

## John Carew's Memorial Service

### Primary Eulogy by Barb Carew (wife)

Just a little story before I start.

Many years ago a little scrap of a child arrived at training every morning and afternoon – crying his eyes out. John's reaction was always the same 'get over it and get on with it'. It didn't stop Stephen Holland from crying, but he did 'get over it and got on with it' – becoming an Olympian.

So, in a nutshell that was John's philosophy 'Get over it and get on with it'.

John was born in West End, Brisbane, 81 years ago and for 80 of those years he worked, loved, played and lived a good life. That is worth a celebration.

John's father died when he was a toddler so life for his mum – Nanna Carew and two siblings – James and Marie – was not easy.

He left school at 14 to help support the family, and was granted an apprenticeship with the Government as a plumber. While doing his apprenticeship he joined the *Souths Rugby League Club* and the Surfers Paradise Life Saving Club. He believed all the best sportsmen in the whole wide world came from Brisbane's West End.

He finished his apprenticeship and became a 'licensed sewerage, water and plumbing engineer' – a title the family teased him about for years.

He started his own plumbing business which grew to the point where he was able to employ his own apprentice. There was only one problem, John was so busy playing football and hitching a ride every spare weekend to Surfers Paradise he forgot to ask people to pay for their plumbing work ... so, the business eventually went bust.

John kept up his commitment to the Surfers Paradise Surf Lifesaving Club, becoming club captain and chief instructor. I recently found a paper clipping from 1947 about a surf rescue of 61 people

from Surfers Paradise Beach in one day. John was involved in that rescue and I believe that record has not been broken to this day.

John's other great love was horses. Somehow he managed – between his sporting and work commitments – to ride a push bike from West End to Lake Manchester, near Mt Crosby –(about an 80km round trip) where he appointed himself as the unpaid general rouseabout on a cattle holding property. In this role he did a bit of mustering, learnt to ride and did a bit of horse training and learnt to understand horses. The owner eventually gave John his first horse. John always said it was a mongrel of a thing, but it was all his and he loved it.

John Interpretation of the word 'entrepreneur' is not the one in the Oxford Dictionary, but because of his love of horses, his next business venture was to become a professional punter. Not a smart move – as once again he was broke. He surmised that if punters didn't make money, then bookmakers must.

His next career move was to get a bookie's licence and he started book-making on the paddock at Albion. Being a bookie was not for him – so once John was broke.

Somewhere in those vagabond days, there was also a period where he bred and raced greyhounds.

By now the Queensland Turf Club was feeling sorry for John so he accepted the job of Stipendiary Steward. John was the youngest steward in Brisbane at that time, but I think his own work requirements were to walk the track after every race and pick up all the bits and pieces that the jockeys disposed of!

By now though, John has a daughter, Donna Maree, to support, so it was time to get a proper job.

For the next three years he worked on the whaling station at Tangalooma. The men lived on the boat (and on the rum) for 3 to 4 months at a time. As this was only seasonal work, John had the summers off and this is where his teaching and coaching career really started.

John was still living at West End so the closest pool was Davies Park. At this time, Davies Park Pool was not much more than an enclosure jutting out into the Brisbane River. The filtration system was to pump out the pool and refill it again from the river.

John's friends, Bill Flemming and Joe King were at that time coaching at Davies Park Pool and they asked John if he would be interested in joining them – and that is where his life-long passion for coaching began.

His winters were spent at Tangalooma (his paying job) and his summers, under the guidance of Bill, were spent at Davies Park Pool.

After three years with Bill, John commenced coaching professionally at a couple of lanes in the Fortitude Valley Pool. John was the first swim coach in Brisbane to turn professional and he was ostracized by other coaches and the establishment. The thought of the day was asking for money to teach children a sport was 'most UnAustralian'. He persevered though, slowly wearing away the prejudices and was eventually accepted.

His first school coaching job was at Somerville House, and once again he was battling prejudices – shock, horror – a young (and good looking) male training young girls in swimsuits! But again he won through. Later he was accepted employed by several private schools as a swim coach.

During these years he went to every swim camp and clinic he could afford. He listened, watched and stored all this information in what he called his E.E.C. Computer (eyes – ears – common sense). Whenever he could get his hands on a swim film clip he would spend hours studying the style, strokes and timings of top swimmers. This was all stored in his E.E.C computer. He learnt from the old masters: Forbes and Ursula Carlile; Don Talbot, Frank Guthrie, Sam Hurford, Gary Windrum, Phil McLeod and Les Lazarus to name but a few.

Then in 1958 Landlands Park Pool came up for lease and at last John Carew had his 'own water'. For the next seven years he built up his reputation as a teacher and coach.

Then, another setback. The then Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Clem Jones and John had a bit of a misunderstanding, which resulted in John knowing he would not get another pool in Brisbane.

Home pools were just starting to be built in Brisbane and John started a home pool-cleaning service company called 'PoolCare' which is still around today. PoolCare kept the wolf from the door but coaching was his real passion.

Then in the mid 60s a new pool in Sydney – Greenacre – came up for lease, and he once again had his ‘own water’. What he did not know was the only sport the youth of Greenacre knew was vandalism, graffiti and a bit of break and enter on the side. His coaching and teaching programs were unwanted.

Then, good news in 1969, Canterbury Council granted him teaching and coaching rights at Roselands Pool. He was once again doing what he loved.

During the Sydney years, he still attended lectures and sat around pools watching and learning – all the time storing everything into his little E.E.C computer.

By now John has three children to support – Donna, John and David. John was adamant that they would be raised in Queensland, there was so much to teach them that they could not learn in Sydney. Important things like:

how to surf - how to read the beach - how to fish, set crab pots and net prawns – how to row boats – and – most importantly, how to push the home-made beach buggy out of sand bogs on the North Shore because there was never another soul about.

Then in 1970, all is forgiven back in Brisbane with Clem Jones so John now had the lease of a brand new pool in a brand new suburb – Jindalee. Life was good and then got even better with his first Olympic swimmer, Rosemary Millgate a member of the 1979 Montreal team. John now knew that he and his trusty E.E.C. computer were on the right track.

Then – disaster again – the Brisbane floods of 1974 – which just about destroyed the new suburb of Jindalee.

By now, John realised that leasing pools had no future so he found a block of land in Indooroopilly and built a 20m pool. It had to be 20 metres because that was the size of the block of land! We opened for business in 1978 and the business just grew.

A reporter wrote in a Sydney paper that he ‘could not believe that this 20 metre non-descript pool, squashed between a service station and a builders hire yard could keep producing champions; all due to the coaching ability of John Carew’.

Then one day, another scrap of a kid called Kieren walked in the door and the rest of his professional life would be well known to most of you.

So, my John, that was your life, and I have kept my promise to you: “none of that singing sad songs at my funeral”.