

Hooked On Recovery

A Joyful Noise

I didn't sleep much the night before the scheduled C-section, but I probably slept a little more than Sandy. There once was a day when I would have had to self-medicate to get through something like a scheduled C-section, but not today thanks be to recovery. I was lying in bed early Monday morning thinking about what was going to happen when I heard a knock on the door. Mom was there early (no surprise) at 4:45 am to get Joshua and Samantha off to school and to watch Matthew. Sandy and I had to be at the hospital for 5:30.

We were on our way to have a baby, number 5 for me, number 4 for Sandy (you can figure that out, it's a riddle). I had been in on all five births and they were all different. I've seen 3 natural births (one with the cord wrapped around the neck), one emergency C-section and this one - a scheduled C-section. I keep using that word "scheduled" because it's still weird to me. We were going into the hospital at a set time and date, my wife would have surgery and then "BAM!" we'd be holding a new child. Which leads me to a rabbit trail thought, I never thought I'd know some of the things I know just by being a husband and father. For instance, VBAC. I would have never known what a VBAC was, what it stands for, or that I'd have some influence on deciding if my wife should have one. I do now. And I'm not sure I wanted to know. VBAC stands for Vaginal Birth After Caesarean. I'm sure some of you didn't need to know that either. Sandy and I opted not to go the VBAC route with Mary; a little too much risk for our taste.

So, I'm sitting at the head of the operating table looking at Sandy, then looking over the top of the blue curtain at the mirror and seeing what they're doing, then looking on this side of the blue curtain and looking at Sandy and was musing on how the two sides of the curtain were diametrically opposed. On one side there was the peaceful, loving face of my wife and on the other side of that blue wall was... a LOT of stuff going on, much more aggressive and violent than the side I was on. Chalk it up to the miracle of modern medicine and a powerful spinal anesthesia.

After much tussling and yanking and pulling, the doctor reached in and felt for a head, but instead grabbed a butt. The little girl was breached. Good thing we opted for the C-section! With some serious exertion by the doctor, Mary finally emerged from her mother's womb and was placed on the table. Ten very, very long seconds passed, all I could hear was the sound of suction and the murmur of the nurses. I realized I hadn't taken a breath in awhile. My heart leapt and my emotions swelled at the next sound, the most joyful noise in the world, the cry of a newborn child. Mary Elizabeth announced her presence to the world. The doctors and nurses cheered. Angels rejoiced. Holding hands, Phillip and Sandy wept.

What a wonderful Christmas this will be.

Mary Elizabeth Valentine was born December 13th, 2004 at 9:09 am weighing 9 lbs 1 oz and stretching 22½ inches. Mother and baby are very healthy and at home.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, now a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments

and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Visit the website at www.ccar.us to read the entire series.