

Dear Jackson,

This is our third father's day together. This year we can talk to each other. And sing. And make jokes. And dance Jackson. We can DANCE!

This year we cannot call your mommy's daddy, "Pop" and wish him a Happy's Father's Day – which seems so unbelievable, but as Gege says, "Pop is in our heart." That is true, Pop is in our hearts and dreams every day. We are thinking about him a lot on this Father's Day.

Jackson, I have told you some stories about my father, Jack Lange, who you were named after. It is not that hard for me to appreciate how much a part of you is him, though you will never know about him except by the stories we tell you, and the pictures, and some recordings we have of him singing.

We tell the best stories at night after the lights are turned off, and the sun is down and the moon is right up there in the sky. To be honest Jackson, I don't think I remember enough stories about Jack Lange since he died in 1998 and my memory is mostly pictures. I remember him more as a feeling than most of the things we did together.

I remember how much fun it was when he put his computer speakers out the window of the second floor in Pittsburgh and played bird sounds into the trees. I remember the birds coming to the window, and my Dad being so happy with that. I remember him thinking he controlled the weather, and saying on every beautiful day, "see what I gave you." I remember sitting on the front steps of the house in Pittsburgh watching every car come around the corner, hoping it was my Dad coming home from work. I remember being so happy when his car would pull in the driveway. I remember when he would sit down at dinner and always – and this was a joke – but he would always tell A how crazy it was that what she was serving for dinner was exactly what he had at lunch. Mostly she made him a NY strip steak with mustard broiled on top. He would have a Coke. I would ask for a gulp, and he would say I could have a sip. At dessert, my Dad would say he had to taste it first to see if was good enough for me or your uncle Andrew. Mostly I remember my father telling me how I could do anything I could dream up. That the world was truly my oyster.

He did not give me a lot of money Jackson, although he did pay for everything I needed growing up. While he couldn't really afford to be a member of the fancy clubs other friends belonged to, he always felt he belonged. He always said he couldn't afford everything, but there was never anything he wanted that he couldn't afford. Mostly Jackson, mostly, Jack Lange was a big dreamer with a bigger heart. He would have loved you so much, and it makes me so sad you will not get to play with him, and hug him and pat his back.

Jackson, around the time I was born my father took A's typewriter from college, a card table, some chairs, and went with his brother, Leonard to start a business. They went to a small town outside of Pittsburgh and began a home remodeling business they called, "Brighton Construction." My father could not build anything. He was not good with a hammer or a screwdriver or painting. What he was Jackson, was just about the nicest person anyone had ever met.

He was funny and knew lots of jokes. He was a good friend that people could trust. He was sensitive, which you will learn is a mixed blessing. There was a restaurant that my father went to every single day called "Dideo's." Everyday for years he went there, took his employees, took his customers. He became good friends with the owner, Mr. Dideo. One day Mr. Dideo decided to fix up his restaurant, and he hired someone other than my Dad's company to do the work. My dad's feelings were so hurt, but all he said to Mr. Dideo was, "I will not be coming to your restaurant for five years. After five years I will come in like nothing happened and we will be friends again." And guess what Jackson?? That is what he did. After five years, your grandfather Jack Lange walked right back into Dideo's and acted like nothing had happened.

You know Jackson, that Jack Lange was Jewish. Not only was no one in the town where he had Brighton Construction Jewish, but they had never met a Jew before. Some of them had crazy ideas about what Jews were like because they had never met one. That made it harder for my Dad – but also made it fun to be the first Jew they met, and know that they would judge Jews by how my Dad was.

And Jack Lange was fun! Do you think they thought everyone Jewish was fun because Jack Lange was fun?? These people were big drinkers and your grandfather would drink with them. These people were big smokers, and he would smoke with them, too. Everyone smoked then Jackson – and it turns out that was a really bad thing to do, but no one seemed to know. Mostly Jackson, all these people became really good friends. They were strangers from very different backgrounds, and they came to trust each other and care about each other. They talked about life and work and made jokes, and in a big way took care of each other.

Jackson, some people say that having children is work. I never understood what that meant. First it is hard to understand because I love what I do for work so much that if they are saying that raising children is work, they must be saying it is really fun and inspiring and the greatest job in the world. If they are saying raising children is a challenge, well that is good, too – we like to try to reinvent ourselves everyday.

Last night Jackson you woke up in your big boy bed so upset. You were crying so hard, and all you wanted was to come into our bed. Mommy sat next to your bed, and you were so sad. I tried holding you, and all you wanted to know is if I was taking you to our bed. First I let you know that I heard what you were saying. Then I started to tell you where everyone was sleeping. Where A was sleeping, and uncle. Where Gege was sleeping and Katrina. Where the penguins were sleeping and the giraffes. Pretty soon Jackson you were falling back asleep in your own bed. With your own dreams. Then I climbed back in bed next to mommy. I curled up and put my hand on her belly that is so big and warm, holding your new brother while he gets ready to be with us.

I was thinking about this Jackson: I was not born knowing how to be a Daddy, I was born knowing how to dream. I was born loving every single thing I got to do, everyone I got to be with. (Jackson, a lot of big people reading will not believe this...but if they know A well, A who loves every movie, every book, every dinner, every day more than the last- they will know what I mean). My Daddy taught me that being a Daddy is about learning that dreams really do come true.

As I grew up I learned that you never know what is going to be the most fun, give you the most pleasure, be the biggest part of your life. Even in my work, I never know which assignment will bring the best best pictures. I didn't even know Jackson that the love of my life, your mommy was going to walk through the door at a dinner party in Nashville one night.

Jackson, we need to give everything we see its chance to breathe, everything we hear the chance to sing. Jackson everything we touch needs to be turned around and examined from all sides, knowing that there is goodness somewhere in almost everything.

Jackson, we could not imagine you before you were here with us. You were born out of love. You were born because Mommy and Daddy were loved so much growing up, and love so much being together, that they wanted to share their love even more - with you, and then free you to share your love with the world. Jackson you are a dream come true as every single child born into the world is born with so much love inside. Every parent who gets to raise a child is so lucky to help their children get all that love out. Each day spent releasing all that love teaches all the parents how much love they were hiding inside themselves.

Someone told me when you were born that being a parent is the process of letting go. I think it is the process of learning how to love even more.

When people tell me that raising children is work, do you know what I say Jackson? I tell them I love changing every dirty diaper. I love every moment I get to hold you in the middle of the night when you are upset.

And Jackson – that is not even mentioning all the moments of pure joy you share with us everyday, with your one foot up gliding down the driveway on your scooter, singing along to Bruce & Ella & Louis & Jack Johnson. Kissing us, and running in circles, and drinking lemonade.

Jackson – I want you to know that Papa and your grandfather Jack Lange are in our hearts AND our souls. There are so many special ways that we see the world, relate to people and love each other that we learned from the way they lived. And Jackson, as much as we learned from them, we learn from you. That is how the world works Jackson...

And it doesn't feel like work at all.

Happy Third Father's Day Jackson.

Love,

Daddy Finn Lange