



In Memory of Lizbeth Denise Fatig

It's so hard to put into words how much someone can mean to you. My story is about my stepmom, Liz Fatig, who over the years became a really good friend. Liz was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in July 2012 and lost her battle in December 2012. It saddens my heart to think that if there were more tests to detect this aggressive cancer early, she would still be here today. My dad and I met Liz while on our daddy-daughter vacation in Alaska when I was 9. It was instant love for the two of them and she joined the family a few years later. Liz didn't have any kids of her own so she took me in as "her child". Of course with all relationships ours had it's tough times...it also didn't help that she came in right in my pre-teen/teenage years. After we worked together to overcome our differences, we became great friends. I could call Liz for anything. She was the person I'd call after a miserable day and could vent. She'd then tell me about all the drama going on with her as well. She was a school teacher for students with behavioral problems, but loved the job and the kids. She was an avid lover of Scottish Terriers and was very involved in a Scottish Terrier Club. My dad traveled quite a bit for work and during summer vacation she'd travel with him discovering the world. During the summer of 2012 she started to have abdominal pain. After several tests and multiple diagnoses she was finally diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It was a punch in the stomach to everyone. I had announced a few months earlier that I was due with my first child and Liz's first grandchild in December. During one of the happiest times of our lives we were also dealing with great tragedy. It's so cruel how the world works sometimes. She

remained positive through her journey, keeping a blog with a word of the day. The blog was helpful for her and all the friends and family. As she became weak from the chemo, it was difficult for her to talk on the phone so the blog allowed her to stay in touch with everyone. Liz decided to move to Oklahoma during her chemo treatments to live with her parents. My nana is a registered nurse and had the ability to care for Liz 24/7. Even though I was pregnant I was able to go out there a couple times. My last visit was in September and my only regret is that I was able to visit her later. Around Thanksgiving was our first scare when she was admitted to the hospital for an infection. Her body was slowly giving away but she continued to fight. She was determined to meet her grandchild, Olivia. She never got well enough to leave the hospital bed, but my dad and Liz's parents were able to bring her home and have hospice come in. On December 14th, I went into labor and Liz also went back to the hospital for a blood transfusion. I had Olivia that evening and Liz was able to see Olivia via a picture from my husband. We came home from the hospital on Sunday, December 17th and we talked with Liz via FaceTime so she could officially meet her granddaughter. On Monday, December 18th, Liz passed away peacefully and finally pain free.

Liz had so many friends and people that cared about her. Many of these friends were through the Scottie Club and she'd never actually met them but had many conversations with them via Facebook. It was so touching to meet these people who drove through several states to attend her memorial in January as well as those she's touched over the years locally. I have continued to stay in touch with some of them and I think this has helped my grieving process. I'm able to speak to several of them when I'm having a sad day and we can laugh at the great memories we have. Not only did Liz's death affect my life, it has put a hole in her students. The students at the school as well as the teachers created a memorial for her at the school to honor a great teacher taken too early. We spread her ashes in February in Northern California at the family home. She has become one with the place she loved so much. Olivia has become our focal point and we are all making sure that she will know who her Lolli was. My dad is currently putting together a book for Olivia about their journey through the ovarian cancer process. Olivia inherited so many great things from Liz that I can't wait to share the stories behind the items when she is old enough to understand and appreciate them. My dad and I will never be the same people. It hurts my heart to see how sad my dad is sometimes (their 16th anniversary was April 26th) but I'm proud that he has taken the steps he needs to join grief counseling and he has many people to lean on. I can't believe she's no longer here but we will carry on our great memories in stories to Olivia.

I've included a picture from good times in 2011 and then in August 2012.

Written by: Diana Fatig-Wheeler