Obituary - Johnny Marr

On the 26th March this year, our world was literally shattered by the news of Johnny's diagnosis of metastatic pancreatic cancer. Despite the very best care, exactly nine weeks later he would pass away 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, and attended Knysna Primary School, crossing the lagoon by railway bridge on the steamtrain 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 was deputy head boy of Rondebosch Boys High School, and matriculated with distinction in 1980, playing 1st team rugby and cricket and representing the school in athletics. After school, Johnny studied medicine at UCT. 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.

While in his 5th year, Johnny met Sue who he would marry four years later. During their courtship, he completed his undergraduate training in 1987, before spending a year as an intern at Groote Schuur Hospital, and another as a GP in Canada, followed by his 1 year of national service. He started his post graduate training as a general surgical registrar at Groote Schuur Hospital in 1990, qualifying as a general surgeon in 1995. Thereafter he spent 2 years in the hepato-biliary firm at Groote Schuur before starting private practice at the Kingsbury Hospital, Claremont.

Johnny's private practising 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. He was technically gifted, intellectually brilliant, academically astute. He strived for excellence, he 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, a keen golfer, fisherman, surfer, cyclist, diver... 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 have known 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