Lauren Guilford - After Birth

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IN THIS EPISODE

One week ago, Lauren Guilford — Los Angeles birth photographer and labor doula — sat down with Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC to share her plans for a home birth. Now she is back, just one week after giving birth to her first child, to tell the story while it is still fresh. The last days of pregnancy were mellow, but labor began in the early hours at 40 weeks and four days — would it fade by morning, or keep building? Lauren talks about trying to rest through early contractions while her husband slept, why her doula brain kept her from calling her midwives, doula, and birth photographer, and what happened when the tub calmed her without slowing anything down. As contractions closed to two to three minutes apart and her team finally arrived, would the birth pool, her bag of waters, and her carefully made plans hold up — and how fast would a first baby actually come?

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DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Welcome to the Informed Pregnancy and Parenting podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Elliott Berlin. My guest today is a guest who we've heard from before. In fact, just a week ago, we sat down to talk about her plans for birth. And I said, like I say, many times, birth is imminent. It could happen at any point. Here we are a week later and birth has happened. Lauren Guilford, congratulations.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Thank you. Thank you.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know anything. I have no details. I don't know anything. I'm going to find out with you, the audience, exactly what went on. But we could say this, you're a birth photographer, you're a doula, been to many, many births in both roles and you've seen a lot and I'm sure a lot of different experiences and a lot of different settings. And you decided you wanted to have a home birth and you surrounded yourself with amazing people and you made plans. Last time I spoke to you were just 40 weeks and we made some predictions, actually. Well, your husband and I made some predictions on when the baby would come. It turns out we were right. So how was your last days of pregnancy? So we have the podcast that saw you the next day.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah. And I saw you one more time. And our last visit was truly really in the last days. Yeah, the last days leading up to labor were actually really lovely. You know, we just were kind of wrapping things up. My husband was still working from home, but like nonetheless, still working. And we were trying to just nest a little bit. We were getting all our things ready or, you know, any last little bits of things ready at home. And I was doing my usual round of appointments between midwifery care and acupuncture and seeing you. So it was really nice as far as like that goes, it was really kind of mellow. I felt really content. I didn't feel any pressure or idea of like, oh, when's labor going to start and or it should or this or that.

LAUREN GUILFORD: And so I just was kind of moving through each day and trying to get lots of rest and taking care of myself. The only downside was I think in that last even two weeks before birth, but definitely those last few days, my SPD pain was just like pretty difficult, which it was fine. It wasn't like I couldn't do things. I just had to stop taking the dogs for walks, which I had really been loving. So it's just like giving up some things like that were, you know, kind of bummer, but it also felt really nice to just be able to rest at home.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And that's a pubic symphysis pain. So this is just dysfunction, SPD. Did you have any moments where you thought, oh, maybe this is it. But then it wasn't.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yes. And I think in hindsight, I think at the time I thought that a little bit, but was more very like quick to brush it off to the side, but probably really just wish now looking back and it probably just was my body getting ready, probably in some of the days leading up to like here and there, I'm a Raven, like saying to my husband, it almost feels like my period is about to start, like I'm not crampy, but it just has that sensation that like maybe I was like, that's the only thing I could compare it to, right. And if you would kind of laugh. And one of the times in particular, it was like before bed, he goes, oh, you know, wake me up if you're in labor tonight. And then of course, nothing happened. And I slept like a baby.

LAUREN GUILFORD: What great, wonderfully. And so there was that. And then probably two days prior to birth, I kind of was feeling that again, a little bit again, very. Like not discomfort, not stamping, nothing like that. Just kind of like a sensation that that was kind of there. And I started losing a little bit of my mucus bug. But being a doula, I was like, that doesn't really mean anything. There was no bloody show. Like I wasn't having any other signs. So like this kid could be in there for like, who knows, another week or two.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Since you're a doula also, people always ask, how do you know you're losing your mucus plug? What should I look for? What does it look like?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Totally. Well, if you're like any of my clients over the years, you can always text a picture of it to do well, if you have one. We see a lot of mucus plugs and we're always happy to confirm or, you know, let them know like, ah, I don't know. When you lose it in bigger chunks, it's more obvious. I think what's tricky is if you lose in bits and pieces, which I kind of was initially. And it looks like, you know, I mean, it doesn't gross me out because obviously I do all things first, but when it's more in like strips or pieces, it kind of does remind me of like, you know, when you're pretty sick or like you've ever had like bronchitis, like thicker kind of chunks of mucus. I guess bronchitis is a bad way to put it

LAUREN GUILFORD: because bronchitis is more like green and sickly. And if that were to be the case, that probably wouldn't be good. But yeah, just like thicker chunks of mucus and definitely when it's like the mucus plugs, some people will lose the whole thing. And then it's seems like they're just a glob of really thick snot for lack of a better term. So yeah, things look forward to whoever is out there listening to this.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. Where in relation to your due date did labor start?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So labor started in the early hours of 40 weeks and four days.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How did it start?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So it started so similarly to, I guess, how I kind of always thought it would start. We had gone to bed and you know, typical night of waking up to go to the bathroom, when if any times I woke up around 1 AM to get the bathroom and made my way to the bathroom in the dark. So I would always try to keep all like the light sauce, like fall back to sleep easy. And you know, I'm in there for just a minute, maybe. And I'm like, I'm realizing I'm kind of crappy, like a little bit more like actual true crampy. And I'm kind of just like, Oh, that's interesting. The official bathroom and make my way back in bed. And you know, by the time I get settled back in bed with all my pillows and all of that,

