

that I can't sing for long and I start humming. Then I realize how exhausting it is to hum and begin doing a nearly silent breathy whistle. The advantage of the whistle is that I can do it while inhaling and exhaling, so that all I'm really doing is breathing normally and modulating my lips. If I make it through the whistle stage a few times without complaints from the audience, I can lay her down.

Anyway, back to the particular evening in question. The lullaby is NOT working. This does not bode well. My precious little girl slowly transforms into the prime instrument of torture in my own personal hell.

ZOMBIE PARENTS OF THE STRATOSPHERE!

Then something magical happens. She points to the couch and says, "Daddy sit there with Zuzu?" Hell yes daddy sit there with Zuzu! I sit on the couch and she tries to sprawl over me like she used to do when the only way she could sleep was laying across daddy's chest. (She's still like this when she has a cold). I lay back in one corner of the couch and she nuzzles into my chest and shoulder and is promptly asleep. I didn't have time to prepare the couch at all, and I'm going to be there for several hours, hopefully sleeping. All I could do was grab two of her stuffed toys and cram them into the corner to support my back. One makeshift pillow was a "Captain Kaleb" doll, complete with a stuffed bird that's Velcro'd onto his shoulder. As I drifted off to sleep I recall thinking that if I could stick Zuzu to me with Velcro it might make the Zombie walk easier.

Fussing and all, she is just the sweetest thing. I can't say why exactly, but for all the exhaustion and frustration, and for all the times she's nearly blinded my right eye while thrashing around with a dangerous object, I wouldn't give up a night like this for anything. On those nights when she sleeps peacefully all the way through, I'm relieved and grateful, but I also feel that I missed out on something - something infinitely precious that I won't get to experience too many more times.

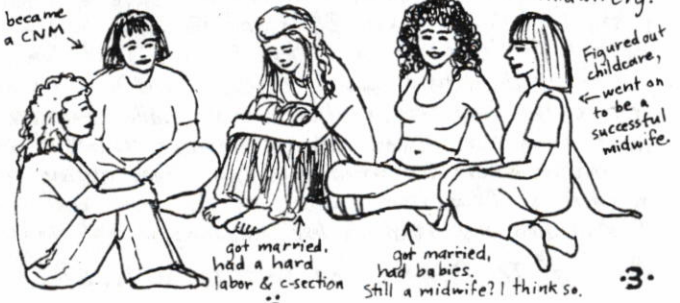
She's just turning two in June and I miss her already. Happy birthday, my little bean.

BECOMING A MIDWIFE IN 10 EASY YEARS

PART 4: Where do I go from here?

We left our intrepid heroine daydreaming in a vehicle... and frankly my memory of where I went from there is murky at best. It was March of '93. I knew I wanted to be a homebirth midwife. I got my hands on as many books and magazines as I could. And I called that phone number for the Portland study group, remember that? Who should answer but that very insistent "What do you do about childcare?" gal! Turns out she and four or five other women had a long-running midwifery study group. They had midwives come and teach on different topics, they had assignments - it sounded great! My elation was short-lived, however: one of their teacher-midwives was going to be opening a midwifery school in a few weeks, with the study group as her first students. I could come to the last study group meeting if I wanted, though, to just see what I thought.

Of course I went. I don't remember much from that afternoon, but I do remember being impressed by the diversity of the women. The one I'd called was a lovely woman, older than me, expensive but casual clothes, very savvy. One was dark and exotic-headful of dark curly hair, tanned and very sensual. The expected hippie chick, long hair, unshaved legs, soft and sweet and gushing. A registered nurse, ready to try something else. Since it was their last "study group" before they became actual "students" it was a bittersweet meeting. For my benefit, or perhaps for their own rite of passage, they reminisced about their own calls to midwifery.



The hippie chick told how she immediately ran out and got Spiritual Midwifery and read it cover-to-cover, sitting on the bathroom floor! I marvelled at how similar, yet how different we all were. And they were so welcoming, so open and kind... they encouraged me to talk to the new school's instructor, Marnie (not her real name) and see if I could join their class. It was an exciting prospect. I came away with lots of encouragement and some books I wanted to find.

I was still working fulltime at the Art Supply Store, and when word got around that I wanted to study midwifery, one of the assistant managers hooked me up with a friend of his, Bonnie. She was working as an apprentice at a very very busy birth center in town, and she graciously met me for coffee. She filled my ears about the lifestyle, about births - and, despite the fact that midwifery had lost a bit of its shine for her, she too, was very encouraging.

The doors were starting to open. Since leaving home at age 17, I had made many career choices - all of which had fallen through or had somehow been blocked. Starting with my son's birth, which veered me away from fashion design (unfathomable to me now). Living in Chicago killed my urge to be a commercial artist. The local colleges in Portland were undecided about which course of schooling I should take to teach 8th grade English, so I had backed off from that until they figured it out. Then I thought architecture would be cool... and just months before the semester started a state ballot measure and its funding cuts closed the architecture school! It seemed no matter where I turned, the doors kept closing. Until midwifery. Now, here I was... all the doors kept opening. I dug into my reading list, knowing it was right.

4. Next: TO SCHOOL, OR NOT TO SCHOOL?

On whim I took two pillows and stood them up sideways, then put another pillow across the top to make a pillow tunnel. She crawled in around and through the pillow tunnel for a great long time, frequently stopping in the middle so that she could peek out at me and say, "Hi". Then at one point she crawled inside, turned sideways so that her feet were tucked under one "wall" of the pillow tunnel, leaned her head back on the other wall, and she says, "This Zuzu's house. Go sleep Zuzu's house!"

The pillow house promptly collapsed atop her unstoppable wiggling, making her giggle like a... well, like a two-year-old.

What is more precious than that? I'll tell you a story. One dark and frustrating evening, Zuzu is being really fussy and contrary - arguing, demanding and fickle all day long. Mama is at her wit's end trying to get the little beastly to sleep, and daddy steps in for round two (or is it round 127). Zuzu sleeps for 20 minutes then wakes up very upset. I think she has to pee - she hates having to pee in the middle of the night (who doesn't?). So I'm up carrying her in the dark as she fusses and complains; finally she "agrees" to sit on the potty, angry at the world because she doesn't want to have to go pee right now. I have low hopes that she'll settle down anytime soon, but I pick her up again when the potty business is done and begin singing her favorite lullaby, ready to do the zombie-walk for the next hour if necessary.

