

## Leah Suzanne

*My baby was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1972 (her due date was 20<sup>th</sup> November 1971) this time of year will always be hard, but I do not dwell on it, I just quietly remember that day and hope and bless that she is happy. My Grandmother died shortly after I lost Leah Suzanne, so that gave me some comfort at the time that there was someone else from the family in heaven to look after her.*

*They kept me waiting 6 weeks over the due date. She should have been born on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1971 and I had her on 1st January 1972, it was Christmas time and being the doctors knew what was going to happen they wanted to wait as there were staff shortages until after Xmas. I sensed there was something wrong for a long time before I had the baby, but did not want to ask in case they thought I was just being paranoid and kept telling myself that this was a first pregnancy and how was I to know if there is anything wrong. When finally taken into hospital for the labour to be induced, I was given a bed and, on the bed, table was a dead Lilly, this turned my stomach, and I felt a strange feeling that something was wrong. The same happened at pre-natal classes when the midwife was talking about superstitions, 'if you have a fright from a spider when first pregnant you might had a deformed baby', she was trying to explain not to listen to any of these old tales, I was shocked as what she did not realise that this had happened to me in the first 3 months. I was 7 months then and suspicious that something was wrong with my baby, this comment from the midwife (although not meant to upset anyone), did not help me.*



*When I eventually went into labour I was in terrible pain and in labour for 27 hours and understand it would have been breech birth. It was all due to lack of folic acid in my diet, but then that was then, and they know more now. It is just the unanswered questions that people do not realise were never answered for me. In fact it was only many years later when I received copies of my medical records after an accident claim that I found out about what was wrong with Leah, it was Anencephaly but while I carried her, she lived. Years later my friend who was a nursing assistant in a maternity ward for many years, told me that she would not go into intensive care when a baby was born with this defect as the babies were just left to cry and not fed, they would only live for a few days sometimes just hours. I am only thankful that Leah was not put through this. That was so horrible to imagine that that could happen. When I asked the nurse at the birth what my baby was, I knew by then without them telling me that my baby had died, she just said, 'we don't know.' I imagined that I had had a monster and that they did not know the sex. Even*

*after I was just kept in the dark. It was 4 days before I found out it was a girl. I was also put outside the nursery and spending 5 days in hospital was torture. This added to my distress. I was really upset and asked one of the nurses, 'why did this happen to me,' all she replied was in a sharp voice, 'you won't be the first and you are not the*

last,' straight faced with no emotion, all I wanted was a hug and told that it would be ok. There are ways to say something, but this nurse certainly didn't know how!

We were not given the chance to name our baby, have a funeral or any involvement with Leah's resting place. I was married to my ex-husband at the time, and he just blanked things out as he was aware that I would have a still born baby when I was 7 months pregnant (and told not to tell me), the pain was too big to cope with, but I was not told until after the event. My mother-in-law claimed that it must have been something I had done wrong and when I was pregnant again asked me 'will you have another one if this one die's. This added to the guilt that I had had a still born baby. My own mother was quiet and did not say much until I asked her if I was going to die as nobody would tell me anything and seems to avoid talking about what happened. She realized after that that I needed to talk. My sister-in-law, came to see me with her 5-month-old son and she did the best thing, plonked the baby on my lap and went and made a cup of tea, this made me feel wanted again as most people were avoiding me, even to walk across to the other side of the road if they had their baby with them, so they would not have to talk to me about it. I understood but would have liked to have spoken to them.

There is a lot of unpleasant things I could tell you, but it does not change anything. My second child was a boy, and I took a long time to accept him as I was afraid to love him and then lose him too. No help was given, and he was a child that cried all the time. My third child was also a boy, and despite the love for both of them, I always hoped, as I love dancing that one day I would have a daughter, however, my sons have made up for this as they are both performers, one loves acting and the other loves music and they are both artistic. I do have 4 granddaughters and although 1 is not in the country, the others I do try and see when I can. I also have 2 grandsons and 2 great grandsons; I don't get to see all of them. My eldest son who is now 42 years old said I should call their baby sister by her name, Leah Suzanne. I know the place where she was supposed to have been buried but not the plot. But then nobody has any idea of whether or when she was put there as then we were just told to get on with things.

The ironic thing is that if they had explained to me, yes, I would have been devastated and may not have agreed to it, but I would probably have donated the organs to a baby that needed them so that I could have comfort in helping another baby to live. At that time nobody spoke about things like that, and technology wasn't so far advanced.

*Leah Suzanne - Stillborn 1<sup>st</sup> January 1972*