

**Jacob Lollback**

5/10/1988 to 22/9/2009

2<sup>nd</sup> Son of Eric and Kaylene Lollback

Brother of Andy, Dan, Mitch, and Josh

Grandson of Max & Pam Lollback and Bruce & Zelda Ebeling

Friend to thousands of people

Over the last 10 years or so I've done a lot of things for Jacob and had intended doing many, many more. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that delivering the eulogy at his funeral would be one of those things. However it is with enormous pride that I have accepted Eric and Kaylene's request to help us all reflect a little on Jacobs amazing 20 years and 50 weeks of life.

It is not my intention to stand here today and tell you what a saint Jacob was..... he hadn't QUITE reached that status .....but I am sure he has already smiled widely and talked his way past St Peter at the pearly gates .....and he's probably already picked up a free ticket to the V.I.P. stand. I can just see him there sitting next to Stevie Irwin, the Crocodile hunter, comparing notes about their exploits in the wild.

Jacob was an extraordinary human being, a unique character, he was different but very special, he was warm & loveable, able to talk to anyone of any age, always smiling, full of fun and mischief, he was a torment, a likeable larrikin – there was never a dull moment when Jacob was around.

He gathered many nicknames over the years. There was "Norm" or "Normy", "Lolly", "Scrolly", "Lolliback", "Superfish", "Grafton Ironman", "Main Beach Snake", and the one Grant Bennett gave him "Jason Finback". He answered to them all.

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But lets go back to the beginning.

He was born on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1988 at Grafton Base Hospital weighing in at 8lb. 5oz. Kaylene said it was quite a traumatic birth ( which might explain his left handedness). Eric said he came out long and skinny and looked like a "skinned-rabbit".

When he was 3 years old the family, now comprising 4 young boys, moved from their Oliver St home to live at the family farm at Barretts Creek just west of Grafton for a year. It was there that Jacob developed his love of farm life.

And didn't he love that farm life with a passion – this was a side of his life known so well to his close family and relatives. They saw him revel in the bush right up till the present day.

He had a real affinity with animals –when he was little he would spend hours at a time just being in their company – lying beside a new calf or the family Labrador, Ben, or spending time with Sunline – the family horse at the farm..... He loved them all. Those days on the farm will never quite be the same now without him.

Jacob's animal attraction went a little further as he got older and more daring and many of you have your own stories of his fascination with anything feral that moved.....he could be quite ruthless to say the least....

I like Lani Bennett's comment on "Facebook"

*"....the pigs will be nervous in heaven now, that's for sure.....AND the rabbits.....AND the fish.....AND the bush turkeys.....AND the bloody seagulls. The list goes on."*

No doubt the Lollback boys have some amazing stories of their own that we may even get to hear later today at the Services Club.....they will be worth listening to.

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Back to starting school at Westlawn Public School.

Jacob immediately excelled at sport. He played soccer with the Westlawn Tigers Club from the age of 5 years , helping his team win many grand finals as they progressed right through the age groups to Seniors.

Hockey was also on the agenda in the winter months with the City Bears Club from Under 6's right through until he finished high school. And when he moved to the Gold Coast he started playing Underwater hockey at Southport Olympic Pool.

At Grafton High School... athletics, swimming and cross country became additional successful sporting pursuits..... but there was not much academic prowess ..... he wasn't interested.....no time for that with sport and farm life and family adventures.

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At the age of 7 Jacob joined the Yamba Surf Club as a nipper. His brothers and his mother and father all went on to get their bronze medallion and become patrolling members of the club – such was their nature in giving to others and being involved in activities as a family.

For many years at Yamba Surf Club their surf patrol was made up of just two families.....all the Lollback's and all the Douglas's.....and they were all Cronulla Sharks supporters. Of course they were all tickled pink when Luke Douglas left this patrol to

go off to Sydney to ultimately become the successful Sharks rugby league player we know today.

Back in his early nipper days Jacob was a beach sprinter, winning State medals in the Under 8's. But he soon moved into swimming and board paddling. He showed immediate potential but his lack of size and strength meant that he didn't meet with a lot of success as a lie down paddler on those short nipper boards.