Let me digress right here to share the zombie-walk with you. It's 3 AM, I haven't had more than a few hours of sleep for days and I'm carrying my little girl trying to comfort her. Usually it's easy - she passes out right away, I lay her down in her crib, mission accomplished. This evening however, she needs a lot of TLC. Maybe it's a stomach ache, or a nightmare, who knows. Daddy drapes her on his shoulder until she realizes she's tired, at which point she lays down in my arms facing me, head resting in the crook of my arm. I sing the lullaby, which is "Southern Accents" by Tom Petty. At some point I may need to give her the sippy-cup full of water or her "night-night Elmo". I'm a zombie of course. I'm so tired I lose track of large blocks of time as I shuffle about the house retracing the same steps back and forth. I think I may actually fall asleep while walking and carrying and singing. I'm so tired

the fundamental nature of the universe, but she understands humor very well. In the mind of a two-year-old, these word-play gags are equal parts science, social training and high comedy.

Obviously she understands contrariness, and the power of the word "No!" She is on a regular "just say no" campaign, saying no when she means yes, saying no for no reason, saying no when she exhales. Here's a little dialogue:



Zuzu: No running in the house! (shouting as she runs gleefully through the house)

Daddy: Yes running through the house! Joining in by running behind her)

Zuzu: No!

Daddy: Yes running! If you can't run in the safety of your own house, where can you run?

Zuzu: (Stops, looks at daddy). Outside.



Well of course **outside**, what was I thinking!

You may already know that Zuzu likes to play "night-night", a game wherein she pretends to be tired and lays down. Pulling a shirt, pillow, rug (or even a blanket) up over her little body, she says "Night-night" and sometimes closes her eyes. An instant later she sits bolt upright, throws her arms straight up in triumph and shouts "Awake!" This is followed by Zuzu's "Awake Dance". To be honest, it looks an awful lot like Zuzu's "Fancy Dance", but **we** know the difference.

I relate the Night-night game only so that I can tell you about the new game, "Tunnel". Zuzu has become fascinated with tunnels and holes. Holes in the ground, tunnels dug with sticks through mounds of sand at the beach, and highway tunnels as we drive along in the mini-van. (She also loves to watch ants crawl around on the sidewalk and she and mommy feed them cookie crumbs sometimes. Mondo cuteness.) A few nights ago we were playing another favorite game called Romping on the Bed. It's a big bed, and she loves to Fancy Dance on it, and then fall down laughing and dramatically exclaiming "fall down!"



Fancy!

where
mama?



A READING LIST FOR WANNA-BE Midwives

By no means comprehensive, here is a list to get you started. This makes good reading even if you aren't going to become a midwife, too. Interesting stuff.

SPIRITUAL MIDWIFERY - Ina May Gaskin & the Farm
This is the revered classic. Lots of birth stories. Lots of psychedelic experiences. Good stuff. Weird, but good.

HOLISTIC MIDWIFERY VOL. I: CARE DURING PREGNANCY - Anne Frye. Illustrated by yours truly.

This is considered by many to be the definitive text-book on home-birth midwifery. Not a sit-down-and-read-it-cover-to-cover book, but a must-have nonetheless.

HEART & HANDS - Elizabeth Davis. A great general guide to being a midwife. Gorgeous photos & illustrations.

BECOMING A MIDWIFE - Carolyn Steiger-Woods. Such a great book on getting an apprenticeship & self-study - too bad it is out-of-print. Try Ebay.

HOMEBIRTH - Sheila Kitzinger. Also out-of-print. More of a guide for parents, but if you're new to this stuff, it's great information. Lots of photos.

THE BIRTH PARTNER - Penny Simkin. The bare-bones basics about helping a woman give birth.

BIRTH REBORN - Michel Odent. Will get you thinking again about everything you ever thought about birth.

BIRTH AS AN AMERICAN RITE OF PASSAGE
Robbie Davis-Floyd. If you never thought about how barbaric hospitals can be, you will after you read this.

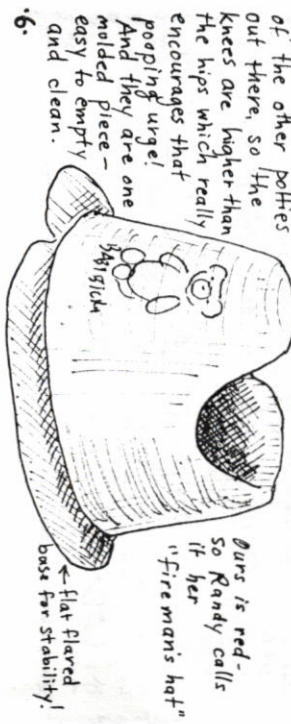
IN LABOR - Barbara Katz-Rothman. Essential. Empowering.

"Mama-go potty!"

Since the age of 10 months, Zuzu has been pooping on her little potty. I realized what a blessing this is when a little visiting friend needed a diaper change and I was confronted with the sheer unpleasantness of it. It seemed very strange to be wiping adult-size and consistency poop off a child older than Zuzu; it made me instantly grateful to Lynn for showing me the secret...

From the time Zuzu could sit up on her own - six months or so - we would sit her on her little Baby Bjorn potty when it was clear she needed to poop. I remember vividly the morning I looked over at her and noticed she seemed to be thinking about starting to poop - you know the look. She was only 8 or 9 months old at the time - definitely pre-verbal. I asked her "Zuzu, do you need to go poop?" She concentrated a moment, then nodded vigorously, with her whole body. It was, I think, the first time she had communicated a clear "yes" - and sure enough, she needed to poop! It was so cool!

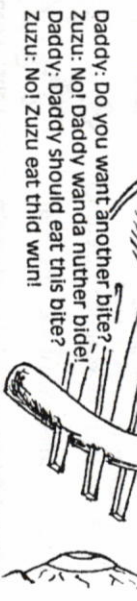
The Baby Bjorn potty, which is impossible to find anymore, is perfect for little persons just learning to sit up, because it really supports their whole little body; the little cut-out sides cradle the legs and the front and back are high for support. Plus, it is VERY low to the ground - unlike most of the other potties



6.

GEEK DADDY

Zuzu loves to laugh and consequently tells jokes and plays games. And nowadays she's sooo contrary! I can't tell the difference sometimes between one of her games and one of her jokes. I think they're jokes, games, and power-games all rolled into one. A typical Zuzu conversation goes something like this:



At this point we both have our hands on the fork and we take turns opening our mouths wide, inserting the speared tubes of mac 'n cheese but never actually taking the bite off the fork. If Zuzu eats another bite, daddy wins. Safety tip: Do not let your guard down in such a way that a child has access to either of your eyes with the fork.