LAUREN GUILFORD: I start realizing, so maybe like five minutes has gone by and I'm like, I think I'm having a contraction. And, you know, I'm laying there trying to like settle. And sure enough, within like a few minutes, another one. And one of those first ones, I can't remember if it was the first one exactly, or one of the first three was really long. Like it was like kind of going on for a while and I didn't time it, but I could tell. And I was like, Oh, well, maybe it's not my body might just be confused. Something else might be happening. But within honestly, a matter of like 10 minutes, I could already tell. Cause they were already kind of coming fairly consistent. Those first handful of

LAUREN GUILFORD: contractions, you know, I'd say first dozen were already between like six to eight minutes apart. And there were a few in the beginning that were really long. Cause I did felt like my little contraction timer. And there was a few that were like two minutes long. I was like, so of course my doula brain got going thinking, Oh shoot, maybe the baby's in a funky position. And my uterus is working really hard to try to like rotate them. So that's like where my brain initially went. And so that's kind of the like first little like how I knew, okay, I think we're onto something here.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So those are really contractions, two questions about them. Where did you feel them and how would you rate the intensity of them?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So I felt them really low in my low belly, which also helped me feel better about that thought of is baby in a funky position? Cause I wasn't feeling it in my back at all. It's very low belly and do intensity. I would say, you know, they were intense enough that I was like, Oh yeah, these are uncomfortable, but yeah, I would say probably still fairly low intensity or like mild ish. Was it exciting to you as like, okay, this is it. Yeah, I was definitely excited, you know, cause I always joked one of these nights, I'm gonna go to bed and wake up and labor, but it never happened. So I was like, oh, it's just one of those nights. So that was exciting. But again, my doula brain was still very much on at that point. And I was like, Oh, you know,

LAUREN GUILFORD: but this could be, I can have some of this for the night and the daytime could roll around and it might fade away. So it could start and keep moving now, or it could pick back up tomorrow. Like we'll see, but it wasn't this exciting feeling of, Oh, probably most likely I'll be meeting my baby at some point, maybe this weekend.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. So this is early labor. What time is it when it starts?

LAUREN GUILFORD: I'll give it like one 30. Cause about one 30 is when I realized like, Oh yeah, I'm having contractions.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: One 30 in the morning. This is a good start. Very curious what happens next. We're going to find out after a quick commercial break. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy Podcast. We're talking to Lauren Guilford about her very recent birth story. Okay, 1.30 in the morning, you go to the restroom and boom, you start having contractions and they're low, very low in your belly, not in your back. You feel them, but they're not overwhelming. What happens next?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So what happens next is, again, my doula brain is really working at this point and it goes, this could be a while. It's early in the night and I need sleep. So I rolled over and took a sleep aid, like a unisom, and I was like, okay, I need to be able to rest. And my plan was, as if I could control labor, to stay in bed and sleep slash rest as much as possible and just see how the next, however much of contractions and labor would unfold, or if it would potentially, like if I would doze off or truly fall asleep and then they would fade away. So it was kind of my, you know, let's see if it's going to go one way or another moment.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Was your husband awake at that point?

LAUREN GUILFORD: No, he was sound asleep. He's a deep sleeper.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Oh yeah. Okay. So, um, were you able to fall asleep?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yes and no. Shortly after that, this is where it starts to get like funny for me is shortly after that they were, cause from the start, they were kind of like six, eight minutes. And I would say probably by one 45. So just a matter of like really not long at all, maybe like 15, 30 minutes, they were then about like every five to six minutes apart. And I thought again, who knows? Like, this is so early. My body's just, you know, trying to work itself out. And I had that contraction timer app open. So I thought, okay, I'm all settled in here and took my sleep aid. It's going to set in. And I didn't feel thankfully, cause I'm sure it would have been harder if I got like, of course as excited, but if I was really like up and out, I'm excited.

LAUREN GUILFORD: That would have been really hard to fall back asleep. And I was still in a very calm state. And so I got all settled. I had my phone by my pillow and just had the screen open, not like super low. And I would just close my eyes and rest in between. And I do think that I was able to probably over the next 30, 45 minutes doze off a little bit in between. And then once I realized, you know, I would kind of like look at, you know, my little phone and see the pattern. And once I realized like, oh, these are coming really consistently around that, like every five minutes. I definitely need sleep and I don't need to time them right now. Like it's fine. Like I just need to ignore my phone and shut off that screen and just rest.

