

In Memoriam

Ruth Shaeffer

(April 10, 1923-December 7, 2009)

This project and publication are dedicated to her memory.



The Most Significant Learning Experience of My Life

By Ruth Shaeffer

It happened in a hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. The date was April 10, 1923. I was happily swimming upside down in a lovely warm fluid while listening to someone talking to me. It was wonderful. I felt safe and secure and I somehow knew I was loved.

Then suddenly I felt the fluid rush away and I was slammed down hard on my head! This had never happened before and I was scared! I had just begun to relax a bit again when there it came again – and again –and again! It kept happening until I was pushed out a pipelike opening into a very bright place filled with lots of noise and lots of talking.

Next someone grabbed my legs and held me upside down. I felt a big whack on my bottom! I was so surprised that, even though I had never done so before, I gasped and then let out a loud cry! And I did it again. In fact, once I started doing it, it felt so good I just kept on. (Later someone told me I had learned how to breathe and that I would keep on doing that as long as I lived.)

Then I was passed to my mother, who happily held me. As soon as I heard her voice again I knew I was safe and secure. I could feel that she loved me and I very happily went to sleep. I was still breathing.

It was quite a day. I had been born and I had learned how to breathe. That is something I have been doing for 86 1/2 years now. I know a time will come when I will forget how to do it. That's OK. I'll be ready to go on to learn about whatever comes next, for I feel loved and happy. I know you have learned how to breathe too; I hope you feel loved and happy too.