Tad (short for tadpole) had been giving signs that he was ready to exit since just past 36 weeks when I had a few contractions strong enough to wake me from sleep. But since we were planning a homebirth, I really wanted him to stay inside until 37 weeks (after which homebirth is deemed safe). Then when his older brother got hand, foot and mouth virus at 37 weeks exactly, and we had to ask our little Tadpole to wait another week until big brother was no longer infectious.

By the time we hit 38 weeks I was ready to meet my baby. Pre-labour symptoms were well underway and I was having Braxton-Hicks contractions every 6 to 12 minutes all through my 38-week midwife visit. The contractions were not painful, but after a full day of it they had tired me out at least. That night I got my first hint of bloody show. I expected something to happen … but nothing did. The next day it was more of the same and even more show – but no labour. I’d feel ready by day, but then at night everything would stop.

That Friday I decided not to work from home since the pre-labour symptoms were so distracting. Instead I took the day to go on a lovely fall walk. I enjoyed the fall colours and the bright autumn weather, I reviewed my hypno-birthing CDs, and I appreciated what might be my last afternoon to myself for a while. That evening I realised that after we put our pre-schooler to bed my pre-labour symptoms stopped. Perhaps, I reasoned, I was stopping the labour because I was nervous about our pre-schooler waking up during the labour or birth. I pictured him waking being alone and frightened with no one coming to his aid (because they were busy with me). I knew that some preschoolers witness labour and birth with no problems, or sleep through it, but ours has always been sensitive and a very light sleeper, so I was not convinced that having
him around for the birth was a good idea.

Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny. Throughout the night before and the morning I was getting sporadic contractions (more painful than Braxton-Hicks). However they were very far apart.

We went about our weekend tasks as usual, doing the grocery shopping, the laundry and the vacuuming.

In fact I volunteered to do the vacuuming in an attempt to get labour started in earnest.

In the afternoon we took a walk and the contractions came more regularly.

At 5 pm I decided I needed to talk to my husband about calling my parents to take our pre-schooler for the night.

I explained that I thought my concerns about him being there for the labour and birth were hindering progress.

It would seem that I was right, because as soon as we called my parents, my contractions began to come with greater intensity every 3-4 minutes!

By the time my dad arrived I needed to breath through the contractions.

After they left, around 6:45 pm, I called the midwives to give them the heads up. Turned out that was a good idea since our main midwife was already at a birth and we needed to contact the back-up.

I told them the contractions had been coming every 3-4 minutes for over an hour and that they were about 30 seconds long.

But I knew from experience that they weren’t very strong yet, so I was fine when the midwife said she’d be by in a few hours to check on me, but I should call again if anything changed.

For the next hour I listened to my hypno-birthing mp3’s while walking around the house. I really didn’t want the labour to stall and I knew it was important to keep moving.

Every time a contraction hit I leaned over something (a counter, a desk etc.) and swayed my
hips back and forth. This worked really well.
When the contractions started to intensify, I decided to get into the bathtub. The water felt wonderful, but it did slow the contractions to more than 5 minutes apart. That worried me a bit, but on the other hand when the contractions were further apart they were stronger and actually harder to breathe through. In fact, I loved the bath between contractions, but not during them!

After awhile, I drained the tub and I turned on the shower, standing under the hot water and swaying through the contractions. That felt really good.

Now the contractions were coming more frequently again, but they were more manageable.

After the bath I called the midwife again, I couldn’t talk through the contractions anymore and although they were still not a minute long I wanted her to come by and check. The back-up midwife arrived she arrived at 9:30 and declared me 4 cm dilated and 80% effaced - not bad. She also gave us good news, the birth that our primary midwife was attending was already over. We were very lucky since that birth was to a first time mother and first births are rarely that fast. That meant that if I could hang on until 11:30 our primary midwife and her student would be there as well as the back-up.

By the time the midwife was ready to leave, the contractions were intensifying and lengthening and she figured I was entering active labour. She stressed that I shouldn’t hesitate to call her before 11:30 if necessary.