LAUREN GUILFORD: And so for the next then hour till probably, yeah. So like, if that was like one 30 to two 30, probably from like two 30 to three or three 30, I just tried my best to rest. And so I would wake up for the contract. And would then kind of just doze off back in between and they stayed that like pretty consistent pattern that whole time

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Have you still fast asleep?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, so that's why I mentioned that time of like three three thirty because then around I think I was in that too I got up to the bathroom. I had to keep going to bathrooms I kept him like very pinchy bladder and went to the bathroom and then around three again like so I was going back from it seemed like every hour and made my way in there went back to the bathroom again came up to bed and You know got all settled and a few minutes later I you know see my husband can stir and get up in the bathroom. So clear. I'd like woke him up and I was like, oh I gotta tell him he's awake. How's my time? And so as he comes back in I roll over and I'm like, hey, hey, I'm having contractions. I'm in labor

LAUREN GUILFORD: And he's like, you know half asleep and I can't really see him. It's dark, right? He gave here in his voice and he's like, oh, okay What do you do need me to do anything right now or something to that effect? And I just said, you know, no go back to sleep, you know, I'll wake you up when I need you and You know, as he kind of jokes, he's like, you know, God tell me twice And went back to sleep and I still stayed at that point I was still in bed resting in between but at that point I did start timing them again because I felt They were starting to feel stronger at this point There were some that were like four four and a half minutes apart and then some that weren't like five

LAUREN GUILFORD: so probably anywhere between that like four and a half to like five and a half minutes apart at that point and Doing a little bit more intense and so it was enough that I couldn't fully fall asleep in between but it was really nice To just rest my eyes in between and to know that my body was just relaxed and resting And I was still trying to like play this game with myself like stay in bed as long as possible And so, you know right back to sleep and I still stayed in bed for a little bit. Okay, you had

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: midwives a doula birth photographer Did you consider reaching out to them at any point?

LAUREN GUILFORD: I didn't tell anybody at that point

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So your husband found out

LAUREN GUILFORD: Had him woken up. I probably wouldn't have told him at that point

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Yes, your husband found out went right back to bed. Yeah, and everybody else is sleeping peacefully has no idea

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, and you know, it's again my doula brain was too on at that point I promise it eventually turns off but we didn't talk about that. Yeah, people have been to a lot of birth

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It's very hard. Yeah, you like not doula yourself

LAUREN GUILFORD: Totally and I knew that and my doula had teased me about that ahead of time I mean lovingly like trying to pretend myself like hey, like, you know, you don't have to do that and my midwives as well We're always so sweet. We're like that's what we're here for, you know, and I know that right because I want for any of my clients I want them to tell me all these things. I just tell them, you know by the time I hear from them They'll say like oh, I've been in labor for such-and-such in that time and I'm like, why don't you call me?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're not calling anybody yep

LAUREN GUILFORD: And here I was not doing it and kind of it was because you know again like having all the experience I felt like well, I'm a first-time mom. This is gonna be a while I should at least let them sleep as long as possible so that they're more well rested to support me when I really need it

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So you're expecting your birth to go on for quite some time. Yeah

LAUREN GUILFORD: So at that point, you know, I thought that it was gonna be that day But again, you know at that point in time was like three three three in the morning I thought maybe like, you know by evening or something or even later than that So I thought I still had you know, the long haul ahead of me. What happens next? I Started realizing. Okay. Well, these are definitely getting more intense. They're uncomfortable. I love water. I love baths I love showers and so I was like, I'm just gonna you know Go get in my regular bathtub in my bedroom when you said your regular tub

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Does that mean you also had a portable birth pool?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yes, so since I love water so much I always kind of had this not just vision because like water birth is pretty I just always thought that would be such a supportive like tool and comfort measure for me when it came time to birth and so

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You got in your regular tub

LAUREN GUILFORD: It felt really good at that time interestingly enough. I guess I had always pictured Getting into any kind of water shower tub whatever and labor would like take the edge off Intensity wise or pain wise and I didn't have that experience but not to say I didn't love getting in the water I did it felt really good I wasn't at that point thankfully too tense or anything but I was able to really relax in between So I could kind of like, you know almost doze off nothing was like asleep in the tub But like just kind of rest off to the side and really let my body relax in between the contractions and then I'd have To kind of get up and move accordingly to whatever felt good once the contractions started to build

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay, so for your experience it was calming but the intensity still felt the same

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, and I think part of that too is for some people and it depending on stages of labor Getting in water warm water or hot water Whatever can actually slow down contractions which can be a helpful tool if things are like Seemingly too intense before they need to be so I think a part of it may be subconsciously thought Oh get a little easier when I'm in my bathtub because this will clearly slow down and it did not.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: It didn't slow down when you went into your tub. Did it stay the same frequency or did it start to pick up more intense, more intense and closer together? Yeah. Yeah. So I got in the tub around,

LAUREN GUILFORD: I think like five and actually what was filling up again, do the brain. I was like, okay, I need to make sure my water bottles filled. I need to go have some food. I need to get snacks. So I made my way into the kitchen while it was filling. My dogs were very confused. They were like asleep looking at me in the living room and half excited because they probably like, Ooh, do we get breakfast early? No. So I got a yogurt and filled in my water bottle and made my way back into the bathroom and that's when I had the tub. And so I was trying to, you know, kind of rest. Like it goes in between, like, you know, to take some bites of yogurt, some water. And when I had first gone in the tub, they're probably like every,

LAUREN GUILFORD: you know, we're increasing that like four to five minutes around that point. And shortly, like probably within 30, 20, 30 minutes of being in the tub, they were maybe even less than that. And I probably didn't really notice though. Cause I was timing up. I wasn't really looking at the time. I was just hitting the button. They were suddenly like every three to four minutes. So they were just like ramping up. And at that point, thankfully I wasn't having any evil two minute contractions. They were just like consistently a minute, sometimes upwards of like a minute and 30 seconds or something, but mostly just a minute long. So they were kind of really getting into that rhythm.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You know, at the beginning you said, I felt it tensing up, but you know, it wasn't difficult. Then it sounded like it would wake you up. And you would have to kind of breathe through them. Does it pick up another notch in terms of the intensity?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah. So those ones are definitely feeling more intense, still feeling them in the same place. And my lower back was achy, but I wasn't having any kind of back rabor. I just could feel it like as the peak of the contractions, like just my pips just kind of a slight radiation of that contraction. And they were definitely more intense. Like I had to really focus on them and breathe through them. I wasn't vocalizing or anything, but just was definitely very focused and having to like focus on my breath. And I, for me, I was kind of doing a count that was in for four. I mean, I wasn't really counting. That was like kind of about like this amount of time, like in for four and like out for anywhere from like six to eight kind of

