

Johnny Marr



On 26 March 2011, our world was literally shattered by the news of Johnny's diagnosis of metastatic pancreatic cancer. Despite the very best care, he died exactly nine weeks later at his home in Bishopscourt, surrounded by his family. John Donald Fraser Marr (Johnny) was born in 1962 on the original Belvidere farm on the shores of the Knysna lagoon. He attended Knysna Primary School, crossing the lagoon by railway bridge on the steam train twice a day until the age of ten. Thereafter he boarded at Western Province Preparatory School until our parents moved to Cape Town in 1974. Nicknamed 'the golden boy' because of his fair hair, affability and overall talent, he became deputy head boy of Rondebosch Boys' High School, played first-team rugby and cricket and represented the school in athletics, and matriculated with distinction in 1980. Johnny then went to the University of Cape Town to study medicine. He was a member of a very strong varsity 1st XI, winning the O'Brien Shield in the '82/83 season. He also played rugby for varsity 2nd XV. In his fifth year at UCT Johnny met Sue, whom he married four years later. During their courtship, he completed his undergraduate training in 1987 and did his internship at Groote Schuur Hospital. He spent a year in Canada as a GP, and then did his national service. He became a general surgical registrar at Groote Schuur Hospital in 1990, qualifying as a general surgeon in 1995. He then spent two years in the hepato-biliary firm at Groote Schuur before starting private practice at Kingsbury Hospital, Claremont.

Johnny's private practice rapidly grew to full capacity, as did his reputation as one of South Africa's leading laparoscopic surgeons. He co-founded the Chrysalis Clinic, one of South Africa's bariatric surgery centers of excellence. He was the complete surgeon – technically gifted, intellectually brilliant and academically astute. He strove for excellence, and never accepted mediocrity. He was warm, kind and compassionate, and for that his patients and colleagues loved him. Personally, I couldn't be more proud to have been his brother. Despite the considerable demands of his career, Johnny led a full life. He was a great family man, husband to Sue and father to Oliver, 15, Jean, 13, and Matthew, 10. He lived deliberately. He was a qualified pilot, keen golfer, fisherman, surfer, cyclist, diver ... and he loved to braai! He surrounded himself with people he loved. He had integrity, enthusiasm and a great sense of fun. He was a natural leader who inspired friends and colleagues by the high standards he set for himself and lived by. Those of us who knew Johnny will understand the massive void that he leaves. We grieve with Sue and her children in this difficult time, but in times ahead will continue to celebrate the life of this lovely man.

Ian Marr