At age 13 he moved onto the longer racing boards and, with his long arms and arched back, he quickly developed a near perfect paddling technique .....which is used today on many of the SLSA Coaching Videos.

The first time we took Jacob to Kurrawa for the Australian Titles back in 2003 his tiny frame fell victim to the powerful Kurrawa shore break and northerly sweep. In his heat of the Under 15 board race he didn't even get through the break. Eric had to run almost to Surfers Paradise to pick him up.

BUT, undeterred, 3 years later, and now much bigger and stronger, he was back at Kurrawa winning the Australian Under 17 board race title from a field of over 200 competitors. He loved to race at Kurrawa, the "Melbourne Cricket Ground" of surf lifesaving arenas, with its always challenging surf conditions.....and it became the scene of many triumphs for him.

Jacob went on to represent Australia on 4 occasions – 3 times in Japan and once at Bondi Beach as captain of the Australian Under 23 team for the 2007 International Surf Rescue Challenge.

He represented NSW on several occasions whilst competing for Yamba, and then when he left Yamba in 2007, and moved to the Burleigh Heads-Mowbray Park club, where he was reunited with his early Yamba clubmates, Hugh Dougherty and Alyce Bennett ..... he was immediately selected in the Queensland team .....This meant he represented both NSW and Qld in the same calendar year..... surely a unique feat.

However I must admit to all the Queenslanders here today, that, after having worn the sky blue cap of NSW for several seasons, he found it very difficult to pull on the Maroon colours. It didn't quite sit right with him.

He also represented NSW Country on a trip to New Zealand in 2005 where team mates marvelled at his ability to catch seagulls with his bare hands and gently put them to sleep. Skills like this were often practised in the Clarence River in Grafton where he trained with my son Hugh in their younger days.

One particular day they were on their boards paddling close to the river bank. Hugh heard a splash and looked behind to see that Jacob had leapt off his board into the reeds only to surface with a water hen in his grasp. In no time at all he was back on the board with the

hen resting peacefully on the front. He continued paddling as if this was normal.....not quite sure what was given to mum for dinner that night.

As a representative of the Far North Coast branch at the NSW Interbranch Titles every season from Under 11's through to Under 19's Jacob began widening his circle of surf lifesaving friends.....Oh how the girls loved him on those long bus trips down to the beaches of Sydney and Newcastle.

Jacob was selected in the North Coast Academy of Sport Surf Lifesaving squad at age 15. This brought him into contact with a wider circle of fellow country lifesavers from Kingscliff to Port Macquarie – many stories have surfaced from these camps but more importantly strong bonds were formed between these teenagers many of whom are here today.

Jacob earned considerable success in the surf arena as a result of hard work and training on top of his abundant natural talent. But this success never went to his head.....maybe because his father would often tell him to take no notice of the newspaper headlines.

His Australian Titles record stands at 5 gold medals, 4 silver medals and 3 bronze medals.

At NSW State level he won the Competitor of the Carnival Award at the 2007 State Titles winning 4 individual gold medals.....including the coveted Open and Under 19 board race double .....a feat he almost pulled off at the National level twice.

The 2008 Kelloggs Nutri Grain Iron Man Series saw Jacob as the youngest competitor in the field but he acquitted himself admirably and finished 12<sup>th</sup>. He loved mixing with his so called heroes of the surf.

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But despite all this.....his love of the surf was always surpassed by his love of the bush and his love of family.

At every possible opportunity he was back home to Grafton for SOME reason ..... a family wedding, a christening, an anniversary, a birthday for nan or pop, a hockey final or a game of footy where he loved to watch his brothers play with the Grafton Ghosts. Often a legitimate reason ..... but not always a practical one.

It was nothing for him to go straight from a 2 hour ironman training session at the Gold Coast, drive 3 hours to Grafton and then head to the bush for a night time fish or hunt. He hated to miss out on a thing. He loved to be a part of all that went on in the lives of his grandparents, cousins and family. He filled his days to the absolute fullest....but then he did wonder why he was always so tired .

There's an old saying that certainly applies to Jacob:

*"You can take the boy out of the country.....but you can't take the country out of the boy."*

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Jacob "wore many caps" .....His surf club competition caps are on display here with his favourite blue Kracka racing board .....but there were other caps that he wore just as keenly.