LAUREN GUILFORD: a thing. I was really trying to focus on having my ex healthy longer than my in-house to really relax.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: How long were you in the tub for?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So I was in the tub for about 45 minutes, maybe slightly longer.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And why did you get out of the tub?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So as things were increasing intensity, I was also realizing how close they were getting. The contractions were getting to each other. I decided it was time I needed to wake up my husband.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Okay. How did that go?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Good. Although, you know, as I was in the tub, so I was like, I don't really want to get out of the tub. I was like, okay, I can holler out of the room and yell his name. And I realized that's not going to work because I had the door shut. And we sleep with a sound machine on because we're just very large babies. And I was like, there's no way he's going to hear me. I'm just going to be like screaming his name. So I was like, okay, okay, I got to grab this stuff. So I slowly make my way out of the tub, except it's pretty hard to get yourself out of the tub and dry yourself off and having contractions every three minutes, it turns out. Like getting out and I'm like, put my leg over and I'm like, okay, oh, contraction.

LAUREN GUILFORD: I'm like leaning on my bathroom counter and then trying to dry myself off. And then I'm suddenly like freezing. And, um, cause it's, you know, like five 45 in the morning in our house. So it's like cold and wet. And I'm like waddling my way back into the bedroom and, you know, find him like, you know, kind of shaking a little bit at first being gentle, like, Hey, Hey, Hey, Jeff, it's not waking up. And I'm like a little letter job. It's time for you to be awake. Okay. Okay. I'm up. I'm up. And he like, Peter got out of bed and started to like, he just immediately went into like helper mode. He was like, you know, checking into how I was doing, of course, and like getting a little run down and I'm sure within it,

LAUREN GUILFORD: like probably the first 30 seconds of him being awake, I had another contraction. So I'm like, he's been clearly being thrown into it like, Oh yeah, this is really happening. And then he's asking, you know, kind of how he could help me. And I was like, well, I think at the moment just go start to get some of our birth items together because we had everything we needed for the birth. But because I was always convinced I was going to go to 41 weeks or a little bit more. We were waiting until that day to go buy all of our snacks. So we had all fresh snacks in the house for us and the birthday and all of our birth stuff was in the house, but just like not altogether in one place.

LAUREN GUILFORD: And so we were planning on getting it all together in one place in our bedroom. So nothing was like together and we didn't have snacks, which actually I forgot to mention that when I was in bed at one of those hours and I was half asleep in bed in between contractions, I was on Amazon or like whole foods delivery, ordering snacks to arrive to our house in the morning.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Still not in the mood to call any of your team?

LAUREN GUILFORD: At that point, I did start to feel, I like went back into the bathroom, I think to like grab my robe or something. And I was kind of then got like stuck in there for a bit because they were coming so close. And I think within maybe two contractions of being back into the bathroom. So this again was probably like just before 6 a.m. You know, I was like calling out to Jeff because he's already starting to get like stripped the badge, like, you know, get things already. And I was like, no, I really think we should let Rebecca know. And he was like, okay, you know, do you want her to like calm right now? No, no, I just, you know, let her know. I told him like exactly what to say.

LAUREN GUILFORD: You know, tell him that, you know, this has been happening. This is what I've done so far, like running through it. I do a list of like letting her know all these things. And shortly before I got out of the bathtub, I think just the final like last bit of my mucus club and that did have

blood in it. So I was like, let her know that. Yes. So I'm telling him all these things to text her. So he gets a group chat going. And so I could kind of see it popping I mean, I'm not in a headspace to be able to read it. You know, I'm just kind of still looking at my contraption timer to keep an eye on things and just focusing on my breath. And I always knew that my doulas, you know, works a ton with

LAUREN GUILFORD: my midwife team. And so they're close too. So I was kind of always this assumption more or less. I mean, my midwife still said, call us, you know, be sure to call us. But I always knew that once I told my doula, she would let them know right away, you know, to just like, hey, you know, this is what's going on with Warren. So that way I think that was the last thing for us to try and manage. And so I'm sure that's actually a good question I should ask her. I've asked her about that. I'm sure she probably texts them shortly thereafter to be like, hey, just a heads up. Like, this is what's going on with Warren. But yes, I was right around 6 a.m. that I was finally starting to alert my team.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And were they thinking maybe we should come over now?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Or were they? Yeah. So I think that my doula, she was trying to, it's cute because I could look back at the group chat now to like see where her and my husband were trying to like get me through it. And I think she had a similar thought that I did, which was this seems a little too intense too soon. You know, she was asking my husband, like, does she need support right now? And, you know, does she I think that was one of the first things, does she need support right now? And I couldn't think of what I wanted because nothing was, you know, like the tub was nice, but like really it was just my breathing that was getting me through it. And so I couldn't conceptualize

