

John Robert Crawford

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Written by Dr Reg Hession and Dr George Franki



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John Crawford practised for many years at Penshurst, Sydney. In her eulogy at John's funeral, his daughter, Kit, stated: “He was born in Penshurst, grew up in Penshurst, lived in Penshurst and even lived in Penshurst Avenue.”

John was educated at Scots College, Sydney where he was a prefect and represented in rugby and cricket. As a member of Cronulla Surf Club, he excelled in surf boat rowing. As the sweep of the crew his five-man team won the NSW and Australian Championships in 1951, whilst finishing a very close second in 1952. It is said that his crew were invited to try out one of the first ergonomic rowing machines at Sydney University but were so strong that they broke it!

John came from a dental family; his father and grandfather were dentists who qualified under the old apprenticeship system. John's practice was a happy one. His wife, Jean (nee Brown), a former theatre sister at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, was his practice manager and his chairside assistants were known to continue to work in the practice for many years; one who joined the practice in 1968 still works there.

Throughout his career, John employed a number of new dental graduates, amongst whom were Tony Bernard, Phil Pidcock and Brett Taylor, who became John's partner, succeeding him in 2000. John's daughter, Kit Streamer, worked at the practice as a chairside assistant during university holidays where on many occasions she was able to witness John's empathy with patients. The following is a story as related to her by Brett Taylor.

“An elderly lady who was known to be afflicted by dementia appeared in the waiting room of the practice, demanding from John the gold from a tooth which had been extracted from her deceased husband over a decade earlier. Totally

unfazed, he replied that the staff were waiting for her to collect it and he would locate it for her forthwith. After finding some scrap gold in the dental laboratory this was duly presented to her, with the situation defused completely.”

A very active man, John had many extra-mural activities. He enjoyed motor cars (which were always immaculately maintained), played tennis and golf into his senior years and kept a number of motor boats, first in Sydney and later at Hawks Nest on Port Stephens. He joined the Hurstville Rotary Club in 1954 (the year he and Jean were married) and, for his Rotary activities, he was made a Life Member of the Club and was awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship (complete with sapphire pin) on two occasions.

He was also active within PLC Sydney Parents and Friends Association, being its President for a number of years, during which time Jean was a long-serving member of the School Council.

He was very dextrous, being able to do much of the servicing of his cars. His daughter said: “He could make, fix or build anything: toy boxes, doll cradles, billy carts, cubby houses... and a full sized, fully functional dental cabinet with teeny drawers for the tools of his trade.” He also made jewellery.

John and Jean eventually retired to Hawks Nest. There he developed severe back problems and had to enter a nursing home. He accepted this with courage.

John Crawford was a fine citizen. Very much admired by his dental classmates of 1952, he attended the class reunions until 2014 when he was in a wheelchair. He is survived by his wife Jean, daughter Kit and husband Richard and their sons Robert and David, to whom sincere condolences are extended.

