

Halley's Waterbirth

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Publication info: Pre- and Peri-natal Psychology Journal 3. 1 (Fall 1988): 60-68.

[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: None available.

Full Text: Like the comet under which she was conceived, Halley's arrival planetside was truly a cosmic event. What is "cosmic" about Halley's waterbirth is that we had the sense of perfect order-the original meaning of the word cosmic-ORDER. All things were in their right place. Also in the more common definition of cosmic, it was like bringing heaven into our home to purebirth Halley. In our homemade hot tub, Halley's arrival had the full support of the cosmos in attendance. She was born underwater. When she emerged, it was with open and exploring eyes. Not the passive arrival haze through which an "alert" demeanor is considered optimum but BEYOND newborn alert to "conscious." Like the difference from having "reflexes" to initiating movement-being self-motivated. Halley made swimming motions and felt her mama's heartbeat from the outside in the fluid water world which was her first earthside matrix. She appeared to have been born without any trauma but in trust fulfilled; the way conscious beings in this century-of-the-child have hoped. We named this new one Halley Sophia-"Holy Wisdom"-as she looked so very whole and wise to us-pure enlightenment. She radiates a promise for humans actually achieving our namesake becoming real human BEINGS, rather than the ubiquitous human DOINGS. Halley is a harbinger of the new species-people who arrive here untraumatized, united with the original love which called them forth. Fully conscious, connected to their feelings without drug stupor, retreat from primal pains or maternal/paternal separation. Halley did not cause her mother suffering when she was born. She was not pushed through anguish and therefore has no imprint of hurting her mother/self matrix. This is another indication of the "new species"-imagine a primal psychology which includes the imprint, for both men and women, of co-creating tremendous, somatic pleasure during birth. The implications for a template of sexuality based on ecstasy, rather than extreme pain, are provocative. Would we see less sado-masochistic behavior in sexuality? Would rape decrease if men and women felt less like the cause, or at least, an involuntary accomplice of suffering at birth? The psychological complex from "hurting mommy" at birth to later sexual diseases is not often considered as connected. However in my experiences as midwife and researcher, collecting stories of conceptions, births and subsequent sexual experiences, a connection, causal or not, is apparent. Also as birth is metaphor for all movement into new ground, when it comes time for Halley as a young woman to leave Mom's house, she will be able to gracefully depart for the primal imprint of joyous leavings already deep within her (our) soul. We have been introduced to the ample benefits of waterbirth in the person of our second son, Quinn. This fifth baby, like his sister Halley, was born ecstatically underwater. (see Prenatal Yoga & Natural Birth, 2nd edition 1986 for Quinn's birth story). We noticed some advanced developmental aspects (e.g., early teeth), but have been especially impressed with his awareness and sensitivity (including paranormal abilities). Whereas Quinn was born in a souped up version of our bath tub, Halley, our sixth baby, arrived in a deep redwood tub built especially for the birth and enclosed in a solar greenhouse by her father. Fresh oxygenated air, beautiful plant friends around the various altars and wall hangings adorned her birth room. (Many Blessing-Way gifts for the coming baby were placed in here to remind us of the loving friendship circle into which Halley was to be born.) This birthing hot tub had the advantage of allowing me complete submersion while standing (up to my neck that is-no, I didn't birth Halley totally underwater with a snorkel and face mask!) The best advantage of this custom built hot tub is that my lover, Halley's father, could be in the same element-we could share our birth as a holy trinity more readily with my husband in the water with us. There is a lot of talk in the aware childbirth community of the importance of the mother sharing the birth with the father of the baby. Let me suggest that skin to skin support, full body on, in a variety of postures and