LAUREN GUILFORD: oh, yes, I need someone here massaging my back right now or something. I didn't have an urge of like, I need that to get me through. And so it still felt like, oh, no, like, I think I'm, you know, this is intense, but like I'm managing. And in my mind again, I was thinking like, oh, like, so maybe like eat breakfast, have some coffee, take care of yourself before you come on over kind of thing. And I didn't say that because there was no words, right? I was already now in hindsight, funny looking back, but I was already losing that language, right? Like I was just kind of like going off into my own little head space. And so she was giving me suggestions. She was like, oh, well, have you seen

LAUREN GUILFORD: the dogs yet today? Like maybe go out in the living room, like see the dogs. And in my mind, I'm like, I don't want to see the dog. I could only like, you know, some of those like irritations that like, as labor is getting more intense, it was raining that morning. And so she's like, oh, maybe it's really pretty outside. Like, maybe you want to go like standing in your back porch and like, you know, see the rain. And in my mind, I was like, no, it's all these things, you know? And I didn't say that. And I did all those things. I went out in the living room, saw the dogs, they were frantic. And I immediately like turned around and came back because they were

LAUREN GUILFORD: like my babies. And so they're like, oh no, mom, it's like they could sense it. And they were kind of like, you know, sniffing me really crazily and, you know, kind of half jumping on me. And I was like, oh, no, no, this is not a good idea. And I did go to my back porch and just like my robe and I stepped out. And I remember for a split second, I was like, oh, it's so pretty. And then I immediately like a contraction was starting. I was like, oh, I can't be outside. I need to go back inside.

So everything I was trying to do to see if it would change my labor at all, maybe to slow it down or whatnot, to gauge if like, yeah, is this really picking up this fast or is it going to start to slow down as the sun comes up type of thing?

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So everything you tried to maybe slow them down, not only didn't work, but things are picking up, getting closer together,

LAUREN GUILFORD: stronger, longer surges. Yes. And I'm thinking, where's my break? Just, you know, so yeah. And things were just super intense and totally at that point, like intense, everything was still feeling in the same places in my body was just definitely cranked up quite a few notches. And my contractions were at this point really consistently two to three minutes apart minute long. And that's when my doula arrives.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: All right. The team is starting to arrive. What happens next? Soon after this commercial break. Welcome back to the Informed Pregnancy podcast. We're talking to birth doula, birth photographer and birther, Lauren Guilford. Your labor is picking up fast and the team has been alerted. Your doula shows up. What happens next?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, so she shows up and in that meantime while she was driving over, I had gotten back in the tub. We like filled it back up with like hot water because I'm thinking, okay, this is the real deal. That's when it really hits me. Like this isn't slowing down. Like my baby's coming and I need something else because it wasn't working. I should say wasn't working but walking around trying to lay in bed. Like it wasn't quite giving me the rest I wanted in between the contractions. I thought, okay, I'm gonna get back in the tub. So I'm there when my doula arrives and you know, she gets right into being the fabulous doula that she is. And photographer. And photographer, totally. Yeah, she comes out like, you know, gear in hand

LAUREN GUILFORD: and starts capturing my husband and I together. And of course checking in on all the things and seeing how I'm doing.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And does she give you an assessment?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, so she's, you know, kind of checking in on, you know, where I'm doing it and asking like how long I've been back in the tub. You know, kind of getting some information of what has happened in the last 30 minutes. She was closer than 30 minutes but in the last chunk of time since we were talking before she got in the car to head over. And I think at that time too because she was updating my midwives. So she was trying to like, you know, see how I was laboring, gather some details from me to then ultimately let my midwives know like, hey, yeah, you guys should go ahead and come on over.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And how long between then and the time they got there?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, so my midwives arrived at right around 9 a.m.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: So about an hour later. Okay. And during that hour, were you in the tub the whole time?

LAUREN GUILFORD: I was. Yeah, I was in the tub the whole time.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: This is your regular bathtub.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yep, my regular tub and my bathroom. And yeah, so I was in there the whole time and, you know, trying various positions, nothing. That this, I really knew things were like really ramping up because like nothing during a contraction felt good. Which I know that happens, you know, but still being a human, I was trying to like find something like there must be another way that this feels slightly better, you know? And no matter what, like no matter what position I was in, it would feel really intense. And that is when I started feeling a bit more pressure. And I remember telling Rebecca and my husband, not that my husband would particularly know, but I was just like, I feel a lot of pressure and I know it's my bag of waters.

LAUREN GUILFORD: And that bag of waters is bulging.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Where was that pressure? Where did you feel it?

LAUREN GUILFORD: I felt it mostly like really low. I mean, I felt it like truly, it felt like it was against like my cervix, like the same kind of area that I used to feel my baby like push their head, you know, and their little hands like nudging. So I felt it really low in my pelvis and like slightly against, you know, kind of slightly, like it wasn't quite like, you know, because some people talk about pressure and having that like sensation like they have to have a bowel movement. It wasn't quite to that extent. It was much more just down really low in my pelvis at that point.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Did it break?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So no, but I became determined that I wanted it to break. And I remember I had this split second thought of like, I wonder if I could just ask, you know, when my midwives arrive, if they could just break my water for me. And I was just immediately like, no, Lauren, we're not gonna do that.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: I don't know if this is you, but I've been to a couple of births where midwives for sure, but doulas also learn to check their own cervix.

