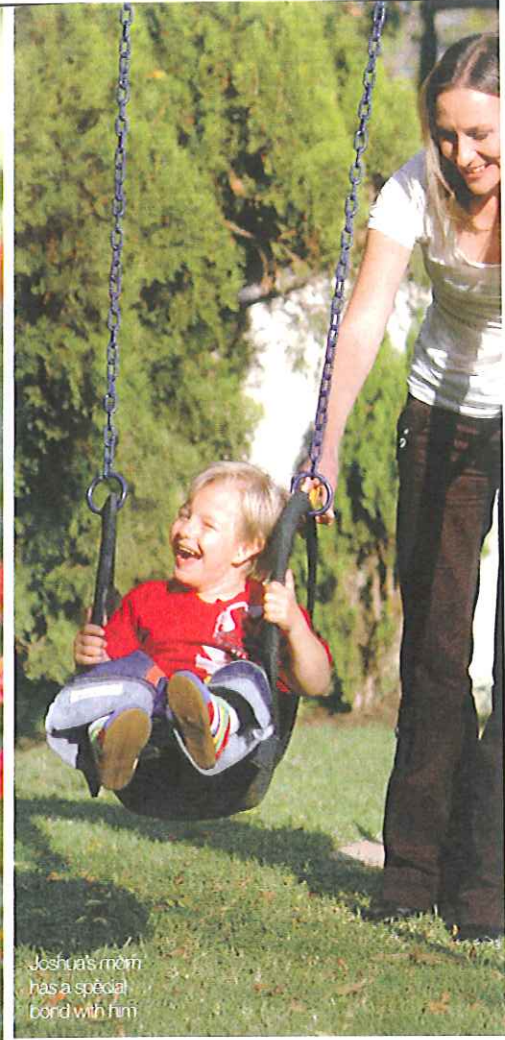


YP Your Story



Joshua's mom has a special bond with him

Our little hero

Joshua was born 14 weeks early, and spent his first eight months in hospital. While the road ahead for the three-year-old is long, Bronwyn Glenbro feels blessed to be called "mommy"

In 2004, I fell pregnant for the first time and was very excited. I was due in January 2005, and going for ultrasound scans was so exciting. I loved seeing my baby's heartbeat and watching him grow. But then, my son was born 14 weeks premature.

At 26 weeks, my gynaecologist picked up that I had pre-eclampsia and I was admitted to hospital immediately, where I stayed for four days. The doctor then gave me steroid injections for the baby's lungs, but there was no improvement of the placenta and my blood pressure had not improved. My kidneys were starting to fail, and my gynaecologist made the decision to do a caesarean section.

On Friday 15 October 2004 as I was wheeled into theatre, the Bette Midler song *God Is Watching Us* was playing on the radio. I remember saying to my husband Glenn at the time, "this song is playing for all of us".

At 9.17am our son was born weighing a mere 430 grams. He was 28cm long and from the time of his birth, he fought an incredible battle. We didn't see him at birth. Instead the paediatrician, Dr Enrico Maraschin, "ran" to the Neonatal ICU unit holding our precious little boy in his hands. For us, the saying "his life is in the doctor's hands" took on a new meaning. It was obviously critical for the doctors to get our baby on life support immediately,



"Sunglasses" ease UV lights for jaundice

and only after about 20 minutes – which felt like an eternity – did we find out that I had given birth to a little a boy. We called our son Joshua which is Hebrew for "God Saves".

I spent three days in the hospital recovering from my c-section. After that, it was time for me to leave – alone. Not being able to take my baby home was devastating. What's more, we live on the East Rand, so driving to the hospital in Sandton took roughly 40 minutes. Still, I went to the hospital twice a day without fail for eight months.

Our rollercoaster ride began on the 15th of October; a rollercoaster ride that I never want to experience again. Joshua had good days and bad days. He fought for his life with pipes, drips, and

machines all around him. I'll never forget the sound of monitors peeping and alarms going off all the while. It was very overwhelming. You can do nothing but sit and watch. The one thing that I could do for Joshua as his mother was express breast milk. I did this for the entire eight months that he was in the hospital.

Every gram that he put on was great excitement to us. I will never forget the first time I saw the nurses weigh Joshua. He had put on weight and weighed 600 grams! We were all so excited, but reality soon hit. To see just how tiny he was without any blankets around him was a shock. He looked like a little baby bird without feathers, terrible as it is to say.

