

One of the most powerful experiences in my life was the birth of my son, Chris. I use the word “powerful” though that does not capture the unique quality of the experience. Coursing through the period were feelings of relationship. Feelings of creation. Feelings of relief. Feelings of love. Feelings of being. Can I describe in one word the experience with this bundle of feelings? No. So I’ll describe the period – portions that I remember.

Back in 1970-71, we knew that we were to have a baby. Boy or girl? We never checked. We never cared that I recall. Our lives were the lives of a young couple just married. Although we might have been older than the usual parents to be blessed by their first child, our purpose was to participate in the creation and not be concerned with any available scientific foretaste of how we would be blessed. Our child was coming. Get prepared.

I strain to remember where Barbara went for her OB-GYN doctor. My memory has a fuzzy image of a doctor’s office in some building in downtown Minneapolis. No names remain.

There were lots of aspects of the preparation. One was creating a room for the baby. I remember the crib and a simple dresser. I believe the dresser was a cheap sort of unpainted furniture. Barbara painted most of it a white enamel. Drawers were painted several different colors – the only color I can remember was light blue. Somehow that dresser survived many years in Chris’s room.

How did we do it all? The lives of young folks seem packed with activities. In the end of 1970 and before the new arrival in June of 1971, I believe I might have been completing a semester of night-school teaching at Inver Hills Community College besides my full time job teaching in St. Paul. Barb still taught at Highland Junior and I taught at Mounds Park. Also, we were dealing on property in St. Anthony and planning on building a house with a contractor by the name of Wally Strand.

When the property was purchased, we worked with Wally on the floor plan and I sub-contracted with him to do aspects of the building like electrical wiring, sheet metal work, and trim work.

House construction began at 3508 Edwards in the Spring of 1971. The foundation was put in and capped. Maybe other framing was done when I did my first job with the instruction of Wally. I installed drainage tile around the inside of the basement wall. I learned that I did not want to be a plumber digging trenches in wet clay basements before the floor was poured.

During that period of 1970-71, Barb and I took classes on natural childbirth. I remember at least one class with a lot of other couples. We were on blankets spread on some gym floor – who knows where. Away from classes, there was reading and practice together. I don’t remember much of that, but it was extensive. I remembered counting, breathing, and Kegel exercises. I was excited to anticipate being there for the labor and birth of our child.

Now remember, this was our first year of marriage. Those early few months were tough and I attribute that to Barb’s concern that I might become the “dominant” male like her father. She loved him deeply (and so did I) but he did make the decisions in her family. So Barbara watched this fellow that she had let into her life with a suspicious eye at times. In later years, she admitted that our work together as we moved toward the upcoming birth put her suspicions to rest. Even with all the things going on, we settled into a comfortable marriage.

I remember a couple memories of interest. I hope Chris was not warped in the natal period. However, once – only once – we held a portable radio playing some rock or jazz close to his safe, secure home in utero. We thought that he wanted to get out to dance!! He kicked really hard and we silenced the music. Maybe he was saying, “Knock it off! I’m trying to sleep!”

Another time on a Spring evening, we had gone to the new construction in St. Anthony (We were living in a duplex on 25<sup>th</sup> Ave SE with the Marks, the Notations, and the Schafers.) to inspect. Carol Anderson, soon to be a good neighbor friend, walked by and introduced herself. She asked about our family. I guess no one had asked that before. We didn’t have any children left at home. Before Barb could respond, I remember that I responded by pointing at Barb’s ready-to-explode stomach. Not cool at all. I don’t even know if anyone – Barb or Carol – noticed. But I must have blushed. Our family was explained and all was well.

Oh, yes. One last thing. Somewhere, in Barb’s photos might be one or two shots that I can remember vividly. From our duplex home on 25<sup>th</sup>, we took a walk one sunny Sunday afternoon. We walked south past the Marks house and across the railroad tracks at the end of the cul-de-sac. Maybe a block or two south (I’m not certain that there was a road there in those days.), there was a pond where Barb sat on a log by the water and I took pictures. The pregnancy was nearly over. Oddly enough, I have driven back into that area which is now full of low office buildings or light industrial. I don’t believe that spot with the pond exists anymore. Forty-five years’ changes things.

Well, let’s jump ahead to Tuesday, June 22 of 1971. It was sunny in the early morning. I believe that Barb was feeling different this morning. She believed she was nearly ready. So the both of us went to the new house where I could work and we could wait and see. I have no clue what I was doing that day. Maybe I was working on electrical.

