

sympathy was due, approachable and deeply sensitive to the difficulties that teenagers endure ... His public image – assured, urbane, witty – made him a wonderful figurehead. He could interact socially with our whole community and intellectually with the judges, lawyers, accountants, doctors and others who

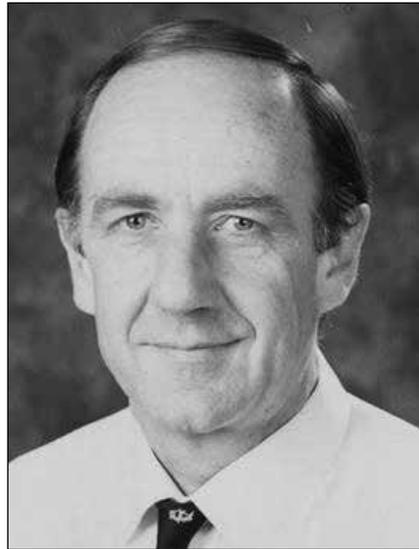
play such a vital role in determining the school's direction. His devotion to College took him to nearly every College or Old Boys' function held during his period of office and he was a tireless supporter of College sports teams."

SIMON HAW

John D'Urban Godlonton (1938–2015)

DOCTOR John Godlonton died in June 2015. He was 76 years old. Born in Cape Town, he was educated in Queenstown at Queens College. He did his medical training at UCT before practising as a GP in Kokstad. Thereafter he moved to Durban to study neurosurgery at Wentworth Hospital. This he did not enjoy and so switched to Addington Hospital for paediatrics which he found of greater appeal. For most of his professional life he worked as a specialist paediatrician at Edendale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg. Retirement took him to Leisure Bay where he remained for a decade, continuing to work at Port Shepstone hospital, now mainly in a teaching role. When his health started to deteriorate he and his wife moved to Grahamstown, because his son lived there, for what proved to be the last three years of his life.

John Godlonton has been described as a phenomenal person who was active in various roles in the Comrades Marathon Association and the KZN Rugby Sub-Union from the 1970s. He was a member of the CMA Executive Committee from 1980 to 1988, and its Vice-Chair for two years. He headed the Comrades Medical Portfolio for nearly



John Godlonton

two decades from 1977. And besides his role as an administrator, he completed the Comrades Marathon himself four times and was awarded his CMA Life Membership with Honours in 1988.

I first met Dr John Godlonton when I was an intern at Edendale Hospital. He was an amazing teacher, with a fantastic ability to impart knowledge in a practical, easily understandable manner. He was a legend at Edendale Hospital and was a founder of the infamous doctor's pub, "Easy Riders". John

was fun-loving and a keen participant in the social activities of Easy Riders during the 1970s, 80s and beyond; and this led to him taking part in amateur theatricals with song and dance routines in a number of Pig and Whistle shows. We spent many high-spirited evening rehearsals and shows with him over many years. He was perhaps most famous throughout the Midlands for his frequent hilarious renditions on stage of an ungainly ballet dancer complete with pink tutu and flashing luminous imitation danglers.

In 1976 a friend of John's was admitted to hospital suffering from acute renal failure after running Comrades. John, who was on the Comrades Executive Committee, realised that if his friend had been given intravenous fluid after he had finished, this could have been avoided. So in 1977 he set himself up in the referees' change room of the then Jan Smuts Stadium (renamed Harry Gwala Stadium) in Pietermaritzburg. Thus began the Comrades medical facility, which has recently been described as arguably "the biggest, most well equipped, temporary medical facility outside of a conflict zone anywhere in the world". That statement summarises the legacy of an incredible human being. He was responsible for implementing protocols and standards which are utilised to this day, and which are emulated at other events.

John was a principled man. He resigned from the CMA Executive Committee and from his position as Comrades Chief Medical Officer in 1995. This was on a matter of principle, as he was opposed to the proposed introduction of prize money to Comrades. Even after I had taken over as the medical convener, however, John continued to come and work in the medical tent

as one of our senior doctors every year until he moved to Grahamstown. The Comrades Marathon fraternity and many thousands of runners who have passed through the Comrades medical tent in the last 39 years owe a huge debt of gratitude to an extraordinary person.

For more than 25 years he also made an invaluable contribution to the Maritzburg Rugby Union, as a doctor and council member. He was in charge of first aid at all the premier division games at the Woodburn Stadium. He was an Honorary Vice President of the Midlands Rugby Sub-Union, with his involvement spanning nearly three decades. He was a trustee of the KZN Rugby Union Cunningham Kemp Spinal Injury Trust Fund where he assisted with spinal and other rugby injuries which the trust administered.

John Godlonton also had a lesser known, creative and artistic side. He was a member of the Midlands Art Group, and a good enough artist to be able to mount several exhibitions in the Tatham Art Gallery. He also exhibited his art while living at Leisure Bay.

It is impossible to describe in words the contribution John has made, and the influence he had, on the lives of so many people in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. From the young doctors and all the patients at Edendale Hospital, the CMA and the thousands of runners who have benefited from what he established as the Medical Tent, the midlands rugby fraternity, and all those who were entertained by the men's ballet.

John Godlonton leaves his wife Mary, four children and 13 grandchildren.

JEREMY BOULTER and
GILL McGARR