

The birth of Solomon Felix

14th of March, 2003

by Sophie Wadson

I had planned a little party on my due date. It was our daughter Lily's 4th birthday a week after, so we had decided to celebrate it early just in case the baby came late and eclipsed her special day. I thought the due date would be perfect - babies are never born on their due date, and besides, it would take my mind off the sometimes frustrating and anti-climatic milestone of pregnancy. The night before, I made a banana cake. Al made rice crackles with Lily and Jasper (our 6-year-old), and blew up lots of balloons. I had felt all day like the baby's head had engaged and was quite uncomfortable and tired, and it was a relief to go to bed. Lily spent the whole night in our bed, and I fell asleep cuddling her.

At 5 am on my due date, the 14th of March, I was suddenly wide awake. Soon I had a strong pain and my first thought was "that felt like a contraction", and my second thought was "it can't be, it's Lily's party today". But 5 minutes later there was another one, and 5 minutes more another. I lay there, increasingly alert and watching the clock. The pains were very low and quite strong, together with a tightening of my uterus. There was something in their nature that felt very 'real'. At 5.45 am I got up and went to the loo, and found I'd had a show. I was really excited but went to sit quietly in my armchair in the living room. I called out to Al to wake up but he wouldn't, so I had to go and shake him. He woke up pretty quickly when I said I was in labour. I had a wee cry because I thought Lily would be really upset about the party. Al began to tidy up - starting with the balloons that were all over the living room. I rang my midwife, Juliet, and my sister, Sarah, who both said they'd be round soon. We live on Banks Peninsula, and Lily's birth was very quick, so we were prepared for the possibility of this being a quick birth also.

Al ran me a bath and it was lovely, warm and deep. My contractions were still strong and regular. I relaxed and Al put on the birth tape I'd made, and it was perfect, every song seemed just right for my mood. I lay there and enjoyed it and felt relaxed and contented about being in labour, though of course part of me didn't believe it was really happening and was worried it would suddenly stop. Another part of me was worried it would all just happen in a rush before Juliet arrived, so I was happy to see her when she came at about 7 am. Sarah arrived then too, and made tea and toast. Everything felt so exciting when my "team" was all together!

Al had gotten Lily and Jasper ready to go to Justine's, and Lily didn't mind about her party at all, she was that happy about the baby. She said, "Now the baby can come to my party too!" Jasper was all happy and excited too, and we had big hugs before Al dropped them round to Justine's.



I got out of the bath and took my chamomile tea into the living room with Juliet and Sarah. We all drank tea and chatted and it was a lovely, relaxed atmosphere tinged with anticipation and celebration. The front curtains were open and the hills and harbour were glowing orange. It was a gorgeous, crisp, clear day just beginning, a perfect start to this day on which my third child would enter the world.

Soon Al got back and he made some bread in the kitchen. We all sat and talked lots, and laughed a lot too. I sat cross-legged in my armchair, and made several trips to the loo. Now and then, Juliet checked the baby's heartbeat and we speculated on the baby's gender, and discussed names we liked. The contractions gradually became stronger and stronger. Soon I needed wrapped hotties on my abdomen and lower back. Sarah kept refilling them as they went cold. She also took the last photos of my glorious tummy, and we looked at photos of me pregnant with Lily and Jasper.

Now I couldn't talk during a contraction, but had to give it my full attention, closing my eyes and breathing through it. Between contractions I'd resume talking and laughing - I felt absolutely wonderful. At 10.20 am Al suggested we break out the pass-the-parcel I'd spent so long making for Lily's party. I burst out laughing and felt a pop and a gush as my waters broke! This made me laugh even more!



My contractions immediately became powerful and intense, I remembered in a flash the incredible pain of childbirth that my body had forgotten until now. I had one moment of thinking, "I can't do it", but rushed it out of my head with the thought "I am doing it". The mood of the room had quickly changed from lighthearted and relaxed to intense and focused. Juliet, Sarah and Al became a highly efficient, organized team. They were amazing! I knelt on the birthmat on the floor, leaning on a pile of cushions on the couch. Sarah was on my left, Al on my right, and Juliet behind. The contractions were so full-on, I was wracked

with wrenching sears and twists of pain in my back, abdomen and bottom. I was working so hard and pouring with sweat, and between each contraction I'd collapse my head on the cushions while Sarah mopped my face and Al fed me water. I was aware of Coldplay on the stereo. During each contraction, Sarah, Al and Juliet worked together applying hot, wet towels to my back, abdomen and bottom. Everyone was telling me how great I was doing, and although I couldn't respond, their words of encouragement really buoyed me.

Soon I felt a shifting inside me, and knew it was the baby's head preparing to come down the birth canal. I said "I feel like pushing, can I push?" and Juliet replied that I should do whatever my body was telling me to. What amazing words - I felt so empowered as I began to push as my body was urging me. With each excruciating, satisfying push I felt the baby's head move down little by little, and then Al and Sarah joined Juliet behind me to get their first glimpse of our new little being. The scorching searing pain of the head coming out felt so familiar, and I felt very conscious of the fact that my baby was about to be born. I thought about how I would turn to hold my baby in just one more push, and was so excited. Sarah was telling me how beautiful the baby's face was, how it looked like Lily and Jasper. She said later that the face was so serene and still, as if carved from marble. This moment seemed to go on forever, but finally, at 11.11 am I pushed once more with my last ounce of



energy and then came the gorgeous, incredible, sacred, yet familiar feeling of that slippery little body tumbling out of me, and into the hands of his daddy. I turned quickly and was handed ... my son. He looked just as I'd imagined him, my boy I was so sure I was having. I am so truly blessed to have experienced the pure bliss and overwhelming love of this first meeting between mother and baby, not once, but three times.

That night we lit a candle on the banana cake and celebrated a birth day after all. We named our wee son Solomon Felix, meaning "Peaceful and Happy". He was big (9 lbs, 11 oz), strong-limbed and chubby-cheeked with lots of soft, light-brown hair. His birth at home was so joyful and special and so very natural, an event we will treasure always.

