excited that morning, looking forward to a 9am visit with our specialist, Dr. Hume. Every visit at Dr. Hume's office included an ultrasound and we were going to see Ayla! I loved viewing her on the screen, checking out her moving heart and seeing what position she was in. That morning her fluid units were up to 14cm (we had some issues with low amniotic fluid the last month of pregnancy; thankfully each visit saw an increase) and she was head down, face down, ready for delivery. In addition, that Friday marked 39 weeks for us. I headed to work after the appointment, happy that the baby was doing well and looking forward to tying up a few loose ends that day. I did not intend to go back to the office after the 14th and wanted to make sure all was ready for my departure.

Around 11am I was talking with my boss, who asked how I was feeling. I considered his question and realized that I had a slight ache in my lower back. Other than that, I felt fine. I was pretty sure Ayla was just getting a little more into position – she could arrive “any day now” – a comment that can be both frustrating and exhilarating for a pregnant woman! At noon I went to visit the small branch of Florida Commerce Credit Union located in the DOE building. I wanted to open an account for Joyful by Design that I could access locally, so I sat down and began the process. Around 12:30pm I felt a strange sensation, one that I had not felt for months and months. Something was working its way out and felt similar to menstrual flow. I thought it was probably my mucus plug and decided to stay in the chair until I finished opening my account. The sensation passed and at 1:00pm I stood and headed out. Thankfully, I was already finished for the day and had all of my things with me. I stopped at the bathroom before heading out to the Jeep, and the moment I sat down a gush of fluid released itself. I couldn't believe it! It was a nice sensation of release, and one that I definitely knew was not urine. The liquid was murky in the toilet and I knew that my water had broken.

Step one was to call Brian, which I did right then and there sitting in the bathroom stall. We agreed to meet at the house. There was a woman in the bathroom who I talked with as I washed my hands, asking her if she had ever experienced that sensation of her water breaking. Her water had been broken for her at the hospital for all three of her kids, so she couldn't really relate. I made my way to the Jeep, spread a towel on the seat, and headed for home. On the way, I called my doula and let her know what had happened. Her first response was to go and get checked at the hospital. I had no desire to do this. I knew that the baby was fine, I could feel her moving. I also knew that not all of my fluid released, it just hadn't been enough of a gush. Finally, I also knew that the hospital would want to keep me and likely try to push labor along since my water broke.

Sure enough, when I called the OB's office, the receptionist told me to head straight to the hospital. Her exact words were “do not pass go, do not collect \$200, just head straight there.” I asked, if I go, won't they try to keep me there? She said yes with an air of “of course they will, are you nuts?” I said thank you and continued to drive home. Brian met me at the house and we agreed that we didn't feel as though we had to rush. I still had not had lunch and he needed to get the car seat taken care of. I was not having what I considered to be real contractions at that point and tried to lay down for a nap.

Cetta arrived a few hours later and we talked about what was happening. I wanted to get out of the house and walk around a little. My intention was to try and move things along, to see if I could get the contractions to pick up. We went to Target and picked up a few things. Strolling up and down the aisles felt good and I even stopped to squat a few times. I'm not really sure where the motivation for that came from, but I listened to my body and it felt good to squat down as needed. I quickly developed an appetite and around 6pm we headed to Hopkins. I enjoyed a light dinner, took a short walk up and down Market Square, and then headed home to relax.

Over the course of the next few hours I tried several different positions to move labor along. Brian put in an Alias DVD for me to watch and he, Cetta, and I just kept making sure I was in a position for a little while, and then I would move to a different one. Some of the ones I remember trying are sitting on the ball while leaning onto a stack of pillows, slow dancing with Brian (he really liked this one), and lying on my side with one leg propped up. We passed a few hours doing this, Brian and Cetta rubbing my hands and feet, talking and laughing. This was the fun time! My Mom and Charles stopped over after my Mom was off work. Around 10pm Mom decided to go home and rest; Cetta thought she should go and see if she could get some sleep too. I wasn't having strong contractions at all, just felt a little...different.

Once everyone left, Brian suggested I take a shower, which was a great idea. It felt fantastic to be under the water. He brought the labor ball into the bathroom and I sat on it while I was in the shower, using the showerhead to massage my back. I really liked that and it would come in handy later! By 11:00 I was in bed, lying on my side and getting ready to sleep.