Here's another bit of zuzu-speak, more like a joke I think:

- Daddy: Let's put these purple pants on this dolly.
- Zuzu: No, brown pants!
- Daddy: We don't have any brown pants.
- Zuzu: (laughing and holding up the same purple pants) These brown pants!
- Daddy: Purple!
- Zuzu: Brown!
- Daddy: (Wanting to play without necessarily giving in) Orange!
- Zuzu: (Smiling and scowling at the same time - "smowling?") Noooooo!

She does these wonderful drawn-out "Nooooo's that just sound so incredulous. It may seem like she's just confused or trying to change

SUGGESTION BOX *it aint over yet*



YOGA MAMA in an ancient form

This is a short and sweet - very sweet - zine by a yoga mama named Kristin McPherson. She talks about finally becoming comfortable combining her yoga practice with parenting her two boys... a beautiful awakening to the meditative nature of motherhood (patting the baby's back was the eye opener). Then she talks about - and shows photos of - various yoga movements and how children assume these poses quite naturally. Recipes for sattvic food to increase vitality, and wonderful yoga for kids! A sweet, sweet zine. I hope she does more. Kristin McPherson, 5 Staub Ct, Mamaroneck, NY 10543. \$2. I think. Tell her ZBC sent you! (and tell her to make more.)

zuzu is looking
her wrinkles



WRINKLE

Once upon a time I read a zine I'd traded for, and I loved it. Then it got swept away in a pile of zines. Then the zine issue came out, and I loved it, too. Again, lost in the piles. But now, here, today, I am remembering: it was "Wrinkle!" From helpful Boo (cutie bug!) and things to do, body issues, snow love, crafty mama... (shh... I have TWO queeguns! One is Randy's, but still) I love her regular feature "Shocking All True Confessions of the Tragically UN-hip!" and can relate on SO many levels. The only thing I don't get is the whole SARK thing - it drives me bug-womp! But you know, Sark inspires a lot of people to be creative and live happy so who am I to knock it? I guess it's kinda like Oprah... making me feel guilty for NOT wanting that life. I digress... Wrinkle is great, very fun. A new favorite. Add one to your pile! #2 to Kara Fleck, 12218 Parkview Lane, Fishers, IN 46038

Paperdolls I love printing out paperdolls - I do them 1/4 size and use them for stationery. Fave place (typen) paper dolls - it's amazing... www.webshots.com/search/

Zine

Zine

Web

So, I haven't had to change a poopy diaper (of Zuzu's) for well over a year. And now, at 22 months, Zuzu is actually wearing big-girl panties all day, every day... and I, Zuzu's mommy, am very happy and proud of Zuzu! 😊 She still wears diapers at night, and sometimes if I think she's likely to have an accident I'll put a pullup on her... but for the most part, the girl is potty trained! Whoohoo!

We never tried to push it on her - live been trained by the training books that somehow life-long scars can develop if you push potty-training too early - and there are days when she just can't remember to use the potty. Luckily she hates having wet clothes (she demands a 'new shirt' if she spills something on it) and so it's in her own best interest to stay dry. We are very vocal in our joy when she uses the potty... I think that helps. She's SUCH a big girl, though, that she wants to empty her potty seat all by herself...

an adventure fraught with peril. One day I got her out of a bath and, once dry, she raced out of the bathroom. A moment later I heard a "thunk-splash-thud-wail" and found a very upset naked Zuzu sitting on the hardwoods in a puddle of pee-pee splashed all over her! Poor baby, she was so upset. I got a towel to dry her off and Randy went to get more towels as Zuzu sobbed and pointed. "Pee-fall down!" She looked sadly at the mess, and then at me, "Sorry!" she said, so sadly. "Oh, baby... it's ok! It was just an accident." She said it again... "Sorry..." and my heart wrenched. My baby is not is baby... but a sweet, sweet little girl.



the crown,
still the
favorite!

The only problem right now with the whole potty-trained thing is that while she definitely knows the "what" and "how," the "where" is proving to be a bit tricky. The first time she made that clear was at gym class... we were playing in the gymnasium after class when she stopped running and said "potty!". I said "okay, honey, lets go to the bathroom," and started walking toward it. Half-a-second later I turned to see that she was one step ahead of me - her pants were down around her ankles! There were a lot of other kids and parents around, but noone seemed to notice the little girl with the naked booty... I scooped her up and we made it to the potty in time. Poor kid... in that situation she of course has to pee with me holding her on the adult size potty; a trick I wouldn't like to have to do! Question: why do all public restrooms have that toilet seat that is split in the middle front? I cannot imagine it is any more hygienic or easy to clean... yet here it is, just big enough for little skinny booties to slide into! Seems kinda silly. So, anyway, Smooshie-Bottom has since dropped her pants in public a few times, the most recent being our beloved coffee shop (that would be Wholesome Blends, NE 46 & Sandy).

I was chatting with a zine fan and Zuzu was meandering around with her special hot chocolate when I heard her little voice: "mama! Go Potty!"... I turned around and sure enough Zuzu was in the middle of the room, showing us her bukblaki! She looked... concerned. We went to the bathroom, kindly chuckles of fellow coffee-drinkers smattering the air behind us. Ter-hee.



SUGGESTION BOX for pottytime... for anyone!

GIRLSWIRL FANZINE **A B O C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**

I wonder if anyone in zine-land doesn't know Taryn Hipp. She does GirlSwirl and other projects, and I've enjoyed every thing I've read... one of my favorites is GS #9. She has taken a sweet children's alphabet book and, letter-for-letter, run through her life past, present and future: "A is for Amabelle" - who told her once that she was a "meanie head". Taryn is not a meanie-head that I can see, just a thoughtful and blessedly content zine-writer. Check it out... order #8 while you're at it! \$2 each to Taryn Hipp, P.O. Box 8, Allston MA 02134 (NOW ITS THE "ZOOM" ZIP CODE! COOL!)

