

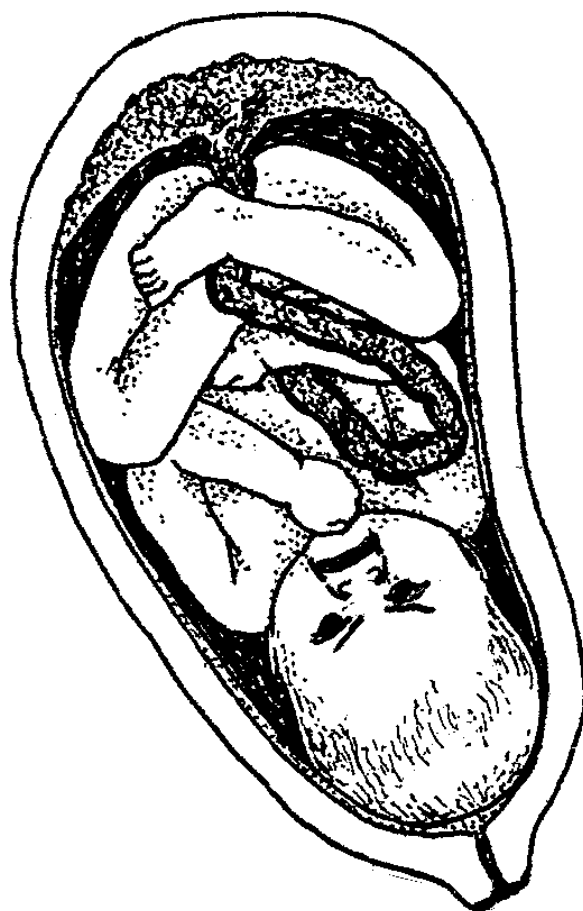
#11

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ZUZU

and the

BABY CATCHER



• midwife • motherhood • meltdowns • more •

- Hi there.

Once again, I nearly called it quits on ZBC. As August loomed and it was time to do another issue, a sinking feeling came over me. I didn't like it.

- I started this zine because I wanted to document & share my life. Very quickly it got formulaic, and folks seemed to enjoy it, so I kept going. Our vacations, my kids, midwifery, Geek Daddy, motherhood: it began to feel like all I ever did was brag or complain... but, hey, it's my zine, right?

- Then two things happened that set me spinning in very different ways. One was Nell ending her friendship with me. I write more about it later in this issue, but the gist of it is this: if my very best friend begrudges me my (now) charmed & blessed life, then how do my readers - mamas, most of them, feel when they hear me complain in one breath and talk about my live-in nanny the next? How many others are sitting on a bench of anger & resentment?

- The other event was a more positive one: I was at a workshop in California (Karen Stranges Newborn Resus class, a must-have for ANYONE in the business; www.newbornbreath.com) and one of the other gals, a lovely young woman, recognized me and waxed eloquent about how great my zine is, etc. If we lived in the same town we'd be best of friends, she assured me, she felt she knew me so well. This was incredibly flattering and sweet... and it made me a bit sad, too. I realized that although I do bare some aspects of my soul here, it is only a teeny smidge of me. There are so many stories I haven't told, will never tell - either because I cannot bear to write them, or because they will offend or even alienate some of you. It made me sad because I started ZBC to be a creative outlet where I could pour my soul - but instead it has become a self-censored little showplace.

- A secret: I don't always have funny stories to tell, because I don't always view things that way. I don't always want to draw little pictures of everything. I don't always want to entertain. I'm sorry.

- So this issue, I say to hell with it. It's gonna be what it's gonna be. I'll try to follow the formula... but if parts of it piss you off or weird you out or offend you or whatever - that's a chance I'll have to take. Maybe you'll even enjoy it. Who knows?

- I'm not going to tell all. I can't. And too much of what really goes on is just plain old boring. But if you are really interested, you can always check out my LJ. Username: 24hourmama.

Don't say I didn't warn you. Be well. all. xo *Ellen*

BECOMING A MIDWIFE IN 10 EASY YEARS

I started the Nell story last issue, and then she broke up with me IRL, and so now I don't really feel like finishing that story, I'm sorry. In a nutshell: we bonded over a very bad, majorly mis-handled (by Agnes) birth, and then we talked on the phone at least once a week (and visited when we could) for ten years after that. End of story.

So let me backtrack a bit. Remember that very first birth I went to? (Issue #9) That 3-day long ordeal that ended in a cesarean section? Well, after that I was still sure I wanted to be a midwife... and I needed to see a birth.

Back in midwifery school I had drawn up a curriculum for a childbirth ed class for women who were relinquishing their babies for adoption - a subject near & dear to my heart. I decided to make the leap and I began to promote myself to local adoption agencies & attorneys as a private childbirth educator & labor support for their clients. My first client happened very quickly, a 19-year-old street kid named Kris.

I met her for lunch downtown and we pretty instantly bonded. At once demure & sweet, savvy, and strong, Kris blew me away with her intelligence and maturity.

To say she'd been through a lot was an understatement. And here she was, nearly nine months pregnant by a guy she didn't particularly like, living in a hotel provided by the adoptive parents via the agency/attorney, and planning to give up the baby. Oh, did I mention her prenatal care?

Dr. Alberts. Ah yes. A 'competent' OB with a PMS clinic - the OB to whom every relinquishing mom was sent by the attorney's office. Kris didn't particularly like the man - he seemed disrespectful, rude & arrogant. After we had talked awhile, Kris asked me to come with her to her next prenatal. I was happy to!

Meanwhile, Kris had nothing but time on her hands, so she read. And read & read. She was full of questions. We talked a lot about her concerns & her rights, and she made a list of questions for Dr. Alberts. Armed with information, she seemed more confident & self-assured than when we first met, and off we went to the doc.

We sat in the waiting room of the famous Dr. Alberts; a shrine to his PMS clinic & obstetrical superiority. I looked through one of the photo albums that were lying around, and my blood ran cold. Photo after photo of Dr. Alberts, grinning proudly, holding up baby after baby that he delivered. The mothers? You could see their draped knees in some of them. That was it Scary. We were finally in, and after the usual wait, Dr. Alberts bustled in, a female nurse close by. "Well," he started out, flipping importantly through her chart, "you're due in two days... so if you haven't had this baby by Monday, we'll just have you go on in and we'll give you a little shot, a little something to get you going..." "You mean PITOCIN?" Kris smoothly interjected. "I'd rather not be induced, I'd rather wait." "Hey, whatever!" retorted Dr. Alberts, "If you want to take that risk!" "I do," she said. She had other questions for him, all of which got pooh-poohed (see below) or shot down; he decided enough was enough, and got out the gloves. Kris tensed, and laid back on the table, asking



(What is she SENSITIVE about?!!) "You should try getting your PROSTATE checked," he continued as he finished up his exam. "NOBODY likes THAT... well, maybe those guys down IN SAN FRANCISCO don't mind it..." he chuckled. My mouth fell open. This was the most unbelievable "Doctor" I'd ever seen. Kris and I left his office in silence. Finally I said, "You are NOT having your baby with that man." And Kris agreed.

But now what?

This is the doctor that the agency sent her to. The thought of the other frightened, vulnerable women who were planning to give up their babies being sent to this incredibly insensitive man made me nauseous. And Kris felt stuck, of course. She was homeless, relying on the agency to take care of her.

But NOT powerless.

