

# Sara's STORY

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**Documentary 47:50 minutes**

SARA'S STORY is a documentary that follows 25 year old Sara Taylor during the most significant two years of her life. On October 8, 1997, 23 year old Sara Taylor, actress, University student, is diagnosed with a rare form of life-threatening cancer. From the first moment, Sara is battling enormous odds. She is immediately operated on to remove a tumour growing in her stomach. Then she begins devastating chemo-therapy. It almost kills her. And from the beginning of her diagnosis, through her treatments, her surgery, her periods of severe doubt and moments of illuminating revelation, Sara, her fiance Brad, her mom and dad, Pat and Lee, her sister Jenny all share their innermost thoughts with us on camera. They gave us complete and uncensored access. This film clearly documents the emotional journey that cancer exacts in a young woman and in the family and loved ones of that young woman.

But it is not only this perspective - the perspective of a 25 year old woman - that makes this documentary unique. It is the extraordinary qualities of this intelligent and vital young woman that make this documentary truly memorable. It's no wonder she's going to be an actor! Her compelling personality shines through in every inch of this film. This is Sara's story and it holds you enthralled every minute.

SARA'S STORY is shot all over British Columbia. At the height of her debilitating chemo-therapy, bald as a billiard ball, Sara appears on a province-wide Telethon performing with Lloyd Robertson, Ray Charles and Bob McGrath. They fall in love with her courage and beauty. And she is an eloquent and outspoken advocate on behalf of disadvantaged children. It is an extraordinary and bravura performance. During breaks she slumps in a chair backstage barely able to move.

That summer we travel with Sara to British Columbia's stunning Cariboo country in the interior of the province and quite possibly one of the most beautiful settings on earth. In the early Fall, with golden leaves set on fire by the setting sun, deep blue skies and vast green fields, we join her on the Ranch in the Cariboo. This is where Sara and Jenny grew up — home schooled on an organic cattle ranch — with no electricity, a log cabin with a big claw-foot tub in the living room and an outhouse. "We always had lively conversations in the evening and nobody wanted to be left out just to take their bath so I built the house with the tub in the living room", Lee (her dad) told us matter-of-factly. This open, natural, and humour-filled upbringing, away from city pressures and expectations, is something that comes back again and again as a theme for Sara.



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And in the Cariboo, at the Ranch, Sara takes us to an extraordinary spot. On horseback, we see the spot she has already designated as her burial place on the top of a hill by the big tree she can see from her childhood bedroom window. Even then, Sara's attitude is positive. She believes the horse she loved as a little girl will be there to meet her. She is radiant and glowing as she speaks to us and it is almost impossible to believe that anything bad could ever happen to this wonderful woman.

On October 8, 1998, exactly one year to the day after she received her diagnosis of cancer, as our cameras roll, Brad and Sara are married in a moving and meaningful ceremony. The crisp air and the vibrant blue sky mirror the upbeat attitude of all of those who have lived through Sara's year with her. It is a time of celebration. Not just for the marriage of two people but also for the life of an extraordinary young woman who has enriched the life of everyone she has touched. But on April 20, 1999, during a routine scan, Sara is told that her cancer has returned. Her Oncologist now considers her terminal. Sara's initial anger is directed at her Oncologist and her family. But their love and patience and unplumbed depth of feeling for this precious woman - niece, granddaughter, sister, daughter, wife - wrap around Sara like the comfort of a quilt on a winter's night. They feed her and protect her. They assume the mortgage on her condominium; all she has to concern herself with is living. And by summer she is smiling and working in the Gold Rush town of Barkerville in British Columbia's interior.

Following the summer, on a much needed trip to the Ranch, the effects of living with cancer begin to show. Sara is in a car accident and then, two days later, falls off her horse while we are filming. She was simply too weak to control the galloping beast. Her only hope now is to fight using natural weapons with her spirited collaborator, noted naturopath Dr. Jim Chan. Through his eyes we now see that the three to five years she has been given may be optimistic. This beautiful young woman is dying. Two years after she received the news that she has cancer, we follow Sara Taylor-Gibson, her mother and her husband to the BC Cancer Agency for a scan. Afterwards, holding the hand of her mother and her husband, Sara is told the results of the scan. The results and her reaction surprise us all. They leave the clinic, three small people against the world as the Autumn leaves fall.

And life goes on.

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