JAMES HORNER



music
 What? What? Okay, this is where my silly geekiness comes out. I love movie music scores. Not soundtracks, where they compile all the cool songs played in a movie, but scores. My very first love was John Williams, who did "Star Wars" and the "Indiana Jones" movies; and so many more it makes the head swim. Well, for the past ten years or so my love has shifted to James. My first James-love was "Legends of the Fall", then I realized he did the very first "Land Before Time". Then there was "Apollo 13" and "Braveheart" - "Field of Dreams" - the list goes on. Like any composer, Horner uses common themes from one to the next... yet there is something so sweeping, so haunting and poignant and lovely about his music that I can listen to it over and over. Right now I listen to the "Titanic" score every day. The nice thing about movie scores is that they can evoke a mood but don't require the language-processing part of my brain to function... so they are ideal background music for drawing, or writing, or whatever. I'm remembering when my sister and I WHISTLED the entire soundtrack from Star Wars... I am still that very same dark.

I hate to go; the music is so good!

SUGGESTION BOX for that copious free time:

I have a plethora of zines. I order them. I trade for them. I buy them at Reading Frenzy in beautiful downtown Portland. Only thing is, I don't have time to read them. Even in the bathroom. I try - I mean, I leave them in the bathrooms and I do read bits here and there - but then I forget which zine I read what in, and they all become a blur. And after a while I just give up and read People or Us or one of the other garbage mags. Zines that my mother-in-law passes to me. After all, what is more important than Britney & Justin? Or Wacko Jacko? Or gosh how DO those celebrities manage to look so great 3 months after they give birth? Hmm! Those magazines actually make me really grateful that I turned down Brad's marriage proposal... he and Jen seem very happy together. (God, I would hate being a celebrity!!) Ahem, so...

BRUCE'S ZINE

This is a great zine by none other than the husband of Kate (Miranda zine) Haas - and the father of Mr. Baby & Nathaniel. Bruce is a fun writer - clear, honest, and straightforward. He's an old-time zinester who decided to write this new one, despite how empty being a zinester had become for him; because he couldn't go over to a fellow zinester's house for dinner, or shake their hand, or describe their voice. He does however return to the land of paper people, writing here about learning to ride a bike & the lifelong passion it evoked, being a dad, peace rallies, how neon works, Simon's birth and becoming a family, and more. I love this zine and I want MORE. Order it and maybe he'll get on the stick! #2 to Bruce Barbarasch, 3510 SE Alder St. Portland, OR 97214

ZINE

the arrival of ZUZU

OR: LESSONS IN HUMILITY, PATIENCE, & PARENTING

- **FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 2001:** It is a week past my "due date", and my dear friend Kim, who came from Montana for the birth, has come and gone. As midwives, we knew damn well that the chances of baby coming on the due date are slim, but we spent a hopeful few days anyway. My huge, hot, and heavy body is flying across the couch, and I suddenly realize something. "Randy," I ask, "do you still have the note I wrote to you, asking you out?" "I think so," he said, "do you want me to get it?" "Yes, I do," I told him, "because knowing me, I put the date on it, and I'm curious." He comes back up from the basement and reads "June 9" "Oh, no," I say. "THAT'S WHAT THIS BABY IS WAITING FOR!" And then I laughed it off. No way was I going to be two weeks overdue. No way.
- **FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 2001:** It is two weeks past my "due date" (two weeks!) and I am about to go out of my mind. My mom is visiting from Illinois. She had planned to be visiting her new grandbaby, but instead was visiting a bitchy, weepy, VERY pregnant daughter... and a sweet, patient son-in-law. She is scheduled to leave the next day, and I am bummed that yet another person is flying in and out again without seeing a baby. Originally she had wanted to come for the birth, but I wasn't sure I wanted her here - I wasn't sure who I wanted around. I knew from experience that even when women have great relationships with their moms, if mom is there for the due date, that baby won't come! So I was afraid to have her visit, in case it delayed the birth... ha! Mom & I had enjoyed our time together, though, I was proud to show off my beautiful home and neighborhood. Despite the fact that her arthritis & back problems prevent her from getting around very well, we had made a trip to the coast the day before, to my very favorite spot. It is a viewpoint, high on the cliffside on Hwy 101, just south of Cannon Beach. It is an old viewpoint, rough-hewn stones encircle it.

You can climb the little stone wall and follow a trail down onto the cliff, through dense vegetation, to another breathtaking spot. Push further out and you find yourself on a sheer rock point - fourteen stories above the ocean, where you can sit on a rock and dangle your feet and it fills your peripheral vision. I have watched many a sunset - and smoked many a cigarette - from that point. I go there during extreme times in my life and watch the ocean breathe.

Needless to say on this particular visit I was NOT doing any cliff-clambering! Mom and I gazed contentedly around until an excited shout caught our attention. Down below us were the magnificent grey backs of a pair of whales swimming together close to the surface. I have never seen whales and I was in awe... such size, such power, such peace.

So here we were, a day later, in the hospital getting me a BFP, BioPhysical Profile, for my peace of mind and my midwife's chart. We passed both the monitoring session - barely - "oh, you are having decels that are concerning" (lets just say I knew more than I let on, and I was NOT having concerning decels!) and the ultrasound. Of course they tried to scare me into staying & getting induced by saying "Well, everything looks great right now, but that baby could crash at any moment." (Isn't that how every moment of every person's life is?) Despite their best efforts, including calling my midwife and telling her to talk some sense into me, I decided to go home. They were very upset - they even called back my midwife to yell at her!

So, home we went to wait... sort of. You see, I was getting desperate. We decided against my better judgement, to try a home induction.

Let me just say right now: I have never seen a home induction that (when it "worked"), didn't have some BIG negative side effects, from prolonged labor to transport for exhaustion to hemorrhage. Let me also say this: my despair, my irrational and impossible belief that this baby was NEVER COMING OUT was overruling everything I knew as a midwife. I woke up and wept every day that I was still pregnant.



"SMELL TALK SOME SENSE INTO HER!"

CALL L&D AND TELL THEM TO GET A ROOM READY"



SUICIDE SNIFFER whisper

>GASP! (laugh) ZUZU!!

Unless...

Hey! What the hell is their problem? Nobody looks at my kids that way!!



