

S3E1: MATERNITY SERVICES | Journey to a first Christmas

Dec. 2, 2020

[00:00:04.035] - INTRO

Welcome back to the Northside Hospital podcast, Medical Moments. I'm your host, Marlon Manuel. Thanks so much for joining me. For the two-part opening episode of Season 3. Medical Moments focuses on stories of health and wellness and the issues that influence them. Please subscribe and like Medical Moments wherever you get your podcasts. And you can email me directly at PodcastComment@Gmail.com

[00:00:34.635] - MUSIC

Joy to the world

[00:00:44.295] - MARLON MANUEL

With Christmas in the air, I'm going to share the story of a family's first Christmas. It centers on Natalie Hudson. And here she is.

[00:00:52.665] - NATALIE HUDSON

I am Natalie Hudson. I am an educator. I teach visual arts in Fulton County schools. I am a gatherer. I collect food and friends and experiences, and I am a tinkerer. I play and dabble in all types of media and passions.

[00:01:18.045] - MARLON MANUEL

Natalie Hudson will celebrate her first Christmas with her daughter, Evelyn. Evelyn will be 10 months old by Christmas Day. Perhaps the biggest Christmas joy for the two of them is that they're here at all. Natalie had suffered two miscarriages before Evelyn was born, but she persevered and carried Evelyn to full term without drama - until the day Evelyn came into the world. Natalie and I met on the phone because of the pandemic.

[00:01:44.175] - MARLON MANUEL

Natalie shared her story from her basement art studio full of brushes, paints and easels. She lives in a white ranch house that sits on acreage where she and her husband have started what she calls a mini farm. They have six apple tree saplings in the yard, along with two pear trees and three peach trees. They're thinking about adding goats and they already have

[00:02:08.895] - CHICKENS CLUCKING

Clucking. Background of Natalie introducing chickens

[00:02:09.855]

... A chicken coop and and chickens, who Natalie introduces.

[00:02:13.875]

And it's all the perfect setting for a family's first Christmas.

[00:02:18.795] - MARLON MANUEL

Natalie, so tell me about Christmas for you. How did you celebrate it? What was it like for you, especially as a kid? And did you have any special traditions or things that were unique to your family?

[00:02:32.265] - NATALIE HUDSON

Christmas has always been just a wonderful opportunity to celebrate growing up as a kid. It was always a little bit of wonder and mystery. Santa was very important. I remember getting nibbled on carrots left behind at our front door because Rudolph dropped them and we always had seen experiences as far as, like each year we would do a new set of ornaments, like we had four members in our family and we would

S3E1: MATERNITY SERVICES | Journey to a first Christmas

Dec. 2, 2020

all do an ornament for that that year so that every year that we decorated the tree or tree with this hodgepodge experience. And that's that's definitely evolved into my own experience now.

[00:03:28.135] - MARLON MANUEL

And like many of us, Natalie has collected Christmas ornaments through the years. They provide emotional touch points for moments in life. One of her favorites is an enamelled blue crab with arms that move. He came from Tybee Island near where Natalie and her husband Randy were married.

[00:03:44.485] - NATALIE HUDSON

And so it's definitely one of my favorites. Our cat actually broke one of my other favorite, which was a glass, hand blown Eiffel Tower from Paris that I bought in Paris on the street.

[00:04:04.525] - MARLON MANUEL

So has it been discarded or is it glued somewhere and set aside?

[00:04:10.225] - NATALIE HUDSON

It was it was too far gone. Trust me, I definitely looked at it in pieces for quite some time and thought I can save it. And then I was like, no. So, you know, when I did my thesis for my Master's of Fine arts, I actually ... but my body of work was sort of about that concept. And so the idea of, does a memory still exist if the item is gone to tell the story? Because if you go to a thrift store or an estate sale or anything like that, there's just all of this stuff that meant something to someone once. And once that storyteller is gone, the the connection is missing. And so what happens to that item? And so I've learned to embrace the idea that it's not about the thing, but it's about the memory or the story.

[00:05:10.995] - MARLON MANUEL

If something goes away that meant something only to a particular person, what is left? Natalie asked. She had been describing that cherished Christmas ornament, but she also might have been talking about her two pregnancies that came before Evelyn. They both ended in miscarriages - lives that never were. Their existence meant something to Natalie. She journaled her experience on social media during her first pregnancy. Doctors found a fetal heartbeat during the eighth week, but sadly, doctors detected no heartbeat by week 12. And Natalie underwent a procedure called a D and C, since she had not naturally completed the miscarriage. What surprised Natalie was how common her experience was. Quickly, other women shared their stories and their pain. That was in 2018. If 2020 is a collective dumpster fire for the world, 2018 was Natalie's own personal inferno.

[00:06:10.905] - NATALIE HUDSON

It was, it was pretty tough, and I had explained before, but we had a heartbeat. And then when I went in for my appointment, we no longer had a heartbeat. So I had to go through a process like I had to go through the D&C because my body had not got the message. And then 2018 was our dumpster fire year because we were really eager to find the right property, the right home. And we weren't just moving to move. It was, we knew we were going somewhere because we had intentions of literally setting down roots, the goal of the garden and the farm. We had our grafted six antique apple trees and pots with the hope of having the right piece of earth to put them into. And so we had moved into a carriage house, garage apartment and stayed there. And then just a series of events that was so difficult. We got rear-ended and our car was totaled. Our cat got suddenly sick and died.

