

GUY JOSEPH

Guy Joseph, son of Vicky and Tony and brother of Lauren and Alex, was killed in a paragliding accident on 14 October 2010 at the age of 25. He lived his life to the full, packed with adventure, discovery and excitement, having experiences most people only dream of. He died without suffering, doing what he loved. Here, Vicky talks about her son.

“To lose a parent or a friend is often to lose the past. But to lose a child is to lose the future: what is lost is no less than one’s life project – what one lives for,” wrote Irvin D Yalom, professor of psychiatry at Stanford University.

Guy and our daughters, Lauren and Alex, were our life’s projects. Not the only ones, of course, but the most important ones. One third of that project is now missing and among the many challenges that we face in coping with this tragedy is how to salvage something positive from it, that will perpetuate Guy’s memory and honour his name. Establishing Guy’s Trust to support causes that reflect his interests and passions has not only been a way of confronting our grief obliquely, but a way *l’takken olam* to repair the world.

Guy was born on Rosh Hashanah 1986/5747. His early years were much the same as many other children in this community: Alyth Kindergarten, Brooklands, Queen Elizabeth’s and then Woodhouse; NNLS Cheder, Geshet, barmitzvah in Hakol Olin, teaching at Cheder; Noam on Sunday afternoons and Noam camp in the summer holidays. Guy’s sense of adventure began to emerge in his early teens and at the age of 16 he learned to scuba dive. He was instantly hooked. From that time on, each summer he set off to advance his qualifications and follow his diving dreams to exotic destinations such as Costa Rica, Honduras, Malaysia, the Cook Islands and Thailand, until he became an instructor.

When it was time to decide on a university course, the choice was obvious: a degree in marine biology would allow him access to the underwater world he loved, and in 2006 he went to study at Newcastle. His time at university was the usual beer-filled, friends-filled riot, but, seemingly with little effort, he managed to achieve a first class degree.

A few weeks after graduating in 2009, Guy, determined to turn his passion into a job, set off for Indonesia to teach diving in the remote Togan Islands. Without internet or phone and with only a few English speakers around, it would have been easy to quit, but instead he taught himself Indonesian and adopted three local orphaned puppies who followed him around adoringly, as it seems did a fair number of the female dive students who passed through. At the end of his three month contract he found a job in East Timor for a time, finally moving to the island



of Flores and settling in Labuan Bajo, a ramshackle fishing village at the gateway to Komodo National Park. Guy loved life there and on our two visits we could see how happy he was.

Throughout his adult life Guy supported himself financially and, despite his youth and sense of fun, had a reputation as a responsible and gifted teacher. He had a talent for developing friendships with anyone, whatever their background, nationality or age – the inevitable consequence of being who he was: warm, open and non-judgemental. These friendships were far from the transient meetings one might imagine. We have been told repeatedly of the way Guy cared for people, protected them and supported them through difficult times.

Guy also put his diving skills to use in helping to set up MantaWatch, an organisation dedicated to protecting the endangered manta ray. He was passionate about this cause and invested a great deal of time and effort into filming and tracking the mantas and trying to convince other people to join him. In recognition of this, Guy’s Trust has funded an annual award at Newcastle University for two Marine Biology undergraduates to spend a summer volunteering for MantaWatch as part of the fieldwork required for their degrees.

By the end of 2010, Guy felt he wanted a break from diving and was ready for a new challenge. Having read a magazine article about paragliding in Nepal, he headed to the Himalayas. As with everything, he mastered this new skill quickly and started to explore the country by

paraglider, flying from one village to the next. He fell in love with Nepal and its people, especially the children, and had planned to return there. Guy’s love of Nepal led us to our first project for Guy’s Trust. In partnership with international development agency ActionAid, we are building the Guy Joseph Early Educational Development Centre in the desperately poor Kaski region. The school will take 150 children up to the age of seven, primarily those who have previously had no access to education: girls and the unteachable class.

If the extraordinary generosity shown so far is anything to go by, this centre will be the first of several dedicated to Guy’s memory.

There are sides of our children that we as parents never see, but as tributes poured in from around the world after his accident we were given an insight into Guy the friend, the boyfriend and the teacher, and it was a privilege to hear the stories and learn just how much he was loved. We were

overwhelmed by the extent to which both his adventurous lifestyle and his wise, gentle character inspired people. We saw clearly that beyond the excitement and the adventure-filled life was a kind, patient, compassionate, sensitive young man who was an unflinchingly loyal friend.

In the days after Guy’s accident many of his friends

wrote intensely moving tributes, each one speaking more eloquently of him than we could ever hope to do. These are a few that particularly touched us:

“I needed looking after and Guy looked after me. He led me to amazing underwater and above water experiences and we laughed and played together. I’ve watched him move on from ace diver to ace flyer. He was truly, brightly alive, turned right on, bright as the brightest. Everyone loved him. What a man. One of the best. A true adventurer. We should celebrate his handsomeness, presence, authority, downright hail-friend-well-metness, bravery and fun.”

“When I asked Guy when he was going to take his inevitable city boy job he replied saying ‘Probably never. I plan on having a job that’s actually fun to get out of bed for’. Guy is a great example of the fact that you should do exactly what you want to do in life, as there is zero point in doing anything unless you’ve got a big grin on your face while doing it”.

“Diving with Guy was always fun and I trusted him with my life. Guy also had the uncanny ability of making every girl who passed through town fall in love with him. I can’t blame these girls; he had such an infectious personality and if you were near him there was always fun to be had.”

“Ours was one of my oldest and most treasured friendships. Guy - I’d always thought you were crazy to want to spend so much time away from your home, friends and family in London, but now I realize how brave you were to have followed your dreams, and how easily you made friends wherever you were. You were always there to make me smile and I wish we could have had more time together.”

“How young, how free, how happy. I cannot help but be amazed at the way he touched so many people, and how deeply in many cases. He inspired so many. He lived fully and in the moment and did what he wanted to do, and died doing something he loved. We should all be as blessed in that respect.”

We are devastated by Guy’s death, but immensely proud of him; proud that he lived his life to the absolute fullest and without intention inspired so many others. He will stay in our hearts through all of our stories and memories and of course through the legacy of the Guy Joseph

Early Education Centres in Nepal.”

PS: We have just heard from Rabbi Jonathan that the synagogue council has decided to make a £4,000 donation towards the Guy Joseph Early Education Centre from the 2% set aside from the building fund for Tikken Olam projects. A huge thank you to everyone involved in this enormously generous gesture.

If you would like to support Guy’s Trust there are two ways to do this. You can email your details to Vicky:

vickyjoseph99@yahoo.co.uk and we will contact you as soon as we have our charity registration number; or you can give directly to ActionAid who have set up a dedicated page for our project:

http://www.mycanada.org.uk/guyjosephnepal/donate

Either way your donation will be enormously appreciated and will help us to create a tangible and lasting tribute to Guy and provide a desperately needed resource in one of the world’s poorest countries.