I called Gail Hart, the midwife in town I most wanted to work with. Calm, brilliant, generous & wise, I had spoken with her at length on the phone about my midwifery path.

I called her about Kris, and she readily agreed to meet with us. Kris felt comfortable with having her baby at the hotel or basically anywhere but the hospital, with Dr. Alberts and the 50% C-section rate for first-time mothers.

Gail agreed to do Kris's birth. By this time I had brought Kris home with me, and Tara & I had taken a liking to this quiet but sassy young woman with the big blue eyes and shy smile. It broke my heart to think of her alone in that hotel, waiting for that baby that she wasn't even keeping. We decided Tara & I, that we were adopting Kris. We invited her to come stay with us, in our guestroom, and have her baby in our home. She accepted.



There was only one little problem... the agency. They were FREAKING out. NO, she could NOT have a homebirth! They might lose the adoptive parents if she did something like that! Hmm... No, it sounded like they might lose the KICKBACK they were probably getting from their little "arrangement" with the Doc. And they seriously underestimated the adoptive parents, who loved & trusted Kris and wanted whatever she wanted. Ah, the delicate balance of power. One phone call from Kris to the adoptive parents, C & J, and a deal was reached: Kris could have her birth the way she wanted, with Gail & Pat & I attending - but it had to be at a birth center. Well, that was easily arranged... and so Kris settled into our questroom to wait.

{ The rest of the story... I PROMISE... in ISSUE #12... STAY TUNED! }

FROM THE "WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU"

FILES: WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT Dr. Alberts:

A few WEEKS after the birth, I read in horror an article in the local paper. Dr. Alberts was going to trial for MULTIPLE charges of molestation & improper conduct, brought by his former patients! AND, this was nothing new, he was ALREADY on probation for earlier complaints, when he was ordered to always have a "witness" (the female nurse) in the room for ALL internal exams. I WAS LIVID. I sent a copy of the article and a very nasty letter to the agency - who I'm SURE KNEW about Dr. Alberts' dirty little secret. I was appalled that they would so cruelly send those women to a known sexual abuser. THEY DID NOT ANSWER MY LETTER OR PHONE CALLS.

Then... a few weeks before his trial (he had long since had his medical license suspended) he DIED of a stroke. So unfair. Bastard.

Josie @ 19 months



Dear Andy,

I'm sure you never expected to hear from me again...but here I am. Remember? Certified __ __, 1986. You were Howard's shining star, his right-hand boy, climbing up that promising corporate ladder. I was just one of the switchboard operators, teasing you about how often your wife called – more than anyone else's. You were so handsome and boyish (you wore a bowtie), and charismatic. I couldn't resist; I asked you out for lunch, told you I wanted to have a fling with you. No romance, no homewrecking, just a roll in the hay. That's just the kind of girl I was then, I'm ashamed to say. I was surprised that you were game... I felt like I'd really accomplished something, to tempt you away from your omnipresent wife. So, we flung.

The first time was at my south side apartment, in my pink bedroom. We had very sweaty, fun, athletic sex... I remember thinking you were showing off a bit, but it was still quite fun. I even wrote a poem about it.

The second time was at your apartment on the north side, just a few blocks in from the Lake. Lea was out of town on business. You were nervous, very tense about my being there. I have a vivid memory of standing in your dining/living room area while you talked to Lea on the phone (did she call or did you call her?) I was admiring your oh-so-artistic photo prints that are now classic 80's. One was three broken egg shells with the insides spilled out, the yolks whole, in perfect primary colors. I thought it was such a cool photo, so stylish and grown-up. Your whole apartment was like that, black lacquered dining room set, leather furniture. You were living a high-class life even then; one that I could only hope I would achieve.

Once in your bedroom you were even more tense – probably due to the painfully obvious photo of Lea on the bedside stand. I was already partially undressed when you said, "I can't do this. She's my best friend." You sent me home, into the night and the unfamiliar neighborhood, without so much as cab fare. Or maybe you offered me cab fare and I refused it, not wanting to feel more like a whore than I already did. I was infuriated that you sent me away... your devotion to Lea was touching, but it hadn't prevented you from rolling with me in MY hay, did it?

To get even with you a few weeks later I told you my period was late. You were icy cold, wanted nothing to do with me. You were angry. Again you sent me away, telling me you'd pay for the abortion if it came to that, but otherwise you were done with me. I hated you for it. I probably made life difficult for you, knowing me, until you came up with the brilliant scheme of telling me that you'd been diagnosed with cancer. Oh, how I grieved! This beautiful, virile man, sexy, in his prime, struck with such a horrible disease! I wrote another poem. And I backed off. It was a brilliant plan, Andy.

Not too long after that I quit working for Certified ____, but I still thought about you. I wondered what I would do if I ran into you and Lea on Michigan Avenue some evening... would I ask you, innocently, if you had seen that new movie, *Fatal Attraction*? I figured you'd probably lied about the cancer. It took me a while to stop hating you.

Many, many years passed. I got married myself, had a baby. Did a lot of thinking, a lot of regretting. I especially regretted the affairs I'd had with married men (what, you didn't think you were the only one, did you?) I thought mostly about their wives, and how disrespectful I had been of other women's relationships, how much wrong I had done.

I looked you up online, to see if you were still married, mostly. To see if you'd done well, were happy. I googled "Andrew and Lea Fastow", and got a lot of hits. The first one was a list of some sort of upper-crust billionaire country club or something. Well, I thought. Good. You're still married – I guess you never told Lea. Wow, well, okay. I guess I was just a one-time mistake, probably one you never made again. I was glad.

The next hit was about the recent Enron scandal. What on earth does Andy have to do with that, I wondered? And there you were – right in the middle; one of the masterminds of one of the nastiest plots this decade. Damn. I guess I wasn't your last mistake. And now you are in jail – or headed there. Lea has served her short sentence (such love, such devotion – it must have been hell seeing her go in for you), she going in before you so someone could be home with your two little boys. Not only did you drag your wife down with you, but Andy, come on. You have two sons. What must they think of you?

Then a movie came out about it. I haven't seen it. I don't know if I can. Besides, I've already seen you ruthless and icy... I don't need to see it again. It was strange enough, hard enough to see your pictures all over the web. You looked as boyish and handsome as ever in many of them. Grey now, though, and looking tired and pissed in the more recent photos. You got caught. And now you have to serve some time, sell your homes, fork over \$20 million. You know what? You had it coming.

Do you know how many people you hurt? Not just the Enron employees who lost their jobs and their retirement, but the ones affected by your energy-manipulation schemes, the faked rolling blackouts. How dare you play around with people's lives like that? What is the matter with you? Where is your decency? Did you ever have any?

It makes me sad that you went on to do such horrible things. I'd hoped that you'd at least stopped screwing people. I guess not.

Andy, Andy, Andy. I think about you, headed for prison. I think about Lea, going to raise your boys to manhood without their father (perhaps a good thing), while you do whatever it is you will do at club fed. I think about my humble life, both then and now; my rather petty screw-ups. You may have been Mr. Billionaire, with your multiple homes and your country clubs... but somehow, I came out the victor. Somehow, despite all the incredibly poor judgment I exercised, despite all the wrong I've done and the regrets I've had... I have found my way home.

Maybe someday you will, too.

Peace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Phil' written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. Tell Lea I'm sorry.

