

Rebecca Cotterill

By Patricia Cotterill, in loving memory of her daughter

As Christmas time draws nearer for yet another year, and everyone around us is talking about their Christmas activities, it is such a very difficult time for us as this Christmas Day will be the second anniversary of the loss of our dear daughter, Rebecca.

Rebecca was 25 years old when she left us. Rebecca had been living in Holland with her partner Peter, and they had a beautiful little daughter on the 29th May of 2002, whom they called Sydney Ann. I was lucky enough to be there for Sydney's birth and spent a little over a month with them, which I treasure very much to this day.

Rebecca developed Placental Cancer, which is a very rare cancer, and was admitted to hospital in the November. Five weeks later she was taken from us, after undergoing three doses of intensive chemotherapy. She had lost her hair, which was devastating for her, as Bec had the most beautiful long hair.

Bec had the most positive attitude, as cancer patients tend to do, and she made everyone around her feel that she was going to conquer this cancer and beat this dreaded disease. My husband Dudley and our youngest daughter Susan traveled from Australia and spent the last two weeks of Rebecca's life with her. Our middle daughter Michelle and her husband Chris, who live in the UK, had traveled over to Holland as soon as they heard the dreaded news and were with Rebecca for a couple of weeks, but had to return back to work.

On Christmas morning, Dudley, Susan, Peter and I were called to the Intensive Care Unit as Rebecca had been taken there approx 7.00am. We spoke to her and she spoke to us. She had had a very bad night. Her last words were "I'll talk to you later Mummy". Sadly, our Rebecca passed away that morning and was beaten by this deadly cancer. It was the worst day of our lives and one that will live with us forever.

We had to go back to her room, which was decorated for Christmas, and all the gifts were waiting to be opened. We had to pack her belongings and leave that hospital which we will never visit again. On Christmas afternoon Susan and I had to choose an outfit for Rebecca to wear in her coffin, and that night, with Peter's Uncle, a Funeral Director, we had to select her coffin.

Life moves on for everyone else, but not for us. We wear our masks each day in our daily lives, but our hearts are forever broken. Our lives feel empty, but we just keep on surviving somehow. We have our many photos and some videos of Rebecca that we will forever treasure, but we'd give anything to have our daughter back in our lives.

Christmas is such a very sad time for us, and always will be.

Lovingly written and submitted by Patricia Cotterill, TCF, Qld, mother of Rebecca Ann, who passed away in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002. She was aged 25 years.

LIFE SINCE THE LOSS OF MY REBECCA

I would like to write about my journey since the loss of my beautiful daughter Rebecca on Christmas Day 2002. To think that it will be 5 years this December that our Bec left our lives and how much our lives have changed since then. Once a parent loses a child, their lives are never the

same ever again. Only a parent who has suffered the loss of a child can fully understand what I mean.

Our Rebecca passed away in a hospital in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002 at approximately 9.20am. She was aged 25 years and had been diagnosed with cancer on the 29th November. We received the call from Rebecca and even then when she told us that horrid news, she was strong within herself. At that stage Rebecca had been in hospital in a place called Deventer for 2 weeks whilst undergoing all sorts of tests, as it took the Doctors that long to finally give her the diagnosis of Choriocarcinoma, or, Placental Cancer.

Rebecca was taken by ambulance to this huge hospital in Amsterdam on Saturday 30th November and her first chemo treatment was started that very afternoon. Her partner, Peter was by her side. Rebecca and Peter had a daughter on the 29th May 2002 and they called her Sydney. Peter's parents took care of her whilst Rebecca was in hospital.

Rebecca's sister, Michelle and her husband, Chris were living in the UK at this time and they were able to be there with Rebecca as soon as they heard this terrible news. Rebecca nearly passed away on the 9th December and was rushed to the Intensive Care Unit where Doctors managed to save her at that time. My husband, Dudley and our youngest daughter, Susan arrived in Holland and stayed in a family unit at the hospital, thus we were able to spend lots of quality time with Rebecca. When we were able to talk to the head of Oncology, she gave Rebecca a 30% to 40% chance of beating this cancer.

After her second chemo treatment Rebecca lost all her beautiful long hair and she cried in my arms when the nurse finally shaved her head. To witness our daughter go through the terrible sickness that chemo does to the body and to see how weak she became, was just the most horrible thing for us, and of course we felt absolutely helpless.

Michelle and Chris had to return to their jobs in the UK and left the hospital on Sunday 13th December. We had family photos taken but Bec was very ill at this stage and could not smile. After her third chemo treatment, Rebecca seemed to pick up a bit and was able to smile again. She was always very positive about beating this cancer and never once discussed dying from it with any of us. How does one talk about dying with their loved one who is suffering from cancer and is so very positive?

On Christmas Eve, Peter and his parents came to the hospital to visit and brought Sydney with them, and so we have beautiful photos of Rebecca holding her daughter on that day. We had decorated Bec's room with decorations for Christmas and the room was laden with gifts. I sat with Bec on Christmas Eve and watched some TV with her. We watched East Enders which was her favourite show.

On Christmas morning, Peter came knocking on our door to say that he had received a call to say that Bec had been rushed back to ICU. We all gathered up there in the waiting room and just waited. We were taken to see Bec and she was sitting up in bed and was able to talk to us. She said she'd had a very bad night. She had tubes everywhere and it was so difficult to hold her. The last words she said as we left the room were 'I'll talk to you later Mummy'. She only ever called me Mummy when she was scared. I couldn't speak as I was crying so much and trying to be so brave for Bec's sake.

We just sat and waited, then a Doctor came to tell us that Rebecca's heart had stopped and they were trying to resuscitate her and then he left. When he returned we knew the news was going to be the worst possible news that we could ever receive, and it was. Our daughter was gone forever. We went to see her and shed many tears over her. It was just so unbelievable that we would never see our daughter again or hear her speak.



Rebecca's funeral was on the Monday 30th December. There were approximately 200 family and friends who were there for her final farewell. Her ashes were divided and half are now placed in the cemetery at Derventer where Peter, Sydney, their family and friends can go and visit. We brought the other half of Bec's ashes back to Nambour with us. They remained by my bedside for a few years. We also had a Memorial Service for Rebecca on Saturday 18th January 2003 where approximately 400 family and friends attended.

This year though, on the 14th February, when it would have been Rebecca's 30th birthday, we placed her ashes under a liquid amber tree at Kulangoor Cemetery. Her tree overlooks a pond and she is now at rest with nature and the angels.

Our journey has been very tough. Our lives will never be the same again for us. We wear our 'masks' every day. Life goes on though and we have learnt to just take one day at a time.

Peter suffered for a long time and he has done a brilliant job of bringing Sydney up. Sydney is now 5 years old. Peter has moved on now and has a lovely partner called Susan. They have a daughter called Gwen who was born on 5th September last year. We have regular contact with them. My hobby is scrapbooking and I have done two albums already for Sydney to have one day. The first album has photos of Sydney in her mother's tummy, Sydney's birth, plus photos of Rebecca and Sydney for the first seven months.

Michelle and Chris now live on the Isle of Man. Michelle is studying to become a Natural Therapist which should eventuate next September. Susan is engaged to Nathan and they are getting married on 27th September next year, so it gives Dudley and I something to look forward to.

Everyone who has lost a child has their own story to tell, and I just wanted to share my story with all of you.

By Patricia Cotterill, TCF Qld Mother of Rebecca Cotterill who passed away in Amsterdam on Christmas Day 2002, aged 25 years.