

Gregory Alexander's Birth Story

On Tuesday, March 8, I thought my water broke at school. I had my 38 week appointment scheduled anyways. The ob checked and said that I had not broken my water. I had to continue to wear pads the rest of the week and I felt stuff gushing out of me. I guess we'll never know if my water really did break that early. They said that my bag of waters was already broken when I arrived at the hospital. It's a good thing that the ob said it didn't considering he didn't arrive for 6 more days and that would have meant interventions.

Here's my week 38 bump photo from 3/8



I felt like he started to drop on Wednesday, so I took another photo on Wednesday, 3/9



On Friday, March 11, he must have really started to drop because my back was bothering me. I went for a walk at lunch. I was struggling to climb the stairs at school and the security guard asked me why I didn't have an elevator key. I was climbing stairs at school my entire pregnancy. I ended up tailor sitting on the floor in a coworker's office at the end of the day because my lower back was bothering me. Since it was actually warm out, Albert and I went for a walk that evening.

On Saturday morning, March 12, we slept in. I probably only got up to pee once or twice. We joked how it might be the last time we'd be able to sleep in. That ended up being a running joke at the end. "This might be the last time" for such and such. We went out to brunch because it "might be the last time we'll get to eat out in awhile" (it was!). Then we went food shopping, so lots of walking on Saturday as well.

On Sunday morning, March 13, we slept in again. When I woke up, there was a wet spot in bed and I had lost part of my mucous plug in my underwear. At 11:29 am, I updated my facebook, The countdown is in single digits! Don't forget to vote in our pool! Needless to say, no one came close in the pool!! The most popular date was the 30th. The earliest date was the 19th.

I called Alina at 1:08 and told her about my mucous plug. As we walked the mile to the St. Patrick's Day parade, I felt fluid gushing out of me. I discussed how annoying it was and how I hoped it didn't continue the next day at work. I sat and watched the parade. People climbed over me on the sidewalk and I don't think that it was obvious how pregnant I was from that angle because they mostly acted annoyed having to climb over me. When I stood up at the end of the parade, I was concerned that whatever it was that was leaking had leaked through. It hadn't. We walked the mile home. I noticed that between the parade ending and dinner time that I had about 2 or 3 regular bowel movements.

At 5:46 pm, I decided to call our doula. I had emailed her about the mucous plug, but I decided that I should also call her. She was calm and didn't let on that she suspected anything. It could be within hours or days, she said. I talked to my mom at 6:10 pm.

All day long, whenever I used the bathroom, there was always discharge. I noticed pink tinged mucous, so I called the doula again at 6:45 to update her.

At 7:29, I wrote a friend on facebook: Everything's going great. I still feel really good. I've been truly blessed with an easy pregnancy. (I think it's the height! Being 5'10" has it's advantages!) The baby is beginning to drop, so the end of the tunnel is in sight, but I'm not one of these miserable pregnant women who wants that baby out yesterday. I'm perfectly happy with him baking until his eviction date (April 5th, 42 weeks, is the longest they'll allow me to go).

At 8:10, I posted the following on the bump:

Pink discharge?

This morning I lost part of my MP. Then I had discharge all afternoon. Now when I wipe there's pink colored discharge (over the last hour or so). No real contractions to speak off, just BH. I have an incredible desire to finish cleaning my kitchen and my lower back is rebelling against me.

Is the pink colored discharge significant? (meaning is something happening sooner than later? At this point, everything is progress which is good.)

After dinner, I felt motivated to clean the kitchen. My back was "really fighting me" on cleaning. After a little bit, I realized that it was coming and going, so I called out to Albert the time (around 9) and the duration (40 seconds). I timed it using the stove. I finished the kitchen and we showered. I had 2-3 back contractions while in the shower. The water didn't really help. Around 10, we realized that I had 7-9 contractions that hour, so around 7-10 minutes apart at that point.

The first contraction I timed on our contractions app was at 10:10. It lasted 40 seconds.

At 10:14, I posted the following on the bump:

Timeable contractions!!!

So for the last 90 minutes, I've had timeable contractions that started out as 10 minutes apart and are now 7 minutes. They're only lasting 45 seconds and they are only in my back. I had to share with someone!!! (You know, other than DH!). I don't want to share with family and friends in case they fizzle and I've gotten everyone excited for nothing.

The next one came at 10:16, 6 minutes later, lasting 47 seconds.