THE CARTOON HISTORY of R&R

I INVITED MYSELF INTO RANDY'S BED THAT SECOND NIGHT,
GAME NIGHT, AT HIS PARENTS HOUSE.

WE WERE STAYING IN HIS CHILDHOOD BEDROOM.

I MADE SOME LAME JOKE ABOUT THE SCORPIO KISS OF DEATH
(WE'RE BOTH SCORPIOS, YOU SEE)

IT WAS A PERFECT KISS.

IT WAS PERFECT SEX.

THE BEST ID HAD SINCE MY
OLD FUCK-BUDDY "N" HAD MOVED
AWAY, AND "N" WAS THE BEST.

UNTIL NOW.

I WAS IN TROUBLE. **BIG** TROUBLE.

Darling Nell.

I was at dinner with my family the other night, doing the usual restaurant dance: let Josie play with ice and salt and whatever else will keep her entertained so I can eat a few bites before she climbs down and wanders away. It was a happy, loving meal at the end of a long day. I was tired but content. Then I looked up and saw her and burst into tears. Well, not "burst" - the tears welled up and started rolling down my cheeks before I could stop them.

No, it wasn't Nell. It was just another woman who reminded me of her. She had Nell's distinctive coloring: her fair skin, pale eyebrows & eyelashes, thick blond hair pulled back in a ponytail. She didn't really look like Nell - Nell's features are more elegant - but first glance was close enough. Randy asked what the matter was and I told him. He held my hand, "I'm sorry, Rhon," and Zuzu kept patting my hand and arm and kissing me and looking worried. I stopped the tears, put on my brave face, wondered for the umpteenth time when it was going to stop, when was I going to be done grieving her?

In many ways my grief has turned a corner. As it was I never really got to grieve at all, not the way I have always done it. I've always done grief very efficiently & thoroughly. With kids, though, grief is an indulgence, a luxury, an impossibility. I can't just break down & cry whenever I feel like it. I can't just lock myself away and brood. And I'm way, way too busy when I do get time alone... besides, you can't always turn grief on like a light. It comes when it comes; you deal with it or you stifle it. I've had to stifle it for the first time in my life... and as a result it seems to be dragging on and on, morphing and erupting in unpleasant & unrecognizable ways.

I hate it.

I won't go into detail - I can't, not now, not here. Besides, it's done, it's over - the details are, in a way, irrelevant. Yet the details seem to be what it was all about: my life as it is: enviable to Nell, creating resentments that I had stupidly, blithely gone unaware of. She's having a hard time of it; chronically ill child; less-than-ideal partner; giving up midwifery to go to nursing school - while I've gone my merry, blessed way with the perfect spouse, the life of luxury (i.e. no financial worries for the first time in my life.), children who are healthy, and a newly-blooming midwifery career. Like Sept. 11 - I should have seen it coming. But I didn't, and I was blindsided. It escalated quickly despite my best efforts - and I am proud to say that I stayed honest, loving and respectful to the bitter end. She said things to me (via email - we have not spoken on the phone at all - she ended the friendship in an email) that went straight to my soul and shredded it.

The grief, as I've said, has morphed. I was desperately sad for a long while; angry, yes; but missing her & worried for her. It was as if she had died, by suicide, so conflicted were my feelings. I wanted to call her every day, but couldn't. Randy tried to understand - he even bought a book, an anthology called "The One Who Got Away" or something like that - stories written by women about the best friend they lost. He was more sympathetic after reading the book, less puzzled at the extreme loss I was feeling. But still, he couldn't know. I thank him for attempting.

It's not like I have no friends now, I mean, I have other good - even best - friends. They are all moms, and I love them deeply... and am in fact trying harder to make sure I don't ever lose them, too! (Kate assures me that she will never begrudge me the right to complain. XOXO Kate!)

No, I have other, closer friends. It's that Nell was my MIDWIFE best friend. She understood EVERYTHING.

Everything.

Even as I write this the tears are rolling. I cannot stop them.

What do you do when your best friend divorces you?

Deep breath.

So, okay. The newest incarnation of this process has been fear.

When I was in fourth or fifth grade, a girl that I had been best friends with, Lenette, suddenly decided I was her enemy. Overnight she started bullying me. She came to my house, challenged me to come out. Bewildered then as I am now, I did. I loved her; I did not want to fight with her. She would not let me back in my house. I dodged her, ran to the back door. She beat me there, then slapped my cheek, hard. I did nothing. She slapped me again, then a creepy smile curled the corner of her mouth. "Your mouth is bleeding," she observed, in a very satisfied voice.

"Is that what you wanted? Does that make you feel better?"

Somchow I dodged her again, feigning one way, then the other. I got the door handle, and she grabbed my arm. I got the door open and lifted my leg, side-kicking her hard in the stomach. She fell on her ass in my gravel driveway, grabbed a handful of rocks and hurling them at the closing door. They rattled loudly on the aluminum. I was terrified, and devastated. And from then on I had to watch over my shoulder for she who knew all my secrets. She who hated me.

I find myself there now... and even though Nell is in Montana and I know damn well she's not some schoolyard bully who's going to come 800 miles to kick my ass, I feel a start of fear everytime I see someone who resembles her. Her hatred is real... and so was my fear.

That fear lasted a few weeks. Now I am apparently back to pure grief, as evidenced by my reaction in the restaurant. I still wish it would just end, though. It's not only when I see someone who looks like her: it's when I drive through the gorge or other wooded area. It's when I have a midwifery question and I have to call someone other than her. It's when I eat or drink certain things, when I hear certain music, when my kids do something funny or my husband does something frustrating. It's all the time.

It came to me yesterday that it feels a lot like the grief I experienced before I got in contact with my son. It's a different sort of pain, knowing that she is alive, but that I can't contact her. It would be easier in a way if she were not, because there would be a finality. Never would I wish that, though, so here I am, in purgatory of losing a best friend. There is no answer, no fix. It is over.

I have a new midwife-friend. We both have the same views of midwifery, are both the same socio-economic status, both kind of edgy and sarcastic. We're going to be doing our first birth together soon, and I have good feelings and high hopes. She is also newly pregnant with her first baby—so although the connection is there in many ways, that precious mama-connection is not. And there's a lot to be said for that mama-connection; that bedraggled, yogurt-covered, frustrated, apologetic, impatient, understanding that only another mama can provide.

But someday, I feel, that connection will be complete. Her name is Kate, too... so between Kate H. & Kate M, Michelle, Nephyr, and Wendy my sister, my mom & my husband, my wonderful LiveJournal support network, and my kids...

I will heal.

Coming Full Circle...

After 10 or 11 years of attending births, assisting, some primaries, etc... I finally hung up my own shingle shortly after Josie was born. Got my website up, scored an awesome apprentice, convinced Pat to stay unretired, got the business cards printed up... and waited. I didn't have too long to wait - I got my first client, T, pretty quickly. Soon thereafter C came into the picture. And then I got a call or maybe an email from Caroline.

Caroline was already well into her pregnancy by then. She had been seeing Kaiser midwives but really had wanted to try another homebirth. Her first baby, a sweet little guy named Simon, now 3, was posterior during labor.

Two or three days of back labor, and she was transported to the hospital for some relief & help. Though Simon was born vaginally, it was not the sweet homebirth she'd envisioned. When they conceived again they were not sure they could afford a homebirth, but in the end they decided to afford it anyway. Caroline's college friend, Stacey G. (of Fertile Ground fame) had long since given my zine to Caroline, and so she decided to come meet with me.

