**Caleb Birth Story**

Caleb’s due date was about mid-August 2013. But much like Liliana, we didn’t know an exact date since date of conception was not pinpointed (thanks to my crazy body and irregularity when it comes to all things hormone and baby related). I had a fairly good pregnancy, but very similar to Liliana’s in that I didn’t really have an appetite and had morning-sickness throughout the entire 9 months. We did have a placenta bleed in the first trimester that caused some concern, but we were very grateful that it corrected itself.

I stop going into my office August 6th because I had concern about going into labor while at work or commuting back and forth. I worked from home until the delivery (and all during maternity leave as well) on August 22, 2013. I think because I was able to rest for almost three weeks without having to commute an hour plus each way, that helped subside any major swelling and increased BP (like I had with Liliana).

We had a few false alarms…not with having contractions, but thinking my water broke. Our doula, Grace, came swiftly but we realized that it was just the fore bag that broke. Mid- August came and went….still nothing. So I decided to try taking Black & Blue cohosh (an herbal tincture) to try to induce labor. I took it August 9th & 10th, but nothing happened. I waited a week and took it again August 21st. On Thursday August 22nd I woke up at 4 am thinking my water broke. I guess the cohosh worked! It was just a trickle, no gushing. I was starting to have light pains, more like light cramps, but they were pretty consistent every 2-3 minutes, lasting about 30 seconds. We called Grace and she came to the house around 5:30 or so. While waiting for her, Derek and I both took showers (had to shave my legs!), said our prayers and got the car packed up.

 When Grace arrived I was moving around and the light contractions stayed consistent. If I were to sit down and rest, they pretty much subsided. We decided to get some good walking in to help expedite things. We walked up and down our street for an hour or so. We even stopped to talk to a very excited neighbor who was thrilled that we were in labor. Liliana woke up during that time, so Derek brought her outside to see me. We decided to all go inside for me to rest my legs, so we retreated to the house. Back in the house we continued to rest, walk, do stair lunges, eat some light food; I even tried to take a little nap. The contractions continued to be light, but consistent and always slowed down when I sat.

This went on until 11:30 or so. I was making laps around the kitchen snacking on fresh peaches and toast. The contractions started to get a little stronger and Grace suggested we think about heading to the hospital at some point. It was a hard call to make because we knew when labor picked up that it would pick up quickly and that I would most likely have a fast delivery. I was apprehensive to get to the hospital too early and be stuck there while slowly progressing, but I also didn’t want to have an unplanned home (or car!) birth. At 11:45/12 we decided to head out. We gave out our hugs and kisses to Nana and Liliana. Liliana was such a trooper all morning and was excited for her brother to make his appearance. She told us to make sure we came home with Caleb and not leave him at the hospital – ha!

The car ride was bearable since contractions slowed a bit while sitting, though I did have a few intense ones. We got to the emergency room and I happily walked in, registered and walked up to the birthing unit. They tried to get me to use the wheelchair, but I declined. I wanted to walk and speed up labor …no more sitting! We got into our room and they made me lay down to monitor me and baby for awhile. Both of our heartbeats were good and my BP was good as well. It was about an hour and a half of monitoring, which frustrated me because of course things slowed down again. The midwife FINALLY came in to see me and said that my water hadn’t completely broken, it was just a trickle. She checked me and said I was 5 cm. dilated and completely effaced. I asked if I could finally walk again and she said that was fine. I think the midwife and nurses took their time with me since I didn’t seem like I was in active labor. I was calm and not complaining of pain. They were surprised I was at 5 cm and was doing fine!

So Grace and I walked the quiet halls again from about 1:45 to 2:40ish. Derek stayed in our room to catch up on emails and get some rest. Contractions picked up again with the walking and they were a little more intense. I would just stop, lean on the wall, breath through the waves and Grace would either rub my back or hold my hips together (since I could feel them starting to spread).

The phlebotomist found me in the hall and asked to do my blood work. We went back into my room and he did his work while I bounced on the birth ball. After he was done, I went to the bathroom and when I came out I said I didn’t want to walk the halls anymore. I felt like I was on display with all the nurses watching me and commenting on how cute it was to watch me in labor. Awkward! So instead I started pacing the room and all of a sudden the contractions got intense and super quick. I found a counter to lean on and started breathing through the pain. Grace again was rubbing my back or pushing my hips. Then my water broke at 2:50 – a huge gush all over the floor! Grace got the nurse who came in to help clean up and record my progression.