movements (dances, if you will), is the absolutely best way to involve the father. After all, isn't that how us mothers originally involved fathers in their children's lives in the first place? Warm, loving body to body expressions of unity. The depth of the tub also allowed me to "belly dance" while supported by water and move along with Halley's descent during labor. Birthing my six babies consciously, I have found that babies actually assist in the delivery through helping find optimal positions. By letting Halley move my torso and hips in the way she needed, moment by moment, I was greatly assisted in spontaneous birth. I have found this to be much more effective than trying to decide in my mind what the best birth posture should be and sticking to it. I trust that my babies want to be born and will help in their own arrival if I will but listen and cooperate. Halley chose to come on her father's birthday. It was almost too obvious a statement of her connection for her parents with their understanding of depth/primal psychology and all. Also Halley had "interviewed" her father in a dream before her conception. For more about this amazing part of the story watch for our forthcoming title Cosmic Conception: Adventures in Fertile Sexuality. Along with appreciation for the cosmic timing, we are grateful for the double birthday celebration each forthcoming year, the Jocasta complex aside . . . Remembering that Halley had been conceived around St. Valentine's day brought the heartening realization that her father had quite likely been similarly conceived 43 years before in 1943-on this auspicious day dedicated to love. Fortunately other less auspicious aspects of the family pattern were not continued. Halley's delivery was of an entirely different order than her father's medical delivery 43 years previous. She was welcomed orgasmically with cries of "Baby! Ooooh you're so cute! Praise God! Praise God! Praise God! We LOVE you!!" etc. (verbatim first words spoken at Halley's birth). Not only did Halley's father heal (again) his own rather traumatic hospital birth and post-partum parental separation, but her parents healed another level of sexual bonding by birthing alone, together. Another glorious level of sexual trust came through this delivery. Her parents more fully experienced themselves as co-creators and ultimately more response-able in the total range of their sexual passion from conception to birth. Halley was born without a midwife or doctor in attendance-no other adults. The way the Bakers look at birth, it is a natural expression of heterosexuality. Birth is sexual (as well as spiritual). For the fullest expression of birth's inherent sensuality/sexuality and therefore spirituality to emerge, couples are best given their privacy - like at the time of conception. There was another "Silent Witness" to the birth and one which was ambivalent in its impact-a video camera on a tripod. Later viewing has proven to be highly soul-making. It is the most reverently passionate birth film we have ever seen. However, we are still integrating the subtle effects of even this one mechanical observer. Halley is just over one year of age and I still wonder what it might have been like without it. In order to make this video tape we had to compromise some intimacy in this sacred act of giving birth. Though unobtrusive, I was still aware of the presence of "another," if silent, witness to our lovemaking/birthing. The need to "perform my vision for the people" was involved in my decision to video tape something I consider so sacred. The quote is from Black Elk, an American Indian who shared material from his sacred vision quest with a wide audience. He said that this was "the way to manifest one's vision." (I.e. "perform it for the people"). During the ecstatic birthing of Quinn, I was blessed with a vision of Parents as Lovers, and told that healing birth is a key into a greater healing of the Earth. I had prepared for birth as vision quest, a spiritual rite-of-passage-and been honored by receiving one. During the birth, I saw each woman on this planet giving birth with her lover, the father of the baby between her legs and no one else. The original lovers would be blessed spiritually with the inner knowing that they were in full partnership now as parents and this would have a very widespread positive effect. It seemed that a sixth baby, cosmically conceived just a couple of years after our fifth, was a spiritual gift permitting us to "make manifest my vision." I couldn't "perform my vision for the people" personally-modesty aside, there just wasn't enough room in our greenhouse. However, I could "perform" for all the people through making a birth film. Halley Sophia obliged in a most profound way. Halley helped me with another lesson too. There is the tendency to feel that with a few good births under the belt, that things are under control. Halley proved that control and surrender are definitely not the same. Though I'm not romantic about proof (which I consider a lack of imagination) I might say she proved to me that birth is beyond