Eventually, things moved along to the point where in mid-afternoon we decided to go home to call the doctor about what Barb was experiencing. There were no cell phones in those days. The doctor said that it sounded like we should head off to Abbott Hospital (the old Abbott). Well now Barb sort of held back. (I believe she spoke of this short period at the house on 25<sup>th</sup> in the manner I will try to relay here. It seemed quite funny after the fact. But maybe you had to be there.) Barb went to the bathroom to wash her feet. Now, I’m the nervous father-to-be. I quickly went down to the Marks and told them that we were going to leave for the hospital. Getting back to the house, Barb was *still* washing her feet. Ah, she *finally* came out. Now she wanted to go down the block to tell the Marks. No soap. I just told them. Get in the car! 😊😊

Barb’s seemingly stalling for time reminded both of us of a Phyllis Diller book of cartoons. In one cartoon, she is being drug by two nurses into the delivery room with her toes digging into the carpet of the hospital floor. Distress and terror are written on her face. (Hospitals don’t have carpet.)

We were off on the famous drive to the hospital. Right at the beginning, we had to drive around the cul-de-sac at the end of our block. Mary Ellen and Ruth Ann and maybe Charles and Florence were standing there cheering us on. So much for the drive. It was totally uneventful.

At the hospital, Barb was fitted with the hospital nightgown. Things were moving, but not real rapidly. We had our labor room, but could still move around until “things got serious.”

Baseball was great in 1971. We decided to find a TV and watch the Twins play the Athletics. What we did was to go into the husband waiting room. We sat there for several innings until Barb decided it was time to start our labor routine. Barb distinguished herself as the only woman in that waiting room. I can't recall, but it might have unnerved some of the men – not all of which were into the sort of blasé attitude we had even though it was our first time.

Now before continuing, I must explode one of the most cherished family myths related to this preparation for Chris's birth. To this writing, I would have said the importance of watching that particular Twins game was that Vida Blue, a phenome pitcher for the A's was pitching that night. Check on Google for "Twins game on June 22, 1971" and you can find a page from Baseball-Reference.Com. (Here is the link <http://www.baseball-reference.com/boxes/MIN/MIN197106220.shtml>) That page shows that Vida Blue did NOT pitch that night. He had pitched on June 21 and won for the A's in a 3-2 game. He went on to have a record of 15-2 that year. On the June 22, the A's lost to the Twins 1-10 - a birthday present for Chris a few hours ahead of his coming on the scene. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Catfish Hunter was the starter followed by 3 other less notable pitchers. (Golly gee! In that year, the A's also had Blue Moon Odom and Rollie Fingers on their pitching staff. They didn't make it into the World Series.) Jim Perry pitched all the way for the Twins win.

Back in the labor room, we did what we were taught. From our room window facing west, we could see the sun go down. Hours passed. Occasionally a young nurse would come in and measure Barb's progress. Although Barb's discomfort increased with the contractions, the measurements did not seem to increase enough. Finally, I blew the whistle and called one of the older nurse to measure Barb. She immediately found that the younger nurse had been measuring inaccurately due to bulging of something. (Sorry, my technical memory fails me.) Barb was to go into the delivery room right away and the doctor should be called.

The time was at least 1 AM, but a birth certificate might be consulted. I was out in the hallway now. There was a small anteroom with a sink next to the delivery room that was lighted as was the delivery room. The hallway was dark and extended to the north. I never went down that hall to where some lights were lit – maybe a nurse's station. My image of that area now is like a dream scene.

The door to the lighted anteroom was open. From inside that little room, one could see Barb on the birthing table. It was not a good scene for me. Barb had been pushed to the limit. She screamed as the nurse "screamed" back to "Hold it." It wasn't just once, but several times through the minutes of waiting for the doctor. I was in and out of the anteroom. I could not go into the delivery room until the doctor had arrived.

I don't know how to write to express how long I waited. It seemed like ages. The doctor was not in the hospital. He was probably at his home somewhere in the suburbs. Some magic dilation number must have been the cue to call him; but though the inaccurate measurements, that cue number had been passed.

Finally, he arrived. It did not satisfy me. I could see him coming down the hall from the far end. Not fast. He was talking to the nurses from down in that lighted end. Very nonchalant. Business as usual. That unnerved me. He came up to me. We shook hands. He entered the anteroom and looked toward Barb on the birthing table. The screaming and struggling continued. The doctor seemed satisfied with

what he saw so he took me and went down to a poorly-lit dressing room. There he changed into his whites and gave me something to wear.

We went back up to the delivery room, washed, and went in. I took my seat next to Barb on her left side and the doctor proceeded to the delivery end of the table. How many minutes or seconds elapsed? I don't know. I believe the birth happened pretty quickly. Barb, I and Chris were much relieved.

