

Ada Parsons: "Giving birth should be a special time"

Narrative 9 of the Marathon Maternity Oral History Project

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Aaron Orkin MD MSc MPH CCFP Sarah Newbery MD CCFP FCFP

In 2008, we interviewed women about their experiences of childbirth and maternity care in Marathon, a rural community in north-western Ontario. This narrative is one of a series of stories that resulted from the Marathon Maternity Oral History Project. All of the narratives in this series were edited from the interview transcripts, then reviewed and approved for publication by the women involved. We invite readers to see the accompanying research paper for more on the Marathon Maternity Oral History Project.¹

I like to think that it's the same for most women: giving birth should be a special time and the care one receives during pregnancy and delivery plays an important role in obtaining those special memories. I can honestly say the best 3 days of my life, is when my 3 boys were born. It's very important that the delivery be made as positive and pleasant as can be.

My name is Ada Parsons. I'm a registered practical nurse and I work at Marathon Family Health Team. I'm 47. Originally from Newfoundland, I've been living in Marathon now for the past, I think, 19 years. My husband, Tony, started working here.

I've got 3 kids, and they all claim their own little territory. One can say, "I was born in Newfoundland"; one can say, "I was born in Marathon"; and the other was born in Thunder Bay. My first was an all-new experience, of course. I didn't know what to expect. Second time around, I now have experience. My best delivery was my second one. My third delivery, maybe due to my age, had to be C-sectioned.

My first ... memories are muddy

My first, he's 23 now, was born in Grand Falls, Newfoundland. Physicians would commute from Grand Falls to Robert's Arm and set up clinic. This is how I obtained my prenatal appointments. My pregnancy wasn't pleasurable. I was nauseous and vomiting the first 6 months, my blood pressure increased, and I became preeclampsia. Edema became prevalent. I was hospitalized a month before he was born. Blood pressure became stable and then sent home.

The nearest hospital was approximately a 90-minute drive. Labour pain came on sudden and extreme at approximately 11 PM. Traveled to Grand Falls and had my first baby at 9:30 AM. My memories are muddy, possibly due to the pain medication, but I do remember screaming with joy, "I have a baby boy!" I was a little too loud and my husband was trying to quiet me. Since

then I have tried to tone it down a little. My experience, though somewhat muddy, was a pleasant one, and I received wonderful treatment from the physician and nursing staff.

My second ... a fairytale pregnancy

I became pregnant with my second one, 12 years after the first. My second was like a fairytale pregnancy. I was monitored very closely by the health care providers in Marathon, Ontario. Everything was on schedule. I think I had a prenatal appointment every second week just to see how the baby was progressing and to see how I was progressing. I was reassured at every visit. I just loved the whole 9 months of it. The second child was just such a walk-in-the-park pregnancy, everything was going as per the textbook, lots of prenatal appointments and support and the care continued post delivery, ensuring the baby received his immunizations and developing appropriately. At that time a nurse visited our home, teaching all family members a CPR course in relation to infants.

My second was born at 3:40 AM on October 23rd; the end of a nice pregnancy and, according to spectators, an easy delivery. I lived 2 minutes from the hospital, went to the hospital at 3:00 AM and baby born at 3:40 AM. The way I like it. Not once did it enter my mind of having complications. I received the best of care from the nurses and physician that night and during my stay. The plans were made and in place, I signed a form not to be given any pain medication and it worked out well for me, the pain was bearable and I have vivid memories of the birth.

A warm memory of that night is as follows: The attending nurse and my doctor both had very calming voices. I can remember the face of [my nurse] and [my doctor] sitting there. "Okay, Ada," said the nurse, "you said you didn't want any medication, so keep focusing." She kept me focused. My physician kept reassuring me in her calming voice, "You're going to feel a little burn."

And she kept repeating the word “burn.” “Don’t worry, it’s just going to be a little bit of burning and then it’s gonna be all over.” The next day, I reflected and decided that’s how she’s describing the pain that I was experiencing. But at the time I did find it kind of amusing, and it gave me something to think about and it did work keeping my mind off the pain.

It was a great experience. Just a great delivery. You know, looking back at it now, if I could have, I wouldn’t have taken medication for any of the other 2 births, because it takes away the memory. The memory of Bradley, my second birth, is so vivid.

The third ... stressed out

The third pregnancy was not as pleasant as the second one and yet better than my first. I was nauseous most of the time. In my third trimester, again from my prenatal visits, they were able to determine that the baby was not positioning himself correctly and because of that I wasn’t able to deliver. I had to have a C-section. It was upsetting because this meant I had to leave my 2-year-old and find a sitter. I had and have faith in God,

which helped me through all of my pregnancies. I went to Thunder Bay and met the doctor there, the process explained. Yes, it was stressful but not overly stressful. The C-section was scheduled for a Thursday, August 18th. My husband and I went to Thunder Bay, leaving my 2-year-old with his grandparents. Due to other circumstances the doctor was not able to perform the surgery on that day. This became very stressful to me. It was advised that I not return to Marathon because of the possible complications, and the C-section was rescheduled for Tuesday, August 24th.


My husband had to take all this time off work, and the additional finances became overwhelming with the extra cost of food and hotel bills. At 6:30 Sunday morning, August 22, contractions began. My husband took me to the hospital and the C-section took place at approximately 10:30 AM. Again I received great care from the staff on duty that day. I wasn’t stressed out because I was having a C-section. It was because of the thought of leaving my 2-year-old and the financial situation.

I’ve had one regret; I did not thank the staff at Wilson Memorial General Hospital [in Marathon] for the most



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Wilson Memorial Hospital, Marathon

memorable delivery. To this day I remain thankful, so thank you for the wonderful treatment I received in the delivery of my baby boy. 

Dr Orkin is Assistant Professor at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in Thunder Bay, Ont, and a resident in Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the University of Toronto in Ontario. **Dr Newbery** is Associate Professor at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and a family physician practising in Marathon, Ont.

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Competing interests

None declared

Reference

1. Orkin A, Newbery S. The Marathon Maternity Oral History Project. Exploring rural birthing through narrative methods. *Can Fam Physician* 2014;60:58-64. Available from: www.cfp.ca/content/60/1/58.full.