egoic control and conscious desire. (Showing how birth can be a major ally in woman's spiritual growth.) She arrived at the old moon, whereas my other five babies each came at the full moon! She came after many hours of labor, whereas all my other babies have been born median time five hours. Halley was a relatively big baby, as was my firstborn son Gannon. However I did not tear of have any birthing trauma myself, (see Prenatal Yoga for the Gannon's birth story.) She actually opened me up in less literal ways and showed me the stuff of which "I" am made by her unique way of coming through "me" to "us." I now know that I am made of the "right stuff," perhaps not astronaut material but appropriate for inner space travel and delivering my vision of truth. As Martin Heidegger puts it, Truth is letting be. Carrying her was more of challenge than my other pregnancies-but then again, as "they" say, I'm not getting any younger. However, without visiting any perinatal professionals, but by praying and listening within to our baby, I guided us through pregnancy at the end of my thirties without any disharmony/disease. For being "high-risk," "we" did okay on our own. The reason I am enclosing the words "I," "we," "they" and "us" in quotes is that from the felt experience of birthing, especially underwater, these are arbitrary divisions and do not reflect absolute reality. The boundaries were not so delimited as the words seem to suggest. As Halley was conceived without the use of experts, so was she birthed. We birth as we conceive. (Anyway, my definition of a sex expert is-analyzing the word expert-first "X," a has-been and "spurt," a drip under pressure. I therefore claim no expertise as mother or midwife . . .) Having had a vision to satisfy my quest of quests with the birth of Quinn, I was eager to "see" into the mysteries again with this baby's delivery. What I "saw" was energetically the stuff of "White Holes," how something new comes through at these openings and how "I" was like the phenomena of White Holes in astrophysics-the opposite of a Black Hole. By saying "YES" to the birthforce literally aloud (and imaginably "YES" down to the boneseed of my soul, I was opening like the shutter of a camera to let the light in, to give light, to give forth light in the form of this baby-the picture of what our love looks like. I understood how light/energy/matter and yes, love, are One in giving waterbirth. "How bold to fall in love with my unseen child. I've snapped the picture of what our love looks like and am silently growing it within. Soon, self-developed, out you will slide, the picture of our ecstasy becoming clearer as you dry ... Sometimes I catch a glimpse of you at the changing times. Before dawn, after dark, You soar then, weaving mystery ... I look and peer inside. Do I see a butterfly, quickening? Though you hide from my eyes you cannot from my skin ... I hold you as surely as the ocean cradles the earth ..." from "First Fluttering-The Quickening" (an unpublished poem I wrote when first pregnant with Quinn in Hawaii) From the discipline of archetypal psychology, one might say I was claimed by a Goddess during delivery. "I" felt the "personal" dissolve into the "transpersonal" dimensions of consciousness. Each of my birthings has its own guiding pantheon representing psychological voices within. Often in answer to the query who was going to attend my upcoming birth? I would reply, "The Goddess," "Our Divine Mother," or Whomever was on call that night... I prefer to allow the baby coming through to make the connection, each according to its needs. With Gannon's birth "I" saw Artemis, Kwan Yin and Durga. In Halley's birth I knew the Goddess White Tara. The White Tara of Tibetan Buddhism is said to have eyes all over her body. This is how I experienced Halley's birth. Vision was cellular-I could see beyond the beyond. This mystery of the gateway is revealed, layer upon layer, veil upon veil, each time I give birth. With this most recent waterbirth, I understood the morphogenetic field of consciousness which we as lovers simultaneously co-create and transcend as pivotal. Visually this is the gateway. From the point of view of the Goddess White Tara, the field of consciousness and the gateway are the same from wherever She is looking. The "keys" into this gateway are accessible to all parents who have the courage to assume them. Timothy Leary wrote in EXO-PSYCHOLOGY that there are several ways to "key" in change on a genetic level, or re-program the bio-computer-among which are psychedelics, near death/critical illness or accident, psychosis and giving birth. The "keys" into this program on the (mythic) genetic level, in Leary's language of "bio-computers," are the most opening and effective when there is no fear, even of the unknown. The "keys" into this expanded consciousness are accessible in all births. With waterbirth they are inevitable. It takes courage to let our babies be born in the optimum way for each unique soul. In order to tune into the baby's needs fully,

