

Our Angel Rebecca

In the last hours of Rebecca's life, she held out her arms and reached for angels. How perfect-just as we hoped and believed her passing should be. Angels! Rebecca reminded us of angels. She had the face of an angel and the voice of an angel. It was a treat to listen to her sing-always with all of her heart and soul. She even had the beautiful curls that Renaissance artists love to depict. Her spirit, however, well...that was one of an archangel. She was a fighter, a rescuer, a champion.

Rebecca was intriguing and complex, as intelligent people usually are. She extended her hand to anyone who she thought needed help, but she expected every person to pull his own weight. She had little patience for those who put themselves above others, yet she wanted everyone to strive for excellence. Rebecca respected both humbleness and confidence.

She was serious. Becca cared deeply about her family, friends, community and world. You could often catch Rebecca deep in thought with a little frown on her face, trying hard to come up with reasons and solutions for the injustices she observed. No one was exempt from her scrutiny-national politician, store clerk or, in one particular instance, a radical feminist law professor. She believed that we all have a responsibility to treat each other with respect, compassion and dignity. She was not shy about sharing her thoughts and we were glad because she inspired us to think a little more deeply.

On the other side of that seriousness, Rebecca had a wonderful wit, a great sense of humor. She loved to laugh, and her brother, Tim, was an expert at getting her to do so. The two of them became great impersonators, and there are more than a few us here today who were either treated to or the subject of this fine talent. As a little girl, Rebecca would look up at Tim with a gleam in her eyes and an expectant smile on her face. He always delivered. Just recently, he came through again by bringing Rebecca a comedy for them to enjoy. We were rewarded with the sound of their laughter.

Rebecca lived her life as if she knew she had a lot to do in a limited amount of time-a lesson for us all. At a very young age she was already an expert at campaigning for what she wanted. Her tactics-genius! This story demonstrates her tenacity, insight into human psychology and love for animals. When Becca was around five years of age she asked if she could get a dog. For many good reasons, she was told no. One of the reasons was that they already had a very nice cat-Nell. Both Becca and Tim had successfully convinced their mom and dad to adopt Nell, who had shown up on their doorstep one day. Rebecca must have remembered some of those "convincing" tactics, because it became very obvious that the word "no" did not mean the same thing to Rebecca as it meant to her parents. She really wanted a cat *and* a dog. This is also a story about perseverance, because Becca had to argue her case for the better part of the next 4 years. Hard work pays off.

One day Rebecca came home from school and showed her parents a lovely picture that she had drawn of a little girl outside on a bright sunny day. There were

flowers around a cat, but the girl had great big tears coming from her eyes. Her mom asked about the tears.

Rebecca replied, “ She doesn’t have a dog”.

Soon after, the Chappell family had, Ginger, a golden retriever. She later led successful campaigns for another cat, Buffydora, who turned out to be extremely mean and a very sweet little dog, Penny Lane. As you may surmise, she didn’t have to work quite so hard for Buffy or Penny Lane.

Becca was the champion of the underdog and the down trodden. She wanted the earth and all of nature to be nurtured. Becca wanted world harmony. Even for her very mean cat.

It’s a little difficult to believe that she was only nineteen. She had interests that would lead one to believe that she was much older. Imagine at her young age that she was into the Beatles, especially John Lennon. His lyrics spoke to her. She paid attention to world events. Even in her last hours, she was listening to the presidential primaries and making witty commentaries. Amazing! Whether it was on the soccer field, on the tennis court, in the classroom, hospital or home, she inspired us in so many ways. She taught us. She truly captivated our hearts. She was an angel among us who was here, not to keep us safe, but to push us forward. In return, we wanted to do *great* things for her.

Angels and great things. Angels disguised as doctors and nurses took care of Rebecca as she fought so valiantly to beat cancer. Kathy and Chip are overwhelmed by the love Rebecca was showered with by the wonderful medical staff. This love was demonstrated over and over again. At one point, Doctor Laura spent an entire day calling all over the country to find the right combination of pain medication to bring Becca essential relief. On another occasion, Rebecca accidentally pulled out her pain medication tube. Rebecca was at home, so someone needed to travel to the house to assist her. One of her nurses, Robin, left her own small children with a neighbor, hopped in her car and drove 30 miles to make sure that Rebecca was kept comfortable. Only someone with wings could have gotten there as quickly as she did. Her nurses became her friends. They inspired her to want to be a nurse. She inspired them, too. Even in her pain, she found ways to ease the discomfort and pain of others.

Thank you to all of you who took care such great care of Rebecca. Chip and Kathy cannot possibly convey in words their gratitude to you.

Love never dies. Please hold on to that. We have all asked ourselves the question; Why did she have to go-a vibrant child who had all the promise that any child ever had? Compassion, intelligence, beauty, tenacity, courage, talent, humor.

I would like to think that her mission on this earth was too big for any one person, so Becca recruited all of us. A band of angels.

Remember that love never dies. Becca loved all of us and we loved her.

Rebecca will live on in us. We will carry her in our hearts, and not just as memories, but also as inspiration as how to live. Hold her in your heart. Take care of one another.

Take care of the earth and all of the animals on it. Live your lives with a sense of compassion and justice for everyone. Laugh at every chance. Sing with all your heart and soul. Reach for excellence.

That's the message that we need to carry on our wings.