

RICHARD WRIGHT

# 'Birth' day still vivid after 2 years

My daughter turns 2 this week. Although I have been calling her a 2-year-old for a while, she officially reaches that age Thursday.

It's been two years since she was born, but it's a day neither my wife nor I will forget.

It started at 8:30 a.m. Sept. 30, 1991.

I was in the shower when my wife came in and announced that she thought her water had broke.

I dropped the soap. After consulting with the doctor, who confirmed it, we went to the hospital.

I thought, OK, I can handle this. I know my brother-in-law fainted when his son was born, I've seen the films, I've been through Lamaze. I know how to breathe.

After all the waiting, all the worries, all the doctors' visits, it was time.

After nine months of trying not to eat Mexican food in front of my wife, of not turning the truck too fast, of trying to turn the TV channel quickly when the Taco Bell commercials came on before Cathy saw them and got sick, it was time.

After countless sleepless nights and reading up on all the latest in breastfeeding, it was time.

We got to the hospital, got Cathy into her room, and signed I-don't-know-how-many forms. We were ready.

From all indications, the doctor said delivery would be around midnight.

Great, we both said. Only I had it much, much easier. I wasn't the one in labor.

But after long hours of "breathe in, breath out," and "are you sure you can't give her any drugs yet?" it happened.

The doctor told me to get into my scrubs.

It was only 8:30.

"But you said not 'til midnight."

"Well," he said, "OK, but we're



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going to have this baby with or without you."

With that, I got dressed. Realization struck. With or without me, we were going to have a baby.

After 10 hours and nine Diet Cokes, I was ready.

Now the hard part began.

I was ready; we'd been through the contractions, most of them hard.

Not for me, of course, but for my wife. Although I was beginning to have some pain in my stomach.

As I look back at it now, it wasn't false labor pains, but the chili dog I had for lunch.

We were beginning to enter the transition phase.

Childbirth is getting too technical. With all these phases, it sounds like a long-term construction project.

Which, I guess, is what it really is. For some women, I think it is a longer project than they really want.

The transition phase was the one I had been told to watch out for.

As a man, it would all be my fault. I was the one who did this to her. I was the pig who got her pregnant. I was going to pay for putting her through this.

I mentally prepared myself for the abuse. I expected it. I mean, I would want someone to yell at if I was going through labor. I'd want to hurt someone.

Luckily, transition only lasted an hour.

I was yelled at once.

Next came the pushing phase. The

real work started then.

Even with three nurses and a doctor, the only person that mattered was Cathy. She was doing the work; the rest of us were cheerleaders.

It was during this phase that I screwed up. All that I learned in class, I forgot.

I counted too fast. I counted too slow. I almost broke one of the nurse's toes because I stepped on it and used it as a brace to help Cathy push. I almost soiled my pants because I was pushing, too.

Luckily, Cathy had her senses with her.

The biggest thrill of my life happened then when my daughter's head crowned. Needless to say, I'll remember it because of my first words.

"It's got hair!"

What a thing to say.

But then it was over. Alexandria Nora Marce Wright was born at 9:55 p.m. on Sept. 30, 1991. She weighed in at a little more than 7 pounds.

After a long nine months, the most beautiful thing in the world was here.

Now, two years and another baby later, she is still beautiful. She has her papa wrapped around her fingers. She is papa's girl.

Alley turns 2 this week. I'm sure I won't remember everything about her life in the future, but I know that I won't ever forget Sept. 30, 1991.

Wright is a graduate student in journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

ALAN PHELPS

# Crazy critters infest commune

I haven't had a biology class since ninth grade, but I would bet I have an intimate knowledge of most of this area's native life forms.

They live in my house. We all get along pretty well, although an all-human commune might be nice. As things are, it's an education.

The largest animal at Isle Broddick is, of course, the human. Humans (*Homo sapiens*) are interesting to watch and study. The biggest difference between humans and the other Isle species is that humans don't jump all over people. I suppose a few do, but, generally speaking, not in the living room.

Next in size would be Loki, the dog (*Canis familiaris*). Named after the mischievous Norse god, Loki is a frolicking mutt of the Medium Brown breed. I believe Medium Brown dogs were first bred in the tundras of the Far North where they fertilized cropland by converting Alpo into precious plant food.

Loki mistakenly takes our basement for cropland, performing her age-old duty again and again. My roommate and I thought we might begin spreading Alpo about the basement floor ourselves, thereby saving a step, but then what would Loki have to do all day?

After Loki, by height, comes the Thing That Lives on the Dishes (*no fancy name*). A mysterious creature, the Thing generally hunts at night, stealthily slithering over its prey near the sink.

Out of the darkness I have heard the cries escaping from the kitchen. I have heard them and turned away. O! The shame!

After the Dish Creature the animals begin to get much smaller and more pesky. First in pecking order is the common house mouse (*an aerosol foam used to help hair stay in place*).

During my sophomore year, we lived on Everett Street with a mouse named Grummsh. Grummsh was a cute little guy who used to scurry by when we were watching television, sometimes stopping to actually stare



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at us, as if daring us to try to catch him. One night, we finally trapped him in a cooler and took him out to Antelope Park.

The mouse in today's commune doesn't seem to be as much fun as Grummsh was. Mostly we see him running around the rafters in the basement, late for some mouse appointment. Maybe he's a mouse doctor or something. I've never noticed a pager on him, though.

Next in the parade of animals is the species that has lived in the commune the longest. A German Cockroach Headquarters — commanding the Fifth Mobilized Armor Unit, the Seventh Infantry and an Air Wing — survive in warrens throughout the commune.

The German Cockroach (*Cucaracha*) is a tough customer. Three times we have sprayed. Numerous bug bombs have been detonated. Still, they survive. In smaller numbers, perhaps, but there they are. Lurking. Spitting. Illegally selling artwork plundered from European galleries during World War II.

Because German Cockroaches have lived at the Isle Broddick as long as I have, there has been ample time to study their habits. They like to stare at you, waving their little antennae in some kind of sick sign language. I don't know much sign language except for part of the alphabet and the sign for "sunrise." I've never seen a German Cockroach sign "sunrise."

For a time I thought we might be able to communicate with the German Cockroaches, to open a dialogue with a new and exciting life form like

Capt. Picard does on "Star Trek." Unfortunately, the German Cockroaches spend all their time on that incomprehensible antennae waving, never bothering to learn English like all real aliens are supposed to do.

Perhaps the most disgusting animal in the commune is the Shower Slug (*not yet classified*). On several occasions my communitates and I have noticed a peculiar, sluggish herd of objects on the shower curtain. It hasn't been determined if these slug-like creatures are animals in themselves or merely growths of the curtain, some type of spore the curtain uses to reproduce.

Moving along, the next animal is a result of Loki. Fleas (*of the order Siphonaptera*) followed the Medium Brown dog into the Isle, quickly establishing a circus they charge the other animals to see. Entrepreneurs, the fleas are.

We have an active campaign to rid the commune of fleas. Two bug bombs were detonated, and Loki has been subjected to numerous flea baths. The results of our efforts have not been favorable, and fleas roam at will.

Along with the normal houseflies and cobwebs any house can claim, that about makes up the Isle roster. Like the Brazilian rain forest, the commune is a tight-knit ecological system, where each creature depends on the others to survive.

It kind of makes me proud, but it also kind of makes me sick.

Phelps is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.

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