Caroline, her husband Pete, and Simon all rolled up to my house on their bikes. She was slender with a sweet little belly, tan, healthy, and so lovely I was a bit intimidated... but she was also very open & friendly, so it was ok!

For some reason Randy, who had been out with the girls, came home with them about 3/4 into our meeting. Seeing my rambunctious & needy girls, bowling me over with their little bodies, "Mama! Mama! Nurse!" was apparently the clincher for Caroline & Pete. While C. and I finished up, Pete & Randy got to chatting about teaching.

As they left, Randy asked Pete if he'd be seeing them again (he did not realize they were interviewing me!) and Pete said, "Yeah, I think so..." and so then I had three clients. I was very excited about all of them, but particularly Caroline's, since we had other connections. (If you read Fertile Ground zine then you may recognize the name Vanessa Ross... Vanessa is a CNM who was in town for Simon's birth AND she writes for FG AND she is a friend of Stacey's AND she reads ZBC. Whew! You see how all caught up together this is?)

Caroline's pregnancy went along mostly beautifully - it is hard when a busy, active woman realizes her pregnancy is creating limits - and Caroline bounced back from every little setback beautifully. We got to being friends - Simon came over and played with my girls; Pete & Randy went out, bonding over fatherhood. Caroline's Blessingway was lovely, a strong circle of women.

Simon came over to play and left us the flu. It was the first time either of the girls had it, and though Josie had a mild case, Zuzu got hit hard. Fever, vomiting, diarrhea all at once. It was awful.

Caroline was a week overdue by then and I prayed she wouldn't go into labor...



The flu passed, the days passed... no baby. Having gone two weeks overdue with Zuzu and 11 days over with Josie, I had the utmost sympathy for poor Caroline. Some days were better than others, but mostly she was okay, waiting for this baby to make an appearance. Big brother had come on his due date, so it was a bit unusual... but we continued to monitor mama and baby, who both seemed to generally be doing well.

It was July 19, ten days after baby was due. And "something was not right" my gut told me. Well, I try to listen to my gut whenever I can... so I called Caroline. "I'd like to come have a long listen to that baby," I told her. Randy had made me a complicated little graph for charting fetal reactivity - a process whereby you listen to baby with the doppler or fetoscope, and call out the rate every five seconds. The assisting person writes down a little dot on the graph, and then you jiggle the baby OR wait until it moves, note that, and continue calling the heart rate. You're looking for variability and reactivity in the heartbeat: when baby moves, the rate should increase by at least 15 beats per minute (bpm) for 15-30 seconds. It's not fool proof, but good reactivity is generally a sign of fetal health. It's a good thing to have charted, when you've got a gal overdue... although 41 weeks is still perfectly normal. But, as I said, my gut was telling me to check out this baby, so Jen and I went over. Pete, an elementary school teacher, was home for the summer, and he hung out with Simon and Jen's toddler Quinn while we got Caroline all comfy on the couch. Her belly bulged, full of baby, and she looked lovely. We gooped up the doppler and I put it on her belly... and counted... and what I heard was a heart rate that sends a little spike of fear into a practitioner's mind. 100. 97. 100.

A normal baby's heartbeat is between 120 and 150. 100 is too low... in technical terms, bradycardia. Not good.

"Can you lie on your other side?" I asked Caroline.

Jen asked if she should be charting and I told her not yet. I wanted to start over; I hoped it was just a fleeting little temporary episode... baby playing with his cord... something. Caroline flipped over and we listened again.

100. 100. 96. 88. 98. 100. On and on it plodded, slow as an adult heart. No, I did not like this, not one little bit.

I asked Caroline to move again, again telling Jen we would start over. With Caroline sitting, leaning back, we were finally able to get brief 120's. But that baby... that baby was not doing so great in there.

By now we had scrapped the charting, and I told Pete & Caroline that I was concerned. I called Pat & we agreed that an immediate BPP (Biophysical Profile) was in order. We have a terrific naturopath in town who is also a midwife AND a skilled ultrasonographer, and we called him and got Caroline an appointment.

This all sounds very businesslike and straightforward... we did this, then this, then that... but really it was an anxious and stressful few moments. I was not terrified or panicked or anything... just very concerned. I know this showed on my face, because I saw it reflected in my friends' faces: puzzlement... what? what is it?; concern; worry. The next few moments were a blur... Jen decided to head home since she had her son with her. Somehow childcare for Simon was arranged, and we headed over to the docs. I don't know what Caroline was feeling, but what was coming over me was a cloud of uncertainty and worry, that I tried fiercely to combat with positive energy and hopefulness. To no avail.

The baby was not doing so well in there. To be precise: there was no more room, and hardly any protective amniotic fluid left. Baby's cord was getting compressed. A long labor would probably be dangerous.

Dr. Ed, who was also Caroline & Pete's family naturopath, was candid with me. "I would take her in," he admitted. Which was how I'd been leaning since I first heard those heart-tones. As he spoke with them, I made phone calls - to the hospital, to let them know we were coming; to Pat, to let her know we were going; to Jen, and Randy, to let them know the plan. Meanwhile Caroline was a bit in shock, I think. They understood the need to go in but it just didn't seem real to any of us. Beautiful, hot day, blue sky. A baby, waiting to be born. A mama, lovely and big-bellied, full of hope & patience for her beautiful homebirth. The baby... with a different plan.

I'm going to fast-forward a bit... give some of it to you in snapshots. First let me tell you the mantra that I started saying to myself & to them: "I'd rather bring HOME a HEALTHY baby than BRING IN a SICK one."

Caroline's contractions started, of course, the minute we left the ultrasound. Which was good, really, excellent timing, since the idea was to go to hospital to get her induced! They had picked up their friend & labor support person Lara, and together we went in. The baby was sounding just fine, and they encouraged us to walk around with Caroline, who was 4cm dilated and 100% effaced! We decided to break the rules and leave the hospital grounds. We went to Baja Fresh... a strange hot walk in off-the-freeway, non-pedestrian-friendly suburbia. It was just so not what



The day had started at 10:45am, and now it was 6pm. Caroline's baby (Baby Two Hours), as nicknamed by big brother Simon) was doing great, and so was Caroline... but her contractions were spacing out and it seemed a good time to go home and rest. The hospital staff had been warm & wonderful, the CNM's on staff were gracious & accepting, and I knew they wouldn't try any monkey business.

At 9:20pm I came back. They had started Caroline on Pitocin, which we had expected, and she was in great spirits. Baby Two was plugging along just fine and it crossed my mind (just one of many times) that maybe I had been wrong... maybe this baby could be born at home... maybe... maybe...

But my gut told me otherwise, everytime. And so here we were. Lara turned out to be THE most entertaining labor support I've ever encountered. She danced. She sang. She made Caroline laugh. Everyone seemed happy. Too happy.

It finally hit Caroline at 10:20. This was not going to be the homebirth she wanted. She was here, in a small hospital room, hooked up to an IV, laboring in a hospital gown with fake contractions. She went into the bathroom and closed the door.

A moment later her grief appeared, loud and clear. It broke my heart to hear her pain and disappointment... but I also knew it had to come. Lara & I (Pete was on a break, visiting Simon I think) sat and looked at each other sadly. After a few moments Caroline reappeared... serene and ready to work. It was a difficult acceptance, and she did it with grace.