-Fin-

ZUZU and her Bukiluki*

Starring Zuzu, Isaiyah, and Ri-Ri

*Wrote from Ayni'xo
*Gentitalia



I was huge, miserable, and depressed. So, with conviction and a heartful of hope, I tried to kick-start my labor. I called my midwives, Pat and Desiree and they headed my way. I started cotton root bark tincture. I cut up a grapefruit, peel and all, boiled & mashed it and drank the tea (not too yucky, with a lot of sugar!) I walked, I climbed stairs. Midwives "swept" my membranes (NOT rupturing), but rather using a finger to try to separate the membrane from the inside of the cervix. I started black & blue cohosh. I prayed. My midwives were terrifically supportive; came & settled in as if this was going to work. The herbs did get contractions going, and they seemed strong, but after my self-allotted four hours was up there had still been no real progress. I was really out of it; mentally, at that point. I sat on the couch with Pat, feeling like I was on drugs, feeling beaten, looking at the tincture bottles when suddenly I felt a voice go through me so loud and clear: "STOP THE HERBS." I looked at Pat and said, "Enough." I sent her home. Desiree agreed to stay a bit longer. My contractions continued into the evening, and at midnight I was encouraged but tired. Randy & mom & Des & I all went to sleep. By 3AM it was clear it wasn't happening, so Des, groggy and loving, went home... and back to bed went all.



● SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 2001:
The morning of the 9th was the worst ever. First of all, Pat's daughter was graduating from high school at 2pm, and although I ran a close second, Pat was NOT going to miss the ceremony, even for me. So, obviously, I was going to have to wait another day. But first, I was going to die waiting. I was still having contractions, but it was not labor. After breakfast Randy & I went for a walk to get things moving. Nothing. We came home and I lost it. I mean, I LOST IT. I WAILED. I hit bottom.

I looked at my baby's beautiful crib, with the cute sheet I had made myself, and the little quilt that Randy had designed and I had sewn, and it was as if it had all been in vain. I know how stupid that sounds, but in that moment I KNEW that I would be pregnant FOREVER.

"THIS BABY... IS... SOB = NEVER COMING... BUT! SOB = NEVER!" I leaned on that crib and cried as though my heart were breaking. My mom, meaning well, said lovingly, "Honey, you know you can always go to the hospital and let them induce you..."

"No, mom," I bawled, "I'm NOT going to do that... please stop talking about it!" Her words brought me around a bit, though, because really, what were my choices? Stay home & wait, or go in. I was still weeping, though. My mom left the room and Randy, my brilliant perfect spouse, sat me down on the bed and gave me a gentle talking-to. The gist of it was this: "You're fine. The baby is fine. There is nothing to do, nothing to fix. This baby will come when it is ready. Let's just do our days and forget trying to make it happen." I looked into his kind, patient, chocolate-brown eyes and loved him so much, trusted him. "Okay," I said.

We decided to walk-slowly-to the park, a daunting 12 blocks away. We held hands, we chatted. Once there we climbed onto the swings. There I was, 42 weeks pregnant, swinging as high as I could. I felt my heart expand, lift, and let go. It was all going to be okay, no matter what happened. It would be just fine. We laid in the grass for a while, talking, laughing, and connecting. I had been so caught up in my own drama, it was good to remember there was life outside my belly. Eventually we got up and started our long walk home.

A block later I felt a strange movement, like an elbow poking me from the inside, then a flicking, popping (oh my god is the baby okay?) and then SPLASH & water gushed out of me, soaking my pants. "My water just broke!" I yelled, disbelieving. Randy and I looked at each other, excited. I looked at my watch and had to laugh. It was 2:15 pm.



12. Swinging to this day)

We started with "nurse" which is the ASL for "milk" - opening & closing the right hand as if milking a cow. We signed it everywhere we said it, and I signed it to her while we nursed, starting at about 6 months. At 8 months, driving toward home, Zuzu was DONE being in the car and was screaming bloody murder. I turned to look at her and she was frantically making the "horse" sign! I palled over to nurse her immediately - wow! It worked!

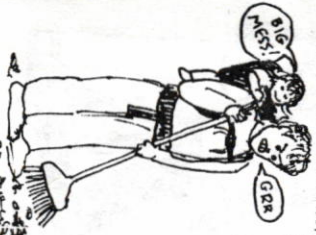
Next was "more" and "open" - or her particular versions of it - "little", "big", "balls", "walk", "bike ride", "go poth", and "fish" and nodding. We signed "mama" and "daddy" but she never used them.

Her first actual words were "now" and "ah-ah!" which seemed to span the human experience quite nicely. From there it was a cascade, ("bah-pah") while I was making caramel corn for gifts. The popcorn started burning and I grabbed the pan and turned quickly to lid and burnt popcorn flying everywhere! I yelled "SHIT!" - Then started cleaning it up, explaining what was going on to a wide-eyed Zuzu. "Mama made a mess and now I'm sweeping it up." She thought about that, then started telling her version "Mama... MESS!" she yelled. And then, very proud, she adds, "BIG mess!" which she then repeated, for hours, to everyone.

One of my favorites was "Little bit". She would hold up her pinching hands in front of her eyes, squinch up her face, and say "witha bithoo bithoo bitho bitho."

This is not to say we always understand everything she says. For the longest time she used the word "souse" and despite questioning "can you cat souse?" "yeah!" we could fit figure it out. Finally I put on some flowered "blimies" and she looked down at them and said "souse!" Oh, FLOWERS. She still says "s" for "P."

Then today a new first "Member dat may-go-rain?" she said, and Zuzu rode a horse up and down?"



I will always remember.

Zuzu Speaks

Just today, driving along in the car (well, I was driving, Zuzu was riding) she observed "I don't see purple stop signs, I just see red Stop signs." She will be two in a few more weeks.

My mom loves to tell how well I spoke at a young age - saying the Pledge of Allegiance at age two... I've heard the red-to-reel tapes myself so I know its true. Still, I find it remarkable that a person so small can be so observant; so precise in her communication. And so incredibly contrary. We say yeah, she says no. We say no, and she says YEAH. A perfect example:

Me, Randy, Zuzu. Coming home from dinner. Drive past an indie film theater in our neighborhood. On the Marquee: "NOAM CHOMSKY AMEN". Randy, who knows who that is, leans forward and says excitedly: "NOAM CHOMSKY!!" Immediately Zuzu protests: "YEAH, Chomsky! I LIKE Chomsky!" We gaggle about it for several years...

I'm not sure if its just hereditary (the language skills, not the contrariness) - Randy has a Masters in Communication - I guess we shouldn't be surprised. At any rate its true that Zuzu has been communicating with us since about 8 months old, thanks to ASL - American Sign Language.

