

Welcoming Henry

Life Begins for Henry Jason Andrews



A YourStory™ Milestone Book

Welcoming Henry

Life Begins for Henry Jason Andrews



A YourStory™ Milestone Book

Welcoming Henry

Copyright © 2007 by YourStory™, Inc.

Written by David Andrews

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of YourStory™, Inc.

All Gain and Sipping Champagne?

Feeling as prepared as they would ever be for the baby's birth—the due date came and went—Jen and Mark began looking for ways to help the baby along. They had heard that pumpkin and pineapple could help get things moving, so they ate pumpkin tortellini and all the pineapple Jen could stomach. Finally, the contractions started coming. Janice loaded Mark and Jen into her car and drove them down (name) Street toward the hospital.

“All of (name) Street was out,” Jen recalled. “It was like one of those weird 1950s movies where everyone's out doing yard work, and they're like, ‘She's having a baby. Bye! Good luck!’” The plan was to have a natural birth at (name) birthing center. Janice joined them for a time, but eventually Kevin arrived to pick her up, leaving dinner for Mark—with back labor in full force, Jen had lost her appetite.

They were soon introduced to the realities that the books and classes had never quite driven home. Their hypnobirthing class had told them that there should be no pain, but their other class proved more accurate. Giving birth did, in fact, involve pain. They were also not prepared for the duration of their labor. Even the video they watched in Maui cut straight to the few minutes when the baby was born, leaving out the hours of labor that preceded it. “We thought it was going to be four hours of labor, and then

we'd be sipping Champagne," she said. Instead, the labor continued for more than a day.

Mark and Jen had thought of strategies to pass the time and get through the ordeal. In the beginning, they listened to their iPod together. Then they tried sharing happy memories of trips to Hawaii, Wilmington Beach, or Nahant. After awhile, though, they abandoned their recollections of cucumber salad picnics or searches for blue sea glass, and simply focused on breathing, which was all that really mattered.

Even in the midst of pain and anxiety, there were moments of lightness. On a whim, as they waited for an epidural, they flipped on the television, and on came their favorite reality show—the Discovery Channel's "The Deadliest Catch." Watching king crab fisherman trawling for crabs on the dangerous Alaskan seas was a surreal experience that made them laugh and think, "At least we're not there."



A full day passed. Their first midwife, Reina, was with them throughout her full 24-hour shift—Jen was her first patient as well as her last. Then Amanda took over at 7, and another long morning began. "Towards the end it was really, really hard," Jen said. "The only thing I could do was look into Mark's eyes and know that everything was okay." As hours ticked by, the doctors began to consider their next steps.

Those next steps would prove unnecessary. After Jen began pushing at 12:30 on the afternoon of (date), a baby boy began to make its way into the world. As the doctors stood by unprepared, not even ready with their gloves on, Henry was born into Amanda's waiting hands at a quarter past

one. Lying on Jen's exhausted body, he was "this squirmy gooey blob of baby." The reality of her baby now lying on her chest was beyond anything she had ever felt.



Just months after his birth, Henry celebrates his arrival into the world.

After a few minutes of absorbing this new reality, experiencing their newborn son, Jen reluctantly let Henry be taken away to be cleaned off, and then the new parents could enjoy their baby before he was taken to the maternity ward. Mark was uncertain at first with just how to hold such a fragile body, but it didn't take long before he was gazing intently at his new son, whispering, "How are you doing, little guy?"

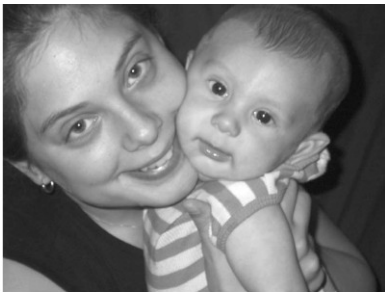
Soon, Henry was taken to the maternity ward, and Mark stepped out to introduce Henry to his parents and sister. Jen was to move to a new room in the maternity ward herself, and, as she dragged an armful of her belongings, feeling still wobbly from a dose of Percocet, she bumped into her father-in-

law, Frank. It was a strange moment, Frank wanting to give Jen enough space and Jen just not knowing what had hit her. “Hey, can I carry anything?” Frank said. He took some of Jen’s things and together, they went to Jen’s new room. There, she would rest and recover before the three of them went home to begin a new life together.

Simply Henry

Life with Henry exceeded their greatest expectations. They loved Henry dearly, and they knew he loved them too, though with no way to express his pleasure, at first they took it on faith. As he grew, though, he began to recognize his Mom and Dad's faces, and entertain everyone with his laughter and smiles.

Even after a night when he's kept Jen awake, he knows how to tug at his mother's heartstrings with a grin. "The next morning, all he has to do is flash me a smile and I'm like mush." Most mornings, though, Mark is the first one to greet Henry. To give Jen a little extra time to sleep after a typical wakeful night, he'll rise at 6, change Henry's diaper, and take him out for a walk.



Henry woos Mom.

For Jen, Mark is a steady, reassuring presence that she can depend on for anything—or nearly anything, anyway. Jen calls him a “rock star” and Mark interjects that he is the “rock star who forgot his guitar.”

One day, for example, when Jen was visiting the breastfeeding support group La Leche League, she called Mark to ask for a book she had left at home. He rushed to get his bike together, find directions, print a map, and make it there in time—only to realize upon arriving that he had left her book in his backpack at home.

For Mark, Jen has been a driving force, the one with the sudden inspirations and plans, big and small. She'll come up with new meals to try in order to get the most out of their farm share, or crafts such as a new bib that they personalized for Henry's Christening.



Jen arranges an impromptu family outing.

Henry, meanwhile, is simply happy to be here. With each day his personality grows—from cooing and laughter to exaggerated yawns that seem to announce, “What a long, exhausting day it’s been!” As he begins to experience the world—sometimes even going on trips around town with Pat (a.k.a. Nana)—Jen has grown to see Henry as his own person, not just an extension of herself. Even such a brief separation, though, brings about a

joyful reunion. “When he comes home, he’s happy to see me, and I’m just like, ‘Oh my God, I love him so much!’ ”

As Henry grows older, Mark and Jen are careful not to project his future. As the eldest child in her family, Jen knows how much pressure can be placed on a firstborn. They simply hope that he will share their values of honesty, compassion, and open-mindedness, and share in some of the family and cultural traditions that they enjoy. Jen sees him enjoying a home-cooked Polish boiled meal with pirogues as a main dish, while Mark can imagine him taking part in some offshoot of the family “Make It and Bake It” Christmas gift exchange that he gets a kick out of.

What would they want Henry to take with him, years down the road? To enjoy life and strive for whatever goals he sets his mind to, for one thing. “You can do anything,” Mark says. And to remember that the love that his parents feel for him now will always be there, no matter what. “He’s really, really loved, and that’s important for him to remember,” Jen says. “As much as he’s loved now, he will always be loved that much.”

About YourStory™

Everyone has a story to tell, and YourStory is dedicated to helping people share those stories with others in an appealing and engaging format. Whether recounting favorite moments that span a life or a career, or focusing on a single milestone event, YourStory captures meaningful memories so they can be preserved and shared for years to come. YourStory keepsakes are created by experienced writers who, through comfortable interviews, compose stories of the subject which can then be produced in a variety of elegant formats and are accompanied by photos.

YourStory was formed in 2007 by David and Isabel Andrews. For more information about YourStory, visit www.all-your-story.com.