

GIBNEY: REBECCA CATHERINE

Born: 14 Dec 1964, Levin, New Zealand.

Married: 4 Nov 2001, Queensland, Australia

To: Richard Bell

Honours

1990: Australian Film Institute Award for Best Actress

for her role in "Come in Spinner"

1991: Most Outstanding Actress Logie Award

2009: Gold Logie for her role in "Packed to the Rafters"

2009 and 2010: Most Popular Actress Award

"Packed to the Rafters"

2013: Film Critics Award Best Actress in a supporting role

in the PJ Hogan Film "Mental"

**She has also been nominated for numerous awards over the last
thirty years.**

Rebecca's parents:

Austin (1930 – 1982) & Shirley Claire (nee Way) (1935 - present)

Rebecca and ***Richard*** have ***one son***:

Zachary Edison Bell (2004 -)

Rebecca has ***two brothers*** and ***three sisters***:

Michael Austin (1954 -)

Teresa Maureen Marion (1956 -)

Patrick Shaun (1957 -)

Dianna Frances (1958 -)

Stella Margaret (1960 -)

Apart from her eldest brother Michael, who was born in Wellington, the Gibney children were all born in Levin, Rebecca being the youngest. Before she was born her father Austin was hoping for another boy and had already planned to

call her Thorpe, after an American athlete and Olympic Gold Medallist (Jim Thorpe). She was christened Rebecca with the middle name of Catherine after a lovely Irish nurse in the maternity hospital in Levin who had been kind to Shirley.

The family lived at 24 Middlesex Street but shortly after Rebecca started school, at the age of 5, they left Levin, moving around a lot during Rebecca's youth, spending time in Masterton and Hastings before moving back to Wellington when Rebecca was 11.

Growing up Rebecca was quite the tomboy spending most of her time in flannelette shirts, jeans and sneakers. She was a keen gymnast and trampolinist, winning third place in a National Championship when she was in her teens. She also attended jazz ballet classes for a number of years.

She completed her primary education at Kelburn Normal school and then went to Wellington Girls' College. Despite being an A student in her early teens Rebecca struggled to fit in and left at 16 to work for a Wholesale Jewellers before moving back to the family home to help care for her father who had lost a leg as a result of a blood-clotting disorder.

Her father sadly passed away at the age of 51 when Rebecca was 17. It was a blow as she had only recently grown close to her father who suffered from alcoholism and had often been violent toward her mother. Having not had a strong relationship with him, Rebecca has said she is very fortunate that her two older brothers Michael and Patrick were great role models for her as she matured, describing them as kind and sensitive.

At 16, she began deportment lessons at Plume Modelling Agency in Wellington and it was here that she started part time modelling. It resulted in Rebecca being asked to audition for numerous television productions where she landed her first major role in the kidult TV series "Sea Urchins" for TVNZ (*kidult* being a term used for an adult whose interests would be more akin to those of a child, or who acts childish with his/her children).

At the age of 19 Rebecca went to Australia, securing an agent and auditioning for various television and film roles. But homesickness saw her return to Wellington after only a few months. She was only home for two weeks when she was offered two television series back in Australia and moved to Melbourne in 1985 to take on the role of 'Julie Davis' in the children's series "Zoo Family".

Then came the feisty mechanic 'Emma Plimpton' in the popular drama series "The Flying Doctors". In 1990 she took on the role of 'Guinea Malone' in the mini-series "Come In Spinner" which saw her win an AFI award as Best Lead Actress in the drama and an Outstanding Lead Actress award at The Logie Awards.

From 1991 to 1993 Rebecca appeared in the sitcom "All Together Now" with singer turned actor Jon English. It was a surreal experience for Rebecca as she had been a fan of Jon since she was a teenager having his poster on her wall.

In 1994 Rebecca starred in the title role of 'Dr Jane Halifax' created for her by fellow New Zealander Roger Simpson in the telemovie series "Halifax f.p.". It was an immense success in Australia with 21 telemovies completed over a 7-year period and a multitude of awards and nominations. It cemented her status as a household name within Australia and New Zealand. In 2020 the series was recommissioned, as "*Halifax: Retribution*". It was one of Channel Nine's highest rating dramas for that year, also garnering Rebecca another nomination as Lead Actor in a Drama at the Australian Film and Television Awards.

In 2007 Rebecca started work on the series "Packed to the Rafters" playing the character of 'Julie Rafter'. "Packed to the Rafters" is still considered one of the most popular dramas in Australian television history with dozens of awards for the series and its lead actors Rebecca, fellow New Zealander Erik Thomson and the younger stars Jessica Marais and Hugh Sheridan. The series ran from 2008 through until 2012 with over 120 episodes filmed. It has recently been recommissioned by Amazon Prime and will launch in 2021 on September 17.

On the big screen, Rebecca's most acclaimed role has been in the 2012 movie "Mental". It won her a Film Critics Best Actress in a Supporting Role Award for playing a mother struggling to cope with five children while her husband was frequently absent, and unfaithful. Leading the cast was the globally-acclaimed Toni Collette collaborating with director P J Hogan for the first time since the much-adored "*Muriel's Wedding*" (1994). For "Mental", Rebecca was required to put on 12 kilograms in weight, and then had to take it off again for the next series of "Packed to the Rafters".

In her early 30s Rebecca began to develop agoraphobia after a gruelling work schedule and a number of personal issues saw her suffer a mental collapse. After being introduced to a therapist via a friend, she worked through the traumas that had plagued her and she finally managed to overcome the anxiety attacks she had suffered for decades.

She was further settled by meeting and falling in love with fellow New Zealander Richard Bell, a production designer she met in 2000 on the set of "Halifax f.p.". After spending some time together, the two realised they had actually lived on the same street in Hastings when they were children. Rebecca's father had worked with Richard's aunt at the local dry cleaners. The pair married in 2001 and will celebrate their 20th wedding anniversary in November 2021. Their son Zachary (Zac) was born in 2004 in Tasmania but the three have been happily living back in New Zealand, near Queenstown, since 2017.

In 2021 Zac was chosen as one of the finalists in the New Zealand Shakespeare Awards. It seems he is following in Mum's footsteps and may end up treading the boards in London at the Globe theatre in 2022.

Among other special programmes Rebecca has been involved in are:

"Sensing Murder" a documentary series produced by TVNZ;

"The Killing Field" a crime drama released in 2014. Rebecca was also co-producer.

"Winter" a follow-up series to "The Killing Field" that Rebecca also co-produced.

"Wanted" a series created by Rebecca and her husband Richard that starred Rebecca in the lead role of 'Lola Buckley'. She was also the executive producer. It ran for three seasons from 2016 - 2018. Season 2 was filmed in the lower South Island.

She was also the subject of genealogy series "Who Do You Think You Are" which transmitted in 2016.

In a 2017 interview for Marie Claire magazine, she described herself as content, "the best word ever".