FINDING MYSELF IN BIRTH
My Discovery

My first pregnancy initiated the usual doctor visits, ultrasounds and tests. Our first born not only had dozens of scheduled ultrasounds but was also induced two weeks before her estimated due date. The reason given to me was because I had been dilated three to four centimeters for several weeks.

So I was induced, my water was manually broken, I had drugs and the end result was a drugged depressed baby (who I thought was gorgeous) that was to weak to breastfeed. The hospital even tried to feed her formula without our permission. When I tried to breastfeed for the first time four nurses stood and stared at me as if I was a dumb kid. I could not get Charlotte to latch on for nothing. No one helped me at all. I felt like a failure. I handed Charlotte to my husband Scott and devastated I said, "Just feed her." Scott had already been equip with a bottle of formula from one of the nurses. The nurses said that the baby had to have fluid right away but they'd "try" to let me nurse. Imagine that. They'd let me nurse.

These days nursing is a privilege given to you by the hospital. This ordeal took place in just 1996, so much for hospitals being more supportive of breast feeding.

Needless to say after the bottle was given to her she never would go to the breast. I pumped all I could. At just eighteen I now really felt as the nurses did, I was just some dumb kid. We wanted out of that hospital as fast as we could.

Much has changed now. With that experience a seed was planted. And it exploded. We grew into very outspoken strong-minded parents.

Scott and I have always had a sense of the natural world that we were meant to live in. That's why when we became pregnant for the second time we wanted a very different birth. We wanted a totally natural birth.

We pondered an idea I had to have the baby at home by ourselves. I remember thinking; can I really do that? Sure I can I thought it's my body! It was about a month latter I was browsing through childbirth books at Borders bookstore, not expecting to find anything unconventional, when I saw a book titled Unassisted Childbirth by Laura Shanley. I bought it that very second and gobbled up every word. I knew what my calling was; I was having this baby at home alone. I prepared for the birth by reading many books some of which include: Spiritual Midwifery, Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year and Immaculate Deception. We began a birth kit that included a tape measure, blankets, herbs, books and skin oil.

I felt that my first job was to re learn about childbirth. I took the assumption that everything I already knew about childbirth was wrong. And for the most part that was a very accurate assumption. I discovered again and again that mammals have easier births when allowed to birth alone and without fear. In most areas of the world images of modern birth are obsolete and complications very rare. I learned without a doubt that having a baby at home alone is positively safer than going to a hospital and even in some instances having a midwife assisted birth.
I am so glad midwife assisted birth is becoming so much more popular, however I felt that I was in tune with myself to the point that I did not desire any one present at my birth. Increasingly there are more midwives that use intervening and interfering methods while assisting women having babies. I strongly believe that a woman should be confident with in her own abilities and self to birth alone, even if she doesn't chose to.

Scott and I always have believed strongly in our mind and body. It was a concept that was not new to me. My parents took a "mind over matter" seminar and walked across hot fiery coals when I was a child. Scott and I had an assortment of books many about astral projection and self-awareness. During Charlotte's birth Scott and I were able to lower my blood pressure using only our mind. So we soon began telling ourselves what kind of birth that we wanted to have this time. Everyday I imagined and believed that I would have a two-hour labor. I reminded myself that pregnancy and birth was natural and nothing to fear. Fear in a laboring mammal brings on pain and slows the labor rapidly. When a mammal is afraid (weather it is fear from a predator or fear about birth and hospitals) the labor ceases to allow time to flee to safety. The muscles of the cervix however are still contracting to open, but now other muscles of the cervix are contracting to close. This creates great tension and pain in the body. This is where the pain of birth directly lies.

Charlotte who was now barely three years old was very excited about the baby. We talked to her about Mommy being pregnant and sharing our home with the new baby. Charlotte talked about sharing her room, toys and even her cloth diapers with the baby. We told her that it would be a very long time until the baby was born because the baby had to grow big and strong enough to come out. As my tummy swollen and she saw the baby move the baby became more real. She talked to the baby, brought toys to the baby and even played ring around the rosie with my stretched abdomen. There was never any question whether she would be at the birth or not. She was a part of this just as much as we were. I told her that the baby would come out when he or she was ready and that we would be at home together. We watched birth videos together and looked at pictures. She loved the videos and books so much that she asked to see them. She loved the whole excitement that surrounds birth. I only allowed her to see natural looking births by women who were calm during birth. We talked about sounds that some people make during labor and breathing to relax. I did not teach her anything about birth other than it was natural and beautiful. I told her that it was not scary and that mommy was not being hurt.

Unfortunately in the videos we had there were always a lot of people attending the births, some of which were at hospitals or birthing centers. One day Charlotte and I were talking about having the baby like we always did and she became very bothered. She talked in circles for a moment as I was trying to understand what was wrong. She finally got the point across when she yelled, "We have the baby here!" "Baby come out and those people not here!" I realized she was referring to all the people she saw attending some of the births on video. I reassured her that we would be at home with just her, mommy and daddy. She was fine and from then on when she saw a birth she would say, " We not go there we stay here." Apparently she wanted to stay at home as much as we did.

