

Excerpt from Santosha Tantra's Journal

June 26, 2017 Monday at 2:16 am

True Way Bennett was born

On the evening of Sunday the 25th, Ellie began her contractions—as they remained light and irregular she wasn't quite convinced she was in actual full labor. They did put the midwife Jackie on notice. Ellie stayed in the pool with Emily and Alia for almost 2 hours that evening. Convinced it was not progressing towards birth, she decided to go home to get some sleep—this was about 10:30 pm. I felt that this was the night and that it was going to proceed, so we got the birthing tub close to ready and the mattress and space in the living room ready. We all went to bed, but on alert. I kept dreaming that I was getting a phone call from Ellie. Two hours later at almost 12:30 am that phone call came. It was on! She, Mike and Alia came over in a few minutes. As she waddled in I could see that her focus was on the process of labor. Everyone else who was attending the birth arrived. James, who came to document it through video and pictures, Geri as a loving presence. Emily as a loving friend who ended up taking the primary role as doola, or actually midwife. Susan, who received the call, started cooking the meal for Ellie and didn't arrive till right after the baby was born.

The night was warm so the outside birth in the birthing tub was on! Ellie walked the porch with Emily, Alia, and Mike. As the contractions became regular or more persistent, though they didn't follow a patterned progression, Mike called the midwife Jackie. She wanted them to time the contractions and their severity and length for a half hour. Mike became more involved in this while the girls (Emily and Alia) walked with her. Emily began to help her breathe through them. After about half an hour of this, the midwife was called again and she recommended that Ellie take a shower and that a shower would either dissipate the puzzling pattern of contraction or intensify them. It seemed to me that she was in actual labor at that time so that was a little puzzling to me. The midwife hadn't left yet. After the shower Ellie knew she wanted to go in the pool and Emily, Mike, and Alia followed her in. I followed and watched with flashlight in hand. There was a scorpion on the tiles and I warned people to avoid it.

As Ellie walked and swam through her contractions in the pool, Mike and Emily walked with her, holding her hand and breathing with her as the contractions came. They were definitely getting stronger and Ellie became more vocal—even yelling “shit” a few times. She was grunting through a few of the contractions and I felt that surely she must be crowning. As this was happening I noticed the beautiful starry night above us. I suggested to her if she would like to get into the birthing tub. She was getting chilled in the pool so this suggestion was welcomed as the birthing tub was heated and ready for her. I believe the midwife was called again and she was seriously preparing to leave her home to come to the birth. Ellie went into the birthing tub assisted by Mike and Emily. Emily was the primary focus for Ellie to breathe through her contractions with. The focused energy between them was beautiful and pure. Emily was all in with Ellie and so was Mike who went into the birthing tub to help her and hold her as needed.

Everything was proceeding very quickly now. I ran into the house to get my camera—it became important for me to take pictures of True’s arrival which I knew was minutes and seconds away. To Ellie’ surprise, the contractions now produced her impulse to push down deep. Almost immediately I saw the baby’s head between her legs and coming down into the tub. “Ellie,” I said, “there is the head.” I took some pictures then. She felt between her legs and was surprised. “She is almost here, just push again,” I suggested. Sure enough, on the next contraction, True slid out into the warm pool. Ellie, still surprised at the quickness of it all, reached for the baby as Mike helped her and Emily held on to her arm and leg and True was held close. The parents were stunned and I clicked away receiving some rare photos of such a moment. I could see True was a wonderful, strong baby and as she was still blue, I was hoping that she would show signs of breathing. She did and in a few short seconds she burst out into a cry. Everyone was happy and I remember Alia and James and everyone else surrounding the tub to see the baby. It was a surreal moment, being outside on a warm summer night and a baby was just born. As the couple reveled in the presence of their new being that arrived and would be their daughter, I took pictures of this most tender, intimate moment. Later, looking at the pictures of these moments, the intimacy between the baby True and her parents Elraya and Mike were incredibly beautiful. That Mike was not the happy standing-by father was obvious—he was the father who went all the way with the mother and his wife in that moment of birth.

