

I was due to have my third baby in the middle of April. As my due date approached, I knew my baby could come at any moment, so I was on high alert waiting for even the smallest signs of labor beginning, but other than the routine braxton hicks contractions I'd been having for weeks, there really was no indication of a baby coming. I woke up feeling very normal on the day before my due date. It was a Saturday morning and I had slept very well the night before. I had a good amount of energy and began my day by cooking breakfast for the family, taking a shower, and doing some cleaning around the house.

At 11:00AM, I started to have some back pain. Then, I started feeling crampy. My husband and I had had plans to go to a car dealership to buy a new car that afternoon, but I wasn't feeling well enough to go. He went ahead without me and I stayed home in bed. I figured I had over-done it cleaning and resigned myself to an afternoon of watching LOST on Netflix while playing a game of Words With Friends on my phone. I was very relaxed and the pain didn't worsen, so I was pretty content to chill where I was for awhile. It wasn't until about noon that I suddenly started to feel mild contractions. I ignored them, assuming they were braxton hicks. At 12:18, I actually tweeted this on my twitter account: "Contractions!!#\$\$@%& I'm laying in bed watching Lost & playing Words With Friends because I can't do anything else, really." And would you believe I still did not realize I was actually in labor?

It was only about 10 minutes later than I began to suspect I might be in labor, though. I suddenly realized I could not focus on the TV. The characters were speaking, but my pain was elevating dramatically to the point where I couldn't concentrate on what was happening on the show. I got up and began to pace the bedroom. I was now in so much pain that I pulled out a notebook with bible verses I had jotted down specifically to read during labor. The pain was getting unbelievable, and I started to pray. As the pain continued to escalate, I called my husband and told him, "I'm not sure if I'm really in labor not, but you should come home." Nope, I still didn't realize I was really in labor!

My husband made it home shortly after 1:00 and timed my contractions. At this point, I was dropping to my knees and squeezing his hand through each one. After we had timed a few contractions, we determined that they were 3 minutes apart and lasting 40 seconds. My husband encouraged me to get up and walk around, but I didn't want to walk around the house moaning and potentially freak my other children out, so I decided to walk outside instead. I had only made it to the end of our

driveway when I felt incredibly heavy pressure. I knew then. "It's time to go to the hospital."

We did not grab anything, we just climbed into the car and sped to the hospital. It's a 30 minute drive, but my husband made sure we made it sooner than that. I have almost no memory of the drive, at that point the contractions were so intense, so close together, and lasting so long, that I was no really aware of my surroundings. My body dozed uncontrollably in and out of sleep in between contractions. Walking from the parking lot to the maternity ward was the hardest part: I had to stop about every 30 seconds and wail through a contraction in public with people staring at me!

We made it to Labor and Delivery at 2:30. I had to ring a doorbell, and I remember as soon as I pushed the button, I was hit with a huge wave of a contraction. I had no choice but to drop to my knees and wait for it to pass. When I stood up, the doctor and several nurses were just standing around staring at me. "I'm in labor," I said. "Yes, obviously!" the doctor replied. She helped me into a wheelchair and brought me into a delivery room, then wasted no time checking my cervix. I was so relieved when she announced that I was dilated to 7cm! My husband got very excited and I remember telling him, "I'm almost done!" But of course, this being a hospital environment, the staff's first task was to put fetal monitoring on my belly and an IV into the back of my hand. The doctor announced that I could start pushing after she broke my water. She said she'd "be right back" and left the room. Babies, however, rarely like to wait for the doctors to be "ready," and my baby was no different. I could feel my water leaking and felt my baby coming down. I told the nurses it was time and they called the doctor back into the room. She broke my water the rest of the way, and then I told her I was going to start pushing. She urged me to wait "at least five minutes" to allow my cervix to thin out more, but I really couldn't wait any longer. My body was already pushing the baby out without my even trying; there was no stopping that. I gave it one, long push (about 40-50 seconds) and felt him slip right out. At 2:52PM on a sunny Saturday afternoon, my seven pound, twelve ounce Oliver was born. I had no tearing at all, and no burning sensation like I did with my previous two births. Oliver latched onto the breast flawlessly and nursed like a champ. Our first night together was peaceful; Oliver slept for unexpectedly long stretches, and we were able to leave the hospital first thing the next morning.

When I think about this birth, I think of this quote: "Just as a woman's heart knows how and when to pump her lungs to inhale, and her hand to

pull back from fire, so she knows when and how to give birth." – Virginia Di Orio. Each time I give birth, I am always amazed at the beauty of how my body instinctively knows what to do, and how beautifully my body was designed to give birth. For most of my labor, I didn't even realize I was in labor. It happened so quickly, I had little time to process what was happening, but afterwards I was able to look back on it all with great satisfaction and pride in the strength of my own body.