

A Father's Perspective On His Baby's Birth



Dear Friends,

Leslie and I wanted to let everyone know that Jabob (it's a boy!) was born at 1:05am on Monday, June 21st. He weighed 8lbs 2oz and measured 22 inches.

Labor lasted 20 hours, nearly all at home. Les was 8cm dilated when we reached the hospital Sunday night, and she walked in the garden at Alta Bates til she was a 10cm.

The unexpected happened when it came time to push. She began moving the baby through her cervix at 7:30pm, but 5 hours later the baby had not fully crowned. It turned out that his left arm was in a forward position that made it difficult to maneuver the pelvic bone; after so much energy and exhaustion, we opted with the advice of our doula and doctor to use a low vacuum extraction. Since the baby's head was slightly exposed already, we were advised that the use of the vacuum did not present a risk greater than Leslie losing her strength mid-delivery. Jacob was left with a small red bruise on his head, but there was no distension of any kind. Yay!

I cannot say enough about the staff at Alta Bates. They followed our birth plan, and permitted Leslie to continue to try to deliver without intervention after they suggested the low vacuum delivery a first time. (Our doula was extremely helpful here, helping us to understand the risks involved to both mother and baby.) The doctors explained every phase of delivery to us, answered our concerns at every pass, and allowed Leslie to manage her birthing experience to the extent it was medically advisable. The nurses were likewise attentive.

I will remember two things forever. One was the moment when Les realized she was about to go into labor. It was as if she heard a siren call from a thousand miles away that only she could hear. Beginning at 11:30pm on Saturday, she turned me out in a way I had never before seen; she didn't mean to, she later told me, but something had begun to pulse inside and she knew something dramatic was impending. During labor she sat on her exercise ball and chanted in the bathtub for hours, reminding me of the goddess figurines that line Janaki's office.

The other was the intensity of the birthing process. The highs and lows were more than I had prepared myself for, even though I thought I was ready for anything. Watching Les was mesmerizing, scary, and exhausting all at the same time, as she alternately receded into herself, struggled to control the spasms of pain and discomfort, and fought on to be with her baby as the hours ticked by. The psychological stress made me leave the room at times to compose myself, because to watch the two things I love more than anything in the world, dancing toward one another in a process I had little to say about, was numbing.

We send our love to everyone. Our thoughts are with you.

June 24, 2004