

From the Waters Birth Stories

The day Genevieve 'Vivi' Zeches was born...a doula's perspective 2006

7.10am Doula Germaine gets a phone call from Charley. Contractions began around 2am that morning interrupting Charley's sleep. Now the surges are coming 10-20 minutes apart. Charley feels like 'today is the day'. Today is the official estimated due date and also the day Bob's mom Margaret arrives. Charley & Bob get Lola off to day care. Margaret's flight comes in at 9am. She will take over responsibility of Lola. Charley had been, and I quote, 'crossing her legs' until her mother-in-law arrived.

10.30am Contractions have spaced out a little. Charley and Bob take a walk to Noe Valley and pick up a chocolate croissant for breakfast. Walking usually stimulates labor. Meanwhile Germaine cancels her appointments for the day and generally gets ready to provide labor support for whatever duration necessary. Everyone is hoping for a short labor! Second babies have a reputation for coming quickly so the chances are good.

12.30pm Charley calls to give an update. She and Bob are watching movies at home with a heating pad warming her back. During the conversation she expresses mild frustration that labor is not progressing. The surges are still 15 minutes apart and some can be described as painful. She has two concerns. One: being up for 10 hours already in early labor. Two: wanting to be out of the house when Lola returns from day care around 4.30pm. Charley wants labor to progress.

Sometimes early labor stops and starts. Germaine mentions the possibility that true active labor may take a while to begin. She counsels a long bath, in the hopes that Charley gets a break long enough to nap and recharge her energy. A laboring woman needs to alternate between activity and rest. A plan is made that Charley will focus on rest until 3pm when Germaine will show up and provide labor acupressure to help move things along.

2.10pm Bob calls. Charley's labor picked up during a lie down in bed. The contractions were alternating 5/6/7mins apart for the past hour. Charley is now in the shower, which seems to be relaxing her. Germaine asks if Charley is happy staying at home until she gets there. Affirmative.

2.45pm A cab drops Germaine at the Zeches's house just in time. Bob is getting the car ready for heading to the hospital. Charley is pacing the dining room as Margaret times the contractions in the kitchen. One look at Charley confirms that active labor has well and truly arrived. The timing sheet Margaret is keeping concurs - time to get going. Charley is working beautifully with the strength of her labor. She is rocking during contractions and breathing deeply. A helpful coping mechanism is counting the seconds ie. '15 sec.....30 sec....45.....50....good, well done'

2.55pm Bob, Charley and Germaine jump into the Mercedes. Germaine calls California Pacific Medical Center on the way. The nurse at labor and delivery asked for the spelling of Zeches. Germaine stumbles with the acronyms, 'Z as in Zach'?.... Charley says 'Z as in Zebra' between contractions. She must be used to this question!

The ride to the hospital seems to take a long time. There are many traffic lights on Divisadero Street. Bob continues to monitor the frequency of contractions, still every 3 minutes apart, lasting 50-60 seconds. Like clock-work. Charley names the streets as we pass 'Eddy' etc..... then 'Thank God, California Street!'

It was the same time of the day traveling to the hospital for Lola's birth too. Charley feels more confident this time because she feels her body knows how to open. Everything is going to plan.

3.15pm Bob pulls into the hospital entrance. Charley heads to Labor and Delivery Triage clutching her hot rice pack. Germaine & Bob follow with the bags. A triage nurse takes Charley into an assessment room. Germaine successfully re-parks Bobs car to avoid towing. Charley is 6cm dilated and labor is strong. The nurses transfer her upstairs to L&D room 204.

3.30pm Once in the room, Charley's ready for the IV and the 'epidural man'. She has rolling veins and two different nurses try with difficulty to get an IV line in. Third time lucky. Meanwhile Germaine heats up the rice pack that seems to be a big comfort.

The narcotic fentanyl helps too (or more?). Bob holds the hot pack on her back. Charley discovers making rhythmic noises 'Ooh...Ahh.../Ooh...Ahh...' helps to cope with the strong contractions. The Blue Angels (the Navy flight demonstration squadron) seem to fly-by directly overhead drowning out Charleys moans briefly.