At 10:18, I called our doula. I remember telling her that I felt back labor and she didn't want me to call it that. I told her it hurt when I was standing to clean and she wanted to know why I was standing. She wasn't concerned about the back pains. I mentioned that I had some cramping, and she thought that was more significant. She was concerned that I rest. We could have a long night ahead of us. I told Albert that I want to watch TV at one point, but we never got on the couch. We went into the bedroom to relax and I lasted 2 contractions lying down, but I didn't want to lie down anymore. I wanted to move through the contractions. During this time, I was on hands and knees resting my upper body on our ottoman. Albert applied counter pressure the way our chiropractor showed us on my sacrum. I didn't not like it when he used the tennis balls. I also bounced on the exercise ball and rolled my hips. I kept "breathing" through the discomfort. Albert kept reminding me to slow down my breath. Occasionally he'd breathe in my ear to help me. I was never really able to slow down my breathing through them. It got to the point when we were timing contractions that he knew when they started and stopped by my breath. They felt more manageable to me to breathe heavily through them.

The next contraction came at 10:25, 7.5 minutes later, lasting 44 seconds. Then a 5.5 minute break, another contraction lasting 48 seconds (10:31). At 10:37, I called my parents and I told my mom that I was having timeable contractions. 9 minute rest, 44 second contraction (10:41). 8 minute rest, 40 second contraction (10:49). Then only 4 minutes rest, next contraction 52 seconds long (10:54). I believe it was around this time that I had to have Albert time the contractions. I had been able to press the button on my phone up until that point. This might have been around the time that I just completely closed my eyes for the rest of the labor. 3.5 minutes of rest, 30 second contraction (10:58). 2.5 minute rest, 1 minute and 35 second contraction (11:01).

It was at this point that we stopped timing for awhile. I think Albert may have started to gather his stuff for the hospital or maybe he was pushing on my back during this time. The next contraction we timed was at 11:55 lasting 1 minute. Then a rest of 1 minute, 38 seconds, then a 45 second contraction (11:58). Then a rest of 3 minutes, 36 seconds (or did Albert miss a contraction???), contraction lasting 52 seconds (12:02). 2 minutes, 13 seconds rest, 1 minute contraction (12:06). 3 minute rest, 51 second contraction (12:10). 1 minute, 20 second rest, 1 minute contraction (12:12). 1 minute, 8 seconds rest, 1 minute contraction (12:14). 1 minute, 40 second rest, 43 second contraction (12:17). Then 1 minute, 15 second rest, 20 second contraction (12:19). 1 minute, 46 second rest, 47 second contraction (12:21). Then a 3 minute rest, 34 second contraction (12:25). Then a 1 minute, 24 second rest, 54 second contraction (12:27). This was the last contraction I timed. I remember at this point that the contractions were coming frequently and that it seemed like they were a minute or two apart. Albert timed them for me and I remember at the time thinking that it was as if he were frozen in place and was just watching all of this happen to me.

It was around this point that I knew I needed to go the bathroom. I believe I got up in the middle of a contraction that Albert was applying counter pressure with the tennis balls and rushed to the bathroom. I wiped and there was a glob of bright red blood. I showed it to Albert. He said, "I'm called Beth." That was at 12:28.

Albert called Beth again at 1:10. I said to tell her that I was feeling a slightly nauseous during some of the contractions I was having on the toilet. I also had pushed a couple of times. I knew that I shouldn't, but it really felt like a bowel movement.

At this point, Beth wanted to speak to me. She asked why I was pushing. I told her that I thought I had to go, but I hadn't and that there was a lot of pressure there. She said, "Stop pushing. Short, shallow breaths. I'm meeting you at the hospital."

Albert rushed around packing up my toiletries and medicine. He kept asking me questions about where things were and I remember being annoyed that I had to focus on something else other than my labor. I also realized that at the hardest part of labor, the part when you would think you'd need your husband the most, that I was doing it all alone. But it didn't bother me. Honestly, it wasn't that hard. I never had any doubt in myself. There were a couple of back contractions at this point where I was on the toilet and I called out to Albert that I needed help getting through that contraction. But I never screamed, yelled, or threw up. I had on a ratty sweatshirt because after my shower, I was hot, but then at some point I got really cold. I remember sitting on the ball with a blanket on my lap.