LAUREN GUILFORD: So I had been checking my cervix. So earlier in the tub, the first time I ever got in the tub, I checked it and I was two to three centimeters. So when we had told my doula to come, that was one of the details I told my husband to include just that like, hey, there's been progress. I'm two to three centimeters. And when I was in the tub before my midwives arrived, I self-checked again, because I think I needed to have that reassurance because it was getting so intense. I wanted to know like, but am I progressing or is this just like some weird, crazy labor that's going nowhere? So I checked myself again and I didn't at that time. It's hard to give myself a number because those contractions were coming so frequently

LAUREN GUILFORD: that I really was only in there for like a brief moment, but it was just enough to feel that a lot more of my cervix had gone away. And I could feel that there was a chunk of my cervix left towards the anterior part of my cervix, which also makes sense. Cause every time I went to like all like hands and knees, it really didn't feel good. And I'm sure cause that cervix really needed to go away. So yeah, so I kind of had that idea. So my midwives arrived and did a full assessment of me and checking in on baby and everything was perfect. My blood pressure was super great. Baby

sounded phenomenal. And she offered, she said, do you want to get checked? If you don't want to, you don't need to. Clearly you're in like active labor.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Like this is going. really well. Everything looks great. What do you think? And at that point, I didn't care as much about the number, but I kind of thought, you know, maybe it's a smart idea for me to get out of the tub to like switch things up a bit. And so I was like, yeah, I think I should get out of the tub. Like, why don't we just go in and check my cervix anyways? So I make my way into my bedroom, hop in the bed, which that was a whole thing. The, the chuck was not uncomfortable at all. Getting into highly uncomfortable. Um, so she texts me and I was six to seven centimeters and fully effaced and baby was really low. Oh, wow. Okay. So things are moving along. Yeah. And I laughed out loud and said, that's it.

LAUREN GUILFORD: But that's transition at that point. Yeah, totally. And my whole team was like, you know, laughing back and they're like, that's great. Like, you know, you're going to meet your baby soon. And I wasn't ever like in my head thinking, oh, the baby's never coming. That was never a thought. I was just like, yeah, you're right. I can just like, I was getting that head space of like, you know, yeah, you know, just kind of that birth work or confirmation of like, totally, this is progressing. Like, I know when people start to vocalize some of these things of like, how much longer or, you know, like, man, this is really hard, you know, it's transitional talk. So I was reassured in that as well.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: Is that when you generally fill the tub?

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, I think around then the tub was inflated, or right after them, they inflated it and they started to get the water going. And then in the meantime, my midwife, like, it kind of confirmed like, yeah, you felt like this bit of cervix in front. And so after finding out that update assessment of where I was at cervix wise, my doula was like, hey, well, you know, you're in sought and I was saying, I'm so tired. I just, you know, can we go back those five minute apart contractions? I just want to sleep. And she was, you know, loving on me and reassuring me and I was like, why don't you stay in bed for a little bit? Let's get you in a couple positions to, you know, just try and help that cervix

LAUREN GUILFORD: melts away. So I did either side, like basically like extended exaggerated side lie with pillows underneath, you know, whatever leg, depending on what side I was on was like crossing over. And that was really uncomfortable. And I remember thinking like, man, I feel so bad every time I've done this to any one of my clients. But at the same time, it just felt so intense. And I just knew it was so intense because I needed to do that work. Like I knew that that was what needed to be done. And so at this point, like, you know, from the time I do look after even I was definitely vocal for the contractions, like kind of low like moaning and still focusing on my breath, but I thought sort of

LAUREN GUILFORD: get pretty grunty during that time. And I remember thinking like, oh, my throat's gonna be so sore tomorrow. Spoiler alert, my throat was very sore the next day, still a little raspy. And so yeah, so we're doing that. And then after a little bit, I finally was just like, I can't, okay, I can't, I got to get a bed, like, this is too much, I got to do something else. So you go back in the bathroom. And this is where things really start to kind of turning around that final, you know, curve getting closer to meeting baby at that point. And as I'm making my way back to the bathroom, they're,

you know, my midwife, and I do it, they're like, you know, like, it's been a little bit since, you know, you went to the bathroom, like,

LAUREN GUILFORD: let's try to enter your bladder. So I'm like walking, I just like, see the toilet, and I suddenly terrified. I'm like, oh, this is suck. Like, I don't want to sit on that thing. So no, what the toilet does me lovingly call it the dilation station. Like, this is gonna be intense. And so I sit down, I'm thankfully able to go to the bathroom a little bit. And then contraction hits. And I'm like, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, like, stand up. My husband's right there. And I didn't stand fully, I was actually kind of like midway. So it's kind of like squatting over the toilet, the pressure is too intense to sit on it. So holding on to my husband and half squatting over the toilet. And this is when I was really mad at my

LAUREN GUILFORD: bag of waters. I wanted it gone. And my midwife asked me like, well, if you bear down a little bit, like, you know, what happens? So I like kind of bear down and nothing really happens. And I'm like, dang it, that bag of water, like I just in my head and thinking like, just go away. Go away. So I got my baby. And I think I thought, you know, in the moment, I thought if that just goes away, I'll have a teensy bit of relief. And then I'll push out my baby, you know, so whatever reason I've had this, like, I think it was kind of this like carrot dangling in front of me. Like if I just break it, I'll get a little relief and then I'll push out my baby. And a couple contractions later, it broke. And because I was half squatting over

LAUREN GUILFORD: the toilet, it was great. It just broke right into the toilet. It was very convenient.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: You're a very tidy birther.