The doctor held Chris; and the first thing I remember him saying was a question. "Who has the red hair?" Chris's hair came forth as red or strawberry blond. Neither Barb nor I matched the profile. It was fun. Soon after the birth, Barb produced a relative called Great-Gamma Lockwood who was reputed to have had red hair. Although it was a black-white photograph, we enshrined Great-Gamma Lockwood's picture in our hallway in the new house.

Sometime around 3 AM I drove home very carefully. I was now a proud father. I don't remember that I slept much. My next memories were my visits to the neighbors on that sunny Wednesday morning – probably 10 AM. However, each visit had its own ordeal. A nice ordeal. I would knock on a door, be greeted by the neighbor, and begin to speak. Two or three words into my explanation and cigar delivery I would begin to cry. That happened for quite some time. For days or maybe a week. The birth had been a completely awesome experience.

Barb was fine. But she had to stay in the hospital for 4 or 5 days. A urinary obstruction had caused her to hold water. Although free of Chris, she remained large. First they had to determine what was going on and then resolve the bloating. That extra time allowed Barb to visit with other new mothers as well as bond with Chris.

One mother who was in her 20s could not believe that Chris was Barb's first at age 37. That young mother was having her 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>. The lady in the bed next to Barb had a baby boy weighing in at 10 lb. 4 oz. Chris was receiving his first toys – little fuzzy dogs, etc. The 10 lb. baby got a large hippo toy and other large animals. I hope that mother wasn't sensitive about that.

Chris had his own distinctions. I guess there can be disruptions in a nursery when a baby tends to cry. Solution: put a ticking clock in the crib. It simulates the mother's heartbeat which the child had grown to be comfortable with. The child would go to sleep. Chris was a crier. His crib would be rolled up to the observation window. He had two ticking clocks – one for each ear. The system worked.

So we went home eventually. Chris took up living in his backroom nursery. I returned to working on the house. It was never a dull moment with the little guy who loved me to make noises by tapping his feet on my cheeks. It was great to rock Chris in the rocking chair and then feel that warm wet feeling announcing a loose diaper. Often Chris would share a deep connection between his eyes and mine only to follow it with a telltale red face that lead to another diaper.

But seriously, as I worked on the house that summer, Chris was on my mind a lot. One particular time was during some late work on the electrical. Our new house was two story and the back half of the house was all open to the ceiling – i.e. a cathedral ceiling. In that cathedral area, the walkway to the upstairs bathroom was still open to the first floor. I had to put an 8 ft. stepladder on that walkway, climb the ladder nearly to the top, and drill with a ½ horsepower drill over my head. That drill was powerful and when it got stuck, the driller (me) and not the drill bit would turn – sometime cracking his

knuckles into the wooden stringers. So I think I wasted a whole afternoon and never got up the nerve to turn on the drill at 20 feet above the first floor. I kept thinking of my responsibility to Chris and Barb. This might be a foolish move. Ultimately, I found a totally different way to string the hallway lights although it took more flexible conduit. Someday those second homeowners (now 21 years in that house) might find my handiwork.

So ends the first chapter in the history of Chris Bailey.

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The “old Abbott” hospital was at 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and 18<sup>th</sup> Street. When I took these pictures it was about to begin yet another renovation. The shot here probably included the windows of both the labor room and the delivery room. I believe they were on the second floor. [That is just my sense of their location after these 45 years.]



One more picture. The house where Chris spent his months from June to December of 1971 was on 25<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Google Earth can get you there, but the street is cut up into sections by railroads, warehouses, and streets. So remember that this portion of 25<sup>th</sup> is south of Como, but it has to be approached by exiting Como at 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave SE (the Manning Restaurant corner) and turning left onto Cole Ave. SE. A pretty short segment of 25<sup>th</sup> is about the last street at the end of Cole.



Our front door is visible here. This duplex included us and a couple by the name Schaffer. (Old Man Schaffer could spot me 20 points and then beat me in horseshoes.) Their son was married to a Phy-Ed teacher who worked with Barb. )

Our address had to be something like 835 25<sup>th</sup> Ave SE.



Marks ? Runquist Bailey/Schaffer ? house Notations/?

Marks were at the far end of the block. There was another small house followed by our southern neighbor named Runquist, a veterinarian. Then came the Bailey/Schaffer duplex and the big white house. Notations lived in the duplex in the southern part just as we did. These duplexes were all over and managed by a good landlord – ZAE Anderson. I don't believe they exist anymore.

All this background is presented because I know that I cannot find my first home in East Chicago where I spent 3 months before we moved to Griffith. Mom showed me in my pre-teen years but I don't remember. I think it was somewhere on Columbia Ave. in East Chicago. Columbia Ave., Indianapolis Blvd, I don't know.