A number of years ago "Signing with babies" became the really cool thing to do. Of course special books and videos popped up everywhere, national talk shows were abuzz - for only \$89.95 you too could learn from the world-famous language researcher guy!!

Well, bleah on spending money. I knew I wanted to teach Zuzu some sign language and I also knew it didn't require a video. Got a couple books, found some great ASL websites that actually show a little video of each sign being demonstrated, and I was ready to go. Tricky part was figuring out which words were going to be necessary and useful...



I had black pants on, so I couldn't see if the fluid was clear. I took a step and more water poured out. What a mess! I couldn't believe how much fluid there was. "I don't want to walk home like this," I told Randy, laughing joyfully. He handed me his cell phone and ran home to get the van. Meanwhile I squished over to the park restroom to check the fluid color and make a few phone calls. The fluid was clear. Good.

Let me back up to tell you another piece: I had very much wanted my oldest dearest friend Sarah to attend the birth of the baby was a girl it would be named Sara, to honor my friend and a promise I made to her when we were 13), but the week before she had left for San Francisco on vacation. I had told her goodbye sadly, knowing she would miss the birth. Today she was coming back - her flight landed at 2pm.

Another piece. Pats daughters graduation started at 2pm. Weeks before I had asked another dear midwife friend if she would be on call from 2 to 5pm on this day. At the time I had laughed, "God forbid! That would be two weeks past my due date!" Marilyn was easy, "I'll be there if you need me, gal."

Back to now. In the back of my mind I was scrambling to adjust to who might indeed be there for the birth: hoped-for Sarah - maybe. Did-not-expect mom - probably. Did-not-expect Marilyn - probably. Expected Pat - probably not. Then again - who knew? I wasn't even in labor - even my water breaking hadn't gotten things going.

I called Des. She laughed and said "Well, I'm on my way to my birthday dinner right now." "Oh NO, its your BIRTHDAY?!" "No, my birthday was weeks ago. I scheduled my dinner for tonight because you were s'posed to have had that baby by now."

"Oh, no, I am SO SORRY!" "Don't worry about it, I'll be at Gustav's!" We both laughed; shed be three blocks from my house. We hung up and I called Marilyn, who was delighted to come.

"Go home and eat and take a nap, if youre not in labor yet," she said. "I'll get on the road as soon as you need me too, but keep in mind I'm an hour away..."

Randy & my mom met up with me a few minutes later - I climbed into the van and we all grinned, all the way home.

From the birth record:

"3:00 pm: will eat some protein- tofu and yogurt- and drink lots of water- and lie down for a rest. FHT: [Fetal heart tones] 130's-160's w/cent. My angel cooed: 'Communication', Randy drew 'willingness' and 'a cooed for Zuzu. It said 'Birth'."

Of course I have a doppler, so I could listen to the baby, but I realized that I did not want to be my own midwife. Being pregnant and a midwife is a complex and difficult thing. On the one hand, you know a lot. On the other hand, you know a lot. Too much. I spent my pregnancy trying to remember my birth with my son-how hard was it, really? How long was it? I knew the women in my family have pretty quick births, but now that I had midwife brain was I going to jinx myself? What if I couldn't handle it? I worried myself silly wondering about the unknown.

I think I was too excited to really nap- none of us can quite remember what happened over the next two hours. The next vivid memory I have is of deciding to get in our regular bathtub for a while- the inflatable birth pool was set up but not filling yet. My contractions had started in earnest and this time there was no mistaking them- they were so vastly different from the ones I'd had on herbs that I had to laugh. I was not laughing for long.

Smashat: around 4:30pm: me in our main floor bathroom while the bathtub is filling. My husband trying to get things set up upstairs.

My mom, unable to climb stairs well, sitting with me. Randy pops his head in, 'the phone on his shoulder. "Dug is already at my mom's house, when should they leave?" I get a moment- it takes an hour to get to our house from hers... "Tell them to leave in another hour or so." Randy pops back out again. Then I have another contraction. And another. My midwife brain thought "Uh, this is getting serious!" I call Randy back in to the bathroom.



(2 Randy's badly-prepared/disorganized)

"You'd better tell them to leave now."

And while we're on the subject:

can you help Uncle Doug?

The story is only too common: small company gets bought. Employees of small company are told - don't worry. Employees of small company get laid off indefinitely. This is the story of Uncle Doug. He needs work. So, because he is Uncle Doug and I love him, I am going to break my 'no advertising' rule and blatantly advertise here... Even if you don't think you'd ever need Uncle Doug for anything, read this anyway. He wrote it, and it's quite entertaining. Thanks.

WHY DO YOU NEED UNCLE DOUG?

by Uncle Doug.

What I'm good at and love to do:

1. Web design - I design simple, functional web sites for people who don't want to spend all their money and time on web sites. My goal is to design pages that people can update and maintain themselves without having to pay me or anyone else to do it for them (unless they want to).

2. Proofreading and editing - I really enjoy correcting other peoples' typos and grammatical errors. Call me a freak, but I think it's fun and I'm really good at it.

3. Librarianship - I'm a professional librarian (with a Master's degree and everything) and I love library work, especially helping people find the information they want.

4. Crafts - I like to make fountains and design t-shirts and other unnecessary stuff.

What I'm good at, but don't really love to do:

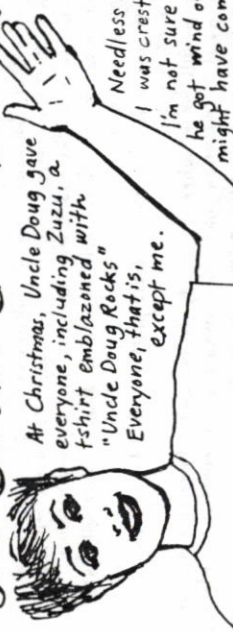
I'm an intermediate-level Visual Basic programmer with 6 years professional experience, including lots of database creation/management and full-cycle development. We never met a piece of software that I couldn't learn to use in two days or less.

My resume is online at <http://www.uncleDougProcs.com/resume.html>, also available for download in MS Word at the top of the online version.

I'm loyal, trustworthy, honest, brave, perceptive and unimpeachable.

I'm the one who people call when something goes wrong with the computer or the printer or the fax machine, because I can usually figure out what's wrong and I never yell at or make fun of people while I do it.

The Coolest Shirt Ever!!



At Christmas, Uncle Doug gave everyone, including Zuzu, a t-shirt emblazoned with "Uncle Doug Rocks" Everyone, that is, except me.