At 11:30pm Caroline was working hard, happy to NOT be having back labor. "I could do this for days!" she said. What a woman.

At 1am Baby Two Hours was still high in her pelvis, her cervix was at 5cm, and rest was needed. They started some IV fluids and at 2am Caroline got a much-deserved epidural.

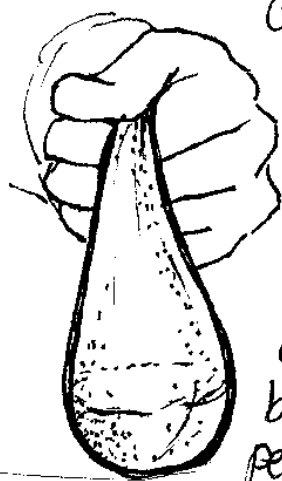
Pitocin contractions are not normal contractions. Although they look pretty normal on a strip, they are still not naturally-occurring, so the lovely human endorphins—those natural pain-relievers, don't kick in quite the same.

The whole feedback loop is just not there when it's happening artificially. Which is why I was so proud and amazed at how long Caroline labored on pit, and happy for her that she chose an epidural.

3:50 am - as oftentimes happens, once she was able to relax and rest, Caroline dilated fully as she rested... I went in to flip her over to her other side and she smiled dreamily. "I think I may have pooped, I felt something come out" she said.

I lifted her sheet and there was a very interesting sight. Her membranes - at least those in front of baby's head, had been born... and it hung from her like a clear gold balloon, with about a quarter-cup of amniotic fluid in it.

It was a very odd sight. Chris B, (the CNM who had been on our side from the beginning, we loved her) came in and we exclaimed over this curiosity.



Chris then checked Caroline, who was complete, as we suspected. She had Caroline try to push, still lying on her side, but the baby was still not really coming down. Chris wanted to wait an hour more to see if the baby would come down on its own, so to speak. We helped Caroline roll to her other side... and that's when it became clear - that fluid in the balloon? It was all that baby had. The heartrate plummeted from the perfect 120's it had been to 70. And no matter

what position we put her in, that baby's heartrate stayed slow. They put an oxygen mask over Caroline's mouth & nose, to try to compensate a bit. It became a little dance: help Caroline move a bit, search for heart tones, still low, help her move... for a long scary few seconds they found no heart tones at all. I remember the look on Caroline's face, confused, concerned. I could see the tension in the backs of Chris and Joy (the nurse). I felt it in my own back. Come on, baby...

Finally, lying flat on her back, head propped up a teeny bit, right hip propped up a teeny bit... baby's heart rate recovered. We sighed with relief, and said simultaneously "now don't move!" Not that Caroline had plans to go anywhere. She was content, it seemed, to rest some more. "I love epidurals" she had said at one point, and I have to agree: sometimes epidurals are just what is needed.

We all rested. I tried to stay out of Caroline's room as much as I could, wanting to let her just be with Pete & Lara. I laid on a couch in the family waiting room, listening to the other folks in there: a grandmother, young, her rambunctious toddler grandson high on the novelty of being up at this hour. Other members of the same family, talking about other births, other times. I drifted off for an hour or so. I was grateful that Caroline was in the hospital... those heart tones had scared me. I played "what-if" for a while... and finally, inevitably concluded that there is simply no way to know what might of happened. We were here; it was the right choice.

At 5:20, Caroline started pushing. She was an excellent pusher... and she giggled with glee when she could see the baby's head crowning. Push-GIGGLE-push-GIGGLE GIGGLE-push. It was such a sweet and funny entry for that baby. He was born at around 5:35pm, July 20, into daddy's welcoming arms. Safe and sound.



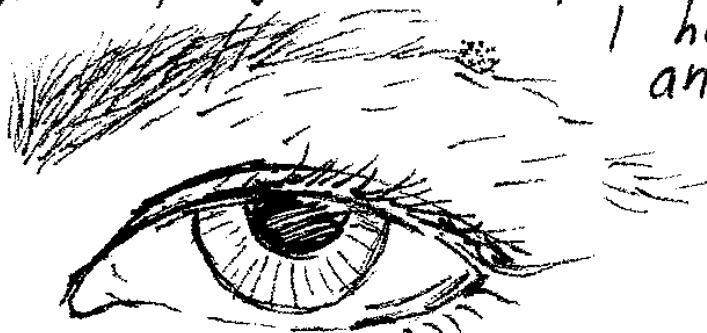
Welcome August "Gus"
Marion Oakley Leone

AFTERBIRTH....a Doogie Howser moment

- It did not escape my notice that the first birth I attended as a real grown-up midwife on my own was a bit like that very first birth I attended. The main difference was that this time I was the midwife and not the green student. I knew what was going on this time (well, to the extent that any midwife really knows what's going on!); I was the decision-maker.
- Finding myself sitting on the cold hard floor in a hospital corridor again was every bit as discouraging and bewildering as it had been then. Why was this happening? Why couldn't this be a nice straightforward home birth? What could I have done differently?
- It was very painful to make this decision; to, in effect, deny Caroline her sweet homebirth. I hated doing it, hated that it needed to be done. And up until that last few hours when Gus began to crash, I wondered if I'd done the right thing. We all knew it was the right thing, but I couldn't fully admit it until the shirt hit the fan. In fact, I think I even said it aloud, when we finally got decent heart-tones after that heart-pounding, gut-twisting moment, "THAT'S why we are here and not at home." I was finally convinced I'd done the right thing.
- I was so incredibly proud of Caroline, and I'm not sure if I said that. She was so lovely, so gracious, so strong and amazing. I am honored to have been her midwife, and to be considered her friend. I may not have caught her baby, but I get to watch him grow! Thank you, Caroline, Pete (a terrific man) Simon, & Gus.

THINGS I WISH I COULD CHANGE

When I was 10 or 12 or so...before I cared, anyway, and before my contact lenses; I was wrestling with my cousin Jason (strange that I was, but this is how it happened) and his head came down on my face. It hit my glasses, hard, and they bashed right into my right eyebrow, making a deep gouge.



I have a scar there, now, and no hairs grow from it. So I have a large blank spot in the middle of my already sparse eyebrow. Next to it is a mole

(mirror image, of course) where no hair grows either. It is a pale mole, so basically I am missing a lot of my right eyebrow. I pluck the stray hairs (if I didn't my eyebrow would look like the picture) and I fill in the blank spot. I never really minded doing it until one morning my then-boyfriend saw me filling it in. (Luke had not wanted to be with me, but I forced the issue-and paid for it. He was 9 years younger, and wanted a perfect, young girlfriend. He thought my body was ugly, but never said so in words, just actions. So I tried hard to appear perfect.) When he saw me fixing my eyebrow he was disgusted. "You fill in your eyebrows? I always thought they were just naturally perfect. Now I've lost some respect for you." Yes, he was a bastard. But I think about it nearly every day...as I fill in my eyebrow.

as elusive as sleep



Let me tell you a little secret. I'm a perfectionist. No, really. I am. It started at a very, very young age, before my memories. According to my mother, I got so frustrated with my blocks at age 1 1/2 that she had to take them away from me.

This desire to be perfect - to do everything I ever attempted perfectly, the first time, haunted me all through childhood & well into adulthood. I have vivid memories of yelling at inanimate objects: my bedspread, my hair, my bike, for not performing perfectly as I believed they should. I was a straight-A student, but was never happy with my report card because there were never straight A-PLUSES. Lucky for me I was not at all competitive, or I would have completely alienated myself! Instead, I managed to maintain friendships with people like myself: those driven to perfect themselves... and to hell with anyone else.