LAUREN GUILFORD: Yeah, very tidy birther. So my midwife pops over to double check to make sure the color and it thinks it was clear. And then that's where things really shifted sensation wise, because I really did start to feel like a different kind of pressure. And now it makes total sense, because the pressure I was feeling before was so much in my cervix, like it felt like really low in my pelvis, like I could almost picture that was on the cervix and totally was because my bag of waters was just pushing up against whatever cervix that was left. So once it was gone, instead of just having that very like specific area of pressure. um well the pressure grew but I did start to feel it more like kind of back into my whole pelvis

LAUREN GUILFORD: like and back into even you know kind of I guess a little bit more of that kind of bowel movement type pressure yeah it really was and it was interesting it was almost like not the sounds it could be really painful but I almost could feel like more pressure on my tailbone even like it just was really everything was getting really low you know my midwife asked me to knowing you know because when she arrived here I was like telling her like oh I checked myself and I was there and she laughed at me and she was just like oh Lauren you do like you know like just as you know kind of like you know laughing at me doing all this stuff so she asked me that she was like well you want to feel on that and tell me what you feel and I kind of like nodded

LAUREN GUILFORD: like oh yeah I want to feel so I felt inside and sure enough there was baby's head and one I mean that's as you can imagine so encouraging I was like oh that's my kid that's cool and two was the coolest feeling because it's a duet and for those that maybe don't know this listening and like do is don't perform clinical tasks so while yes I was checking myself I don't do that for any

clients you know I I'm not qualified to do that and that's not my role as a doula so I've never felt a baby's head and you know in that position oh interesting

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: and at this point you still don't know what you're having right no and I remember I felt

LAUREN GUILFORD: and I was like I think I even said like that's my baby my baby's right there so it's kind of this you know and everyone else was you know chiming in like I'm gonna meet your baby so soon that's your baby so from that point though I was like okay but I need to get out this toilet because now this pressure is like oh too much like I need to get off oh so where do you go so I started just trying to make my way out of the bathroom but I'm sure anybody who's given birth you know listening is probably laughing and like I have that but you like I was just kind of stuck like I couldn't really move I was able to get off the toilet and just right next to our vanities right next to the toilet so I just kind of

LAUREN GUILFORD: turned around and then I was kind of just leaning on the counter and I was kind of doing this weird dance of sorts of like I would come up on my tippy toes like I would switch my legs and the contraption just to like give myself some type of distraction and then I started to kind of like I'd hold on to because the sink was right there so I'd kind of hold on to the lip of the counter and I would kind of like lean back and use this leverage and squat into it I swissed down and my doula was behind me you know at this point doing amazing counter pressure like double hip squeeze I was so helpful and lovely and my husband was helping had gone into the bedroom to help my midwife finish drying up the

LAUREN GUILFORD: birth pool tub because unfortunately we don't have an electric water heater so we ran out of water or hot water so they were boiling hot water on the stove in the kitchen and then bringing it and putting it in my birthday old school old school and unfortunately I mean our house is small but it's on like the other side of the house so you know it's like a little bit of a trap and then having to like you know work around the dogs because the dogs this whole time wanted to be in the room so bad but we had them locked out and and I keep asking at this point like okay in between contractions can I get in the tub can I get in the tub and I felt like I asked a lot of times I probably asked twice because I wasn't there that long

LAUREN GUILFORD: my water broke I think it was like 1101 a.m and I was in the tub I think by 1115 so I really wasn't sure my contractions were coming every two three minutes that's quite a lot of contractions in that time but it was still a relatively short amount of time my water breaking before I was able to get into the birth tub so I think at one point I even said it kind of louder to my midwife you know because I was thinking like well maybe Rebecca doesn't know like maybe I can get in the tub like maybe now it's time you know so I come hollering out like can I get in and the time I hear like oh yes sweetie it's like it's all ready for you I'm like oh my god and so I quickly try to make my way around the corner to get the tub before

LAUREN GUILFORD: I you know get bombarded with more contractions and right when I got in there was like this immediate relief still not taking like pain away but like just relief of just total relaxation because my body was starting to I was still able to relax in between thankfully I was kind of surprised by that but it was getting a little bit harder to relax in between because that pressure was

building so much and so I got in the tub and you know I'd already been kind of bearing down and it felt wonderful and I immediately started pushing and it was lovely nobody was telling me like what to do and they were all just kind of there holding space and you know listening to baby's heartbeat obviously they kept checking on baby and I

LAUREN GUILFORD: just went for it all my instincts took over and I was pushing into my hands and it felt like a push forever but I didn't and before long I started to feel that you know for a lot of people dreaded sensation ring of fire for me it wasn't dreaded I mean it was very intense but I was like so excited at that point because I was like oh my baby's right there like I'm about to have my baby and thankfully my team was like kind of the only thing they really told me during that time was you know when you start to feel that ring of fire just you know let us know so we can help make sure that you slow down a little bit during that time you know stretch those tissues so you don't tear as much and I was like okay

