**The Arrival of Elin Elise Craddock**

Elin, let me tell you the exciting story of your birthday…

At 2:45AM on the morning of Wednesday, November 12, 2014 I woke up with the first contraction I had ever had that actually hurt a little. Leading up to your birth I had been having Braxton Hicks contractions, but those never hurt. I got up, used the bathroom, laid back down in bed, and then I had another somewhat painful contraction. I laid in bed for the next hour timing the contractions. The contractions were eight minutes apart and lasting a minute long. Once an hour had past I woke up Daddy and let him know that I thought something might be happening.

I decided to change what I was doing in order to see if the contractions would stop. I went into the kitchen and ate a bowl of grits while I checked Facebook. Daddy came out and stood beside me while I did this. The contractions did not stop and they actually got a little closer together. I next told Daddy that if this was the real thing, I wanted to be showered with clean hair before giving birth. Therefore, I took a shower, washed my hair, blew my hair dry, and then quickly ran the straighter through my hair. Daddy laughed at me and gave me a hard time that I straightened my hair. He told me that if this was the real thing my hair was going to “go to pot” and that I wouldn’t care about it.

By the time I finished getting ready and putting on the clothes that I would want to wear to the birthing center, my contractions had slowed down and were not as strong. I chalked it all up to being false labor and laid back down in bed with Daddy. After lying in bed for a little while I had another much stronger contraction, so strong that I had to get up out of bed. I went back into the kitchen and began walking around in a circle. My contractions were now about five minutes apart and they were strong enough that I had to stop and focus on relaxing when I had one. There was some inconsistency in my contractions, but they eventually became about three and half to four minutes apart and lasting for a minute. This meant that it was time to call the birthing center.

At about 7:30AM we called the birthing center’s on call nurse midwife Carol. Carol informed us that she would be off call at 8AM and that she would have the next on call nurse midwife contact us. In a few minutes, Terri from the birthing center called us. On the phone I gave Terri the details of my labor up to that point.

When talking to Terri I had another contraction and had to hand the phone off. Terri had Daddy hold the phone where she could hear my behavior during the contraction. My contractions were definitely hurting, but I was handling them really well because I have a high pain tolerance. After the contraction I got back on the phone with Terri. Terri told me that it seemed I was still handling everything very well and that she thought that I had several hours to labor at home prior to needing to go to the birthing center. She told me to stay home for now, use the labor techniques I had learned in class, and to really focus on practicing relaxing because I would need to be able to really relax when I got to the transition phase of labor. I reminded Terri that we lived 40 minutes for the birthing center and that I was a little afraid we might not make it on time. In order to make me feel more comfortable Terri said that we could meet at the birthing center at 10AM so she could check me. She did inform me that if I wasn’t far enough along in labor that she would have to send me home and have me come back later. I agreed to this plan and got off the phone.

Once off the phone I told Daddy that I hoped Terri knew what she was talking about because I felt things were much further along than she might think. At this point Daddy and I decided to use what we had learned in class. On the bed I got into the side lying relaxation position we had learned in class and Daddy put on our piano classical music iTunes playlist. My first contraction in this position was excruciatingly painful. I told Daddy that if labor was going to be like this I might not be able to do it all natural. I got back up on my feet and decided that I would rather get into a warm bath. Daddy was on it! He ran me a warm bath and sat in a chair next to me as I soaked. The whole time he was timing the contractions on his phone.

While in the tub my contractions became stronger and I even felt like pushing with some of them. When I told Daddy this he said it was time to get out and get ready to go to the birthing center. Getting out of the tub and getting dressed were difficult tasks for me because things were starting to get more intense. However, I managed to do these tasks as Daddy loaded up the car. Once dressed, I went into the bedroom and put my hands on the bed as a contraction began. On this contraction my water broke! I yelled to Daddy to come quick as he was in the garage at the time. He came inside and laid down a towel for me to stand over.

Daddy quickly called Terri back and told her what had happened. This time as Terri listened to me have a contraction she knew things were much further along and more serious. I was going through the transition phase of labor and this was the most painful part. However, it only lasted a few minutes for me and then I felt the strong need to push. We were still at home in the bedroom and I needed to push! I told Daddy that I didn’t think I could make it to the car and that we were going to have this baby at home. He quickly put me on the phone with Terri who gave me a pep talk and told me to get my behind in the car and get to Allen! With Daddy’s help I changed bottoms and got into the car.

With his flashers on, Daddy drove as fast as he could down the double lane highway. There were many large diesel trucks on the highway this day that made getting to the birthing center slower than I would have liked. The entire time we were in the car I had the strong urge to push. Terri had told Daddy to tell me to blow like I was blowing out candles every time I had the urge to push. I did this the best that I could, but there were many contractions that I could not resist the urge to push with.

At approximately 9:45AM we made it to the birthing center. I got out of the car, went inside, walked up a flight of stairs to the second floor, and then made it into the room that you would be born in. Terri had me lay on the bed so she could check me. I was 10 centimeters dilated and 100 percent effaced. I was told to push as I pleased and to assume any position I wanted. The most comfortable position for me was on all fours with my head resting on a pillow. The contractions continued and I pushed hard through them. At some point your Emmie came in to the room. She let me know she was there by putting her cold hands on my neck to comfort me and cool me down.

It was not long after Emmie’s arrival that you were born. Daddy caught you the best that he could, but you were so slippery that you slipped through his hands and he passed you up to me between my legs. I instantly held you on my chest and took you and everything that had happened in. You were finally here and I had successfully delivered you 100 percent all natural.

The hours following your birth consisted of us admiring you, resting, and celebrating this joyous event. Poppa came to the birthing center after you were born and brought us Ihop for breakfast. I ate a bacon omelet with pancakes and drank fresh squeeze orange juice that Emmie had brought. I will never forget your Poppa tearing up as I told him the story of how everything happened. I knew that he was proud of his only daughter for having brought you into the world.

We would have left the birthing center within four hours after delivery but the first time I got up to go to the bathroom I passed out and continued to feel lightheaded each time I got up after that. Terri the midwife, along with Diane our nurse, monitored my blood pressure and heart rate until it became as stable as it was going to get. Terri had me eat one more meal at the birthing center, a Schlotzskys sandwich, before letting me leave. We left the birthing center six hours after you were born and I had no more episodes of lightheadedness. I rode in the back of the car with you to our house admiring you the whole time. Never had a felt a love like ours… a love that will last a lifetime.