My eyes popped open in response to a strong feeling of pressure on my pelvis. I lay still for a minute and the sensation shifted; I had to go to the bathroom immediately! Lifting myself from bed, I checked the time, 1:29am. Once in the bathroom, I passed what felt like a small bowel movement, but what was clearly the mucus plug. I also noted that several minutes had gone by and the sensation of pressure was returning. Brian started timing my contractions. They were somewhere between 4 and 5 minutes apart. I said I was ready to go and get checked at the hospital. It had been over 12 hours since my water had broken. I had not been trickling water after the initial gush, but I knew it was time to leave the house just the same. The car was already loaded from earlier in the day and we were off. It soon became apparent that sitting in the car was not comfortable at all as the contractions came. I told Brian that the next time we have a baby and are driving to the hospital in the wee hours of the morning we can take Thomasville Rd. and avoid "the effing scenic route."

We arrived at the Woman's Pavilion at TMH around 2:30am. Getting inside was interesting. I had a strong urge to use the restroom that ended up sticking with me for hours. I stopped at a bathroom before getting on the elevator to triage and was in there for several minutes. I kept passing soft stools. Upstairs, we filled out the paperwork and minutes later, I was back in the bathroom. My sister, Lesley, arrived, followed closely by Cetta. I was brought back to triage, where both Brian and Cetta were permitted to attend to me.

Once I was put in a bed and hooked to a monitor, I was able to sit quietly for a reading and breathe through my contractions. The triage nurse came to ask about my plans for pain management (we told her we didn't want any medication) and to check my cervix. She poked and prodded for several minutes and finally said she couldn't tell how dilated I was because she couldn't find my cervix. As I pushed myself out of the bed, I told Brian I did not want to have my cervix checked again. At this point, it became necessary for my back to be rubbed during a contraction. The exam no doubt moved things along. My Mom arrived while we were waiting for the nurse to come back. When she did, she said she had spoken to the midwife on duty, who recommended I walk the halls for an hour. We started strolling.

Cetta told me the plan was that I would walk until a contraction started, at which point, I would squat up against the wall. We walked for awhile and soon noted the contractions were coming closer together. Brian squatted with me and rubbed my lower back for each contraction. That is where all of my sensation was. Throughout the entire ordeal, I never experienced the wrapping sensation from back to front. After 25 minutes of walking, I had my biggest contraction yet, followed by an intense wave of

nausea, the kind that comes upon you and make you feel so icky you want nothing more than to vomit so that it goes away. I got my wish! The vomiting forced my stomach to contract a little more and I swear I could feel Ayla move down.

I was back in the bed at 4:30. The triage nurse appeared again with her bucket of IV tools. She told me we were going to run an IV to push antibiotics since my water broke at 1pm the day before; the baby was at risk for infection. I looked at Brian and we both knew this was our first test. I knew there was plenty of fluid left; it had slowly started to trickle after the nurses attempted cervix check. Furthermore, there was no way in hell a nurse who couldn't "find my cervix" was going to give me an IV. She did not argue with Brian when he told her we didn't want the antibiotics and she let us know that another nurse was coming in to check my cervix. I reminded Brian that I didn't want another cervix check. He leaned over to me and whispered "this new nurse is really tall and has long, thin fingers. It'll be okay." I smiled and agreed. The contractions started to require more of my focus. I could still talk through them, but I felt a change in myself. I moved further inward and trusted that Brian would take care of the things I couldn't. He would speak up for me.

And he was right about the new nurse. She was quick and relatively painless and said I was 4.5 – 5cm. Woo-hoo! Time for my very own room! At this point, we met KT, our labor and delivery nurse. She showed us to our room, which she said she made sure had a big tub with jets after reading our birth plan. I was rolled into what would be my domain for the next several hours and from there I don't really remember an order of events. I know that once I was in the room Mom was with us almost the whole time. KT was great about letting me stay in a position for "just a few more minutes" before putting the monitor back on and I don't know that it was ever on me for very long. I tried lying on my side in the bed, sitting in the rocking chair, and dancing with Brian. I kept going back to the toilet because I had to use the bathroom, and also, it felt great. I didn't think I would really like that position while I was in labor, but it turned out to work well.

