

A STAR REBORN?



Cathy Byrd, 49, was stunned when her toddler was hailed as a baseball prodigy, but wasn't prepared for the reason why...

By the time my son Christian was five years old more than 5 million people had watched him on YouTube in the video I'd uploaded.

Why? Because the media were hailing him as a baseball prodigy. The YouTube video of toddler Christian catching, throwing and hitting a ball like a pro had gone viral. Then, off the back of that, he'd caught the eye of Hollywood actor Adam Sandler, who invited Christian to showcase his gift in a cameo role in the 2011 movie *That's My Boy*.

But what's even more amazing than the worldwide interest in Christian's astonishing baseball skills is the explanation behind them. *My son could have inherited these incredible talents from a past life.*

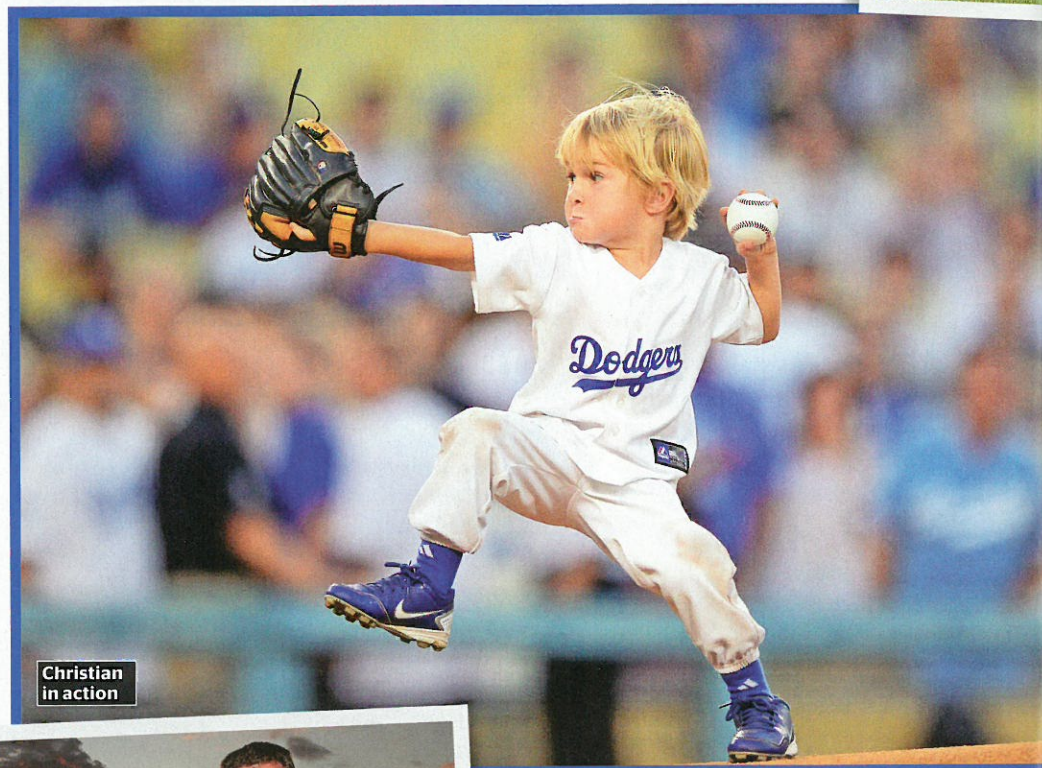
When he was just a year old, Christian saw some local kids out in the street playing baseball, and an obsession was sparked.

A year later, he was spending pretty much every waking moment begging my husband Michael and I to pitch balls to him so he could hit them with his tiny, wooden bat.

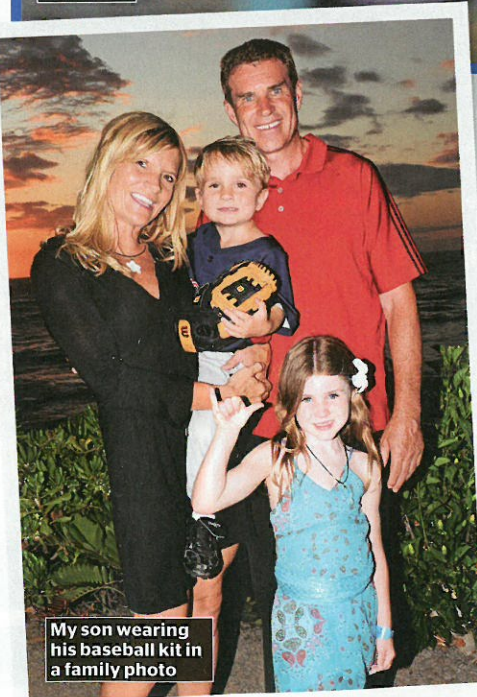
Michael and I weren't the least interested in the game, but Christian wanted to live and breathe it, insisting on wearing his full baseball kit and boots day in, day out.

