

Geordi's Birth Story

Hail Storm Baby

By Carolyn Howard



I was planning to have a home birth, but in the last few weeks of the pregnancy my blood pressure went up and homebirth was no longer an option. So my back-up hospital was to be where I would birth my baby.

My due date came and went, then on Sunday 21st March in the afternoon I started getting some period type cramping. This continued most of the evening, went away for part of the night, and was irregular on Monday morning. By midday on Monday my CMP midwife took me to hospital and I spent the afternoon and evening on the Maternal and Foetal Assessment Unit (MFAU).

Alas, it was the day of a massive hail storm in Perth, not a good time to be in hospital (or on Stirling Highway, the freeway etc – not a good day to be anywhere in Perth!). Chaos reigned at the hospital - parts of it were evacuated due to flooding, the lifts and phones wouldn't work, and emergency procedures were in place.

Meanwhile the contractions I was having were irregular for most of the day but by the evening they became much stronger and about ten minutes apart. Unfortunately I couldn't be transferred to a ward due to all the chaos the storm was causing in the hospital so I remained in the Assessment Unit, labouring away.

I eventually got transferred to a pre and post labour ward at about 10:30pm which was difficult for the staff because by then my contractions had become about 5 min apart, and they didn't want to risk me having the baby on that ward, as it wasn't set up for, or used to having births. Access to the labour ward was limited due to the lifts not working and I later found out that the theatres had been flooded – in short hail storm chaos reigned!

To me the contractions felt pretty effective, but a midwife determined that I was only 4 cm dilated at about 11pm, therefore only in EARLY labour. The intensity of the contractions was becoming overwhelming, so on the advice of my midwife I accepted an injection of morphine, which did nothing for the pain.

On the next contraction I felt a sudden and unexpected flood of warmth in the bed, I excitedly realised that my waters had broken. This was all the excuse that the staff on that ward needed! I was soon transferred to the labour ward, which was packed with labouring woman. There were no spare beds when I arrived at about 1:30am. After some monitoring of the baby's heart rate and my blood pressure I got into the ward bath for a couple of hours. It was relaxing, and in between contractions I was almost able to sleep, but it did very little for the actual contraction pain. My midwife was called in, because the hospital was short staffed.

At about 4am I was found to be still only 4cm dilated!! Plus my baby (Geordi) was showing signs of being distressed. The contractions I was having felt VERY full on to me, but weren't doing anything for dilating. So in conjunction with my midwife I decided to accept an oxytocin drip and an epidural. The oxytocin took a long time to do much about dilating, and Geordi was becoming increasingly distressed. For most of the rest of the labour it looked like I would be having a caesarean birth, due to his distress. However in the last hour or 2 the oxytocin kicked in, and I fully dilated just in time, as Geordi had to be born!

With the assistance of forceps he was born at 11:24am 23.3.10. Once born Geordi was stable and healthy, very enthusiastic at feeding, and beautiful :-). At birth Geordi was: - 3.76kg, - 54cm in length, - 35.5cm head circumference.

My doula was also with me during the birth. It was great having my midwife and doula there, for the familiarity, continuity of care and wonderful ongoing support.