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About Home Birth

"The way to convince another is to state your case moderately and accurately. Then scratch your head, or shake it a little, and say that is the way it seems to you, but that of course you may be mistaken about it; which causes your listener to receive what you have to say, and as like as not, turn about and try to convince you of it, since you are in doubt. But if you go at him (or her) in a tone of postiveness and arrogance you only make an opponent of him (her)." -*Benjamin Franklin*

Things I Loved About Having my Baby at Home

- I avoided the C-section that would have been required in hospital, because I had a labour which went longer than the arbitrary "limits" set by hospital protocol.
- We three were all snuggled up in bed together within an hour of David's birth.
- I was able to labour in our home, in familiar places, moving when I wanted, and not moving when I didn't.

For Example:

- Out back listening to the cows down the road moo. I mooed back, every 7 minutes.
- The sofa
- The hot tub
- Sofa, again
- Upstairs in bed
- Hot Tub, again
- Got upstairs again, and wasn't coming down, nohow, when it got serious.
- I didn't have to fret about when to leave for the hospital.
- I had midwives working closely with us before, during, and after the birth
- Someone was in our house, checking on us, helping with breastfeeding, etc., **every day** after the birth, for a week, and regularly for weeks afterward.
- My baby was born in an environment safer for him. No strange pathogens floating around, no invasive procedures neither he nor I needed, and no pressure to take drugs which weren't good for him. We worked with our midwives in the spirit and practice of **informed consent**, which is merely a slogan in too many hospitals.

Home Birth is Safe. Study after study has shown that, even if high-risk babies who should be born in hospital are taken out of consideration, outcomes are better for mothers and babies in planned home births than in hospital. Even when midwives at home are compared with midwives in hospital, the perinatal mortality rate of babies born at home is half that of hospital-born babies. (Tew Marjorie (1990) *Safer Childbirth*, London: Chapman & Hall) The best discussion of safety and risk in delivery is in Sheila Kitzinger's *Home Birth and Other Alternatives to Hospital*, cited [below](#). I could quote pages of it, but the copyright people might get upset. This book is marvelous. See if you can borrow or purchase it.

This [Home Birth Site](#) has summaries of many journal articles which discuss the safety of birth out of hospital.

Home Birth is Not for Everyone. Although, for the reasons I've outlined below, I'm delighted that our son was born at home, some women should have their babies in hospital. Some women have complicated

pregnancies or deliveries, and the strengths of modern technology can be lifesaving in those circumstances. Thank goodness we have hospital resources available when we need them. Others simply don't feel secure away from hospital, and since one of the big benefits of a home birth is that those of us who choose it feel more secure and comfortable at home, it's most important that one births where one feels best cared for and safest.

Over the course of a nine-month pregnancy, I made the journey from assuming that we'd find the best OB/GYN in the area to deliver our future child in the hospital, to David's wonderful birth in our home on September 15, 1995.

Having a Baby at Home is Certainly Not New. It's been done for centuries before modern medicine and hospitals took over this century, and is staging a (slow) comeback as people consider their options. Over time, we have learned that the many technological innovations in modern birthing can be unhelpful for normal births, or even downright dangerous. Planned home births, for healthy mums and babies, offer better outcomes than all the latest interventions can provide. One observer notes that Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter are the only American presidents **not** born at home.

Home Birth: Not Just for Hippies Anymore. The homebirth moms in our group ranged from a young woman who lives in an alternative Community on Saltspring Island in B.C. to lawyers, systems analysts, teachers, and daycare workers. Our ages ranged from mid-20's to late 30's. Many of us came to the decision to plan to have our babies at home the same way--we started reading books from authors like Sheila Kitzinger, and came to realize that the hospital route was not necessarily the safest, as we'd all grown up assuming it was.

An Empowering Experience. When I got pregnant, I was genuinely afraid of the whole "birth thing." I believed it to be a dangerous process which was best left to the care of specially trained physicians in a hospital, where "they could take good care if anything went wrong." My first hint at a different perspective came from this medium, the Internet (see some helpful references below). I suddenly learned that many people are concerned that the way medicine typically handles births can be not only demeaning to the birthing woman, but downright dangerous. The explosion of Caesaerian Sections is one manifestation of the problem. As I learned about how birth works, and how different the whole experience can be from what most of us have come to expect, I learned to accept that **birth works** and that, as long as the baby and I were healthy, a midwife, my husband, and I could have a far more positive birth at home.

Birth Contrasts, a table of the differences between the medical and the woman-oriented approaches to birth.

By Sheila Kitzinger, from *Homebirth and Other Alternatives to Hospital*, Dorling Kindersley, London 1991

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