One time we had a professional family photo taken and I wasn't keen on Christian being in his baseball kit, but when he cried his heart out I relented and my little boy's red eyes and baseball jersey made it into the photo.

Our daughter, Charlotte, who is three years older than Christian, went through a phase of being crazy about Disney princesses, but



Christian in action



My son wearing his baseball kit in a family photo

compared to her brother's fixation with all things baseball, that had been small-scale.

When Christian was invited to be in the Adam Sandler movie, we had to travel from our home in Southern California, to Boston, Massachusetts, for the filming. While there, I took Christian, then three, to a baseball game – the New York Yankees versus the Boston Red Sox.

As I led Christian to our seats, he suddenly stopped dead and waved his bat at a big portrait of a baseball star from the Twenties.

'I don't like that man there. He was mean to me,' declared Christian.

What was he talking about?

Embarrassed, I tried to hurry him along to our seats, but he wouldn't move away.

A man nearby heard what Christian had said and remarked: 'This kid is onto something because that player, Babe Ruth, was a real jerk.'

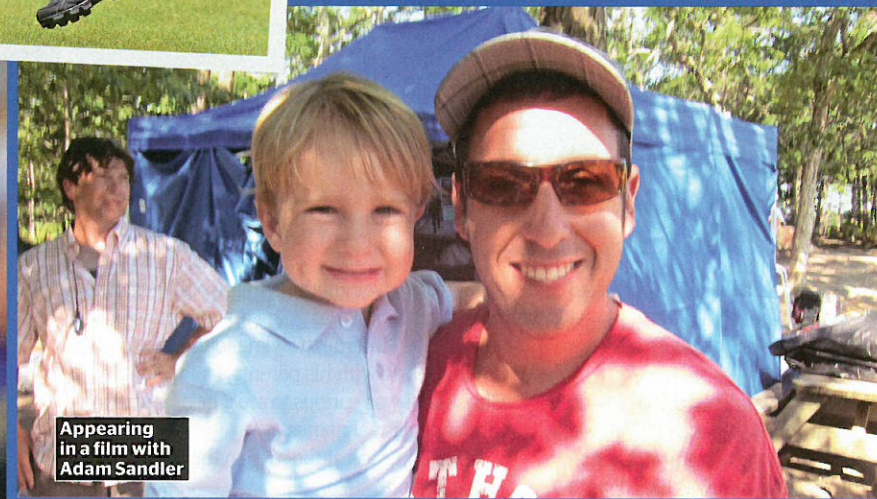
I was flummoxed. What had just happened? Why was my little boy getting himself in such



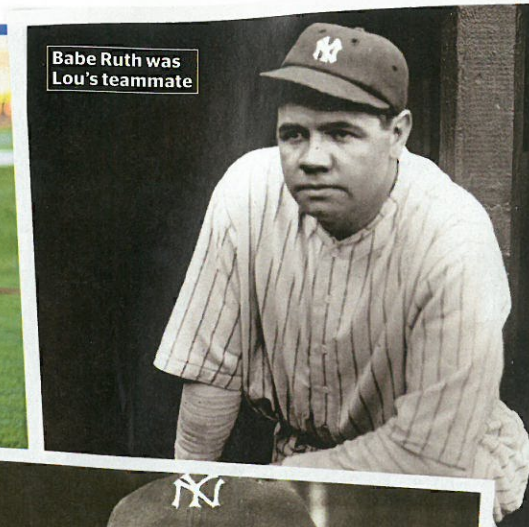
He catches like a pro...



...and bats like one too!



Appearing in a film with Adam Sandler



Babe Ruth was Lou's teammate



Lou Gehrig played for the Yankees

a state over an old picture of a player who had died decades ago?

Unfortunately, that was just the start of Christian's eerie behaviour.