Not only was he a loving son, brother, grandson, cousin, special friend to Jamie-lee, and friend and huge torment to so many more..... he was also:

- A volunteer surf lifesaver
- A champion board paddler
- An elite iron man
- A soccer player
- A hockey player – both field and underwater
- A diver and spearfisherman
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- He was
- An animal lover
- An accomplished horsemen
- A seagull catcher
- A hunter and gatherer - in more ways than one
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- He was
- A Royal Pines Resort bell boy
- A council lifeguard
- A swimming instructor
- And finally an apprentice electrician. And wasn't he happy and proud of his new found job.

His dream when his surf lifesaving days were over at the Gold Coast was to return to the Clarence Valley and buy a small farm here and work as an electrician.

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My wife Cathy and I and our children have been blessed to have Jacob look on us as his second family. We thank Eric and Kaylene for allowing that to happen.

Jacob became a part of our family through his surf lifesaving activities – but I am sure there are many of you out there who also felt he was a part of your family...because that's the way he was with people and activities he was involved in....he fitted in everywhere.

Jacob has lived with our boys at the Gold Coast at different stages since he left Grafton in mid 2007 ..... first with Joe and Hugh in an old flat on the Burleigh beachfront. It was old and basic but they loved it..... then in recent months with our youngest son Martin at Tugun. During this time our daughter Emma always provided the home base for the family dinners they all shared on a regular basis.

Burleigh Surf Club also provided some surrogate families for Jacob in his time there as I'm sure many in Grafton and Yamba had also done while he was here. His school friends who lived on the Gold Coast also always had space for his swag on their floors. They, too, often made a home for the sometimes itinerant drifter.

The other night as we all sat around the dinner table telling "funny Jacob stories" the kids talked about his domestic skills ..or lack there of.

Lets just say that things like cleaning, washing and cooking were not his strong points. A fact his mother knew only too well. When he washed up after a meal the knives and forks and plates often came out of the water as dirty as they went in.

His brother Andy was also conscious of this trait.

At 2am on the morning following his death, Marty received a text message from Andy knowing that Jacob was not returning home – he said

*"Marty can you please make sure Jake doesn't have anything in his room that he wouldn,t want mum to see"*

Two days later, with a heavy heart, I helped Cathy, Marty and Meg pack up his room...and Yes, there **were** a few things in there that mum didn't need to see and we sure had a few laughs at some of the things that he had hunted and gathered.

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I have never been into "Facebook" or "My Space" or "Twitter" like all the young people .....that is until the last few days. With the help of my daughter Emma I have had an amazing trip through Jacob's life –courtesy of Facebook – just so many facets. Thank you to all those who have placed those beautiful messages and photos. It will be a wonderful record for Eric and Kaylene and the boys as well as the rest of us. I think the Facebook site set up by Andrew and Dean Butcher had over 1,000 members within 48 hours of it being set up.

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Whilst Jacob had hundreds and hundreds of male friends he had even more female friends. All the surf club girls loved him and loved being in the same training squad, and hanging out with him at surf carnivals. He rarely wore a shirt at the beach – he was nearly always bare chested. This probably added to his appeal.

This attraction to the opposite sex goes back a long way. One of his primary school classmates wrote on Facebook .....”I still remember you getting into trouble at school in grade 5 for trying to kiss all the girls.”

And in another Facebook entry Brendan Lane a school mate said ..... “15 years boys freestyle relay final at the State CHS Titles..... 3 minutes to start time and no Jacob..... They found him in the warm up spa with 6 girls.”

Last Wednesday night some of us gathered at Tugun surf club to share the grief and to support each other..... It took a while, but eventually the fun stories began to flow. It wasn't long before his love of the ladies was mentioned. Tim Peach said to me in his dry way .....”that bloody Jacob .....not only did all the girls love him ....but all their mothers fell in love with him too.”

We bumped into one of those mothers the next morning while having coffee in Tugun. She said to us .....”I christened him the GM.....the Genetic Masterpiece”.

