

After experiencing a first trimester miscarriage in May 2008 just 6 months after our marriage, my husband and I were thrilled to learn we were pregnant again only one month later. We breathed a huge sigh of relief once the first trimester had passed and I was still pregnant. During my second trimester, my husband got a job promotion that would require us to move from St. George, Utah, to Richmond, Virginia. We checked with my obstetrician and he said it would be fine for me to travel for the move.

We packed up our little apartment and set out on our new adventure. I was 26 weeks pregnant. The 3rd day of travel, I started experiencing cramps that I thought were just gas. When they didn't go away, and started to get more intense, we stopped at a small emergency room in New Mexico. We were told that I was experiencing Braxton Hicks contractions. We were reassured, and continued on with our journey. Later that night, we stopped at a hotel in Amarillo, Texas to spend the night. The 'Braxton Hicks' still hadn't gone away and were getting more intense. I thought maybe I had a problem with my appendix or something, so we decided to go to another emergency room. I was checked for dilation in the Labor and Delivery unit, and I was already dilated to 8 centimeters and the baby was at +2 station. She was coming! I delivered Gabriella Nicole at 4:50 am on 11/11/08 weighing 1 lb 15 oz. She let out one little cry before being incubated and whisked off to the NICU. By chance, we had chosen a hospital that had a Level III NICU facility.

She spent the next 40 hours in a relatively stable condition, but needing a lot of support. We spent as much time with her as possible. Then during the middle of the night, we went into the NICU to drop off some milk that I had pumped. The NICU nurses told us they had been looking for us, and that our precious daughter was 'very sick.' They would do everything they could, but she was experiencing pulmonary hemorrhage. Eventually we were approached by the neonatal nurse practitioner and told that they had done all they could, but it didn't seem to be working. We were asked how far we wanted them to go to sustain her life, but told that it was highly unlikely that she would recover. After being told that she was on enough morphine to put a grown man to sleep but she was still flailing her teeny arms and legs, we decided that it was best for her if we released her from her suffering and removed life support. We got to hold her while she was still alive, and then asked to have her ventilator removed so she could pass away peacefully in her parents arms. She died at 2:30 am on 11/13/08.

We spent all our savings on transporting her body back to our hometown. My mom helped us cover the rest of the funeral costs. We had a simple yet beautiful private family viewing and a graveside service for her.

Since then, I have had a precious baby boy. He was born at 29 weeks on 08/02/09 and spent 6 weeks in the NICU. He's truly a miracle.

Unfortunately, my husband has left us. He had an affair during the 6 weeks I spent on hospital bed rest during my pregnancy, as well as during the time our son was in the NICU, and is now living with that woman and her two children. We are in the process of divorce.

We had planned to save to purchase a headstone for our daughter's grave, but since he has left, I've had a hard time even getting child support for our living child from him. I put off my education in order to move for his job, so I'm currently balancing going back to school to become an RN (I hope to work in the NICU and perhaps someday become a neonatal nurse practitioner) with taking care of a 5 month old former preemie. I live with my mother.

It's been over a year now, and it makes me so sad when I go out and visit her grave and still see the temporary marker there. As a newly single mom and a college student, I have no idea when I'll be in the financial situation to be able to purchase one for her.

Thank you so much for the work that you do, and for considering my precious Gabriella for this blessing.

Again, thank you so much for your time and consideration, and for all the help you give to families grieving for their precious children.

Sincerely,
Alicia Nicole Dils