Not long after we got back from Boston, he looked at me and said in a deadly serious voice: 'Mummy, I used to be a tall baseball player.'

Automatically I corrected him. 'You *will* be a tall baseball player, some day.'

Looking exasperated, he stomped his foot.

'No! I *was* a tall baseball player, tall like Daddy,' Christian insisted.

First the incident at the baseball game, now this, what was going on? Was it just his vivid imagination? I didn't know, so I decided to see where Christian would take this.

Kneeling down, I looked him in the eye. 'You were a grown up? Like Daddy?' I asked. 'Yes!' he replied, nodding furiously.

As what he was saying sunk in, two words came to my mind – *past life*.

I'd heard of such things and knew people very much believed in them. But I was a Christian, reincarnation went against my beliefs.

When I told Michael about the strange conversation that I'd had with Christian, he was quick to dismiss it and I might have done the same, had it not been for what I witnessed over the next few months.

Christian started to say more strange things, things which seemed to point to a previous life as a baseball player in Babe Ruth's era. 'When I was

a kid before, there was fire in my house,' Christian told me one night.

'Your house was on fire?' I asked.

He shook his head. 'No Mummy, there was real fire – in the lights.'

In the lights? Did Christian mean the old-fashioned oil lamps people had before most homes had electricity in the Thirties?

I was really struggling to understand what Christian was telling me. I didn't believe in reincarnation, but it was looking like a past life could be an explanation for my son knowing all this stuff, after all he couldn't even read yet and he never watched TV.

Christian's 'stories' got even more elaborate, always coming just before he fell asleep, or shortly after he'd woken up.

'When I was a tall baseball player I used to get to stay in hotels almost every night,' he told me on one occasion.

'Did you go on airplanes?' I asked.

'No, mostly trains.'

Later that night I Googled whether baseball players used to travel to games by train, and discovered that all professional teams travelled that way between 1914 and 1935. It wasn't until the mid-1940s that players were given the option of flying to away games.

The fact that my son somehow knew this was just downright creepy.

'If we don't talk about it, he won't. Don't encourage it,' Michael told me. But there was no

way I could ignore it. I had to find out if there were other children like Christian – children who seemed to know things, things they shouldn't logically have knowledge of.

I typed 'children and past lives' into the computer and an article flashed up.

It was written by Carol Bowman, a therapist who for 25 years had worked with kids who claimed to remember their past lives.

'Why was my boy in a state over a photo of a player who'd died decades ago?'

'Children usually talk about their former lives just as they're falling asleep or right after they wake up – as this is when they're relaxed and drowsy,' she wrote.

I froze – that was exactly what Christian did.

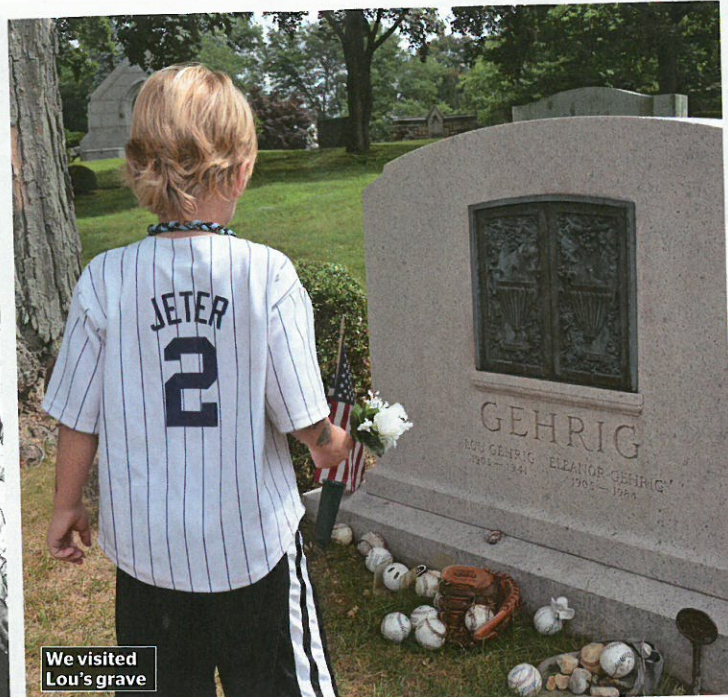
I clicked on Carol's contact details, and sent an email telling her all about him.