[00:07:27.945] - NATALIE HUDSON

It was just like the hits just kept coming. And then we were pregnant again in ... January ... and then that one also was unsuccessful. I think technically, yes, it was a chemical pregnancy because I didn't get much further than about seven weeks for the second one, but it's still. You get your hopes up.

S3E1: MATERNITY SERVICES | Journey to a first Christmas

Dec. 2, 2020

[00:08:09.135] - MARLON MANUEL

Natalie said she wondered whether she was meant to have kids, whether it was going to happen, whether she'd be OK with just being, as she said, a cool aunt. She and her husband became godparents to their best friend's daughter. While they healed emotionally, Natalie and her husband went back to school. Natalie got her master's degree in fine arts. She helped open a brand new school building and taught college art at night after teaching high schoolers all day. But after their dumpster fire of a year of 2018, Natalie said she and Randy worked out the kinks. She became pregnant in 2019 and the experience was a breeze. Natalie said. Trouble free.

[00:08:47.985]

Natalie was cleaning up her basement art studio on a Sunday afternoon, two days before her due date in February 2020. She started feeling mild contractions. More followed. And in the 4 a.m. darkness the next day, Natalie ended up at Northside Hospital Atlanta. What had been a smooth sailing pregnancy for Natalie was about to get turbulent.

[00:09:13.845] - NATALIE HUDSON

My water had not broken and they did not they were concerned about how everyone was having delayed decelerations with every contraction. But they asked me if I wanted to do an epidural to see if maybe I could get some rest if I hadn't slept, because labor doesn't allow you to sleep, really. So, I said, yeah, whatever. Let's do that. Girl, I'm not here to prove anything. And so they they were really giving the hairy eyeball to the monitor because every time I would have a contraction, she would have a pretty significant deceleration and was not responding well to the contractions, even with the epidural. And so, you know, this was maybe an hour or two going by and a few more people were starting to kind of show up in the room.

[00:10:21.425] - NATALIE HUDSON

I had another doctor come in and they said, OK, let's break the water. And then how do you feel about putting a monitor on her scalp so we can be very sure, you know, because right now you're about four and a half centimeters. You're not, you know, the epidural slows things down and we could let you into labor, but we don't really like how she's demonstrating response to the labor process. And so they put that monitor on and they said, yes, it's we're not liking her intolerance for this process and we really think it's going to be best that we go ahead and do a C-section.

[00:11:09.825] - NATALIE HUDSON

I mean, I was definitely nervous. I had already processed the potential for a C-section, because way earlier in the pregnancy, they determined that I had a low lying placenta and so they were really monitoring that because there was a high probability that if it didn't shift enough as things progressed in the pregnancy, I was going to have to have a C-section anyway because it was too close to the cervix. And so I had already sort of grieved that I wasn't going to get my hope, which was I really wanted to have the whole experience. I wanted to really push my body to what it could do and have ownership over that process. And I there was part of me that felt robbed.

[00:12:08.895] - MARLON MANUEL

Evelyn came into the world about three hours later. She would go home to living on the mini farm and bonding with her parents. Her first Christmas is yet to come. But in that moment, Natalie Hudson's emotional pendulum has swung from two years of grief to an instant moment of joy.

[00:12:28.335] - NATALIE HUDSON

S3E1: MATERNITY SERVICES | Journey to a first Christmas

Dec. 2, 2020

Surreal. Absolutely surreal, especially because I didn't really have serious pain or strain for that. You know, I think when you are pregnant. And you go through nine months of all of these things, right, the physical endurance that it takes to carry a baby to term, and then in my vision, you know, going through labor, is that like ultimate roller coaster peak that you have sort of passed through the physical process of bringing the baby forward into the earth.

[00:13:12.235] - MARLON MANUEL

Natalie recovered peacefully at Northside Hospital. She was overjoyed to hold Evelyn - to see the foot that had been poking her right side for months, to see a beautiful, perfect face. All was right with the world.

[00:13:27.385] - MARLON MANUEL

It was three days since Evelyn had been born. When the night rotation started, Danielle was Natalie's Northside nurse. She checked Natalie's blood pressure - and that's when she found the start of trouble. Evelyn was fine. Natalie was not.

[00:13:43.165] - NATALIE HUDSON

The eyesight was getting a little more blurry and then I could feel my heart starting to just kind of throb in my chest. And then I couldn't get a full breath.

[00:13:53.605] - MARLON MANUEL

Next on Medical Moments, find out what nurses call "flu in a bag" and how it helped Natalie. Why Jolly Pirate donuts make Natalie think about the holidays and what Santa just might bring for Evelyn's first Christmas. That's next time on Season 3, Episode 2 of Medical Moments.

[00:14:14.815] - OUTRO

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