As the hours passed, I ended up vomiting an additional three times. Each instance was preceded by an intense contraction, one that felt like a significant movement was made. And each time felt great for me too. It was a relief to feel my stomach contract and push her downward. Eventually either I asked or someone suggested that I get in the tub. That's when things started really rocking and rolling and as hazy as a lot of that time is in my memory, I clearly recall being in the bathtub three separate times. I was getting really uncomfortable and frustrated that the positions I was trying were no longer easy for me. The instant I sat in the water, I felt better. I could position myself so the jets were on my back and work my way through the contractions. Brian kept leaning over the tub to keep focused on my back pain. Finally, he got in with me, which was great. I could lean forward for a contraction and have him rub my back, then lean back into him to rest in between contractions. After some time had passed, I had to get out of the tub to get on the monitor. I don't think it was long until I asked if I could get back in the tub after we confirmed Ayla's heartbeat was good and she wasn't in distress. This time, I wanted the shower running while I sat in the bath. Cetta ran the shower against my back and for each contraction, Brian rubbed my right and left lower back while Cetta sprayed the water with one hand and used her other hand to beat in a pulsing rhythm on my tail bone. Meanwhile, I was sitting with my legs open to rest and for each contraction, I was on my hands and knees or lying on one side or the other in the tub. Brian held pillows in place for my head during the contractions. The hospital, really KT, was great about letting us have and use whatever props we needed.

I don't really remember when it happened, but there was one moment where I was told I they wanted to check my cervix again. I asked if they could check it in the tub, and (I think it was Carol) who did! I

have since been told that this almost never happens, but that I was doing so well, they were happy to work with me. I don't remember how many centimeters I was after this check. I do remember that KT started bringing the Doppler into the bathroom and checking Ayla's heartbeat from the tub too, which meant I didn't have to get out of the water.

Another thing I noticed, and I'm not sure when this occurred to me, was that my contractions were not 60 seconds long. I counted in my head several times while I was having one. For reasons unknown to me, I didn't count seconds, you know, "1 Mississippi", but instead I just counted slowly. My contractions were usually over by the time I got to 8 or 10 in my head. Mom told me afterward that she timed several of my contractions too and they were running more in the 30-40 second range.

During the second round of tub time I started to get really tired. I remember telling Brian that I couldn't do this anymore. He asked me what I wanted and I said that I wanted to push. Each contraction brought with it an intense sensation of needing to pass a bowel movement. I started propping myself up on my hands and knees and bearing down while I breathed through the contractions, Brian and Cetta continuing their back rub tactics. I needed to have my cervix checked again to see where I was with needing to push. I climbed out of the tub and went to the bed. Carol came in the room and said it was almost 10am, nearly 21 hours since my water broke. She said that I should consider getting IV antibiotics for the baby to prevent infection. If I chose not to, Ayla might be subject to additional blood work when she was born to make sure she was okay. I asked a couple of questions about this but quickly refocused on my contractions. I could not be part of that discussion at that moment. I don't know if Brian talked with Carol about the antibiotics or not, but I do know that after a couple of minutes Carol checked me and said I was 8.5cm and that the baby was posterior. She said I was far enough along that it probably wasn't worth it to run the antibiotics. (Side note: the pediatrician later said we would just watch Ayla closely, no additional blood tests were run). I remember hearing her tell me that based on the baby's position, I needed to lay on my left side and prop my right leg up, lifting it even more slightly with each contraction. I did as she suggested, with Brian still rubbing my back, and wow! The level of pain doubled and with each contraction I could feel both of us, Ayla and I, working to get her in the right position.

Cetta asked me if I wanted to get on the ball; I countered with the suggestion to get back in the tub. Cetta thought to ask KT for a portable potty chair with the goal in mind of keeping my pelvic floor open. The chair was placed in the tub and Cetta started spraying me with water. I kept working through contractions, but it turned out to be only a few. I don't think I was on the chair very long before the urge to have a bowel movement was replaced with the most intense feeling yet. I no longer thought I wanted to push – I was pushing and there was no stopping it! Each contraction came like a wave of movement through my body, forcing me to bear down, giving me no choice but to push. And as wild as it felt, it was the right thing to do. Pushing down through that intense pressure was the best relief I could ask for. I had been making various sounds and noises throughout the entire labor, but this is when I started to really cry out. One of the mysteries of birth that I was so interested in became evident when amazingly, between each contraction, I was able to quiet down and completely relax. It was like two extreme sides of my personality were working together to create a happy medium.