Another one I recall was at the first surf carnival we went to after he joined Burleigh Heads club in 2007. One of the more outspoken mothers there introduced herself to us, telling us how popular Jacob had been since joining the club. She said .....”all the young girls at Burleigh love him.....they flock round him just like a dog on heat.”

His net spread far and wide... I had a phone call from my sister Judy, a school teacher, in Albury. She told me that last Wednesday morning, after getting the news about Jacob, she went to school and the first person she saw was a year 12 girl who was in the hockey team she trained. She told the girl the sad news she had received about Jacob. The girl stopped and said .....”Oh,I know HIM.....I met him at a hockey carnival in Year 8 .....I used to be in love with him.....he used to send me text messages”

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Jacob certainly acquired a reputation in many places...

Most of us would never rate a mention within the walls of Parliament House but in 2006 Jacob was honoured in the NSW Parliament by our local member Mr Steve Cansdell - himself a great advocate for our youth. If you go onto the Internet and Google the name Jacob Lollback one of the first things that flashes up is “ TRIBUTE TO JACOB LOLLBACK” by Mr Steve Cansdell, Member for Clarence in the NSW Parliament on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2006. And there is the Hansard report of Mr Cansdell's speech to the Parliament about Jacob carrying

out a rescue of two swimmers at Yamba late one afternoon after having competed in 13 events at the club championships. As indicated earlier..there was no stopping him.

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He had the ability to grab the Newspaper headlines even outside of sport at times, as evidenced by a Year 12 school break up prank that went horribly wrong. Jacob along with the Wicks twins, Daniel Purser and a few other classmates were making smoke bombs to let off at the high school on “muck up day”.

There was an unexpected explosion and Jacob and Cameron Wicks suffered serious burns. They both spent a week in the Burns Unit of Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney. Jacob had 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns to his face, arms and legs BUT it didn’t affect his appeal with the nurses at the hospital.

Fortunately he made a full recovery with no damage to his good looks...just more stories to tell.

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Yamba Surf Club has received many messages of condolence over the last week but one from Andrew Chubb, President of Fingal Rovers SLSC probably best sums up Jacob.

He said:

*“I remember Jacob as an unassuming, humble, exceptionally talented, natural athlete. A promoters dream – he never forgot the sponsors and was well spoken when interviewed. A real asset to Surf Life Saving as well as society.*

Another few examples of his ability to talk at any level occurred last season after he broke his collarbone in a training accident and was unable to compete at the major championship surf carnivals.

At the Queensland State Titles up at Kawana Waters he was interviewed in the commentary box over the public address system by commentator Jason O’Pray –he didn’t leave the box for the rest of the day. He took over the microphone and became guest commentator. Just as well because In the race preview for the Open Iron Man final he was the only one of the 4 commentators to correctly pick the eventual winner Pierce Leonard.

A few weeks later – still with the bad shoulder –he was desperate to compete at the Aussies in Perth. He failed the fitness test – no surprise to anyone but Jake. He was like a cat on a hot tin roof.

He didn't score a gig in the commentary box this time but he did manage an invitation to spend finals day in the VIP stand rubbing shoulders with life members, sponsors and politicians. All done in his T shirt and boardies.

That was Jacob, equally at home with all people regardless of their standing.

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The Lollbacks are one of the pioneering families of the Clarence Valley so it is a well known name around here. In fact there were two Lollbacks in the first ever bronze medallion squad at Yamba Surf Club back in 1908.

But some of the surf lifesaving commentators had a bit of trouble correctly pronouncing Jacobs surname when he first burst onto the main arena as a young kid from a small country club in Yamba.

He was often called Lolliback and one of my favourite occurrences of this was at the 2006 World Lifesaving Titles at Lorne in Victoria. In the Open Board Race final Shannon Eckstein, Hugh and Jacob had broken clear of the pack half way back to the beach and the South African commentator was getting excited at the business end of the race. In his heavy "Saffer" accent he screamed:

*"And young Jaaacobb Lollliiibackk from Yammbarr is shtilll in the mixsh."*

He was always astounding people with his performances.

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One of my favourite Jacob story's..... I promise this is the last one..... and I know its also Alyce Bennetts favourite story..... revolves around the Coolangatta Gold race which is due to be held again in 2 weeks time. Back in 2006 two Yamba club members Paul Cromack and Rob Sandbach decided to have a crack at the toughest race in Surf Lifesaving.