Right before we left, I remember thinking that I should ask Albert to make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and then it occurred to me how long we were taking to get out of the house, so I didn't say anything. We walked out the door and Albert went back in for our bag. I had my last back contraction standing up. I leaned over the railing on our front steps. I realized at this point that I hadn't even printed out our birth plan. I thought about telling Albert but then I decided between him and our doula, that I would have the birth I wanted without a printed up plan. Albert knew my wishes. I was very aware of how cold it was outside and I was shivering. We got in the car and I called my parents. It was 1:24. My dad answered and I told him that we were on our way to the hospital. He said, "Okay. Good luck." Right before we turned the corner for the hospital, I texted Alina and Roy, "Hospital". I didn't have the energy to do anymore. I had these illusions beforehand that I'd take one last bump photo before heading to the hospital and I thought I'd be able to update my facebook. Nope.

As we traveled down the highway, Albert said, "Oh, we forgot that car seat. Should we go back?" At this point, I was focusing on NOT pushing in the car. So I said, "No, Beth said that we should meet her at the hospital. We'll get it later." I was aware that the baby was coming soon.

We pulled up to the hospital and the valet parking attendant said in a heavily accented voice, "Wheelchair?" I didn't open my eyes. I merely pointed at him and nodded. But he didn't see me and Albert didn't understand him, so I called out, "Yes." He wheeled one over and I got in and Albert tried to get our bags. The attendant said, "Leave them here and come back down for them." I remember seeing them sitting outside of our locked car and thinking that didn't seem like a good idea, but Albert wheeled me away. I opened my eyes only long enough to point him in the right direction as the main entrance was closed and we had to enter through the children's emergency entrance.

I have no idea what the lobby looked like. I never opened my eyes. A woman asked Albert if I was in active labor and I remember thinking, "Duh. Isn't it obvious?" Then someone else asked who my doctor was and Albert stumbled answering, so I called out "Greater New Haven Ob-gyn and Midwives." Someone said, "Did you call ahead?" and I realized that everything moved so quickly that it didn't even

occur to me to call them. Then they asked who our pediatricians are and I answered again. I was wheeled into a room and the nurse said, "Take off your pants." I believe I kicked off my own shoes, but I needed Albert's help getting my pants off. I consciously laid down on my left side. I wish the nurse had said to take all of my clothes off because that ratty sweatshirt stayed on through the rest of my labor.

She was trying to get the external fetal monitor around my stomach and was trying to get me to help her. In the back of my mind, I realized that I was being stubborn and wasn't helping, but I was concentrating on pushing. I decided that now that I was in the hospital, I was going to push. I said to the nurse, "You should know that I am pushing." Someone quickly came in and checked me and I heard them say, "Fully, +1", meaning fully dilated 10 centimeters and the baby's head was at +1 position (+2 position is crowning).

The next thing I remember was hearing that Meghan was there. She is my favorite midwife. Beth arrived and I think I told her that Meghan was my favorite. Someone asked me to roll over onto the delivery bed, that it was the same level. So now I was on my right side. I think someone lifted my leg for me. All of my concentration was on pushing.

I was pushing like I was having a bowel movement because that's where I felt the pressure. I was grunting and being quite loud. At one point, Beth and Albert propped me up so I was in a better more upright position. I wasn't really aware of my body. I asked Albert later about what position I was in.

Meghan said to me, "Listen, we had to have this baby now. We don't like his heart beat. I know that you don't want forceps or vacuum or anything so you have to push." I actually remember seeing her face. I was pushing and people were telling me to hold my breath. I had a cold and I was having a hard time getting my breath. A voice in the back of my head said, "Listen to your body; not to them." So I stopped, leaned back and took several deep breathes. I heard Gregory's heart beat go up on the monitor. After that, no one said anything about getting him out quickly. I remember someone saying something about the "birthday" club or team, and I found out later that they had called the pediatrician because of his heartbeat. Beth whispered in my ear, "That's right, get oxygen down to your baby."

