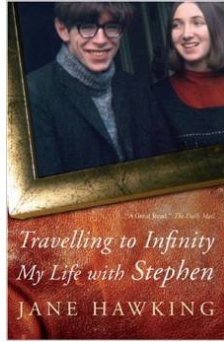


Traveling to infinity: My life with Stephen Jane Hawking Alma Books, 2007,2013, ISSN 978-1-84688-034-6, 450 pp.

This book is an abbreviated version of the longer story *Music to Move the Stars* (Macmillan, 1999). Jane was Stephen Hawking's first wife. They met in the 1960's while Stephen was preparing his PhD and Jane Wilde was studying Spanish and French. They married even though Stephen had been diagnosed with ALS and given only two more years to live.



Jane Hawking (2014)

In the books Jane describes how she experienced the 25 years she had been married to Stephen. She wanted to write her own story before the tabloids would make up one. Stephen left Jane to live with his nurse Elaine Mason in 1990. Stephen officially divorced Jane and married Elaine in 1995 and nine months later also Jane remarried. That was the period that Jane wrote her first version of the book. Stephen's second marriage also ended in a divorce in 2007. Then Jane revised her story which resulted in the shorter version of 2007.



Hawking family 1970's

It is of course Jane's story and it's a plea that justifies how she managed her marriage and to some extent deals with the injustice that in her mind was done to her. Whatever she did was in the service of the family and to the benefit of Stephen. So we learn how they met and Stephen got his ALS ordeal. Shortly after their marriage Stephen got his PhD in '66 in Cambridge. It was inspired by a lecture of Penrose and dealt with the singularity at the origin of our universe. Meanwhile Jane finished her studies commuting to London. But the deteriorating condition of his health did put a lot of strain on the household. Stephen's fame was strongly

established when he developed the theory of Hawking radiation which stated that black holes did loose matter in the form of radiation. He was invited at many institutes all over the world. However Jane caught a fear for flying, so that she often preferred to stay at home and let Stephen go being looked after by his students. Certainly after the children were born: Robert (1967) and Lucy (1970), traveling, even for a vacation was a crusade bringing Stephen and the children to the car, stowing Stephen's wheelchair and loading the suitcases on top.

In between the nursing of Stephen and the children, she still tries to finish a PhD about Medieval Spanish poetry, but that is always delayed, while Stephen is only thinking about his career, claiming they are just a normal family, and refusing any external help. When Jane is advised to take some time for herself, she joined a church choir directed by the organist Jonathan Jones. Jonathan is widowed since his wife died of leukemia. Jane and Jonathan become soul mates, and Jonathan enters the Hawking family as a friend of the house when teaching piano lessons to Robert, but also helping to take care of Stephen. When a third child Timothy is born in 1979, rumors begin to spread and it triggers a break with the Hawking family. However the *ménage à trois* seems to work out in practice. When Stephen is flying out to visit CERN, Jane and Jonathan with the children follow by car, having some camping vacation in Belgium and Germany. However, there the news

reaches them that Stephen is kept in a coma in Geneva. The muscles in his throat had been a problem for a long time that regularly gave him a choking fit. That would sooner or later cause his death, so it could only be solved by a tracheotomy, bypassing the sensitive area, but which of course deprives him of the possibility to speak. This had been a problem anyway because his voice had deteriorated considerably already and he had needed interpreters to make him understandable before. It is decided to operate and somewhat later the well known voice computer is introduced, which in the beginning, he operates by hand, nowadays with one remaining cheek muscle.

After that, nurses were hired to look after Stephen. Stephen's popular book *A brief history of time* was a big success and brought in a lot of royalties. He enjoyed the promotion of the book, placing him in the center of attention. Meanwhile Jane reports increasing tensions among the nurses competing for Stephen's favors, and she is gradually alienated from her husband. She meets the Queen when Stephen is appointed in the *Order of the Companion of Honours* in 1989 and that is about the swan song of their marriage. When at some point the royalties of the bestselling *A brief history of time* are not transferred to her but to Stephen's private account, she realizes that some borders had been crossed and



Elaine and Stephen 1995

that her marriage has come to an end. When an American film crew, making a documentary about the book, wants to add 'some biographical elements', they invade the house and Jane is obviously not in control anymore. The year is 1990 when Stephen informs Jane that he is leaving her to live with Elaine, thus ending twenty five years of marriage that was supposed to last for at most two.

The theory of everything James Marsh, 2014, Working Title Films, 123 min.



