

**A SHORT TRIBUTE
TO
ASH WERNER
DECEMBER 2012**

My name is Mark Modra, and Ash was one of my best friends.

For my son LUKE he was the best friend ever.

Ash taught me a lot about forgiveness, and so from the outset I would like to ask for your forgiveness. If I should say anything out of turn or upsetting I am sorry.

That said, I would like to tell you a little story, actually no, its more of a collage of some of my experiences and thoughts about Ash.

When I first met Ash ...

When I first met ash HE WAS HAIRY, HE WAS SCARY and WHEN HE LUNGED AT ME ... I nearly ... shhh !

No. that was not what I felt about Ash .That was what Ash said about Luke, on the radio*¹, when he was asked about his first encounter with Luke.

Seriously though when I first met ash I was a bit startled in fact bit frightened.

Here was this young guy - dressed in black, studs on his belt, pants around his knees, tats on his arms and metal spikes poking out of his head in several locations. I thought to myself Julie Campbell, what have you done? Who is this guy ? What does he know ? Can I trust this young larrikin to look after my son, in this place, alone ?

Well I can tell you now – that without a doubt the answer to that question was YES.

Ash was a hero, a superhero

Ash was my friend.

Ash was my hero

Ash was Luke's best friend.

Ash was Lukes HERO

Ash was a SUPERHERO.

¹ <http://www.lightfm.com.au/conversation-with-clayton/caring-luke>

He wasn't SUPERMAN – even though there were many times I saw him wear his undies above his pants

He wasn't the HULK _ even though there were stretch marks on his arms from the rapid expansion of his muscles.

He wasn't BATMAN – because he only ever drove a HOLDEN and he certainly didn't need a muscle suit or fancy equipment to look good and do great things.

And speaking of suits – Ash was not the sort of guy to be seen in a suit – so he definitely wasn't IRON MAN.

In my view - He was more Like Hancock.



I told him that and he laughed - and he said “your right”.

Ash was like HANCOCK

For those of you that don't know – HANCOCK was a movie about an angel that had lost his way and ended up drunk and sleeping on a park bench, .. that is, until a little kid came up to him and said “hey mister, can you help me”.



The rest of the movie goes on to show his struggle with his power, his strength, and his humanity.

Like ASH he managed to turn his life round went on to do amazing rescues

With support from a few people who are here today, ASH went on to save Luke, and in saving Luke he helped to save my family.

Ash was the GOOD SAMARITAN

I sometimes told him that to me he was like the GOOD SAMARITAN ...

I haven't got time to tell the whole story but you can look it up in the BIBLE – in the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE –

What Ash did for Luke was what the good Samaritan did for the man who had been beaten, robbed, stripped naked and left to die. As a young man heading in the wrong direction, for someone who some would say was born on the wrong side of the railway line - not only did he dress Luke's wounds, but he put him in his own car, drove him to a house, where he looked after him, and when he left he said to the inn keeper –

“look after him and whatever you spend I will repay you on my return.”

Yes, ash did this. He was the good Samaritan.

Ash was a soldier servant

I have a picture, in fact I have many pictures and videos of Luke that I would be happy to share some other time, but one in particular was taken not long after Luke arrived in DENI. It was a picture of Luke and ASH walking down the driveway towards the letter box.



It was clear that the two of them had already formed a bond of trust and mutual support. Ash would reach out to Luke and hold his hand from time to time, but it was not to restrain it was only to lead.

Ash was like a soldier servant – tough enough to protect, faithful and loving to serve.

We often talked about the challenges we faced together, over the phone and directly, in military terms.

One of the best lines we used was from the British Government during second world war – it was from a poster – bright red with white writing - STAY CALM and CARRY ON



I cannot count the number of times I said that to him, and the number of times that he said it me – STAY CALM and CARRY ON.

Followed by don't worry – its all good.

He also said it to Luke – usually with both hand on Lukes shoulders. He would say –

“MATE – REMEMBER WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT, ... You're a soldier, brave and true, now stand up straight and remember – STAY CALM ...”

Ash was a lion

Ash was like a lion – and even though he seemed to like t shirts with the face of a tiger – he was a lion.

The reason I say this is that one day the HOLDEN RACING TEAM came to my work to show off their new livery. One of the dominant images, and you can see it today on their race cars, is a picture of a DRIVER with a HELMET and beside him, and slightly ahead of him is the LION – leading and providing the power, safety, and the motivation to win.

