

BY THE BOOK

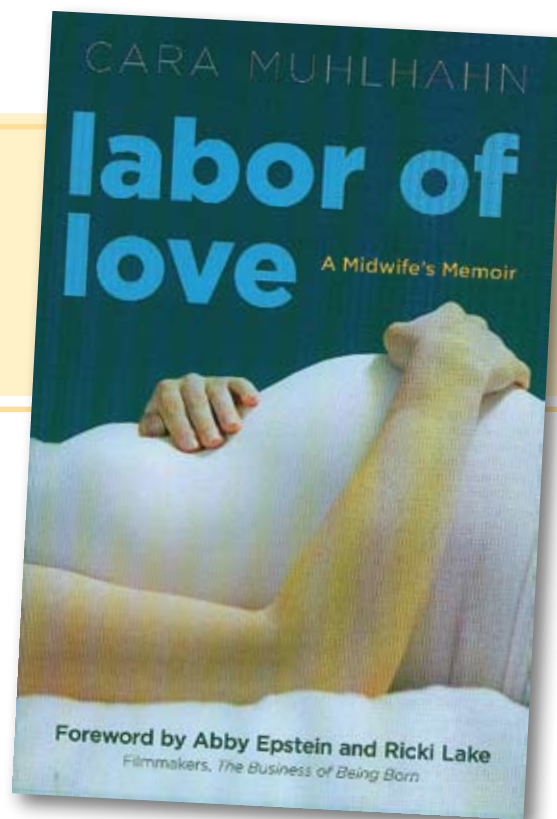
Prepare for a Labor of Love

by Terri Schlichenmeyer

“Labor of Love: A Midwife’s Memoir,”
by Cara Muhlhahn

(Kaplan Publishing, 2009)

\$25.95, 256 pages



You were afraid to look. You couldn’t wait, but you couldn’t peek, either.

Then you saw it.

The stick made it official. You’re pregnant.

Aside from all the other preparations, you now have to get ready for the actual act of bringing a baby (or two) into the world.

Now imagine birthing 10 babies a month. It’s easy to do if you’re a midwife who loves her job, as Cara Muhlhahn does. She offers insight from her breadth of experience in her new book, **“Labor of Love.”**

Even before she was born, Muhlhahn says she was probably destined to be a midwife; she was born feet-first. No matter how often her mother’s doctor turned her, Muhlhahn went back to breech. It must’ve been an omen.

As the second of five daughters, Muhlhahn was able to help her parents with her younger siblings. Later, she says she took on babysitting jobs, caring for cousins and other neighborhood children. At 19, she traveled to Europe to see the world. While visiting her sister in Denmark, Muhlhahn heard the word midwife.

Believing that the best place to study midwifery was on the West Coast, she flew to Oregon, where she apprenticed with a woman who taught Muhlhahn the basics of birthing. Later, she worked at a clinic in El Paso, Texas. After a brief career hiatus with a California cult, Muhlhahn went to Columbia University in New York, worked in several hospital settings, and eventually set up shop literally in a corner of her own bedroom so she could put into practice all that she had learned from so many. Simultaneously along the way, she fell in love, had a son, and became a single mother.

In this book, Muhlhahn remembers some of the mothers she assisted and the babies she delivered, including the one infant

she lost and how the child’s death affected her and her career. She recognizes mentors and the people who made her a movie star in 2007 with “The Business of Being Born,” produced by Ricki Lake.

And she boasts. A lot.

That’s the bad news in this otherwise good book. Author Cara Muhlhahn tends to tell us all the wonderful things she did and how much people loved her. Self-confidence isn’t lacking for a second here.

But give Muhlhahn her due and look beyond the braggadocio. The reason to read this book is because the author gives mothers-to-be a lot of solid advice and reassurance. Her experiences are empowering and the messages are beneficial: Labor in the way that’s comfortable for you. Trust your body to do awesome things. Listen to your intuition. As Muhlhahn says, “... I often feel it’s disempowering to a mother for me to say that I’m delivering her baby. No, she is.”

While “Labor of Love” is a decent read, if you’re a mom-to-be or a mom-wanna-be, you’ll get more from it. For you, this is a book to push for. CPC

Terri Schlichenmeyer reviews books for national and international magazines and newspapers from her cozy Coulee Region home featuring more than 11,000 books.