Less than 24 hours later, I got a reply.

'One of the most difficult aspects is the shock parents experience when they realise their child's remembering a past life. Stay calm, take a few ➤



Lou Gehrig (circled) in a Yankees team photo



We visited Lou's grave



Christian still loves baseball



On Little League opening day 2015

deep breaths and then try to keep the conversation going,' Carol advised me.

Easier said than done when your child was talking about such strange things.

'Christian's natural talent for baseball at a young age is telling,' Carol went on. 'It's highly likely he acquired these skills in a former lifetime as a professional baseball player.'

My mind struggled to take in the words.

'Write down everything he says because there's only a small window of time when children talk about the past,' insisted Carol.

That evening I printed off a bunch of photos from the internet, pictures of different baseball teams from Babe Ruth's era.

When I showed Christian a black and white photo of the 1927 Yankees team, he stared intently at it, pointed his finger and said, 'There's that dumb Babe Ruth.'

'Were there any players on the team who don't like him?' I asked slowly.

'Him,' he pointed at a stocky guy with dimples. 'And who's he?' I asked gently.

Christian looked at me with an expression

that suggested he couldn't believe I'd just asked him that question. 'Me!' he replied.

I was scared, but clung on to Carol's advice to stay calm and act normal.

As soon as Christian wandered off to play with his bricks, I hit the internet, typing 1927 Yankees into the search bar. The stocky man with the dimples, who my son had said was him, was called Lou Gehrig.

Born in 1903, Gehrig played over 2,000 consecutive games for the Yankees during the Twenties and Thirties. His reputation was squeaky clean compared to Babe Ruth, who was a notorious boozier and womaniser. Lou would retire to bed early, while his teammates were out and about partying.

Through my research I discovered that Gehrig had died aged just 37 from a neurological disease called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

Late into the night I continued devouring information about Lou, his career and life.

Then I found it. A story about Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig being great friends until they had an acrimonious falling out and never made up. There was no love lost between them after that.

'He was mean to me,' I remembered Christian saying that day at the baseball stadium in Boston when he pointed at the portrait of Babe Ruth. Had he been referring to the fall out between the two previously great pals?

Michael was asleep upstairs but I couldn't wait until the morning to tell him what I'd found.

Hurriedly shaking him awake I told him what I'd read on the internet and showed him the photo of the baseball team.

'Christian pointed to Gehrig's face and said "that's me",' I explained.

'We'll talk about this in the morning,' Michael replied, settling back down to sleep.

We didn't though, because Michael didn't want to. But while he preferred to blank it all out, I was

eager to discover anything that would help me understand what was going on with our son.

When my internet trawling found an old photo of Lou Gehrig with his parents, I showed it to Christian. I was curious to see if he'd be able to identify their real names.

'Christian, look at the man in this photo. Is his name Joseph?'

'No,' he replied immediately.

I rattled off five more incorrect names for Lou Gehrig's dad, and each time – without any hesitation – Christian said 'no'.

To each one, my son shook his head.

Then I asked, 'Is this Heinrich?'. That was Lou Gehrig's dad's name.

Christian shook his head and I thought that was it – game over.

Until I glanced at the photo caption and saw that Lou Gehrig's dad Heinrich preferred to be called 'Henry'.

'Is this Henry?' I asked.

'Yes,' Christian said matter-of-factly, as if it was common knowledge.

I repeated the exercise with the name of Lou Gehrig's mum.

Again, Christian said 'no' to all of the names until I got to 'Christina' – which was what Lou Gehrig's mum was called.

Only this time, Christian didn't just nod, he pointed emphatically to Christina and said: 'Mummy you were her.'

I stared at my little boy, my mind racing.

I needed help. Christian's peculiar behaviour and the strange things he was saying were seriously unnerving me.

During my research into children with past lives I'd come across Dr Jim Tucker, who'd been studying the phenomenon at the University of Virginia since 1967.

What comforted me was that many of the families Dr Tucker had been contacted by had not

believed in reincarnation either. They were just as sceptical as Michael and I were.

I pretty much begged Dr Tucker to come and see us and he agreed.

On the day of his visit I woke up filled with anticipation. Would today be the day Michael and I would finally get some answers to what had been happening to our son for the past two and a half years?

When Jim arrived he put Christian at ease by getting a baseball game going in the garden.