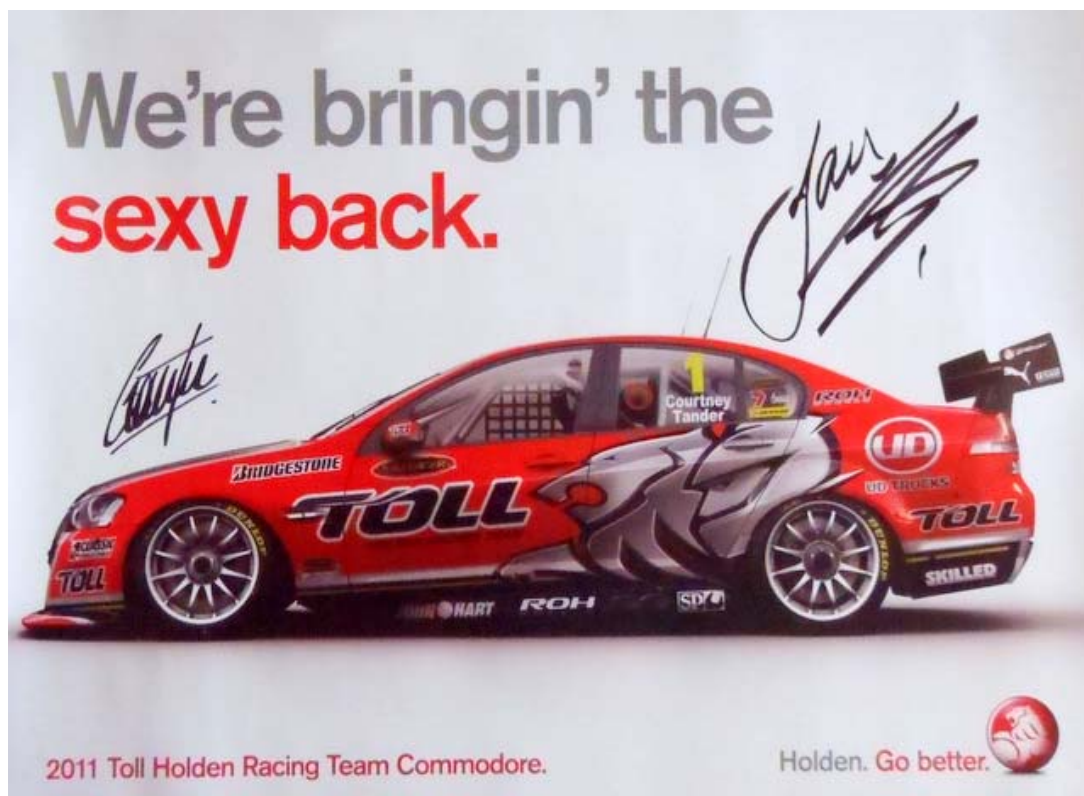


It reminded me of a picture that was posted in the DENI TIMES - a picture of LUKE riding his bike with ASH close beside him leading and prompting and keeping him safe.



When I saw the livery symbol it made me cry.

So I collected a signed poster and sent it to Ash immediately.



Ash was a lion – a pillar of strength for us all.

Ash was street smart – Can God really forgive

Like HANCOCK Ash often struggled with his past.

One day he bailed up his uncle in the street and asked

“CAN GOD REALLY FORGIVE ... EVERYTHING?”

The answer to that question is YES. And I often talked about that with Ash.

Ash knows that he was forgiven. Forgiven by God, by me, by Luke, and by many other people.

Ash taught Luke about forgiveness, and in return Ash was forgiven by Luke.

Sheep and Goats

Some of you might be wondering – did Ash go to heaven?

I have no doubt, and I would like to tell you why -

Back in the day – when Jesus walked on earth he told a story. I had shared this with Ash several times, because it was very relevant to him, and to me, and to Luke – the story goes like this –

On judgement day - the king – that is the king that was born on Christmas day - will sit on his throne and separate those who will go into heaven, from those who wont. To those going to heaven he will say, something like – “Welcome ...” and he will give his reason for his decision as something like this –

I was hungry and you gave Me food;
I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;³⁶
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was sick and you visited Me;
I was in prison and you came to Me.’

And when the righteous people said – when did we do this to you – Jesus said –

When you did *it* to one of the least of these, you did *it* to Me.’

This is exactly what ASH did for LUKE.

The story shows that what ASH did is exactly what JESUS wants us all to do.



I just hope that I can do half the good that ASH has done.

Whatever, this story gives me an assurance that JESUS loves Ash very much , and that he will be welcomed into heaven with open arms.

Maybe he will get the kind of hug he used to give to me. When I walked into the house – looking a bit tired and stressed, would hold out his hand like this – for a handshake – like this - and while he was doing that his other hand would reach over my shoulder to give me big gorilla hug and to hold me and say –

“ITS ALL GOOD MATE, JUST RELAX.”

Ash was a BEST friend to Luke

ASH was Lukes Best friend.

Together they did things no one thought possible.

Ash changed Lukes life and Luke changed ASH forever..

They were best mates

Ash was a soldier servant, a forgiven hero, a friend, the best of friends.



May the Lord have mercy on us all.