



Reflections on the birth of my first child, Rory, 43 years ago.

[AIMS Journal, 2025, Vol 37, No 2](#)



By Noreen O'Dwyer Hart

I love Birthdays, if we are fortunate, they are often so beautifully layered with memories, reflections and celebrations. I became a mother 43 years ago today. It was an extraordinarily transformative experience for the 23-year old me, and I was changed forever. In my pregnancy I discovered my unquenchable thirst for research and read Ina May Gaskin's book 'Spiritual Midwifery' every night before falling asleep; I sat at the feet of Michel Odent and drank in all he shared; I hung out and followed Janet Balaskas and joined the Active Birth Movement; Sheila Kltzinger was my heroine who I many years later got to know and chat with.

I had the privilege of the most gorgeous midwives who were gentle supportive guides in the dimly lit birth room. Gwen knitted her way through much of my labour, murmuring words of encouragement and reassurance. Nicky, a student midwife, dovetailed beautifully with the experienced Gwen by keeping a mindful eye on me and my unborn baby from a respectful distance. There was a sense of their own belief that birth happens and women need love, compassion, encouragement and support without too much interference. My loving partner and supportive doula Jenny were the most perfect birth team. I birthed my son quietly and peacefully in an upright supported squat and felt bathed in love, power and joy. I had never experienced anything quite like it. I was truly changed forever.



I feel deep sadness at how physiological birth is not experienced by so many in our current underfunded, risk averse, undervalued maternity system that is in deep deep crisis. How sad it is that 43 years ago women stood a much greater chance of having gentle compassionately supported births. This is not a judgement about how women give birth, but much more about all women feeling listened to, supported and cared for with kindness and loving respect. Thank you darling Rory for changing me forever and inviting me to this privileged work.

Author Bio: Noreen has been an Antenatal Teacher, Tutor and Assessor for the NCTas well as a Birth Activist, Campaigner, speaker and presenter. She is the mother of 4 grown up sons and grandmother to 4 grandchildren.