

About **Jordan** – by Grandfather, Ron Cross

I write this absolutely secure in the knowledge that, some day, I will be able to visit my memories of my precious granddaughter and the lessons she has taught me and, although they may elicit a tear or two, take comfort in them. That day, however, is not today. Today my grief and my heartache interfere and, as I share these memories and lessons, the pain of her loss is every bit as raw as it was the day she died.

Jordan was a “high needs” baby. That’s what the doctor said when her Mom and Dad sought his counsel because she cried so much. He also said, however, that “high needs” babies were very often exceptional children. As her grandfather I had the luxury of missing the many hours of her early protests and awaiting the “exceptional” child phase of her life.

That came far earlier than I had ever expected. As a very young toddler Jordan taught me her first lesson. After an especially long period of tears and sadness Jo was asked why she had been crying. Her reply, “because my feelings were broke”, has been with me ever since. How concise. How uncomplicated. How intuitive. How many times since then have I realized that the “adult” emotions I was dealing with were caused simply because “my feelings were broke”?

Throughout her childhood I watched that early prediction come true. With one notable exception (Jordan seemed, unfortunately, to have inherited her grandmother’s singing ability) she found success in almost everything she attempted. What she may have lacked in natural talent she made up for in drive. And she attempted pretty much everything her community offered.

In my retirement I have found much enjoyment in watching my grandchildren participate in athletics. I have traveled for hours to watch a basketball game. Even longer to witness the few minutes of a race or high jump. High on the list of my proudest moments was watching Jordan set the high jump record for her public school. One, I understand, of many records she set and still holds. On that list also would be watching her early soccer games and realizing that our little princess played the game with an aggression and drive that I had never seen in her before.

Although her Nanny and I tried to avoid snow as much as possible in our retirement years, we did return early from the sunny south a couple of years ago and got to see our grandchildren on skis. If Jo was a tomboy on the soccer pitch she was a ballerina on skis. She skied with a comfort and grace that brought tears to this old geezers eyes.

I was there when Jordan had her first seizure. I was afterwards witness to the limits epilepsy was placing on both her academic and athletic abilities. In fact, on reflection, it seems pretty obvious that epilepsy had for some time been effecting her performance. And Jordan saw this too. She was very much aware that this would happen. She was determined to be as knowledgeable as she could be about this disorder.

At an OBA basketball tournament in Collingwood where Jordan had played an uncharacteristically mediocre morning game she and I had lunch together. And I discovered another side to my beautiful granddaughter. In my thirty five year high school teaching career I had never met a more mature fifteen year old. And I have never met a more courageous person of any age. She knew her morning performance was the result of her epilepsy. She suspected she had had a mini seizure on the court. She confided in me her plan to “deal” with the limitations this disorder was placing on her life. She would fight to change the effects that she could. She was prepared to accept the limitations she could not change. She saw the skiing ban she was on that winter as temporary. As for the basketball, determination would overcome the small loss of natural ability. She knew she would likely spend the rest of that day’s tournament warming the bench. That, however, was a temporary setback.

In the fifteen short years of her life Jordan has brought me joy in innumerable ways. She invited her Nanny and I to go on their family Dominican vacation with them last year. What kind of teenager invites her grandmother and grandfather on her vacation? The same kind I guess who would ask her Mom to help chaperone on her school trip to Europe. Jo was truly an “exceptional” child.

Wonderful memories of Jordan will be with me forever. She will be forever fifteen. She will be forever beautiful. She will continue to enrich my life. But I will miss her terribly.

I love you Jo.

Papa.