
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: She Was Born in Toyota, Michigan

By Jesse L. Roth

We continue our series of personal, impactful stories that have shaped how we practice law.

One of the things I like about being a litigator in Michigan is driving to places I've never been. Like Cadillac, Michigan, for example, where I attended depositions blocks away from where, 120 years earlier, an armed, drunken brass band seized the county records in an effort to move the county seat to their hometown.

But this piece is about a different drive, one during which I should've blown more red lights than I did. Hindsight is always 0 to 60, right?

My wife and I had a new baby last July. Well, my wife had the baby. This story is about not taking credit where credit is not due, as you'll see.

It was Sunday afternoon and my wife was feeling contractions that were getting stronger, longer, and closer together. Having been through this process four times before with our other children, we thought we were experts at interpreting these signs, and to the hospital we went. Half a day later, back home we went. It had been false labor, brought on by dehydration in the Michigan summer, and knocked out by a couple glasses of ice water.

Fast forward to Tuesday, when the contractions resumed. But by this time we had started to doubt ourselves. She drank some water and told me I didn't need to come home early from work. But by the time I arrived home in the evening, the situation had escalated. My wife said we needed to go, now. I changed the kids into pajamas, herded them into the car, and dropped them off at a friend's house. I raced back home, and my wife took her place in a generously reclined front passenger seat (the back row, I'm afraid, was occupied by three car seats), and off we went. My phone said we would be at the hospital in 23 minutes. Another thing I learned that evening is the value of every minute.

I recall hearing some time ago that if Martians would visit a labor and delivery unit, they'd think the patients were dying. Extreme (I'm told this is an understatement) pain, loss of control of your body, loss of blood, loss of other fluids (this story won't get any more graphic, I promise) and at the end... a new human life. Pretty amazing (again, an understatement) how it works. Well, the other drivers on the road that evening might as well have been Martians, and probably were a bit concerned about what they saw happening to the poor lady in my front passenger seat.

Finally, 23 minutes after we set off, I pulled up to the emergency room entrance to the hospital, threw open my door, yanked the keys out of the ignition (my wife tells me she nearly killed me for shutting off the air conditioning), jumped out of the car, ran to her side of the car, and flung open her door. Then, I pivoted around to get help for my wife, and saw a security guard coming toward us with a wheelchair. I motioned that he should come faster, and we both turned toward the car... and there was my wife... holding our new baby against her chest. Huh? How did she do that?

Needless to say, the entire emergency room department came charging out the doors, and, with the help of a doctor and nurse from OB, took good care of their two new patients. But the hard work had already been done. A friend later remarked that at least we'd save on the labor and delivery bill. (I don't recall having received the bill yet, so that part remains to be seen.)

I've also gotten a fair number of comments from people who assume that I must have had a hand in delivering the baby. And I make sure to set the record straight. I did not do a thing. My wife gets 110% of the credit, and I get 0%. But that's fine. We may be very good at what we do (although I happen to not be very good at midwifery), but sometimes we earn the victory when we didn't even raise the argument that the court ultimately finds dispositive. Staying humble is part of our job. It helps us accurately and honestly assess cases and temper the client's expectations as well as our own. And sometimes, there are pleasant surprises.

The bottom line is that, generally, all's well that ends well, and thankfully, in my story, it ended well. Our baby is a beautiful six-month-old now and doesn't seem to be too bothered by her place of birth. It ends well quite often in our practice, too.

Our second article this month, *Bon Voyage...NOT SO FAST!*, was written by

Harvey R. Heller.

© Maddin Hauser Roth & Heller P.C. All Rights Reserved. | 248.354.4030 | 248.354.1422 Fax