

Greg Hildebrand

Gregory George Hildebrand was born on 18 March 1970, in Melbourne. He arrived faster than the attending doctor, and much of his life followed the pattern. He was bright, wildly imaginative and active.



Greg was...crazy! He wore silly shirts and told bad jokes, but they always made me laugh.

Greg and his three siblings were close in age. They enjoyed an adventurous childhood in Melbourne and Brisbane, with brief stints in Sydney and Johannesburg between, all with their parents.

Greg lived in Brisbane during his teenage years. Despite being a year younger than his classmates, he did well academically and excelled in sports. During this time, Greg first showed signs of a developing depression that accompanied him all his life and finally overcame him. There is no understanding for many of his family and friends, of why or what caused such a cataclysmic event.

Greg had a vast appetite for life and spread it around him liberally. He had a vivid imagination and would light up a room with his sense of fun and quick wit.

The thing I admired most about him was his enthusiasm for life, the way he encouraged other people to “keep on going” even though he was fighting his own battle inside.

He volunteered, loved the bush and music, playing trombone in any band or orchestra around; he painted, wrote poetry, and read voraciously - often three or more books at once.

He had a passion for people and music, and he always made such a big effort to make each day a good one. He was always involved and always had room in his heart for one more friend.

Following formal training in business at QUT, his first job was as an instructor at Outward Bound. This took him all around the Australian countryside. At 20, he went on an experienced mature-age expedition in the Thai jungle. Here, the accidental death of one of the

expedition members shook Greg and greatly heightened his depression.

Later, Greg married and became a purchasing officer, first in pharmaceuticals, then explosives and finally food. He summarised this delightfully as the peak "trifecta" in quality assurance!

During his career, Greg acquired qualifications and computer skills. He next found work in an international engineering firms with huge infrastructure projects needing tight control of activity and costs. He worked in this role in Australia and South Africa without family for a term, then in Canada with family. Workmates formed a queue for a seat in a lunchtime card game Greg invented; he was the commentator. Many such stories were sent to his family after he died. He was a friend to many.

Greg's natural aptitude was for caring, inspiring and teaching. He used these in his work where he could but, in time, formed a view that commercial life was not fulfilling to him despite having been successful in it. So, he decided to train to be a high school teacher. Greg was awarded his teaching qualification posthumously in 2010, soon after his death.

Greg's last few years saw his marriage under pressure as he battled growing depression and a growing dependence on alcohol as a temporary way of coping. Greg held alcohol at bay for many months before he died. Despite expert medical care, Greg died severely depressed at the age of 40, feeling that he was not living up to his high standards.

Greg's parents looked for years for a suitable way to commemorate his life, which was action-packed enough to have filled twice his 40 years. Greg would have loved the Flexi Schools.

To commemorate Greg, Flexible Learning Centres are invited to apply for the annual Greg Hildebrand Award. \$5,000 grants are awarded to fund initiatives that support young people and reflect the creativity of Greg's life. Learn more: www.erf.org.au/greghildebrand