Needless to say, I was crestfallen. I'm not sure how he got wind of it - I might have complained a tiny bit... but now, finally, I too am the very proud owner of an Uncle Doug Rocks (tm) shirt. It is simply the coolest shirt I own. I wear it at least once a week. I like how it makes the teenage girls stare.

On the back it says Uncle Doug Rocks with his website, and on the front is a picture of the man himself framed in a glorious shield which truly befits him. Around the image is this quote:

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!"
Hamlet Act II, Scene ii "

A truer word was never spoken. By now you are jealous and want your own; and you can get one! Go to www.uncledougrocks.com. Tell him Zuzu sent ya!

He gives me a very excited and surprised look. "This is happening really fast - in fact I think we should start filling the tub upstairs." Off he scampers.

Snapshot, about 5:00pm: I am upstairs in our big 'cathedral' front room (the very first time I saw it I envisioned giving birth there - it was our second date!), kneeling in the birth pool which is not nearly full enough, and our hot water has run out. I had expected that, and big pots of water were already heating up on the stove. Mom is nearby, and Randy is running up and down the stairs, carrying the boiling water. Later he tells me that he's thinking we are going to have this baby by ourselves! I realize through my work that I think Randy with me during these contractions, and tell my mom that I think Sarah is home from her trip. Mercifully, Sarah lives only four houses away. My mom makes her way down the stairs, and over there as quickly as she can. I think for a moment how physically difficult this must be for her, and I am awash with gratitude. Then I am awash with a contraction, and that is that.

At some point Sarah shows up starts ferrying water and being the 'tiny helper' so Randy can sit with me. I want ice. He feeds me bits. Doug and Matt and Ginny arrive, unbeknownst to me, and are listening to me as they play a game downstairs. Desiree shows up to check on me before going to her birthday dinner - she is wearing a silver satin spaghetti-strap cocktail dress and Randy and I express our appreciation for not only coming but being breathtaking to boot! We laugh, I concentrate, she leaves. Marilyn is on her way.

I have my mom and Sarah start paging Pat now that we know the ceremony's over. "Put in '9-1-1," I tell them, "So she knows to hurry." I desperately want her there.

From the birth record:

"6:00ish, Marilyn arrived. Rhonda in tub. Having strong context on knees - looking into Randy's eyes." FULLY pressure everywhere."

Pressure.

Labor was not at all what I expected or remembered. In a way it was better, because I expected pain - but what I got was pressure. It wasn't exactly pain, it hurt, but it was different. Make no mistake, it was intense. I once underwent a chiropractic technique where

they insert a balloon at the end of a metal straw up your nose and inflate it, to realign the bones. It was the most terrifying and excruciating sensation I have ever had. That is how my contractions felt, minus the terror. I would rather be in labor! I alternated I thought about the whales I had seen at the coast. I alternated that peaceful, powerful image with the mental/spiritual place I go when I breaks boards (Taekwon Do). I needed nothing but Randy nearby - all I needed was to be touching him, and I could bear anything. As each contraction began I took a deep breath - as it peaked I would cry out "Oh god! Oh god!" and start blowing out my breath, struggling to stay focused. It was taking every ounce of concentration to stay present, yet the midwife part of me was pleased that it was going so well... an odd mental sensation.

"6:20: Up moving/awaying w/contr - FRT's 150-160 - Belly flao succup - drinking H2O"

I have vague memories of walking back and forth across the house, stopping to lean on our blessedly high bed, breathing, breathing. I moved instinctually in and out of the tub. Leaning forward was the preferred position.

Pat arrived around 6:30pm and I came out of my labor trance enough to greet her with joy and a bit of teasing, and to tell Marilyn that she was welcome to stay. Then it was back to work.

A bit later I was on the toilet and I started to lose it. The contractions were so intense, I couldn't stay on top of them. They were overtaking me; I was drawing. "I can't do this much longer, I can't!" I gasped. The midwife in me was smiling, yay, that means I'm in transition - every woman says that in transition. The laboring me said yeah, every woman says it, but I MEAN IT!!

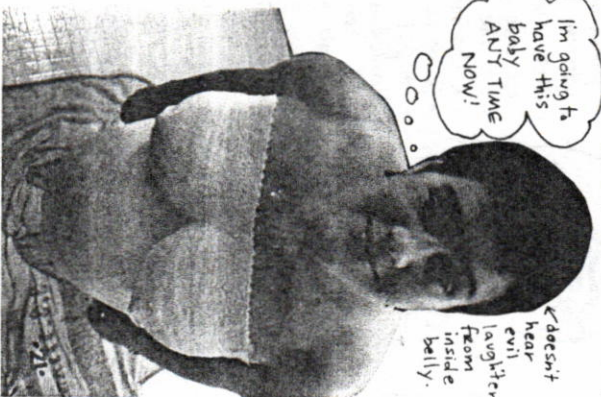


BELLY CAST CONT...

- Work pretty fast, because even at lukewarm the plaster starts to set within 15-20 minutes. Until it sets, though, it's pretty malleable, so be sure to tuck the gauze into crevices and around details.
- If mama needs to sit down, help her lower herself carefully onto the edge of a chair or the toilet.
- Put extra gauze on the weak spots; you'll be able to tell where they are as you go.
- The mama will know when it's ready to remove; there is a distinct "peeling away" sensation when she breathes. Remove it carefully holding both sides and have mama wiggle out.
- Put the belly cast in a safe, supported place (if you want, put a balloon or basketball under the belly dome). Let it dry at least 24 hours.

- When the cast is dry you can use any medium you can think of to decorate it... acrylic paints work well. There is no limit to how gorgeous it can be... and it may be just gorgeous enough as is!
- poke holes in the top, at the breasts, to string wire and hang your cast.
- oh yeah, you can use fine sandpaper to smooth it out before you decorate it. Use very wet strips to do any patching.

RIGHT: Zuzu in utero one month before her birth day.



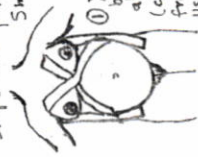
← doesn't hear evil laughter from inside belly.

D.I.Y. pregnant belly cast - IT'S EASY!! -

Doing your own belly cast is really fun... messy, but fun! You can make a party out of it, do it as part of a blessingway, have your significant other or best friend or child do it... this is creativity on top of creation!

You will need: 3 or 4 rolls of plaster-gauze, 4" wide. A dishpan or other shallow tub. Petroleum jelly. And some towels or plastic drop-cloth. And a pregnant mama... the more pregnant the better!

