

August 19, 2005

Hi all,

Sorry we've been so bad about keeping you up to date, but, well, some things never change. All is well with us. Now that Nancy's passed 37 weeks (due date is August 20th - tomorrow), we are cleared for our home birth and in the waiting stage – waiting for the baby to decide it's time. But, to get you up to date, here's a summary of the last couple of months.



The pregnancy has been pretty smooth. Nancy has had her suite of “symptoms”, but none of them has been all that bad – mild nausea the second half of the first trimester, some exhaustion around the same time, a couple of weeks of headaches at the transition from the first to second trimester, a right, mid-back ache starting a month ago because of the baby's position, and most recently occasional pelvic pain as Nancy's pelvis loosens and the baby descends – that about covers the noteworthy discomforts. We had been worried that her “white coat syndrome” would be an issue, but the nurse at work has been able to get good blood pressures consistently, and about a month ago the midwives started getting good numbers as well. We've got great midwives by the way (<http://www.seattlehomematernity.com/>).



For those of you who haven't heard, we decided on genetic screening (2 ultrasounds and 2 blood tests) rather than jumping right to an amniocentesis. The screens came back fine, so we've skipped the amnio. The second ultrasound found “nothing that looks like a guy” – to quote the ultrasound tech. But we've been warned that ultrasounds are not always correct – in fact Nancy knows someone from work who was told she was having a girl until the amnio contradicted the ultrasound. So we are going

with “probably a girl”.

We've kept medical interventions to a minimum. On May 30th, we screened for gestational diabetes, and the results came back just under the wire – saving Nancy from the 3 hour diagnostic test. She was advised to watch/decrease her sugar and simple carbohydrate intake and exercise more. At the same time, we also tested her Rh factor sensitivity and ran a general blood test - all came out fine. She received her shot of RhoGAM to stop any immune response Nancy might have to the baby's potentially Rh positive blood – Nancy is unlikely to be exposed to the baby's blood except at birth, but they recommend RhoGAM just in case. On July 26, Nancy was tested for Group B streptococci - a naturally occurring bacteria which can, in a small percentage of babies, cause them to get very sick if exposed to it during labor. Unfortunately, she came up positive. But this simply means that they will administer antibiotics every four hours while she's in active labor - not fun, but not a big deal.

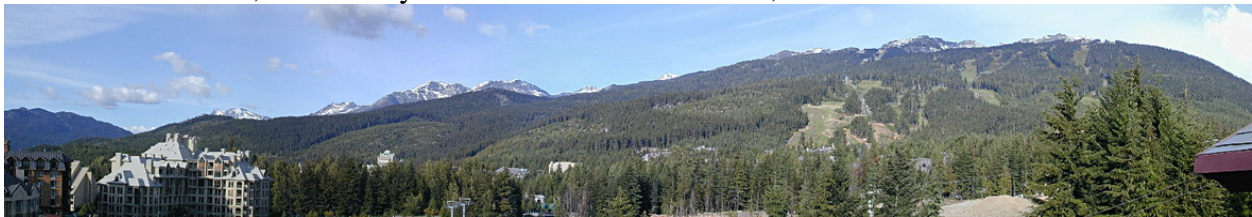
Nancy has been trying to get into a good exercise routine. She did prenatal yoga twice a week for about four months, but has cut back to once a week for the final month. We've also started swimming at least once a week. Ok, some days it's more like bobbing, but it's fun, it gets the

weight off Nancy's back, and helps keep the swelling down (which has been very minimal for her).



We have been able to take some time for ourselves over the last couple of months. May 21st, we went for a spur of the moment, relaxing, 24 hour getaway at Salish Lodge & Spa (<http://www.salishlodge.com/>) complete with a Duet Massage for both of us Saturday night and a Heated River Rock Massage for Mark and a Snoqualmie Falls Foot Revitalizer for Nancy on Sunday morning (descriptions can be found at http://www.salishlodge.com/spa_menu.php).

From June 11 to 16, we actually took a vacation in Whistler, British Columbia.



