**Holly, Josh and Caleb’s Story**

holly: September 21st, 6:15 pm
Text 1: so i think i just had my first "real" contraction
Text 2: Really?!?!?

Josh came home shortly after the text, i continued to make dinner, and had sporadic contractions. I called Amanda around 7, who advised me to try to sleep during the early labor. She suggested snacks and a bath too as this part could last for quite a while. Famous last
words. by 9:30 i was having contractions every 3-4 minutes. call Amanda: is it still early labor if they are coming this quickly? i've had about 9 in the last 45 minutes. hmmm. . . she came over shortly after that call! i got in the bath, preparing to labor at home for a bit, but by 11:45, i was trembling and having strong contractions. it was time to go to the hospital. the nurses checked me in and discovered i was already 9 cm dilated. all were convinced i would have this baby in minutes so did not even complete the check in process. Amanda commenced what would be 9 straight hours of massage, Damla was paged, and active labor was officially in progress. i was
thinking to myself, "i'll go down as the fastest first time delivery EVER!" BUT for the next 61/2 hours i remained 9 cm dilated with contractions every 2-3 minutes. oh sweet pain! by 6:30 am, i had not progressed, but was feeling extremely fatigued as i had been contracting hard in every possible position. My water had not broken, i was feeling frustrated and tired. but my tireless husband, the nurses, and most of all the incredible amanda kept encouraging, rubbing, holding, you name it. by 6:30 Damla came in, broke my water (what relief!) and a warm gush spilled out. At that time the pushing began. again, we were thinking this might take minutes. . . but it
lasted for 3 1/2 more hours! i learned the baby was "sunny side up" with his spine to my spine, which was why it was difficult to push him out. back labor was why i was fatigued and hurting so badly. my lower back felt like someone was pressing boulders against it for hours. yet again why i was thankful to have amanda's tireless hands on me the whole time! by about 9:15 am, caleb was showing us glimpses of his hairy little head, but he kept sliding back in. our nurse, Stephanie, pressed her fingers right where i needed to push, so i took big breaths in and held it while pushing for 10 seconds at a time. all i wanted to do was moan or groan or breathe, so the nurse made all those noises for me. amanda and josh had my legs up by my ears while i did the
equivalent of little crunches and held my breath and pushed at the same time. Damla was called in again, this time to give me some options as nothing seemed to be changing. in the mean time, a nurse named erin stepped in to relieve stephanie for a few minutes, and somehow she managed to turn the baby. by the time damla got there, she was like, "there are no options! this baby is on his way out!"

she suited up and said, "give me a minute to get ready. don't push! wait for me for just a minute!" Ha. how could i NOT push? there was a mirror at the end of the bed, Damla coached me like a champ to give her three big pushes, amanda and josh held my legs up in that most
glorious position, and caleb crowned. Just like that. And i only thought i had already experienced the worst of the pain! Somehow i got this burst of determined energy, and pushed caleb through the proverbial "ring of fire" (i don't think johnny cash knew just what he
was singing about). my vagina burned and stretched like nothing i have ever felt. i watched my body do strange and incredible things in the mirror. . . 4 or 5 big pushes later, his head was finally out, and the rest of him slid through with greater ease. it was exhilarating to see my baby born in the mirror. and in seconds, there he was! suddenly this most familiar bump was in my arms! Josh cut the cord, he cried, i cried, baby cried. . . and we became 3. such profound
relief, exhaustion, and joy washed over me. He was perfect. 10 toes, 10 fingers, a full head of hair. Caleb Lewis Hudley, welcome to our lives!

Josh:
Caleb, we've reached the end of your birth experience, and we've just begun the biggest adventure of all: life! We're so pleased to have you in our lives! your mom recounted the night/day you were born, so i won't bore you with repeating it. i will say i was pretty nervous
and excited that night. i wanted to make sure you and mom arrived safely at st. luke's and i wanted to make sure i stayed calm. amanda, our doula, was there too (i'm sure you will meet her again when you're older), and she helped out a lot. She really helped mom get
comfortable while she was giving birth to you - it was pretty tough for both of you. i'll never forget the moment you were born. when the doctor pulled you out and i saw your face for the first time, i thought to myself, "there's my son!" i couldn't stop the tears. i also cut the umbilical cord and helped place you in your mom's arms for the first time. you were born one day before my 30th birthday, and you will always be the best birthday gift i have ever received.

also, “THE TEA” i had during labor:
2 qts. Water 1 family sized tea bag of hibiscus mint (from whole foods)
4 regular tea bags of raspberry leaf juice of 1 lime or lemon
8 tsp. of agave nectar yum!!!!