My poor mother! My poor family! Not only were they subject to my fits of rage over the obvious incompetency of my bedspread or my lousy attitude about losing a game (it was disappointment in myself, never anger at the winner); but they were

also unwilling participants (or witnesses) to my obsessive-compulsive behaviors. I'm not convinced that being a perfectionist automatically makes one obsessive-compulsive, or vice versa ... but thanks to a generous dose of my father's genes mixed thoroughly with my mom's (and I do believe that my mother would not have been such a neat freak if not driven so by my dad... nevertheless I learned early on to be tidy) I was, well, unbearable. To myself, mostly. I mean, look over there, to the left ↓. This is the kind of stuff I would torture

Rhonda Whee

(garbage!
ran out of
room!
you idiot!)

myself over. Frankly I'm amazed that I ever completed an assignment, considering that if I didn't fill out the obligatory 'upper righthand corner' perfectly, I would scrap the paper. (My reasoning of my unreasonable

Rhonda Wheeler

(garbage!
can you not even
pretend you are
writing on a line!?)

mind in 6th grade is is parentheses) Spelling errors were not allowed. Crooked writing, not allowed. And yet there was also my

Rhonda Wheeler
2nd period
Mrs. Rezba

(You Fool!
HIT REZBA!)

ingrained fear of waste-fulness-throwing away so much unused paper was BAD BAD BAD! More fuel for my self-loathing.

Rhonda Wheeler
2nd period
Mrs. Rezba

(ugh! That w!
(unacceptable! garbage!
Do over!)

I aspired to be like my daddy - his precise, painfully neat calligraphy, his sense of order and organization - were what I worshiped.

"A place for everything, and everything in its place"
"Put things back where they go when you're done"
These were manifestos for me. Still are. So should I be surprised when I hear Zuzu, voice getting increasingly louder and more agitated, becoming frustrated when she cannot accomplish something? Should I be alarmed that she has a strong sense of the way things must be: when she yells at me "THAT'S NOT THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT!"

So far, I am not... not concerned, that is. I know that some of this behavior is normal because I see it and hear about it all the time from other mamas and kids. I know it's about keeping things manageable, about having some sense of control over her life. Of learning the hard way that you have to keep trying, sometimes. That you're not always going to "get it" right away. Things take practice. And the main reason I'm not worried? She needs constant reminding to put things away where they go, or to find special places for things she wants to keep track of. She's a normal kid in that regard: she doesn't keep track of her stuff: she expects me to.

I'll worry when I see this in her room, and I'll know she's becoming a freak... just like mama.

(circa 6th grade) →

Rhonda Wheeler's schedule

6:00 am -
6:02 am - get up
6:07 am - get dressed
6:12 am - eat breakfast
6:17 am - brush teeth
6:25 am - make bed
6:48 am - read
6:49 am - put on shoes
7:00 am - pack school

August 20, 2005

Women who are planning a VBAC (Vaginal Birth After Cesarean) have usually read a lot about birth, and Corry was the most prepared mama I'd encountered. Sweet and warm, wise and loving, she happily nursed her toddler as her belly grew and grew. Her belly grew so much, so fast, that I was not at all surprised when her 20-week ultrasound revealed a 24-week fetus! We laughingly bumped her due date up a month, and awaited the birth of her baby in mid-September. Of all of my clients, she was the one I could most vividly and easily picture having her baby at home. She was just made for it, and her attitude was one of such joyful expectancy – she couldn't wait to be 'more of a mom'.

I grew to love and admire Corry very much as we worked together. She impressed me on so many levels: her deep love for her husband (who is kind and smart and loving and beautiful); her patience with her very sweet little boy; her ease in her body; her acceptance of any and everything that came along. She was the perfect candidate for a home birth, and fast becoming a friend.

On August 20, Kate M. and I (introducing Kate M, a wonderful midwife I was working with on a few clients, in order to give Pat a break... Kate M, zine readers; zine readers, Kate M.) did a 36-week prenatal visit with Corry. Her baby was growing well, and mama looked and felt great. We talked about her puzzling little bit of bleeding five days earlier which we had decided was pretty normal, if a tiny bit heavy, after-sex cervical bleeding. We talked about the birth, all of us getting excited about it and agreeing it was going to be a great birth. We set her next appointment and headed home.

At 11:30 I walked in the door and just a few minutes later my cell phone rang. It was Corry, frantic. "The blood is just pouring out!"

A million thoughts went through my head all at once, as they do. She was home alone with her 19-month-old. Her husband was at work, but very close by. If she called an ambulance, they would probably not take her toddler along, they would have to wait for someone to get there to take care of him anyway.

And it would be even more stressful for her husband to have to follow and not be right with her. I knew she was close to the hospital. "You need to get to St. Vincent's," I told her. "Call Adrian and call someone, your aunt or someone to care for Ray-Ray and I'll meet you there at the hospital." "Should I call Adrian first?" she asked. "Yes, and while he's on the way, call your aunt. Okay?" "Okay," she said, sounding panicked but still rational. I knew she would be okay.

Should I have had her call an ambulance? Why didn't I? Perhaps I should have, but I knew that it would be more traumatic for the family and possibly financially devastating. Should those be considerations when a life is at stake? Whether they should be or not, they ARE. I didn't tell her to call an ambulance because I knew Corry well enough to know that if she thought she was going to pass out or felt her life was in immediate danger, she would have already called 911. I also knew that if the baby was not moving, she would have said, "The blood is pouring out and the baby's not moving..." in which case I would have said, call an ambulance. I felt I knew her well enough, I felt that what was *unsaid* was as understood as what was said.

I listened to my gut. In cases like that, it's all you've got sometimes.

I called up to Randy, "Randy, my client just called, she says the blood is pouring out, and I need to go meet her at the hospital," I hopped in the car, calling Kate and Jen, my apprentice. I did not want to take the time to grab Corry's chart from the office (Oddly enough I had forgotten to bring it from the office to her prenatal, so it was still there, locked up in the file cabinet) so I asked Jen to go by and get it. I called the hospital and alerted them at labor and delivery. Adrian called me from his cell phone as they were en route, asking "What is happening? What is causing this?" The placenta is abructing, I told him, it is coming away from the uterine wall. It was crucial that they hurry, and that Corry stay conscious. She was doing okay, he told me, just scared and crying, but they were on their way and together. I told him to go in the main entrance and straight up to L&D.

