

Case Study – Pat Preedy

Tracey and David

Thirty-one years ago, David was at home on leave from the Merchant Navy and we found that I was pregnant. Around 18 weeks I started bleeding and had to go into the early pregnancy unit. I was told there was no heartbeat and they took me into theatre. It was February 14th – Valentine's Day. I had a procedure so that the baby was removed without having to give birth. They told us it was a boy and we called him Jack. We did not see or receive anything, and I presume the hospital disposed of the remains. They tested me and said that there was nothing wrong, that it was one of those things. This made me very upset and anxious as there was no reason for what had happened. Everyone in our group were all having babies and I was particularly upset when a friend commented, 'It's about time Tracey got over that little episode'. A lady counsellor came round to the house. When I asked how she had felt when this happened, she said that it had not happened to her, and I told her to get out. It took me several years before I felt able to try again for a baby.

This time David again came home from sea and when I went for the twelve-week scan around Christmas time, they said that I was expecting twins. There are twins in David's family, not mine. My first thoughts were, how am I going to cope on my own with David away for six months of the year. At the same time, we were elated as this was very much what we wanted.

I continued to be really well and then I went for a second scan. During the scan the monitor was towards the midwife. She kept going at different angles around my tummy. I sensed something was not right and felt that I couldn't breathe. Then she turned the screen around and said that she was sorry that there were two sacks but only one viable baby. She continued with measurements and her records. Then I was sent on my way. No help or support was offered. I felt frightened, upset and worried that I may now lose this baby as well. I booked a phone call to David's ship to tell him, and we were both distraught and crying. I don't remember telling my Mum and my sister, but I must have done.

For the rest of the pregnancy, I was a nervous wreck. I was worried that something was going to happen. There was no additional support offered. I kept praying that everything would be all right. They said that the baby was measuring small at all my midwife appointments. This was an additional worry. I was very small and I worked in an estate agency until three days before the birth. David was in Tai Wan and he flew home at the beginning of August for the birth.

I went to a cricket match. I was wearing check green and white trousers and a white top. David went to bed that night and I had a bit of tummy ache and back ache. I had a bath and decided to phone the hospital. They said to come in. We stopped to get water and mints. When we got to the hospital, they said that I was in labour. It was after midnight and David phoned my mother. She stopped at the same garage to also buy mints. I had an easy birth and at 9.54am David delivered the baby's head and Mum said you need one more push. David said, 'We have got our little boy'. He looked like a little scrap – 6lbs 4 oz. My waters broke as he was born. The after birth came as it should, but I did not see anything. No mention was made of another twin having existed.

David had three months off and I had terrible post-natal depression. I couldn't believe this little child was here and that he was ok. It is thanks to David that Tom and I are alive as I planned to drive off a bridge with the baby.

It wasn't until Tom was three months old that I thought he is mine. I was terrified of a cot death, and I had all the available equipment to monitor him.

I could not cope with another loss and we decided to be grateful for having one healthy boy. The twinship was put to one side. I can't remember when Tom found out that he had been a twin – he was definitely at secondary school. We have never sat down and talked about it as we would other things.

Periodically David will say I wonder what would have been if the other child had survived. The good thing is that it has made us extremely close as a family.