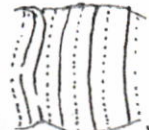
- First, lay the drop cloth down in the area where you'll be. Kitchen or bathroom is your best bet. Keep it comfortably warm.
- Decide how the mama is going to be posing - are you going to do just breasts and belly? Is mama going to put her hands on her belly... are you casting down to the thighs or up the neck? Once decided, have mama liberally coat the body parts to be casted with petroleum jelly. (If you're going down onto the pubic hairs, have mama wear some bikini panties (no need to grease up the panties) Remember to get under breasts and along sides of body.
- Whilst mama is getting slippery, fill the tub with slightly warmer than room temp water... the warmer the water, the faster the plaster will set up... so not too warm!
- Cut 3 rolls of plaster into strips about 1 1/2 - 2ft lengths. Keep the scissors handy, you may decide to cut them in half the long way as you work the round surfaces, like the breasts.
- Have mama sit, stand, or recline as desired. Keep in mind that reclining changes mama's shape. We did ours standing and it didn't take long at all.
- Dip a piece of plaster gauze in the water, sliding the strip between two fingers to remove excess water. Then the strips are placed on the mama. I suggest this pattern:



- 1 X between breasts, & along sides (create a framework) use longer strips
- 2
- 3 be sure to overlap strips and smooth out the wrinkles
- 4 shorter strips if necessary



- 2 start at top, use thinner strips around sharp curves, use shorter strips if necessary



- 3 be sure to overlap strips and smooth out the wrinkles

Pat, famous for her incredible intuition and timing, took my hands at that moment, made me look at her. "This is just right, it's okay," she said, as I've heard her say to so many other women. "This is just how it's supposed to feel. Breathe with me." That's all I needed to get back into rhythm. I turned back to Randy.

A few contractions later I say to him, "I'm afraid." He thinks a moment. "Be afraid," he says softly. "Just don't let that stop you."

Birth Record entry by Sarah: (that's the great thing about home births - the birth record can be so wonderful and personal)

"6:59: R & R are breathing it together. You can feel the love between them. Pat says 15 more contractions."

I remember that moment. I was back in the pool, and I looked at Pat and kind of laughed through my desperation. "I know every woman asks this and I know you can't answer me but how many more of these am I going to have to do?" I begged in a rush. All I wanted was a number. I had to know there was an end in sight. She could have said 'seven thousand' and I would have nodded and plowed on. But she smiled and said "...oh...fifteen."

"11:37: Rhonda struggling to stay on top of contr." of contr."

My focus was getting smaller and smaller. Randy's shoulder, my forehead resting on it lightly.

Contraction, pressure... building... oh God OH GOD !!

So much pressure!!... breathe... breathe... breathe...

Randy's here, he's here, I'm here, I'm

okay... breathe... it's going now... breathe.

okay... okay... Randy... okay... when... okay.

here it comes... breathe...

My thoughts cycled like this, aware only

of my belly and Randy. I reached inside,

feeling for the baby's head. I could

just touch it with my longest finger -

it seemed miles-hours-away

and I wailed, "The baby's

head is so far up there!"

Pat, calm, "It's okay."



Auntie Sarah
hard at work.

From a photo taken moments after that on the previous page. ☺

And then, something shifted. I felt my baby's head drop, all at once, as my body expelled her. It was like vomiting more than anything else. My back arched as baby went from being as high as I could reach to pressing, hard, into my hand. It was beyond my control. My hands flew to my perineum, Randy's too. I was told that I said "This baby is coming RIGHT NOW." I didn't want to tear, and this kid was blasting out of me. I started panting, fast, and pushing back on the head. I could feel Randy's fingers with mine under the water, and the slick soft head of our baby pushing into our hands. I never actually pushed; I never felt the "ring of fire." The head was simply out.

A profound silence filled the room, and my soul. "The head is out," someone said, was it me? Randy? Together we cradled that head and breathed, our foreheads together. It was an absolutely peaceful, painless, perfect moment... the baby alive yet not yet with us, our hands, our hearts, our breath, the water, the quiet... the quiet.

I felt the baby move as my body readied to push again and I shifted back onto my heels. "That's right," Randy murmured, "sit back so our little one can come out." I nodded, shifted, and our baby came from me and into our hands. It was 7:42 pm.

We sat back, baby and I, and Randy came around to my side. I held the tiny body, and realized... this is my child. Mine. I don't have to let this one go. Weeping, I nuzzled the tiny neck.

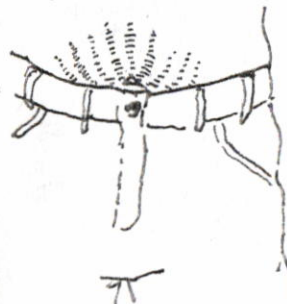
Together Randy and I marveled at our baby, so utterly perfect and gorgeous; long fingers reaching skyward, black hair. I parted the baby's legs - I couldn't wait any more... and I looked at my beaming husband. "It's a girl! We have our little girl!" I sobbed.. here was the daughter I'd longed for for 18 years. She was here.

After a while I looked up into a room of smiling faces... my mom, my best friend, three midwives, and Randy's mom. The room glowed. Zuzu had arrived... at long last.



baby belly baby belly baby belly

You know what is one of my truly gripe-~~as~~ pet peeves? The whole idea that you can prevent or erase stretchmarks. Honey, you can rub in Vitamin E, you can never expose your belly to the sun, you can hold your breath all you like, but if your mama had stretch marks, you are gonna have stretch marks... in fact it's happened that your mama didn't have them, but you got them anyway! There ain't nothin' you can do about it, Sweetie, but wear them deep grooves with pride! And sune, you can buy that miracle cream that "over time" will fade those angry red marks to "barely noticeable" silvery lines - but you can rub strawberry jam on them and "over time" they will fade just the same! Yes, they suck. They can get itchy & rashy even years after the child that made them... and it took me a long time to stop feeling self-conscious. But now... they are my badge of honor. The year I met Randy I went to the Oregon Country Fair to see the family I used to nanny for & to tell them about my plans to have a baby with him. I was wearing a sports bra and a pair of shorts that came just to my navel. The little girl, my heart's child, Priya, gave me a huge hug & a smooch and then said:



Why do you have a STAR on your belly?



From scars to stars.
Thanks, Priya!