When the midwife left, hubby and I laid down in spoons position on the bed. The contractions got stronger and stronger and it was very hard to relax during them and getting harder to relax between them as well. Using the self-hypnosis techniques helped, especially between contractions. With each contraction I had to breath/blow 10 to 11 times, which meant that they were a minute long. After the 5th blow hubby would apply counter pressure with a hot water bottle to my back and that helped immensely!

After about an hour I needed to pee, but found that I couldn’t do it.
This scared me since I had had trouble peeing after I had been transferred to the hospital during my first birth, and had had to endure a painful and unsuccessful catheter attempt while in labour.

Luckily getting in the shower and standing under the hot water helped.

After I got out of the shower at midnight, the contractions were coming 2 to 3 minutes apart.

I asked hubby to call the midwives.

I didn’t know how far along I was, but things were getting hard to handle and I told him I would feel better if the midwives were there.

The primary midwife and student arrived by 12:20 am and started setting up.

They watched me through a few contractions and declared that this was certainly active labour and that I was coping well.

They also took my blood pressure and listened to the baby’s heart with the Doppler.

He was doing well too.

At 12:35 they checked my progress and declared me 8 cm dilated – hurray!

But of course that meant transition was coming.

That worried me a bit since during my last birth I had had Demerol (or something like it) for transition.

The midwife told me to labour in the bathroom for the next few contractions.

This would likely break my water naturally and bring the baby.

But I wasn’t comfortable on the toilet during contractions, so I sat in between and when a contraction hit I stood, leaned over on a chair and swayed.

In the meantime the midwife sent hubby to heat up some water for the birth (just like in those old movies).

She also called in the back-up to be present for the birth.

After only 3 contractions in the bathroom, I got the urge to push.

I was grunting through the contractions and the midwife asked me if things were getting harder to handle.

I answered that my body was pushing, even though I wasn’t.

Amazingly it seemed as though transition had passed very quickly and without the horrible pain that some other women experience.

The student came over to listen to the baby’s heart during a contraction.

He was still doing fine.

Now with each contraction my body pushed.

The midwives had me sit on the birthing stool, but I was terrified by the force of the contractions while I was on it.

The baby was descending incredibly fast!

After only two contractions I could already feel the ring-of-fire and I was very scared of tearing.

They told hubby to hurry up with that water because the baby was coming! Because of my discomfort with the birthing stool the midwives allowed me to switch to the bed for pushing (even though this meant a very quick re-set-up). I began lying on my side and had a contraction, which to my relief was not as strong.

But the next contraction was a doozy with two very strong surges in which my body pushed forcefully.

The baby was crowning and I was still scared of tearing, and by the speed at which everything was happening.

Amazingly my water still hadn’t broken!
Hubby climbed onto the bed behind me and held my hand. Between contractions he told me to remember to relax, that I was doing great and that I was strong. I reminded myself (probably out loud …) to be brave, and to push and that it would be over soon. With the next contraction my water broke (1:15 am) and the baby’s head came almost all the way out. The midwives told me to keep pushing and I felt the head emerge. But there was still a lot of pain and I could feel the midwives delivering the shoulders. They told me to push again and I felt the shoulders and belly emerge and then the baby was out. What an amazing feeling of release and relief!

The midwives announced “Baby’s here!” at 1:17 am and there he was on my chest, pink and intact and crying lustily. He looked up into my eyes and I introduced him to his Papi and me. Wonderful! Then I told him “We did it! We managed a homebirth!” And my next thought was “Wow, that was a lot easier than the last time”. Tad weighed 3550 grams and was 49.5 cm long. He was almost born in the cull – with the amniotic sac still intact - which was pretty exciting and meant that he barely had any bruising from the delivery. And I was so relieved that he didn’t break anything on the way out. His brother was born with his hand above his head, which resulted in a broken clavicle. Unfortunately for me, even though this birth was much easier, I tore along the same area where I had torn during the last birth (when head and shoulder emerged at once). This meant another second-degree tear and stitches. But it was worth it and with the peace of staying at home; my recovery has been much easier than the last time. We had a beautiful homebirth and we have a wonderful new addition to our family.