I announced to my awesome support team that I no longer thought I wanted to push; I let them know I was pushing and it was not a choice. KT leaned down to check out my progress and said I was ready to move to the bed – it was time to have a baby! Brian got me out of the tub and I experienced a rush of adrenaline. My thought process was one-tracked; let's get Ayla out!

The bed was propped up so that I was mostly in a sitting position. My team would pull my legs back while I was pushing and I was given three things to think about:

- I was instructed to pull my own legs back while I pushed; the team would support me as well, but it would also give me a task to focus on while I worked through the pushes
- Carol shared that when the baby's head was coming out, I would experience a burning sensation that is often referred to as the "ring of fire" – my instructions were to not be scared and run away from it, but to let it happen and know that it would end as soon as Ayla's head was out
- Carol also said the order of operations would be that when the baby's head came out, I would relax for a second and Brian would move down to pull the baby out

And so, pushing began. I wanted the mirror, which was a fantastic visual aid. I could see Ayla's progress and I was inspired to keep it going. As she started crowning, the ring of fire exploded and I remember saying something like "ring of fire my ass!" I felt like I was on fire all over! It was absolutely wild. Carol was continuously massaging the perineum and all the skin around my vagina, working to keep me from tearing. She told me to try making a few grunting noises while I pushed. Aside from the intensity of the ring of fire, the most bizarre part about pushing was Ayla getting the hiccups! I had felt her hiccup in my belly for months, but when we could see her head start pulsing with each hiccup, we were all a little stunned. I know I laughed a little; it felt very different from her hiccups in the belly. This time I could see her head move and feel it jerk in my pelvis!

Between contractions I said I sounded like Miss Piggy giving birth. But it worked! I don't know how many times I pushed, but I don't think it was more than ten. While I watched in the mirror, I saw her head get bigger and bigger. Between contractions I watched Carol play with Ayla's hair. Finally with a long, big push on my part, the head was out. As soon as it cleared my vagina the "ring of fire" subsided. Brian let go of my leg and moved to stand next to Carol. One more push and Ayla's body slid out of mine. My cousin, Amy, said that when she delivered her son, it felt to her like all of her insides came out. I can't think of a better description. Once the head was out, it was easy to push the rest of the baby out and it really does feel like you are emptied of all that weighs you down.

The scene changed drastically. Brian held up our daughter and handed her to me. I started giggling to see her and because the cord was tickling me. When I first looked at my daughter her eyes were wide open and locked onto mine. I felt like we exchanged a brief moment of gratitude; we had done it and we did it together! Brian and I both enjoyed some skin-to-skin time with Ayla. We tried to tempt her with a breast, but she had no interest. She was alert and looking around the room, checking things out; it seemed like she was happy to be there!

My birth experience with Ayla was exactly what I wanted. We worked through the entire process without any medication or medical interference. I was more excited than I can say that I had accomplished this feat. I learned a great deal about myself throughout the pregnancy and even more in the labor and delivery process. I learned that I can handle just about anything! My confidence in myself is really high right now, which is never a bad thing!

My belief that Brian is a perfect match for me is completely validated – he was absolutely amazing throughout the entire ordeal. I love thinking about the three of us working together to make it happen – Brian, Ayla and myself. I am grateful that my life has allowed these two people to come to me and further grateful that I was and am open to receive the gifts of having them to love.

Finally, I learned that from the standpoint of preparing to deliver a child, the biggest key to my success was making a conscious decision about what I wanted. Yes, any number of things could have happened that might have steered me from my path. I would be lying if I wrote that I didn't experience a certain level of fear. Ultimately, the majority of my time spent thinking about the delivery was focused on what I did want. I wanted birth free of medication and that is what I envisioned. I meditated regularly and practiced relaxing as completely as I could. When the time came, those tools were incredibly useful to me as I was able to quiet my mind, listen to my body, and work with Ayla to bring her into the world.

After Ayla's Birth

After Ayla was born I enjoyed 20 minutes or so of holding and looking at her. Brian and I both were just soaking up our daughter. A new nurse entered the room, Gail. She was there to check out Ayla and while she was doing that Brian stayed by Ayla's side and Cetta stuck with me while Carol was finishing up. It was at this time that Carol mentioned to me that the placenta had not come out yet. She told me the cord and the membranes had both been expelled, but that the placenta was still inside. My first thought was not particularly one of concern; I knew the placenta could take some time to come out.