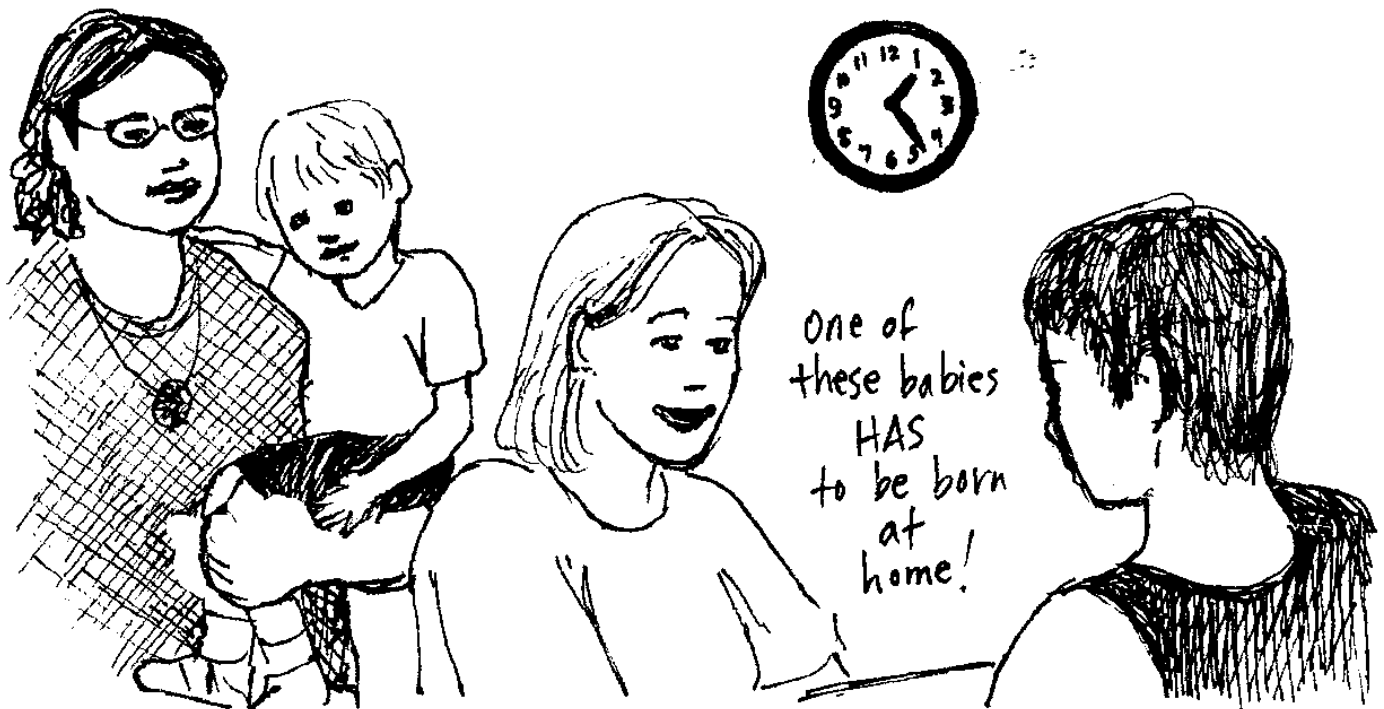
I called Kate, who was already there at the hospital entrance. I parked quickly and we waited for what seemed like twenty minutes. There was no sign of them. I tried calling Adrian's phone and got no answer. We were confused and worried, where the hell were they? Kate volunteered to go up and see if they were already there. She called me from the mother-baby unit, "The baby's okay, they are here, come up."

Corry's considerable support network was there as well; Aunt Jill, cousin Jessie, Jessie's daughter Jasmine, and of course Ray-Ray. All of us sat around wringing our hands and wondering aloud what happened and what was going on in there. I tried to stay calm, but my heart was still racing. We were all in a state of disbelief. I prayed that somehow that placenta would miraculously reseal itself, that somehow she could have her home birth. It was not to be.

By the time I was allowed in to see her, they were shaving and prepping her for another c-section, this time absolutely necessary. The blood was trickling out steadily and although the baby's heart was still beating, it was not getting the O2 it needed. There was not time to waste. She lifted her streaming eyes to me and said, "They have to do another cesarean," and then we just cried together. It was such a sad, hard moment. Aunt Jill came in a moment later and somehow got Corry to laugh about the baby being a Leo instead of a Virgo. My heart was so full of pride for this beautiful strong mama, who could still laugh and smile through her tears. She was amazing.

Her family was springing into action. Jessie and Jasmine were taking Ray-Ray shopping for the baby, and getting some things from the house. Jill was on phone call detail. It was the calmest chaos. It seemed so unreal. This baby was coming, now, today, a month before it was supposed to. The Blessingway was still three weeks away! This wasn't how it was supposed to be, yet here we were.

There was nothing to do but wait. Jen arrived with the chart – she and her husband had had to break into my file cabinet. (I immediately gave her my spare key!) Jill made phone calls and Kate and I sat, talking over the likelihood of this, wondering aloud if our palpation at the prenatal had been the last straw for Corry's placenta, talking through my decision to have her come in by car, which Kate assured me was a perfectly sound decision (a good LJ friend later pointed out that what I had done was practice holistic midwifery – taking everything into account rather than just blindly following protocols – thank you Miranda!). It was one of those times when even though you KNOW there is nothing you can do to change what happened, you still go through and play 'what-if'.



Finally at 1:20 pm, less than two hours from Corry's phone call to me, the baby was born. Apgars 8 and 8, baby was crying in the background as the nurse relayed the info to Jessie over the waiting room phone. They would not, however, tell us the sex of the baby, and this was more than we could bear. In this family of strong women, it was assumed that this baby was a girl. She was to be named Lacy, after Corry's mother who was no longer living. Jessie had bought lovely pink baby clothes for this little girl. But WAS it a little girl? Was it??????

We waited.

We waited some more.

A half-hour later I could not stand the suspense. I went through the doors into the unit and smiled apologetically at the nurse. "Is there any way," I began sweetly, "that we can find out the sex of the baby?" She smiled and pointed down the corridor. "Why don't you ask daddy? That's him, isn't it?" Adrian was practically running toward me in his operating room flight suit, ripping the mask from his face. I rushed toward him.



We hugged, tightly. Together we breathed that relief. It's a boy. He's alive. Corry's alive.

News spread quickly. Tears of joy. It was such a wonderful moment. Adrian showed us the Polaroid they had taken of the baby, a head full of curly black hair, like his daddy, and big! He weighed 7lbs 4oz at birth, one month early! Would have been a 10-pounder, for sure! Laughter. Release. Relief.

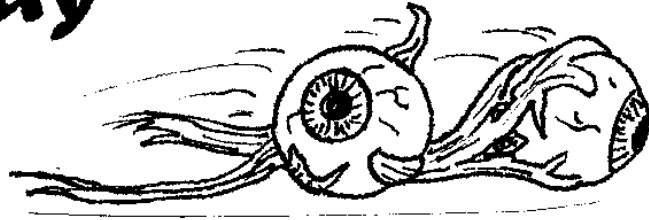
I didn't get to see that baby until the next day, but I did get to visit with Corry in the recovery area. She was smiling, relieved, content, and hungry. Of course they wouldn't let her eat anything for a few hours, but I fed her some ice chips while we talked about the baby, and what had happened. She was concerned about breastfeeding, that she would still be able to nurse and that her milk would still come in. I assured her that she and that baby would still have a great nursing relationship. Somehow, our bodies and our babies survive these things. Somehow, despite an initial separation, we still bond. And they did.

Corry's Blessingway was on September 10, nine days before her due date. She held sweet Jacob for much of the ceremonies, occasionally passing him to an eager Auntie or cousin. She was serene and beautiful, her heart at peace. We'll never know why her baby chose to come this way, but she has accepted it and him with her usual cheerful grace.



Jacob is a sleepy little guy, very beautiful and sweet: still in stasis in a way. After all, he's not even supposed to be here yet! Meanwhile his mama holds him, his big brother kisses him incessantly, and his daddy holds them all in loving arms. And I will forever hold them all in my heart.

