



"Celebration of Jackson's Life"

9am "Kurrumin" then at Funeral 11am
St John Bosco Church, Engadine

Eulogy on Thursday 29 December 2005

My introduction May I thank my daughter Sonya Maree and Father Chris for planning this very special service. Sonya and I were together with Jackson when he passed away. Sonya would you please come and be beside me now to help me please?

ThankYOU, for coming today to celebrate the life of one remarkable boy – Action Jackson.

Early one spring morning, 12 years ago, Amanda and Jay his parents drove north, full of anticipation for a happy beach holiday with their three beautiful sons...

On 27th November 1993 Jackson was 3 months old, a healthy baby, fondly called 'little buddha' and now "Jax". He was born on the 17th August. His brothers, Matthew Peter was 5, David Jaymes was 3. I imagine the two big brothers were asleep dreaming of beaches, swimming...

Amanda and Jay were cherished and had a great love for each other and all their family. They met at their part-time student jobs when Amanda was studying teaching and Jay, business. They married at the Holy Cross College Chapel at Ryde, as Peter and I were twenty-four years before.

After the accident, Jackson and I spent 6 months in the Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick while Matthew and David went to live with Eric and Shirley their paternal grandparents, where they have remained. I appreciate the care and support they have provided to Jackson's two wonderful brothers. Jackson regularly visited their home.

When Jackson was ready to come home from hospital, we came together to "Tree Tops", the family home where Peter and I lived with our daughters Amanda and Sonya. It held many happy memories. Samantha, Jackson's faithful dog came to live with us. Samantha now lives with Pop Stephens.

Jackson was now differently abled. He was a quadriplegic, with visual, swallowing and speech impediments. Support was provided by his dedicated team, headed up by Dr Ric Dunstan and Professor Annie Bye. There was our never ending search for new technology and other ways to improve the techniques for caring and rehabilitating darling Jackson.

Our "Tree Tops" was far from a suitable home, and "Kurrumin" was created out of a desire to provide Jackson with appropriate home based care in an optimum environment. On the 27th

June 1998, Matthew, David, Jackson and I spent the first night in our new home "Kurrumin", which means reflections.

Looking back, our accessible home provided us with much opportunity to improve the quality of Jackson's life, with the sound of lapping water, speedboats, big boy toys and hearing the bird calls as we fed them on the beach. His specialist home based care evolved and Jackson had a team of professional attendant carers, dedicated and focused to help Jax. Every day he was surrounded with joy and happiness – his care was also his play... his life! Over half Jackson's professional team have been with us between five and twelve years. Cathy was with us over ten years providing wonderful friendship and support. Jackson's carers treated Jax with great skills and abilities, they were also his playmates and friends. Indeed our philosophy was to "care for Jackson as we would want him to care for us".

Jax needed special equipment and when he was two years old, our innovative friend Kel Anderson adapted Jax's toys and equipment, designed and made the "Matthew Buggies", designed for children challenged by conventional seating. Kel created a miracle with Jackson's "Anderson Walker", but we didn't know it the first time Jax tried it – he did absolutely nothing. We later witnessed those first few magic steps – we were so excited. Jax eventually walked a kilometer on a regular basis – his personal best was two hours around Bowral. Jax also learnt to ride a bike.

As a family the three brothers and I went to the Gold Coast for our first 'family' holiday in 1994. Followed by yearly Sport & Recreation camps at Berry and Point Wolstoncroft, and a trip to Dubbo Zoo over the following six years. Matthew and David adored their little brother and their time with him.

Jax found time for surfing and swimming. There were the annual skiing treks to Thredbo where Jax had his special sit ski and Simon took him on the double black runs. The faster the better for Jax. We went to Disneyland at Anaheim and Tokyo with our friends– we had the best of times! This year we went to Dreamworld on the Gold Coast, after swimming with the dolphins and kissing the seals at Coffs Harbour.

There's more, Lord Mayor's New Year Eve picnics and fireworks, trips to theatres, cinemas, the city, the country – shearing with Pop, going fishing and catching nothing! Wonderful opportunities too – meeting sporting champs Pat Rafter, Jason Stevens and the Royals, Prince Frederik and Princess Mary. All these events were eagerly anticipated and happily remembered.

Jax went to Alice Betteridge School North Rocks. Gail and Jax drove to school for six years together and shared many secrets. There was a great trip this year, school camp, which offered koala spotting, bird watching, picnics, dolphin cruise, ball and parachute games, 4 wheel drive sand-duning, pippi hunting, sand boarding, spas and - you know what – no parents! They had a fantastic time at Anna Bay with all the Class 11 students and teacher Jacqui.

There was also Cubs and Joeys for six years. Also going to Cub/Scout camp this year with three women, none of whom could erect a tent and it was pouring! Jax did have a few comments about that! Eventually we climbed into our tent, blissimooooooooo.

He was one of the actors in the Scouts 2003 and 2005 Kirrawee Gang Shows with his carer Sam. Jax was a little star with his own dressing room, Sharon and Kursti did his wardrobe and makeup. I watched it all in awe and delight.

I have always seen Jackson healed... complete... lacking nothing. From Jax I learnt many things. I found that his INabilities were my DISabilities and Jax was always a "Can Do" person. We talked, imagined, walked, danced together –

Just a few of Jackson's achievements that made us so proud:-

- 1 Great communication skills. Communication is far greater than mere words
- 2 Daily chats with Pop Stephens
- 3 To those who took the time to recognise Jax responded joyfully
- 4 Knew he needed to walk to be part of our mainstream life
- 5 Swimming with his hydro men Julian and Michael
- 6 Ability to attract attention
- 7 Understanding questions and providing answers
- 8 His inspirational relationships with family and friends
- 9 His patience and tolerance – if we stuffed it up, even better in chaos was fun
- 10 Jax could feed himself, with assistance of his skilled and patient carers

There are many wonderful people who recognise the injustices surrounding those who are differently abled. They see the means to implement changes and seek and achieve sustainable solutions. On behalf of Jackson, I thank you all for daring to make the difference.

Unfortunately, My Mum, Jax's Great-grandmother is too unwell to be here today, however, she sends her love.

Cathy, so inspired by our Jackson, is now developing a holiday home for children who are differently abled, to be named after Jackson. We were to be her very first guests.

Matthew and David, my heart is so sad for you both. I look forward to more happy times together. My home is your home, wherever I live. I love and admire you very much.

Jackson now knows Angels have wings, Angels do not have wheelchairs.

Written and spoken by Judie Stephens OAM, Jackson's ever loving maternal grandmother

I AM JACKSON

I am your teacher if you allow me,
I teach you what is really important in life,
I give you unconditional love.
My gift to you is my innocent trust,
my dependancy upon you.
I teach you respect for others
and their uniqueness.
I teach you about the sanctity of life.
I teach you how very precious this life is
and about not taking it for granted.
I teach you about putting my needs
and desires before your own.
I invite you to share my dreams.
I teach you giving.
But most of all,
I teach you hope and faith.
I am your friend, Jackson.

with my love always
Judie Stephens 1998

www.daretodo.asn.au

Box 531 Post Office Darlinghurst 2010

Jackson - 12 years, 4 months, 1 day
17 August 1993 to 18 December 2005