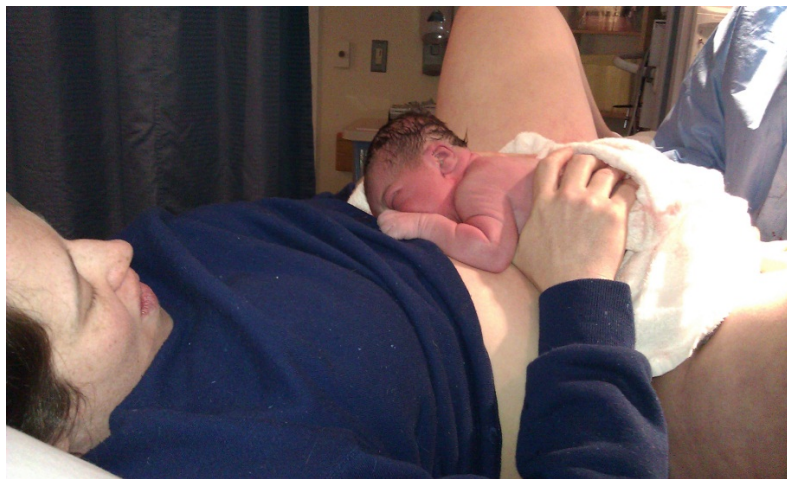
It was around this point that I remembered Nancy, our natural childbirth* instructor, saying that I should push the release of the Kegels I've been doing. So I started doing that. I no longer felt the need to grunt, so I pushed in silence. As soon as I did that, everyone started cheering and telling me that it was working and to keep going. At some point, there was a lot of cheering and Albert got overly excited and yelled like at a sporting match. I stopped pushing and motioned to him to stop. Someone asked what was wrong and someone answered that I didn't want him to yell.

Then either Meghan or Beth or both, who remembers, said that he had a lot of hair. I was pushing when I wanted to, not when they were telling me. I was definitely aware of that. When I would stop, Meghan would say something like, oh, that's the end of the contraction, ok. Someone said, "I know that it's burning." And I replied, "No it's not." I pushed again and I felt pain where I ending up tearing. (I had 2nd degree tearing)

Someone said, "Do you want to feel his head?" And it seemed like so much effort to do so, so I didn't react. Beth moved my hand down there, but I couldn't really feel anything. I guess I was feeling

his hair at the top of his head, but I expected to feel his whole head or something. So I just lied and said that I felt it, so I could get back to work.

Once I realized that I was supposed to do the Kegel release push, things went really quickly. I don't remember the "ring of fire", or his head or his shoulders coming out. All of the sudden he was out and placed on my stomach. He came out crying! I still had that stupid ratty sweatshirt on that was covered in cat hair. Beth and Albert helped me get the sweatshirt and the bra off. I thought that I'd be one of those people who was like, "Oh my God, my baby, my baby" and that I'd cry. But I didn't do either. I think I might have said, "Hi." I don't remember. I remember being memorized by him and rubbing in his vernix. He was so warm against my skin. It occurred to me at some point to find my husband's eyes and we made eye contact and said, "I love you" to each other. Once again, it was if as my eyes were closed, because I only remember what people said at this point. I guess I was just staring at my baby too much.



I remember hearing Meghan say that the cord stopped pulsing. I remember thinking that was fast, but who knows how long it really was. I remember her telling me that she'd like me to get a shot of Pitocin in my thigh to help deliver the placenta. I trusted that she wouldn't have recommended it if I didn't need it. Apparently it's especially helpful in really fast labors. I said yes. I could have cared less

about it at that point; I had my baby. I want to say that I only pushed once and the placenta just popped out.

At some point, they took him away to do something and I remember Beth saying, "Now?" or "does he have to go over there?" Albert went with him. I could see them across the room. Then Albert was sitting in a chair, talking to our son with tears streaming down his face. It was a wonderful touching moment.

His APGARs were 9 and 9. They said that when I arrived my bag of waters was already broken. I did ask to see the placenta because even though I thought it would be gross, I also knew that I'd regret not looking at it. It was actually pretty amazing looking. That placenta grew my perfect baby! It felt like the stitching up took longer than the labor. I joked about it with Meghan.

Eventually we got our stuff from the security desk and Albert was able to give the valet his keys. All of the birth photos are on Albert's phone since both my phone and camera were in our bags downstairs.

Albert called his parents at 2:20 am and my parents at 2:23 am and Alina at 2:38 am. He updated his facebook at 4:28 am. I updated mine at 5:09 am.

It was at some point in our hospital room that I realized his birthday was March 14. I was looking at the sticker in his bassinette and wondering what 3/14 meant. Both Albert and I had thought his birthday was the 13th and I remember thinking, "Oh no, he'll have Friday the 13th birthdays!"

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