We left Saturday and returned Thursday in time for the Mariners vs Phillies baseball game (ok, we were a little late – as we said, some things never change). The time in Whistler was spent relaxing, swimming, getting massages, wandering around the village, and eating good food. Not the Maui trip we had hoped for, but exactly what we needed. We had both intended to work on Friday after our return, but ended up taking the day off. The weekend was spent getting some chores done at home and relaxing. Mark also spent time sending out invoices.



We had the pleasure of taking birth classes with Penny Simkin (an absolutely wonderful birth educator, leader of the doula movement, and an endearing, caring person who happens to live in Seattle: <http://www.pennysimkin.com/>). Unfortunately it was a condensed class (twice a week for three weeks rather than once a week for six weeks) because of her schedule. So we were pretty exhausted by the end. However, the class was designed for home and birth center births, and Penny is well worth it.

On July 6th, our midwife confirmed that the baby is head down, butt up, and feet to the right - often as far right as they can get! Apparently, she/he is in a good position – Nancy's comfort aside (remember the right, mid-back pain we mentioned). Also, we found out that Nancy had been (and is still) getting Braxton-Hicks contractions and didn't know it.

On Jul 21, we had professional photographs taken by a wonderful photographer named Cassie Redstone. You can see her work at: <http://www.redstonepictures.com/>. And you can see proofs the photos she took of us in the client section of her website: http://cassiejenkins.com/clients/marknancy_07_21_05/ - the password is "pregnant" (no quotes). I have no idea how we are going to decide which pictures we want; there are so many good ones.



On July 24, Kim Shelden (Nancy's friend, office mate, and home birth role model) held a baby shower for us. It was a gorgeous, sunny day so we could hang out outside with friends and their kids. Anyone who wants to see the pictures can explore <http://share.shutterstock.com/action/welcome?sid=8BcNGrds1bvzg> and <http://share.shutterstock.com/action/welcome?sid=8AaMm7hk4atXrQ>

On July 26, one of our midwives conducted our home visit (basically a regular visit which happens at our home). They seemed happy with our set up. They said that our corner tub is great - saving us from having to rent a labor tub. Between the tub and the microwave in the bedroom (a hold over from Nancy's heat therapy for migraines), they said our bedroom was already set up like a suite at their birthing center.

As of August 8, Nancy was 50% effaced, not dilated, and the baby's head was at pelvic station -3 (not very far in, but far enough that we don't have to worry about prolapsed cord). Facts which they reiterated have NO CORRELATION TO THE BIRTH DATE.

In the meantime, Mark has been in the process of changing his business so that he can better manage his clients and be a dad. For those of you who remember, he had been offered a straight job in November by his biggest client, but the job was only guaranteed for one and a half to two years. He spent a good deal of time trying to figure out a way to take the job without closing down his business – and risking having to start from ground zero if the straight job did end. In the end, he came up with a third option. Rather than take the straight job, he is transferring his top ten clients (or roughly that number) over to service contracts and letting go of the other, smaller clients. This should allow him to have a set schedule, provide his clients with the maintenance they need (cutting down on emergencies), and have guaranteed income for the term of the contract (reducing the need to take on every client that calls). He's also worked the numbers out such that he has been able to hire an assistant. The transmission is taking longer than expected, but looking good so far.

Nancy had her last day of work on Friday August 12 with plans to return in 3 or 4 months. Her mom arrived Sunday evening August 14 (ok it was actually early morning August 15 since her flight was delayed by 4 hours). We have all finally recovered from a couple of nights without enough sleep. Mark completed his last big work project this week and his schedule should be lighter for now. And we wait.

For those of you who want to see Nancy's progress through pregnancy, we've posted pictures on our website: <http://www.nancyandmark.info/update.htm> with subpages for the ultrasounds (<http://www.nancyandmark.info/Ultrasounds.htm>), progressively larger belly (http://www.nancyandmark.info/belly_pix.htm), and general pictures of us during this time (http://www.nancyandmark.info/Fun_Pix.htm).

