Chapter 19: Mud Day, A New Beginning — John's Birth

Some days, everything just pauses. For our family, that day in March arrived with pouring rain, eager anticipation, and endless mud. It was the moment our lives transformed—the day John was born.

After Barbara's arrival in January 1969, I returned to teaching in the fall, accepting a position at Wayne Memorial High School. I enjoyed my return to the classroom, but a couple of years later, when I became pregnant again, Tom and I agreed that I would take a leave from work to stay home with our toddler and prepare for the baby's birth. Sadly, the pregnancy ended in miscarriage at three months—a quiet heartbreak that left us grieving and reflective. Still, our story soon took a hopeful turn.

Before long, I was pregnant again. After my disorienting experience with anesthesia during Barbara's birth, Tom and I enrolled in Lamaze classes. This time, we wanted to be alert and present for our baby's arrival. We hoped to welcome this child with calm and care.

For six weeks, we attended evening classes. I learned the rhythm of deep nasal breathing and slow, controlled exhalation. I practiced focusing through discomfort, while Tom learned how to encourage me with steady words and firm, comforting back massages. These sessions helped us feel connected, prepared, and more united as Mom and Dad.

Around the same time, Tom was offered a counseling position at Hartland Middle School, which led us to another big decision: we would move. Wanting to stay close to our family, we chose the nearby town of Howell and built a modest home at 171 Edgemont Drive. Those days were busy and full of energy, as we painted walls and stained woodwork, all to save on construction costs. Friends and family helped us move from Livonia to Howell, bringing plenty

of laughter along the way. They unloaded furniture and put everything in place. *How wonderful it felt to be in our new home.*

Several months later, as my due date got closer, life in Howell found a comfortable rhythm. One rainy morning in early March, the kind of day when Michigan schools close for mud instead of snow, Tom had the day off. We called it a 'mud day.' We were both home, relaxed, when I felt the first signs of labor.

We drove the fifty miles from Howell to Outer Drive Hospital in Dearborn, where Dr. George Klutke, who had delivered Barbara, was waiting for us. This time felt different. I used Lamaze breathing, and Tom was by my side, massaging my back just like we practiced. We stayed focused and encouraged each other. At one point, Tom joked, “My hands are killing me from all this pressure.” I smiled through the pain, silently wishing he could feel just one contraction.

The birth went smoothly. I was awake and aware, which felt like a gift after my first delivery. Then, in a moment that felt both ordinary and extraordinary, our son was born.

It was March 9, 1973. Our baby boy, John Thomas Todd, was born with clear skin and a strong cry. The nurses called him 'textbook perfect.' Dr. Klutke smiled as he told us John had a rare Apgar score of ten, the highest possible rating, and a perfect start to life.

Our son passed every element of the Apgar test. I was overjoyed and grateful to be awake, aware, and holding a healthy baby boy, knowing how different this was from my first experience of childbirth.

The Apgar test measures five key signs in a newborn:

* Activity (Muscle Tone)
* Pulse (Heart Rate)
* Grimace (Reflex Response)
* Appearance (Skin Color)
* Respiration (Breathing)

After bringing John home to Howell, we arrived as an unseasonable St. Patrick's Day snowstorm rolled in—a late-season surprise that covered the town and brought everything to a halt. Our little neighborhood on Edgemont Drive was blanketed with a layer of white, and we savored the quiet days that followed.

When the storm ended, we felt cozy and at peace. With everything we needed and a warm crackling fire in the fireplace, Tom and I settled in, feeling deeply content. As Barbara's sweet voice filled the house and John rested in our arms, we knew that all the muddy and stormy days had brought us here, growing and loved, truly home.

Rose and John
in our Howell home