Christian was having such a good time he barely noticed Jim was interviewing him.

'I have no doubts that our souls survive this earthly existence'

'So, Christian, what did your mum cook for you when you were a tall baseball player?' asked Jim.

'She knows,' said Christian, pointing at me. 'She was my mum when I was Lou Gehrig.'

I balked – I hadn't told Jim that Christian believed I'd been his mum in his past life. But Jim wasn't fazed, and said he'd heard this kind of thing before from other kids who'd led past lives.

The most disconcerting question from Jim was still to come. 'Do you remember how you died?' he asked Christian.

This upset me because I'd never asked my son this. I just couldn't bear to think of him dying, in this or any other life.

Christian's response shocked me even more than Jim's question.

He was so matter of fact when he said: 'After I died, I became Christian. Then, looking straight at me again, Christian added: 'And I picked her out to be my mummy.'

Back inside our living room, as I tried to comprehend what I'd heard, Jim explained further.

He told me that many of the children he'd encountered in his studies had said a similar thing.

'It's common for a child to return to members of the same family if there are strong connections with them from a previous life,' he said.

He was also able to assure us that it was highly unlikely Christian would be troubled by these memories for the rest of his life. Every child with past life memories that he'd documented in his book *Return to Life* had stopped remembering the details when they got to around six, seven or eight years old.

I have to admit I couldn't wait for that day.

Christian's eight now and still loves baseball but, thankfully, it's just a healthy interest, one of several sports he loves, rather than a fixation.

He's not lost his talent, though; the baseball team he plays in made it all the way to the Youth World Series last summer.

His spontaneous recollections of life as Lou Gehrig have, however, stopped. He doesn't mention anything about him these days.

When a Hollywood movie producer got in touch, having heard our story, he asked Christian: 'Is Lou Gehrig still alive today?'

I believe my son's response sums up perfectly our feelings about Lou now: 'Yes, in my heart.'

Neither Michael nor I can say with 100 per cent certainty that Christian was Lou Gehrig in a previous life, but the stories we witnessed leave me in no doubt that our souls go on and on.

My family's experience also led me to write *The Boy Who Knew Too Much* all about Christian's journey, and has left me feeling like I have a message to deliver to the world.

I want to tell people that our souls survive this earthly existence and that we're reunited with loved ones, just like me and Christian, because love never dies.

KIDS WITH PAST LIVES

Dr Jim Tucker is a child psychiatrist and physician who's studied children who claim to remember previous lives.

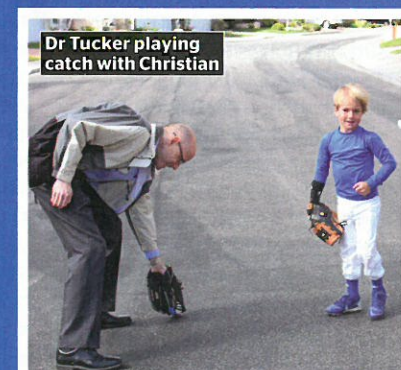
Many of the children are two or three years old, the typical age for past-life memories to arise in youngsters – and an age which Jim says is testament to the authenticity of what they're saying.

'With the children being so young, they haven't been able to search the internet and find out details. You can be pretty sure that in a lot of cases they have not learned the information through normal means – they seem to have picked it up in some paranormal way,' says Dr Tucker.

Among the children Dr Tucker has encountered in the course of his extraordinary studies is five-year-old Ryan from Oklahoma who claimed he was American actor George Raft who rose to fame in the 1930s and 1940s. Born in Philadelphia in 1905, Raft started out as a dancer on Broadway before setting up his own talent agency. When Dr Tucker spoke to Raft's living daughter, she was able to confirm as accurate 50 of the statements Ryan made, referring to her father George's life.

His extraordinary story features in Dr Tucker's book *Return to Life: Extraordinary Cases of Children Who Remember Past Lives*.

The cases provide evidence that memories and emotions and sometimes even physical traumas can survive the death of the brain and carry over into another life. We're not saying that there's proof but there is certainly evidence that consciousness may be able to continue. These cases do seem to suggest that there is more than just the physical world,' says Dr Tucker. ■



Dr Tucker playing catch with Christian

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

The Boy Who Knew Too Much by Cathy Byrd (£14.99, Hay House) comes out on 21 March.