Geek Daddy



CASE FILE: THE ROLLING EYES

Act I, Scene I:

Early evening. A party for no good reason. It's part potluck, part barbeque. There are thirty or so people spread over three rooms, a broad porch and a back deck. Two coolers sit open, with cans and bottles finding their way into an endless succession of hands.

One couple (Freddy and Daphne) wanders through the kitchen. They are arm-in-arm, full of smiles. (They've been married three-plus years.)

Freddy sees his friend Shaggy.

Shaggy (Voice raised over the crowd): Freddy, you made it! Grab a drink; you've got a lot of catching up to do! (Hands Freddy a bottle).

Freddy (Twisting the cap with a grunt): Man, this is hard to open!

Daphne (Bored): It's not a twist-top. You have to use a bottle opener.

Freddy (Looking around the party-goers mischievously): Are you kidding? They're all twist-tops. You just have to have the right touch. Who can get this thing off without using an opener?

Daphne (rolling her eyes)

Five minutes later...

Shaggy (Smiling triumphantly): Yes! Shaggy one, bottle zero!

Act I, Scene II:

An hour later.

A few couples and singles are arrayed around the back deck, having a meandering conversation about kid's TV programs (the ones they used to watch vs. what's on for kids now).

Daphne (Interested; talking to everyone but her husband, sitting beside her): My oldest, Scrappy, loves Thomas the Tank Engine for some reason. I mean, don't you think that fake 3-D animation is just creepy?

Freddy (Dead-pan): Hey, I love Thomas the "Spank" Engine, who wouldn't?

Daphne (rolling her eyes)

Act I, Scene III:

Later evening.

The party has thinned somewhat as babysitters go off-duty and the wild and free crowd heads for a party with a band. A CD plays a slow oldie in the background.

Freddy (approaching Daphne with a grin): May I have this dance?

Daphne (rolling her eyes)

Freddy (encircling Daphne in his arms)

Daphne (tolerating): I think it's time to go, I'm tired.

Freddy (voice lowered, a question): We can keep the party going at home?

Daphne (opts for the tired sigh)

Act II, Scene I:

Anywhere, five years later...

Daphne (soul-weary): So that's why I had to leave him. Maybe I'll find somebody more mature.

Act II, Scene II:

Some other anywhere...

Freddy (resigned): I don't know what happened. She just didn't want to have fun anymore.

THE END

Stop asking yourself what happened to the kids. This is not about them. It's about the eye rolling – or have you forgotten the title already?

And before you ask, the characters and events depicted in this story have been marginally altered from true-life events that an idiot could see through, and have in fact been witnessed in a million variations with couple after couple after couple.

What are some of the variations?

Well, instead of eye-rolling, the female partner can say "Freddy!" in an elongated disappointed sing-song voice, punctuating the complaint with a mild slap or a harsh glare of disapproval. Alternately she might say, "Is that *all* you ever think about?" or "Are you *done*?"

The man has even greater range. He might try to kiss or fondle his mate at an awkward moment, or belch loudly in public. You can imagine the rest. Or maybe you don't have to...

Being a man, you'd think I'd feel sorry for poor Freddy in this story. (And of course I do. About two lifetimes ago, I was him -- poor sad bastard).

But I feel much sorrier for the woman, and it's not because I share her red-faced shame that her mate-for-life would make such unfunny, uncouth, or just plain insensitive comments in front of her friends. And it's not because I blame the man for failing to pick up on her moods as they travel the globe in a never ending adventure without so much as a map or compass.

Here's why she gets more of my sympathy: She rolls her eyes as if to say, "Please ignore my husband, he's a fool, and he's embarrassing me." In fact I believe that is actually what the rolling eyes are meant to convey: that she is aware and barely tolerating the fact that

he's an embarrassment to higher civilization, and that yes, she's in on the joke, and only tolerates the dumb ape as an act of kindness. But here's what she's saying to me: "I fell in love with his unselfconscious willingness to play, his childish enthusiasm and because he made me laugh. I've subsequently lost my sense of humor, and now perceive that I've married an immature loser."

It's a long, ugly road from point A to point B. And, although I too am opposed to loud public belching (except in dire need), it is a road I've traveled. There comes a time in many relationships when the clever banter becomes a bore, when the sexual innuendo becomes tedious, and when attempts at sincerity are likely to be interpreted as just the next gag in an ongoing and unfunny stand-up routine.

More often, I've seen it in other people's relationships. Especially the ones where "he makes me laugh" or "he has a good sense of humor" are commonly heard in the opening dialogs among friends.

So here is this season's great fear: becoming that married man who is more like a piece of furniture to his spouse than a partner. He's done his part, the kids are here, he provides some useful services – but mostly he's an old sofa that must be covered with a sheet when company comes, vacuumed beneath when he's sat in one place too long, and shamefully excused when a visitor inadvertently provokes his squeaky spring to make an ungentle noise.

Just. Kill. Me. Now.

So, men, rein it in a little, at least on weekdays, and also on weekends between the hours of 9 A.M. and 9 P.M. And try to bear in mind that you're not half as funny as your best friends let you think you are. Pay attention to the eye-rolling. It is akin to the blaring of a fog-horn. Ignore it long enough, and eventually you will hit something cold and unyielding that will take you straight to the bottom.

And women, lighten up a little. At the very least, he *is* actually having a good time. If you find yourself less than enthusiastic about his boyish charms, ask yourself, "why?" Odds are you used to brag about him to your friends about those exact qualities (Minus the belching thing. Yuck.)

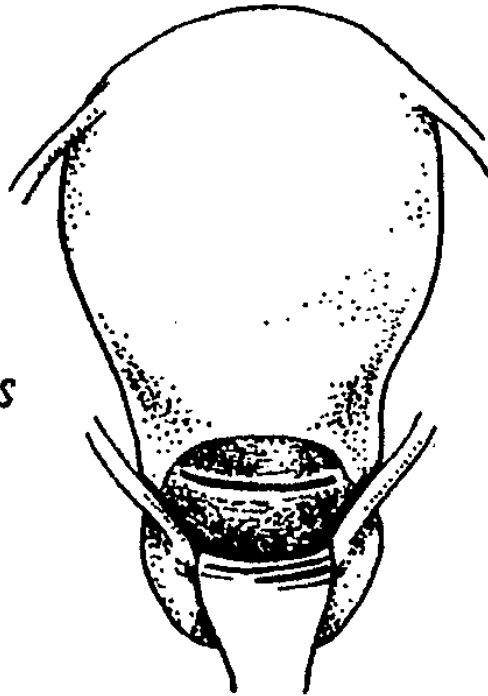
(In case you're wondering, Rhonda was very concerned that this article was *about* her. It's not. It's about what I've seen in a lot of relationships, including at least one of my own. Eye-rolling: I fear it, I watch for it. It's a barometer for how much partners take each other for granted, wear on each other's nerves, and no longer believe the other has anything new or interesting to contribute.)

Disclaimer: I have no clue if or how this applies to alternate family structures, cohabitation arrangements, or marriages.

DAWNING REALIZATIONS



For my clients- brave, strong, and beautiful-
Every single one of them.



Sometimes
babies

Choose
a different
birth.

Zuzu & the Baby Catcher has a NEW ADDRESS:
3939 NE Hancock, Suite 316
Portland, OR 97212

still at www.emeraldgiant.com/babycatcher
email still rhonmama@msn.com

Still \$200 per issue. Still being made....