3.45pm Presently the anesthesiologist-come-surfer arrives and gets started on the epidural. Now the labor is really rocking. Charley leans on Bob to her left and her nurse to her right reminding her to breathe. The nurse asks 'are you sure you don't want to do this naturally?' as we guess she is in a fast transition and close to pushing. Negative! The volume of her vocalizations is rising. Bob gets overheated supporting his laboring wife and Charley immediately realizes that he is dizzy. Suddenly, focus shifts to him. There are many stories about dad's passing out seeing the epidural needle and they did not want that to happen. Bob sits on the floor and Germaine fetches him an ice water. He recovers quickly.

4.00pm Charley's water spontaneously breaks and the next three/four contractions are huge. The water is clear - no meconium present. She feels the baby bearing down as she tries to stay in a seated position for the anesthesiologist. Third time lucky with the epidural too! Just in time for Charley to say 'I think the baby is crowning'. She lies down on her side. The baby is not quite crowning but the nurse checks and confirms full dilation.

4.10pm Nurse Kaela sets up the stirrups on the birthing bed. Charley lies on her back with her feet in the stirrups and starts pushing. Bob and Germaine take up a station by each leg. Kaela does some 'massage' of the birth passage, which Charley can feel and doesn't like one bit. Charley wonders where the doctor is - the nurses call her Doc. out of her prenatal appointments.

4.15pm The Doctor arrives and takes over from the nurse. By now Charleys legs are numb and she is not feeling the contractions.

It is hard to tell when the surges are happening. Perhaps the epidural diminished their strength. Charley has to push hard, holding her breath. Germaine reminds her to exhale when she sees her whole face turns red from the effort. The Doctor responds to Germaine's question about the

benefits of pushing side-lying. The doctor can tell that the baby is directly OA (in the perfect position) so suggests lying flat on the back is best.

The baby is wiggling her head around in the birth canal. We can see a little dark hair on the top of her head. Different suggestions are made to help make each push more effective. Pushing towards the sprinkler on the ceiling, rounding the lower back, relaxing the eyes/face, breathing deeply in between contractions to energize her muscles etc. The Doctor comments that the baby probably didn't descend much during such a fast dilation stage. So it takes more effort now during pushing. Before long, we see some significant changes.

4.41pm Genevieve is born. The Doctor delivers the head and checks that the neck is clear of an umbilical cord. She then directs Charley to push once for birthing the top shoulder and again for the bottom one. At the Doctors suggestion, Charley reaches down and pulls up the baby – delivering babys hips, legs and ten-toes herself. Charley and Bob are ecstatic to finally see their new baby girl. It is a very intimate experience with minimal staff present. We realise that we forgot to photograph the birth as everything happened so fast. Bob gets the cameras to record the post-delivery. Vivi is extremely pink and healthy and Charley had no perineal tears. The doctor cuts the cord and fills up the cord-bank-kit from the umbilicus. The placenta follows immediately. A few congratulations and the Doctor is out the door – back to her busy schedule.

5.00pm Charley is a little in shock from the speed of the labor and perhaps from the drugs and hormones in her system too. She gets some warm blankets and nurses her baby a little. The 'football' hold seems to work the best while reclining on the bed. The baby is a natural nurser - everything looks good in the breastfeeding department.

5.30pm Germaine calls the cord bank couriers to come pick up the kit. Bob accompanies Vivi to the warming unit where she gets the erythymicin ointment to protect her eyes. Bob comforts her through the two shots in her thighs, hepatitis B and Vitamin K. She has a good strong cry and Bob offers her his little finger to suck on - an old trick that worked when Lola was small. It works for this new baby too!

6.00pm Next it's time to contact family. Bob calls his mom first to give her the good news. Lola comes on the phone and wants to talk about her dad's hat. Next, Charley's mom gets a call and so on..... until Charleys attention is redirected to her steaming pasta dinner. She chows down her food beginning to recover. She has two nights in the hospital to get to know her 'perfect' daughter. Bob generously takes care of Germaine's taxi fare as her work is done.

6.30pm Germaine notices the full moon rising in the sky as she gets a taxi home.

