

## ***Jake's story***

I was happily expecting my second child and the pregnancy was going well. It was the summer of 1994 and I was uncomfortable in the heat. I celebrated my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday with family and friends in the park and was feeling excited about becoming a mother again. My due date came and went without anything happening. I was nearly a week overdue. I had an appointment with my obstetrician on Friday and everything was fine. That afternoon I felt that something strange had happened (I felt something drop inside me). Maybe it was the baby moving down getting ready to be born. It was a very strange feeling and I was feeling a bit concerned but not enough to think something major had happened. That night I thought that I would go to the hospital in the morning just to see if everything was okay. But through the night I started to go into labour. My mother-in-law came over just after 4am to look after our 2-year-old daughter while my husband took me to the hospital.

When I got to the hospital my labour pains were so advanced that I could not move from the room they put me in which is the pre-delivery room. They were searching for a heartbeat and later I found out they couldn't find one. I asked for something for the pain but they couldn't give me anything because it was too late. I gave birth rather quickly and the nursing staff looked concerned as they took my son over to the little crib to try and make him breathe. I kept asking them if he was okay but they ignored me as they tried to get my son to breathe. My husband and I didn't know what was happening. What had gone wrong? After a while they looked over at us and I don't remember them saying anything, it was just the look on their faces that told me our son was not alive.

The next few hours were a bit of a blur and it took my husband a couple of hours before he could ring anyone to tell them the news. Only my mother-in-law came to the hospital to see us and baby Jake. We had some photos taken and hand and footprints. Unfortunately there was something wrong with the camera so we didn't get many photos. I had to leave the hospital after 6 hours because I was to be moved to the maternity ward, and I could not bear to go there. We went home in shock with the baby capsule still in the car. I was home on 'midcall' and a nurse came to see me the following day and said "how is the breastfeeding going"? I burst into tears, so she came in and sat down and we told her what had happened. I hope she felt bad about what she said and I bet she looks at her notes before visiting patients now.

The next day we wanted to buy a tree to plant in the garden in memory of our son so we could watch it grow over the years. We bought a claret ash and planted it outside the kitchen window so we could look at it every day. I am happy to say the tree is now 10 years old and still going strong. It is the most nurtured plant in our garden. The following few months were very hard and I became a bit of a hermit not wanting to go to the local shops or anywhere where I might bump into someone I know. Some of my friends kept away as well and now when I look back, I wish they had made an effort to be supportive to us because we needed

something. After a couple of years I decided that I would like to help the former SANDS group so I could at least offer some support to people who needed it, and I knew how lonely it could be. I am now involved with SIDS and KIDS and I am finding my volunteer work is very rewarding. I have had 2 more children (both boys) since Jake and I am feeling happy with my life. Jake will always have a place in our family and this was evident at his great grandmother's funeral last month when his grandfather mentioned him in the eulogy. I got a lump in my throat and shed a couple of tears but felt so proud that he had made his mark in the family chain. It makes you realise that our babies are never forgotten but remain in our hearts forever.

Jake Bink was stillborn on 12.2.94. An autopsy was done but no known cause of death was found. I feel there is hope for future parents out there due to the research SIDS and KIDS are doing into the mystery of stillbirth, and hopefully there will be precautions mothers can take to help eliminate this horrible event from happening.