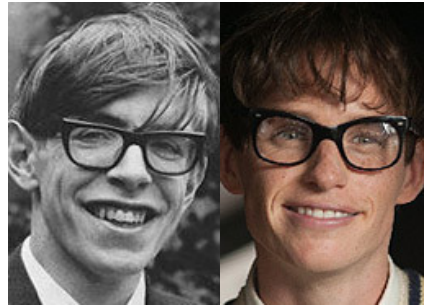
This film is based on the previous book. However, the book has an amazing lot of details. Jane must have kept a diary or may have a very good memory, since there are so many precise recollections. Of course there are the many grand occasions when Stephen gets some prize or a medal or visiting the Pope, but there are many more ordinary everyday events that are told with precise quotes of who said what, how, when, and where. She complains about the strain put upon the children by Stephen and her concern about that. There are even excursions into the theoretical physics in the book although not in

detail, but historical facts are more extensively elaborated like the story of Galileo and his row with the Catholic Church. Religion was a matter of friction between her, being religious, and Stephen, an ardent atheist. The book relates about her efforts for charitable causes, her energy put into the survival of the choir that was deprived of sponsoring under the Thatcher regime, some criticism on the Russian political situation when they visit Moscow, etc. Jane eventually finishes her PhD and starts teaching, and in the final stage of their marriage a house was bought in France where she escaped with the children when separation was imminent. No trace of all this in the film though.

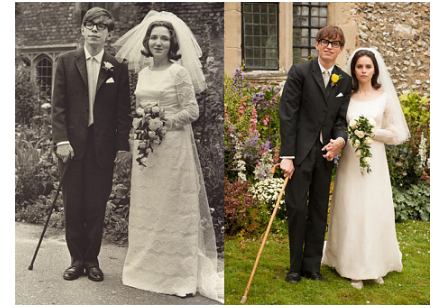
The film concentrates on the romantic and emotional level. Of course Stephen and Jane falling in love, the tension with the Hawking family, the ambiguous relation with Jonathan, and the most dramatic events in their life such as the decision about the tracheotomy. Of course the moment that Stephen decides to leave Jane with Elaine, is the emotional climax at the end.



Jane



Stephen



Marriage 1965

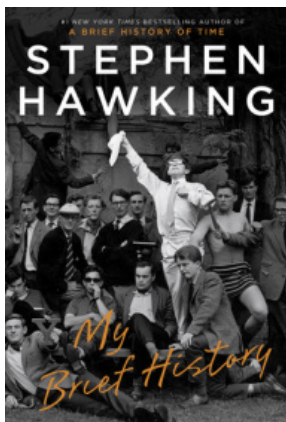
Actress Felicity Jones plays the main role of Jane but the performance of Eddie Redmayne as Stephen is exceptional. He got the *Best Actor Oscar* for it. Stephen Hawking congratulated him for this. Hawking's computer voice in the film is actually generated by the true speech generator of Stephen. The title of the film *The theory of everything* clearly refers to the attempt of theoretical physicists to find a unifying theory for the macroscopic laws of the universe and the microscopic laws studied in quantum mechanics.

Since Stephen's divorce from Elaine in 2006, Jane and the children maintained a 'working relation' with Stephen. The whole Hawking family was present at the London premiere of the film in December 2014.



Jonathan and Jane

My brief history *Stephen Hawking* Random House/Bantam Books, 2013, ISSN 978-0-345-53528-3, 144 pp.



Stephen also wrote a biography: *My Brief History*. This is a much shorter book than Jane's and it has many pictures. There is of course more information about Stephen's youth before he met Jane and there is definitely more physics and cosmology, although not really mathematics or formulas. Some of the events you will recognize from the corresponding account in Jane's book. There is even humor like for example Stephen offering a year subscription to *Penthouse* after a bet with a colleague. He also reveals that initially he approved Jonathan to live in his house since he expected that after his tracheotomy he would not live much longer and he also thought that Jane's depression was because she had the same idea, and then Jonathan could help Jane to look after the children when he died. The speech synthesizer that he has is outdated and much better software exists.

It runs on hardware for which no more spare parts are available. However since he considers this voice as his trade mark, he still wants to keep the machines as long as they still run. Instead of speaking, the system can of course also store the sentence, and this is how he has written seven books and using \LaTeX he could also store equations and he wrote several scientific papers.

We also learn about his marriage with Elaine. How he needed a laryngectomy to completely separate the windpipe from his throat and later also a ventilator 24 hours a day. A separate chapter is devoted to his writing of *A brief history of time* and an amusing analysis of the reviews it got. Remaining chapters deal with time travel, imaginary time, and the no boundary conditions, which allows the universe to spontaneously be created out of nothing.

He says his illness was an advantage that made him the scientist he is, the only downside is that it is hard to do something incognito. He did travel a lot all over the world and met many celebrities. In 2012 he was anchoring the London Paralympics. He obviously enjoys being at the center of it all.

A. Bultheel