

5:36AM

1:45PM

10:00PM



Watch a sunrise, bake a cake and light a candle: Elshe's labour



BY CAMILLA RANKIN

In a word: perfect

Elshe and Pierre share their son's birth

I KEPT WAKING UP throughout the night with mild period pains. I was 40 weeks along, had had a stretch and sweep the day before, reflexology and even did some Mexican dancing to try and induce labour, but in the dark hours of the night, I thought that it must be false labour again. So I didn't wake my husband, Pierre. At 5.30am, he woke and I told him that something may be happening – at last! He was so excited. We timed the contractions – which were regular, lasting a minute and were 10 minutes apart. We knew that this was really it. We lay in bed, with our doors open and watched an incredible sunrise take over the morning sky in front of us, with the knowledge that today was the day that we were going to finally meet our son – it was the 18th January 2012. We felt so calm and ready for this. We went for a half hour, early morning walk around our complex – I had three contractions but was easily able to carry

on walking. We each called into work to say that I was in labour and we won't be coming in – *they* all began to panic, but we were still so contained. Pierre had a hair appointment that morning, so I called and asked to have a pedicure appointment at the same time – bliss. Everyone around us was flustered, but we knew that we still had a long time to go. I timed each contraction on the salon's clock, smsing Pierre the whole time. On our way home we bought the ingredients to bake a cake. Our midwife had told us that this is a great way to pass the time in early labour as there are different stages to baking a cake: mix it up, wait for it to bake, let it cool and then ice it – all the while standing up which is the best position to be in for early labour. So, we made our son, Luca, his very first birthday cake. We also made some pasta – which I couldn't really eat.

Our doula arrived at about 2.30pm when we were watching a cheesy movie, which she watched with us. We then all went for a long walk around our complex

again – this time the contractions were getting more serious. They were five minutes apart and I had to stop and squat each time one came. Back at home, we sat with our feet in our pool – it was a boiling day – but I could no longer talk through each contraction. Even so my doula assured me that I was cracking far too many jokes to be really far along! The contractions were getting more and more painful – but I was still coping well. I bounced on the ball for a while, my doula massaged me and I used a hot beanbag on my lower belly and back – the heat was amazing. At about 6pm, I managed to eat some of the pasta and chicken we had made and I had a shower. I had begun to zone out, often. Our doula told Pierre that it was time to pack our bags and put them in the car. We had to make our way through midweek rush hour traffic, which was surreal. We had been so focussed on our own internal process, to suddenly be out in the real world, in traffic, on a normal day felt very weird. It took us 45

11:00PM

11:14PM



Mom catching her own baby, then Dad cuts the cord





Elshe and Pierre Naude meeting their son, Luca



minutes to get to Genesis, but we were still so calm. We were so prepared for this birth – I had read so many birth stories and was truly ready and focussed.

We arrived at 7.30pm, set up the candles and oils and put the forest sounds on repeat. My waters were broken and almost immediately I began to feel very nauseous and each contraction became more and more intense. I sat on the loo to let the water drain out, with my feet up against the wall. At this point, it all seems really fuzzy, a total blurr. An internal exam showed I was six centimeters dilated. Pierre and I, breathed through each contraction together – which was deeply comforting. I used the ball, was massaged and the beanbag still helped a lot. I never once reached a point where I wanted pain relief. I tapped into the hypnobirthing techniques that I had learnt: visualising the baby's head moving down. I began to transition, with the contractions surging one straight after the other. I got into the bath and the contractions immediately slowed down. I was 7cm. I consciously began to moan – it felt so natural – a really deep guttural moan – this really helped. I was completely in the moment, focussed on just the contraction that was happening right then. I lost all sense of time. My groans became rhythmical and got louder and louder with each surge.

“I consciously began to moan – a deep guttural moan – it felt so natural”

Then I felt the undeniable urge to push. Psychologically I was so relieved to be over the transition. It felt more natural to be squatting, so I sat up, still in the bath. The urge to push was deeply powerful, my body took over, it was overwhelming and I pushed with everything that I had. The midwife put my hand on the baby's head and told me to resist pushing so I

could birth the baby slowly, without tears. It really stung, when his head pushed down. With the next push, our midwife said 'get ready to catch your baby' and with that he was born! I took him as he came out – the relief was just amazing and I was hit with a flood of emotions as I held our son, Luca, skin-to-skin against my chest. It was 11.14pm. **YP**



Little Luca posing for the cameras at just two weeks old