Brandon Makes An Appearance

My daughter, Barbara, and her husband, Todd, announced joyful news that we would be first-time grandparents with the baby's expected arrival in late July. I made a reservation to fly cross country from Ann Arbor to California to be with them to welcome the newborn. I was surprised to receive a tearful and unexpected phone call earlier than expected, on July 9, 1999.

"Mom, my doctor expects the baby to be born soon. When can you get here?"

"My reservation is for next week, but I'll change it and fly in tonight. I can meet you and Todd at the hospital."

"The doc may induce me to move things along. I don't know what to expect."

"Try to be calm, honey. Everything will be fine."

With Barb about to give birth two weeks early and thousands of miles away, I frantically went online to find the first available flight. My heart throbbed with excitement. Within a few hours, all fell into place, and I confirmed a new reservation and packed my luggage. Becoming a grandfather was also a first for Randy, and he held me close for a long time as he kissed me goodbye.

When my flight arrived in San Jose, I picked up my rental car and headed to the hospital. It was night, and the area was strange and confusing to me. I got lost and drove around for quite some time. There was no GPS then, so I decided to be safe and stay in a local hotel that night. Sadly, I missed arriving on July 10, 1999, for my first grandchild's birth.

I arrived at the hospital early on July 11th to welcome Brandon, a handsome baby boy with a round pink face and a full head of hair. He was a lovable bundle of joy.

Hospital stays for new moms and infants were far fewer than when I gave birth to my two children. Barbara was my firstborn, and following her birth in 1969, she and I were in the hospital for five days. Thirty years later, Barb and our newborn grandson were discharged from the hospital the day after his birth. It wasn't a problem for anyone because I was there to help Barb and Todd and to care for my adorable newborn grandson.

Barb had to coax him to feed during his first week at home because baby Brandon was not an eager eater. Her breasts were full of milk and needed help. She requested a lactation nurse to come to her house to demonstrate techniques and to brain baby Brandon.

The nurse pushed his tiny face into Barb's breast and jerked his pursed lips around until he grabbed a nipple. I stayed close by, concerned that the rough treatment might suffocate our tiny infant. The technique seemed mean-spirited, but it worked. Soon Brandon became an eager

eater. Afterward, whenever we talked about the brusque "I'm-in-charge" nurse, Barb and I laughingly referred to her as *Nurse Nazi*.

Five more grandchildren extended and blessed my grammy role in the following years. Reflecting, I will forever cherish the joyous and memorable days I spent with my two firsts — my grandchild, Brandon, and my daughter, Barbara.