For the next 19 minutes I endured STRONG intense contractions, right on top of each other with really no break in between. I think I went through active labor, transition, Caleb dropping and was about to push…all in less than 19 minutes. I remember saying to Grace that I was scared (this was way faster than how things happened with Liliana) and that it was happening too fast. She of course gave me great support, comfort and encouragement. I could feel Derek’s presence in the room, but he let Grace take the main support role in talking me through the process. I love his quiet strength that I can always feel when he is around.

At some point in those 19 minutes I felt Caleb drop and felt him starting to crown. I said this out loud and Grace checked me (since no nurse was in the room). She lifted my skirt and said “yep! There he is”. She called for the nurse. I was still standing at the counter and didn’t want to deliver him on the floor. The nurse encouraged me to get into the bed. This was a huge task since Caleb was almost coming out, but I made a few hops, jumped up on the bed on all fours. All I remember is 2 pushes (Grace telling me to slow down and breath in between the two) and Caleb Todd was out! 3:09pm! Apparently the midwife almost didn’t make it and she literally just had time to slap on some gloves to catch him. They didn’t even have time to prep the bed with the sterilizing pads. So after I pushed him out, they passed him to me between my legs and I held him until I was able to maneuver onto my back.

WOW! That was an intense, amazing, scary, empowering, beautiful 19 minutes! After taking a few deep breaths I was able to take in the moment and welcome my son with kisses and tears. I got adjusted into bed and Derek and I savored the amazing moment. The next hour was spent making calls to our family and with the nurses and midwives tending to us both, including stitching me up….yep, I tore again in the same spot as with Liliana. Guess that is what happens with two quick labors. At least neither of them had cone heads since they weren’t in the canal for very long.

I was blessed with over an hour’s time of holding Caleb and nursing him (he latched perfectly). We delayed cord clamping for about 15 minutes until the blood stopped pumping. They didn’t even take him to weigh or measure him until around 4:30pm; 8 pounds, and 6 ounces, 21 inches long. I think it is key to have that bonding time between mother and baby and to establish those first moments of love and connection. Plus, I didn’t want to let my sweet boy out of my arms after all the work that went into birthing him.

After he was weighed and swaddled, I got cleaned up and walked over to the recovery room. The nurses were all amazed to have seen me walk into the birthing unit, walk during labor, almost deliver standing up and then walk to my recovery room. The blessing of natural labor!

We settled into our new room around 5:30/6 and Grace went to pick up dinner. I was hungry after my mini-birthing-marathon and enjoyed indulging in some food!

We ate dinner and waited for Nana and Liliana to come meet Caleb. I was so excited to see my baby girl and see how she reacted to her new brother. She was a little nervous at first and wouldn’t look at him. So I passed him off to Derek and had some good one-on-one time with her. We got her a gift from Caleb, so she enjoyed opening her presents. One gift was a pack of books, so we read one together. By the end of the visit, she was a little more comfortable with him and gave him a kiss without prompting. She was such a trooper and understood that she was going back home with Nana while we stayed the night at the hospital. She was excited to ride the elevator again and push the buttons. Before she left she made sure to tell us not to forgot Caleb at the hospital and bring him home to share. I just love my sweet girl!

Derek and I had a fitful night, but got some rest. Hospitals are not a place to really get any sleep, too many interruptions. I was anxious to get home soon! By early morning, my midwife officially released me and then Caleb was released a few hours later. So we were packed up and left before lunchtime.

Caleb was (and still is!) such a sweet, calm baby. He didn’t cry much and had no problem nursing at all. We happily took him home and enjoyed the next crazy week adjusting to being a family of four. Liliana and Meatballs both did great with the new addition. This momma was happy and thrilled to have her family rounded out. I count my blessings for having two beautiful, natural hospital births. They each were amazing in their own ways and I would not have changed anything about the process.

I was very lucky and blessed to have a supportive husband and a wonderful doula who was my rock (both labors)! Welcome to our world Caleb Todd Greenland! We love you!