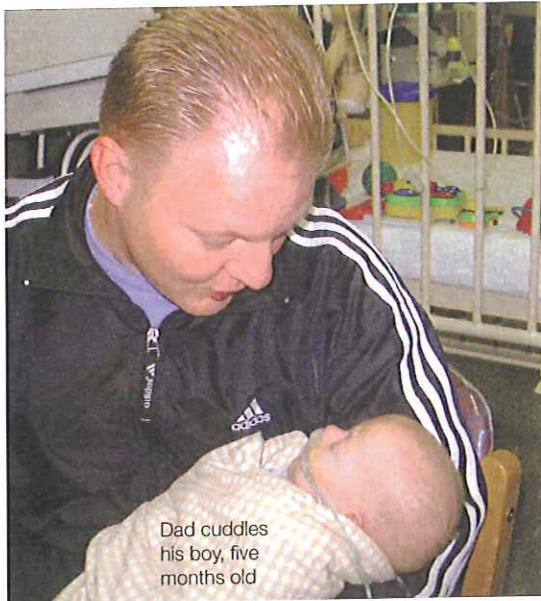
Glenn and I have a special bond with Joshua, though. We constantly spoke to him and sang to him and I firmly believe that this helped him a lot. The first time we held Joshua was in January 2005, when he was three months old. It was incredible! He was still tiny but so beautiful and perfect. Joshua spent eight months in Neonatal ICU, and three months on a ventilator. During his stay he had five operations. These included laser surgery on his eyes and a difficult heart operation.

On 9 June 2005, Joshua was finally discharged from hospital. The Morningside Medi-Clinic held a farewell party for him and all of his doctors, nurses, family and friends came to wish him well. It was then that I got my



Joshua was the size of a teddy at birth

YP Your Story



Dad cuddles his boy, five months old



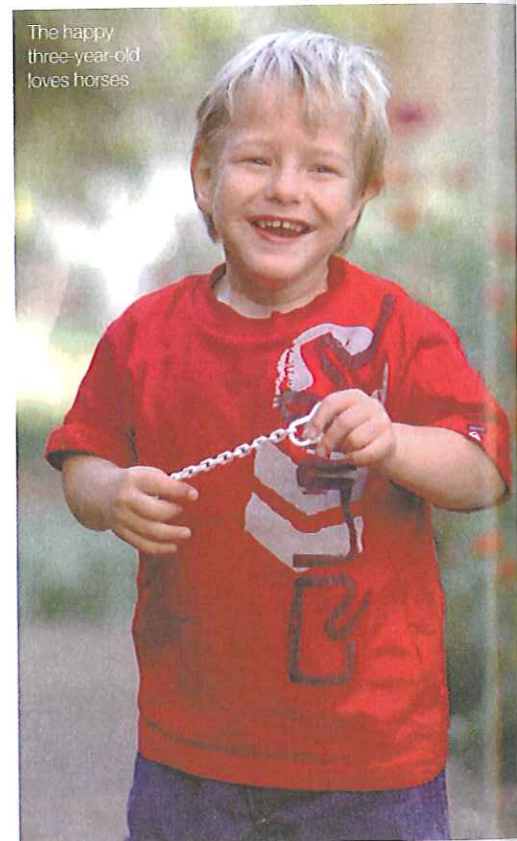
Joshua finally gets to hang-out with mom

chance to walk out of the hospital as a proud mom. Saying goodbye to the nurses and doctors who we'd met and knew well was emotional. But bringing our long-awaited son home was pure joy.

Joshua is three years old now. He has been developmentally delayed and has his own set of problems. We try to lead a normal life with Joshua and encourage him to do what every child does at three years old. At two-and-a-half years old he started to walk and talk. His speech is slow. However, he understands what you say to him. He goes to a special needs playschool and is doing well. Our main issue with Joshua is his eating – he does not eat at all. Instead, we feed him milk formula through a gastro tube as he does not get enough nutrition and hydration otherwise. We are currently looking into a feeding therapy programme in the USA, where a team of professionals teach children to eat successfully and remove the gastric tube. This therapy has proven to be quite beneficial for children with special needs, but it is costly. Joshua also keeps a busy schedule with various physical therapy appointments. These include occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy. He goes to horse riding, which has helped him enormously. When Joshua meets his milestones, we are so grateful and know that we cannot take them for granted.

There is still a very long road ahead but we know that God has a plan for

our miracle boy. Many people go their entire lifetime without ever meeting one of their heroes; I am truly blessed and honoured that my hero calls me mommy. The support from our parents, family and friends is fantastic. Joshua loves his godparents and grandparents so much too. Should you wish to speak to us, we would be happy to give advice. My email address is bronwyn@glenbro.co.za **YP**



The happy three-year-old loves horses

WIN!

If you would like to share your pregnancy

or birth story – whether your experience holds a serious message or not, please email us and it could be published. If we do use your contribution, you will receive a hamper courtesy of Palmer's that includes everything you need to pamper yourself and your baby.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO... Post your story, of 500-600 words, along with two clear photos, to Your Pregnancy / My Story, PO Box 95312, Grant Park, 2051, or email it to mystory@yourpregnancy.co.za – and write either My Birth Story or My Pregnancy Story in the subject bar.