It was when Carol told me that she was going in to see if she could find grab the placenta that I realized things might be a little off. Her efforts at manual retrieval, stalwart as they were, did not get us very far. After she tried for several minutes while I pushed to expel it, she decided I should sit on the portable potty chair to try and push down. I did this for several minutes too, trying to focus, but having a hard time as I was so excited to see Ayla. Finally, after minutes that felt like hours, Carol had me move back to the bed. She checked again to see if I had made any progress moving the placenta down so that she could grab it, but no such luck. Carol told me she was going to have to get the doctor on call. It was to the point where the placenta had to be either manually or surgically removed via a D&C. As Carol left the room to get the doctor, KT started to prepare an IV. I told her that I really didn't want that, that I had worked so hard not to have medication. I also told her that I was not thrilled about a D&C because the last time I had one, not everything was removed. I asked her if we could wait until the doctor came to discuss our options before we started the IV. KT agreed – I cannot emphasize how great she was to have as a nurse.

Carol returned with the doctor. It turned out to be Dr. Adrian George, who is an OB/GYN in town that I have heard good things about. Dr. George started talking to me about trying to manually remove the placenta and if that didn't work, taking me to the OR for the D&C. She said the plan was to give me an IV pain medication to relax me for the attempt at manually removing the placenta. If she couldn't find it or if I couldn't handle her trying to get it, we would opt for plan B. I expressed concern over being able to breastfeed Ayla with pain medication in my system. She explained that the medication she would use was mild enough that it would work its way through my system quickly.

Brian's ears perked up at this mention. He said something about breastfeeding Ayla before we moved ahead with this procedure. Dr. George turned around to face him and I didn't hear what she said, but after she spoke to him, Brian and Cetta switched places. Dr. George asked KT to give me 10cc's of a pain medication called Nubane. After a few minutes, it was evident that it wasn't enough, so another 5 cc's was added. After this, I became quiet and Dr. George started her search.

I remember her going in the first time and saying that my cervix was closing up. She went in for a second time, more deeply and intensely. Dr. George had her other hand on my belly pushing down, along with Carol and KT's hands. I struggled to stay relaxed and not clench up. And it paid off; Dr. George removed the first chunk. She went in a third time and pulled out another piece. She said she had to go in one more time to check and make sure she got it all. I propped myself up on my elbows, looked her in the eye and said that she could do this, that I believed in her. She thanked me for the vote of confidence and made her last swipe. She didn't find any more pieces of placenta.

The next step was to put me on Pitocin to force my uterus to contract in case there was anything left in there that needed to be expelled. And finally, an antibiotic was added to the mix as I had experienced quite a few foreign sources of bacteria presented to my system. The pain medication stayed in my

system long enough so that even if the Pitocin caused me to contract I didn't feel any of it. On the other hand, I wasn't really numb or loopy feeling. I suppose that I was just happy to have that ordeal over with!

It ended up being two hours after Ayla was born that the placenta was removed. Carol told me that perhaps because of the tear in the early part of the pregnancy, it had healed against the uterine wall and formed more of a bond than it normally would. The truth is that we will never know what happened, but we will be grateful that I didn't have to have surgery the day that Ayla was born. All's well that ends well and I was able to switch my focus back to that that which matters most.

Epilogue

The rest of our stay in the hospital included visitors, lots of food (I finally had my appetite back), and learning to breastfeed. The lactation consultants were great and we were so appreciative of their services. The information we gleaned from them was helpful as we prepared to go home. Monday morning brought us a flood of hospital staff, each of which had to sign off on us and Ayla before we could be discharged. We left the hospital around 10:30am and headed for home. When we walked in the front door for the first time with our daughter I finally had my emotional release. The adrenaline had worn off and I was just so happy to be home, with her and Brian, I cried with relief and joy.

Since Ayla's birth we have been having a great time getting to know one another. Brian and I are learning about being parents and taking care of our beautiful daughter together. It is easier than I thought it would be (so far) and twelve days later, I could still stare at her for the majority of the day. Life is pretty perfect!