Jacob had just won his first Australian gold medal in the Under 17 board race at Kurrawa in March of that year and declared that he too was going to take on the Coolangatta Gold and train with Crowie and Rob. I told him he wasn't ready for such a gruelling race at that stage of his career as he was more of an explosive athlete specialising in 4 to 5 minute races.....rather than an endurance athlete tackling a 4 to 5 hour marathon.

BUT he started training with the other two boys and one week end they were to do a 20k paddle in the Clarence River from Rogans Bridge west of Grafton to my house just past the Grafton bridge. Don Marsh, the champion Masters iron man from Tasmania, was in town that week end and he joined in the paddle.

As usual, Jacob took off at the start and wanted to set the pace. But by the time they reached the western tip of Susan Island with about 5k to go he was spent and he had a long

stop on the island. Rob, Don and Crowie paddled on to the finish, then enjoyed a breakfast BBQ courtesy of my wife on our back verandah. About an hour later Jacob finally limped up the bank totally exhausted.

I said to him do you now understand why I don't want you to do the race. But, undaunted, he declared he still wanted to do it.

So a few weeks later we went up to the Gold Coast to go over the back half of the course from Coolangatta to Surfers Paradise. They got through the 3k swim then the 4k run to Currumbin followed by the 5k board paddle to Burleigh and when they came in at Burleigh I asked him how he was going and he said he was fine. So it was on with the running shoes and off on the 10k run to Surfers Paradise. I met them with a drink stop near Miami Surf Club and then drove on to Surfers Paradise to wait for them.

As I neared Surfers I got a call on my mobile. The operator said will you accept a reverse charge call from Jacob Lollback. A little stunned by this ,I said "Yes". He came on. I said "where are you". He said "I'm in a phone box..... Can you please come and pick me up". I said "where" and he said "I don't know".

Feeling a little frustrated with him I said ..... "well read a friggin street sign". And then he said..." Oh I might be near Nobbys Surf Club". So I drove back to Nobbys and there he was sitting on the side of the road in just his Speedos with his running shoes in his hands. I looked at him and said "Do you STILL think you can do the Gold?" and he replied "No..... I better wait till next year".

And 12 months later in October 2007 he went back..... and do it he did..... absolutely smashing the opposition to win the Under 19 Coolangatta Gold by a country mile running that last 10k with a smile on his face all the way. No phone callout this time.

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The last time I saw Jacob was a few weeks ago on Fathers Day – we had gone up to the Gold Coast for the weekend and he had joined us for lunch on the verandah of the Tugun Surf Club overlooking the ocean. It was a magic day. He talked with great excitement about the fishing trip he was about to embark on..... this was to be the last lot of fun for him before the season started with his new coach Hugh and his new club Tugun.

He was due to have his first race of the season this Saturday in the Dolphin Classic at Northcliffe. Unfortunately he would never get to wear the Tugun colours in competition .....but he did end his fun filled life doing just WHAT he loved, in the OCEAN that he loved, with good mates around him.

So much in such a short life.

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Eric and Kaylene.....if Jake had had the opportunity to stand here before you now, I know he would have thanked you profusely for the fun filled life you have given him, for the love you have created and shared within your family and relatives , and for the beautiful brothers to share his exploits.

You gave him the freedom to live every moment of his life to the fullest. For this, I know, he was extremely grateful.

In closing I would like to pay tribute to my co-speech writer, my wife Cathy, or Aunty Cath as Jacob christened her some years ago, for her love and support over the last week. Together we have had an unbelievable journey with Jacob particularly over the last 4 or 5 years.....as he went from a tiny nipper at Yamba to an accomplished performer on the National and International sporting arena.

I used to often wonder where that journey was going to lead us..... Now I know.

Jacob was a champion surf lifesaver ..... but more importantly.....far more importantly..... he was a champion bloke and a close friend to so many..... a real credit to his family.

Jake you will be sadly missed.

Rest in peace.

(Written and delivered by Jim Dougherty  
For the Funeral of Jacob Lollback at  
Christ Church Cathedral, Grafton  
September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009 )