LAUREN GUILFORD: although I had this out of like I'm just gonna you know I wanted to push around let me but thankfully I listened to them. So as I was pushing out the baby's head, it surprised me that when I thought the baby's head was fully out and I could feel it in my hand, there was like a little bit left of the head. And I assume maybe that was the baby's chin then coming out. And the only thing at that point that was, I guess, unexpected was I noticed, and this all kind of happened in a split second, is I next expected the baby to feel the baby rotate. And the baby wasn't doing that. I wasn't feeling the baby's shoulders rotate. And so I actually had true shoulder dystocia, but nothing about it was scary or

LAUREN GUILFORD: even felt like emergent. I mean, that could be something that could be an emergency, of course, but my team was super calm and they just, you know, I had wanted a more like hands-off delivery. I really wanted to like deliver the baby into my hand, like really pull the baby out. And so I just said, Hey, we're gonna, you know, hop on in here to help baby out. And I was just like, yeah, yes. And they just, you know, help tuck baby's shoulder right in it, like really easily. Baby just kind of came under. So they're in the tub with you? They weren't in the tub with me, but the tub that I was in was kind of a smaller tub. And so it was more shallow. So they were able to really easily, like just totally

LAUREN GUILFORD: be right there. Okay. Yeah. So I just reached in and yeah. And I thankfully, again, I didn't have to get out of the tub and I have to move. They were able to just kind of reach right in and just like, you know, help get baby's shoulder right under and out. And my hands were right there. So I continued to write, as that happened, help pull baby out. And all of a sudden I see this chubby baby, like in between my legs and pull the baby out to me. And they cried right away. And it was just like the most incredible moment ever. And then this strong little baby lifts up their head and looks over at my husband and we're all, all of us, the whole room is like, Oh my God, like that's so cute. What

LAUREN GUILFORD: is happening? So the baby was underwater. Yeah. So born in the water, born in the water.

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: And then when the baby lifted their head, did they come out of the water?

LAUREN GUILFORD: So, no, they didn't come out of the water. Oh, well, yes, but I mean, baby was fully born into the water. And then, you know, I lifted baby out of the water onto my chest and then baby, you know, let out a big cry and, you know, and they immediately were like, you know, checking in on baby and listening to baby. And then baby just like right after that, like lifts their head up off my chest and looks over at my husband. And it was like the sweetest thing. And I think there's even a picture of me there seeing, cause I'm like shocked. I'm like, Oh, whoa, what are you doing? And, you know, baby kind of plops their head back down. I look at my husband and I was like, okay, are you ready to see like what we had? You want to like meet our baby?

LAUREN GUILFORD: And then I just pull the baby off of my chest so that their bod was kind of sitting on my stomach and here we're looking. And of course it was a girl. And so I saw these little lady bits and I was like, Oh my God, we call my daughter. And my husband, Maribel sort of broke into tears. So it was a very, very sweet moment. And the best surprise of my life, like I hands down, like that was the coolest thing. And even throughout labor in the back of my mind, I kept thinking, and I wouldn't even say it out loud, like, you know, especially when contractions really tough, like I'd kind of rub my belly and say things like, baby, I can't wait to meet you. Who are you? Like, who's in there? I'm

LAUREN GUILFORD: going to meet you soon. I know you're working hard too. We're both working hard. I can't wait to meet you. So of course I would have probably still felt that way if I knew what we were having, but it was just this extra sweetness to be like, okay, I'm going to cross that finish line and I'm going to see who our baby is. So I'm going to meet them for the first time. It's a cool moment. It's a cool moment. Wow. What an intense birth you had,

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: like to just concentrate it over what started at 3 a.m. kind of. So contractions were like 130

LAUREN GUILFORD: and then she was born at 1210. So what's that? Like 11 hours? Yeah. I mean, for a first baby, that's pretty quick. Yeah, I was not expecting that. I don't think it was a daytime birth and I wasn't expecting that either. And as a photographer, let me tell you, that is a special gift because the lighting, it was, yeah, it was beautiful. And I was like, thank you, little baby. Like that was the best gift you could have ever given me, you know, a pretty straightforward birth. Of course, you know, shoulder dystocia isn't necessarily considered a part of some straightforward birth, but it was handled so safely and swiftly. And it thankfully wasn't scary at all. And baby was totally fine. And I was totally fine.

LAUREN GUILFORD: But really everything else was just such a straightforward, safe, healthy birth. Like I couldn't be more thankful. Like I still am so in awe of the experience and this little baby

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: making their way into the world. Yeah, you're multitasking with the podcasting and feeding baby. Now we could say feeding her. Feeding her. Her name is Rory. So feeding this little girl. So sweet. Yeah. Well, Lauren, congratulations. That's a really beautiful story. And it's hard to believe that just over a week ago we were sitting together and we're like, this is the story I want to have. And I'm confident we're going to have this story. and boom, other than a couple of little details. Yeah. You know, things went according to plan,

LAUREN GUILFORD: which is really nice. Yeah, I feel really, really lucky. I'm grateful to have worked with

DR. ELLIOT BERLIN, DC: you during pregnancy. I look forward to working with you postpartum. Yeah, fix this body. And I'm grateful for you sharing your story. Thank you so much for joining us. Yes. Thank you so much for having me. And at home, thanks for listening to the informed pregnancy podcast connect with us online, perhaps Instagram, if you've heard of it. We are at Dr. Berlin D O C T O R B E R L I N.

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