There was an immediate circle of intimacy, trust and cooperation between the three of them in that little hot tub. Mike had shared everything with Elraya and she had trusted him and allowed him to completely be a part of it. The energy to be in the tub seemed to pass and I suggested we take the mattress out onto the porch and Ellie could lay down there with the baby and hold her to her chest and we could make sure that both of them were warm. I knew she still had to pass the placenta and the cord needed to be cut. We were waiting for the midwife to assist in this part as none of us were medical experts.

Emily got on the phone with the midwife; she was on her way but still almost an hour and a half away. I seriously doubted that we would end up waiting for her to finish this aspect of the birth. Ellie was relaxed and happy, not concerned. The family was happy and their attention was on the baby. Ellie didn't seem to have an interest in getting the placenta out and the baby was still attached to the cord. Emily was on the phone talking to Jackie, getting the instructions on how to get the placenta out, but that got a little bit frustrating as the midwife had to pull over to instruct her, thus delaying her arrival even more. I asked Ellie if she was feeling any contractions, they were starting to come again and I knew that the contractions would help her push the placenta out.

After a while, progress seemed slow and I knew that the midwife was still too far away. I asked Ellie if she minded standing up as gravity, along with her contractions, would probably get the job done. She was agreeable to this. It was a bit awkward as the cord was still attached to the baby, but Mike held the baby and coordinated with her so that she could stand while the baby was still attached to her by the cord. Emily was close by to work with her to release the placenta and gravity and contraction did the trick—the placenta came out. This was a relief and as we knew that we should cut the cord now, I believe that scissors were being boiled for twenty minutes (a job that Geri tended to) as recommended by the midwife over the phone. I suggested that James use my ipad to find out any information on how to cut the cord. Emily couldn't find any clamps in the birthing packet so the cord was a simple cut a few inches from True's belly. Ellie had finished and all had beautifully cooperated in the process of birth! The baby True was taken out of the towel she had been wrapped in and was wrapped in a receiving blanket with a little cap on her head. The birth had taken under a couple of hours.

The family all sat together on the porch couch looking tired and happy. Ellie wanted to eat, so Susan brought out the meal she had made for her. Everyone was blown away, happy all of this had happened without any medical expert! We had never doubted ourselves and everyone had cooperated in the best way possible, doing their part with love. Emily had played the part of the midwife without any prior experience or even much knowledge of the process, but she was right there with Ellie, helping her breathe through all the contractions and assisting her with the passing of the placenta. Seeing her on the phone asking the midwife what to do and how to proceed when she was a complete novice at the task was a testament to Emily's learned ability to stay in there and get the task done. To her surprise she was the one who had to do it. I saw that she had learned how to persist and be brave and calm through my training of her. I was proud of her and my circle of friends—no one merely idly sat by, everyone was called on to contribute and be a part of it and everyone, through my love and training how to be in life knew how to do just that. The parents Elraya and Mike had both stayed with each other throughout. Mike was not a supportive husband standing on the sidelines; he was right there with her every step of the way, holding her, breathing with her, stepping right into the birthing tub with her, helping her to catch the baby—holding the baby with her in the first few minutes of the baby's life, and helping by holding the baby while she released the placenta. And Alia their 12-year-old daughter helped her mom also by helping her in the pool as they swam around during the contractions. She stayed by her parents and was present to help whenever she needed. This was a lot for a 12 year old to take in; she was a happy, helpful presence and the tears of joy she had when she saw her sister being born and later when she held her, was so beautiful to see. And my part? I was the director, the loving presence, the mother of all who dreamed the dance of birth, of loving cooperation among all.

And to my darling daughter Elraya, who followed her own way through the entire process—a tigress that walked the porch, that swam in the water, that slid her baby out in the heat of that little birthing tub, under the stars on the warm summer night while the bats flew by to sip the water from the ponds, and the cactus that bloomed only at night for that one night, opened their petals. Welcome True Way to the circle of love—the unifying field of love. My darling, you are with us here in this beautiful mystery of mysteries—life—life being lived as the Heart.