When I was nine months pregnant we moved to Missouri. My family owns and runs a campground resort. We packed up our home and ourselves and headed cross-country on
December sixth. We couldn't wait to move out of Las Vegas. Though I felt I wouldn't have the baby in route to Missouri we left prepared with the birth kit and an extra car seat in the trunk.

Once we were in Missouri we settled into the small cabin that we would be staying in until the camping season began. We quickly began enjoying the carefree days that the off-season entails. We were expecting the baby any day now. December 15 I woke up with pretty consistent contractions but they ceased by the afternoon. December 16 the same thing happened so we figured that my body was getting ready for the birth. I felt ready. That evening Scott, Charlotte and I cuddled up in bed and watched Lion King. I remember thinking what a perfect night to have the baby.

I awoke very early the next morning at about seven and let the dog outside. My dad was outside with my little brother and sister waiting for the school bus. I chatted with them for a minute then shivered back inside my warm cabin. Charlotte was still sleeping so I gladly crawled back into bed and curled up next to Scott. We were peacefully dosing off when a popping jolt practically threw us out of bed. My water had broken! It was about 9 am.

I immediately had strong waves of contractions one after another. I was very excited! This was it. I was not monitoring the contractions because I did not want to "manage" my labor, but contractions were approximately 2-4 minutes apart. I kneeled along side the bed and breathed with my face in a pillow and concentrated. After a while I climbed in a hot shower. I had wanted to have a water birth but there was no tub in our cabin. I ignored the fact that I really wanted to sit in a bath. I closed my eyes as the hot water rolled over my laboring body. The contractions felt milder at their peak and I was truly relaxed. I did not want to get out of the shower but finally did when I suspected that the water might turn cold. After drying off I walked around for several minutes. I paced thinking about what position I would feel comfortable in. I was very uncomfortable. I really just wanted to curl up and lie down. So like large slow animal I maneuvered myself on to the bed. Attempting to lie down was the most pain I felt during the whole labor. I quickly jumped up thankful that I wasn't at a hospital confined to bed.

By this time it was about 10 am. Charlotte had been coming in and out of the room the whole time giving me sips of water and making sure I was okay. Scott reminded me to relax and let my body do the work. Labor and birth really requires no conscious effort from the women. People think women need to have help to give birth, that women can't be in control of their own bodies. For me birth is all about being aware and trusting of your own body. No one knows me like I do. People that attend births should blend in with the background. Scott sat back and video taped, assembled our baby scale and tended to Charlotte. I squatted on the bed and after some intense contractions I felt the baby moving down through my body. My body was bearing down a bit on it's own as several drops of blood dripped out onto the bed. At a couple of times I yelled "baby's coming!" I felt a tremendous amount of pressure. It was so intense that I reminded myself that even though my body felt as if it would burst that it would not. My female body was created to withstand labor and birth. I told myself this over and over again. After several minutes I wondered where the little one was! It felt like he was going to shoot out at any moment.

I wobbled rather penguin like to the bathroom at about 10:30am, Scott and Charlotte followed and our dog Eskimo lay outside the door watching and waiting. I squatted on the bathroom floor
Sage's unassisted birth By Shauna Wood
Wednesday, 11 February 2009 08:40 -

and looked into a hand held mirror and found that the baby's head was crowning. I hollered at Charlotte that the baby's head was coming. She was so bright eyed and excited. She watched as I twirled my fingers through the baby's black hair. Then finally without pushing his head emerged effortlessly. I did not push. I heard him gurgle as he turned his head. I then pushed slightly but it felt uncomfortable so I stopped. A couple minutes latter with a rush of energy from deep within my being his wet pink body simply slid into my hands. I didn't push at all.

It was 10:41am. I fully remember Charlotte kept yelling "The baby!" "The baby!" He cried immediately. I held his shaking wet body for a moment, I then looked down and exclaimed, "He's a boy!" "We had a baby boy!" For a moment I swam in pure bliss. The world was still; it was mine for that moment. I then realized that he was probably freezing. I hollered at Scott to get some blankets. I wrapped him up as I waddled to the shower, umbilical cord dangling between my legs. The placenta was born at once, without effort it just plopped out onto the shower floor unexpectedly. I placed the placenta in a bowl and handed the bowl and baby to Scott. I turned on the shower to rinse myself (and the shower) off.

By this time it was about 11am. I lay on the couch nursing my newborn baby for the first time. After a few hours we cut the umbilical cord.

I learned so much about my body and soul. Birth is so empowering and special. I wish all women to experience that greatness. I wish it had been like this when I had given birth to Charlotte. I would never hand my body over to someone else again. Women can be in control of themselves. I felt the greatest control of all during birth.

It all makes perfect sense; it is during birth that you are most sensitive and intuitive about yourself, your baby and the great connection we all have with the Earth.