fearlessness is a great ally. One might imagine that the idea of birthing one's baby as an intimate sexual encounter between lovers (the parents) would be readily acceptable. However, when it is presented, almost all pregnant people respond with quite a bit of fear, at least at first. We scare ourselves in our most primal expressions. We fear the unknown and death. To embrace our fears and transform this energy into excitement is the best purebirth preparation. Having imaginal dialogs with the pre-nate is vital. By this practice, we can later during birth listen to what our babies want us to do, or not do. Birth is a dance between partners; imaginal rehearsals help. It is a cosmic dance of co-creation, however, and the transpersonal dimension of birth is woman's vision quest. Dancing with the universe's power of (wo)manifestation (rather than being victimized by the birthforce, the coming baby or perinatal professionals) engenders the parents with many psychological skills to benefit the family as a whole. At least two perspectives were in my consciousness while in labor: the transpersonal and the personal. From the center of the White Hole to Halley's experience of birth-form the consciousness which transcends creation to that which is most deeply rooted in the celebration of life, the experience of the one being born. Back and forth between these two vantage points I consciously journeyed as I swam with Halley through birth. When identified with Halley's primal birth experience, I would feel my heart expand to encompass all the universe in all the heavens. This baby was in ecstasy also! At the White Hole level of consciousness, the personal dissolved-boundaries of self/other poured inside out with each birthforce wave. "Contractions" or labor pains were transformed into "gifts." Balancing between pleasure and pain brought powerpower to be wisely used in the work at hand-the bringing forth of new life. With the goal of purebirth resolute, the surrender into the fluidity of waterbirth was trusted. Balancing between the sensations of giving birth, Halley chose her own birth time and birth entrance-which direction to be facing (which God-Us to honor) as she emerges through the gateway "out of the nowhere and into the here." Halley gave clear guidance for her gentle emergence. Likewise, while still underwater, she looked at each of us, her adoring family, from beneath the clear water, her focus guiding our own. We looked at one another knowing unity. The video shows no upset upon her rising from water into air. She begins to breathe with grace and continues to look at us all, one by one, for by now her siblings were awake and present to meet their new little sister. Her greeting of family was as graceful as her heart-full conception. She was submerged for a good few minutes or so before she emerged again . . . born already of the water, born "again" now of the spirit. I told Rico aloud, "I Love You" as self began to collect itself again, coming back from the "no-where," (ironically only accessible by saying, "Yes,") into public time/space again. The magic of these moments in time are most precious to us-all the more for how clearly Halley came through her transition from water to air. When I have asked viewers of Halley's waterbirth video what they saw, I have been given many far ranging answers-sometimes more reflective of the respondents' inner-scapes than my own experience as birthmother, yet nevertheless all appreciated. The video is my "giveaway" in the tradition of vision quest. After someone has watched Halley be born, they often feel inspired to "give-away" their feed-back to me about her birth. My favorite feed-back was being compared to a wild deer giving birth to her fawn. The way I instantly turned around to hug her closely as Halley's father "caught" her. The deer is a dear totem of mine-an ally into the animal body-wisdom of the wilderness, whence purebirth, spontaneous birth, comes. You know that before we domesticated animals, we needn't any veterinarians to deliver their young. Knowing this, I suggest every pregnant woman have a conscious, lively relationship with her own animal totems and the "instinct" for purebirth will help the "ego" surrender. Other reviews from friends seeing Halley's waterbirth video include how inspiring we are for the cause of gentle, noninterventive birth. Many say after seeing Halley be born, that they had never seen a purebirth before. Needless to say, no one had ever seen a "do it yourself homebirth" before (unless they had one themselves!) The words "ultimate in birth" are often heard. Some people get sad, angry and regretful about their experiences in birth. The perinatal professionals usually justify their own presence and the mothers confess their fears and unresolved issues. Halley's birth brings up a lot of disconnected feelings and helps them to heal. One viewer thanked me for "healing her caesarean section" by sharing Halley's birth so openly. She told me she gave birth again,

imaginally while watching Halley's birth video and worked through (on deepest levels) her traumatic C-section. Another viewer anonymously dropped a comment on my lap (in the form of a note) after a showing at an International Midwives Conference. It said, "While watching your video of Halley's waterbirth, I had an orgasm ... it is the most meaningful and releasing birth I have ever experienced." Those intense feelings I know-tremendous release when the baby emerges, like pulling the universe through the eye of a needle. Birth is orgasmic in its essence. Halley's birth, as ecstatic and cosmic as it was, carries the imprint of the hardest work there is as well as the most blessed. On the outside it looks like I gave birth to Halley, my daughter. Yet in truth, it is beyond any personal doings. Let the power of purebirth come through each moment in our lives. Halley has given us this as her gift, her give-away, amongst many wondrous things by her agreement to be a water baby. Her being shows a more fluid (inclusive, oceanic) consciousness. Admittedly, this is a parental brag. Yet as some of you know, Halley is an inspiring example to us all and watching her unfold into "the possible human" is a cherished journey for our entire family. AuthorAffiliation Jeannine Parvati Baker has published in many journals on the psychology/spirituality of fertility (conception and birth). Jeannine is the author of Prenatal Yoga & Natural Birth, Hygieia: A Woman's Herbal and co-author with Frederick "Rico" Baker of Conscious Conception Elemental Journey Through The Labyrinth of Sexuality.

Publication title: Pre- and Peri-natal Psychology Journal

Volume: 3

Issue: 1

Pages: 60-68

Number of pages: 9

Publication year: 1988

Publication date: Fall 1988

Year: 1988

Publisher: Association for Pre&Perinatal Psychology and Health

Place of publication: New York

Country of publication: United States

Journal subject: Medical Sciences--Obstetrics And Gynecology, Psychology, Birth Control

ISSN: 08833095

Source type: Scholarly Journals

Language of publication: English

Document type: General Information

ProQuest document ID: 198688179

Document URL: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/198688179?accountid=36557>

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Last updated: 2010-06-06

Database: ProQuest Public Health

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