

The Birth of a Little Princess - Anitra Carr

They say that the first three years of a child's life are the most important. As such, I chose to have a three year gap between my first and second child so that I could give as much attention as possible to my first child during her important formative years. I am glad to say that it seems to have paid off as my daughter is now a wonderful help with the new baby - she loves holding her, carrying her around, playing with her, and giving her lots of hugs and kisses - no signs of any jealousy or insecurity, thankfully.

As with my first child, I used natural fertility techniques to monitor my fertility and became pregnant straight away (much to my husband's chagrin). I suffered from fatigue and 'morning sickness' a bit more this time, perhaps because I already had an active toddler to chase around after and keep entertained. Fortunately my daughter was still having afternoon naps at the time, so I was often able to have a rest with her. All in all, the pregnancy progressed normally and I was able to enjoy and appreciate each stage more as I was not working full time (as I had with my first pregnancy).

I have always been a strong supporter of home birth and my first daughter was born at home when we were living in America. Although a number of friends and relatives couldn't understand why I would want to have a home birth, especially with a first child, there was little comment about having my second child at home - probably because I had already 'been there, done that'. I first met Julie, my homebirth midwife-to-be, when she lectured one of my polytech classes. I must have been impressed with what I saw as at the time I thought to myself that if I ever had another child I would like to have her as my midwife, and fortunately she was available when the time came. Antenatal visits were at my home and my daughter enjoyed helping Julie take my blood pressure, palpate the baby and listen to the heart beat with a Pinard. Once again, I chose not to have any doppler or ultrasound scans.

When I was pregnant with my first child we had a 'blessingway' ceremony which is a lovely way for the female friends and relatives of the mother-to-be to show her their love, support and encouragement for the upcoming labour and birth, and to honour the coming child. As such, I felt that it would be nice to have another one for my second child and with the help of my mother and a friend we organised a blessingway a couple of weeks before my due date. Eight close friends and family members attended, as well as my midwife. Each had brought along a bead or crystal of special significance which could be threaded to make a necklace for myself (and/or the baby). We all then got down onto our hands and knees to decorate the birthing mat which my mother and friend had helped me to make earlier.



A number of people (including myself) thought that the baby would be born early. However, it wasn't until about three days after my due date that I started having contractions during the night. By morning, they had petered out, though, and didn't really return again that day, despite a lot of walking around. At about quarter past three the next morning, however, I woke up with full-on contractions. My husband and I got up soon after and he started filling the birth pool which had been assembled earlier. Fortunately, my mother had come



up the day before to stay, so she was on hand to help with filling hot water bottles for pain relief, etc. I called Julie when I lost my mucus plug and also lost a bit of blood. My daughter woke up not long afterwards and my mother took her in hand - they were having an early breakfast when Julie arrived with her bag.

By that stage I was transitioning and starting to get the urge to push (I hadn't had the urge to push with my first child, so it was a totally new experience for me). Julie started applying hot towels (the 'home birth epidural') immediately which was a wonderful relief from the pain. She called Juliet, the back-up midwife, when she realised that the baby was well on its way. We also realised that, unfortunately, we probably wouldn't get the birth pool filled in time. However, because I had started bleeding before the baby was born (as I had also done with my first child), Julie told me that they probably would have advised me against getting into the pool anyway.

At 6:26 am (19th July, 2004), after a short, but intense labour, my second little girl was born on the birth mat that everyone had so lovingly decorated for her. She and I immediately jumped into the pool, which was full by then, to bond whilst watched over by my husband, daughter and mother. After about an hour my husband cut the cord and Julie administered some oxytocin to help expel the placenta. We then jumped into bed with my older daughter who was absolutely thrilled to have a little sister as that is what she was wanting all along. The little girl weighed 7lb 14oz and had the longest eyelashes that Julie had ever seen, as well as a head full of dark hair.

Many people (including myself) had 'predicted' that the baby would be a boy and we only had a boy's name picked out. Therefore, we spent the next few days trying to come up with a name for her that both my husband and I could agree on. It was then that I found out that my older daughter had been telling people for months that the new baby would be called Sarah. Since both my husband and I liked the name, we decided to call her Sarah, which means 'princess' in Hebrew. I came up with her middle name, Angelina (which means 'little angel' in Italian), and my husband contributed her surname, Carson.



When my first daughter was born we 'planted' her placenta under a maple tree outside our bedroom window and put bright red tulips on top. Since we also have a maple tree outside our current bedroom window, we decided to plant Sarah's placenta under it, with some blue-flowering grape hyacinth on top. In many cultures the placenta is treated with much respect and ritual and is even referred to as 'little brother' or 'little sister' by some native peoples. This makes sense since the placenta is formed from the same egg that the baby comes from.

Now, two months later I am finding that being a parent the second time round is much easier and more enjoyable, despite the added challenges of having a toddler as well, because my husband and I are a lot more relaxed and confident. We are able to enjoy and appreciate Sarah more since, having already had a child, we know that every stage is so fleeting in the long run and before we know it she will be a three year old running around everywhere and talking non-stop like her big sister is now! But for the time being, Sarah is a happy, contented baby who is breastfeeding well and still sleeping with us in our bed.



*Published in: Birthplace magazine,
January/February 2005, p 18-19.*