



**NORTH SYDNEY D.R.L.
REFEREES' ASSOCIATION**

NSDRLRA

Life Member Profile

John Quinn

Life Member 18: 1969

Membership: 1950 – 2009*



Honours

Life Membership: 1969

John Quinn Trophy: 1967 & 1972

Refereeing Accreditation: level 2 - Referee

Executive Positions Held

President, Senior Vice President, Vice President and Social Secretary

Association Positions Held

Delegate to the North Sydney Junior League, Director of Referees, Appointments Board, Advisory Board, Representative to the Judiciary, Junior Referee Support, Golf Team, Life Membership Committee, Past & Present Committee, 75th Anniversary Committee and the John Quinn (Bob Purcell) Trophy Committee

Other Achievements

Life Member of four different bodies:

- North Sydney District Rugby League Referees' Association (1969)
- North Sydney District Rugby League (1980)
- North Sydney District Club (1987)
- NSWRL Junior League Association (1990)

North Sydney District Rugby League President, Secretary and Treasurer

North Sydney Junior Representative Team Secretary

Special Recognition Award as part of the 1998 NSW Annual Sports Awards for the service to the game of rugby league at all levels.

A Tribute to Mr. John Quinn



John and Mary Quinn at an Association
Ladies Night in mid 1970s.

In the film *It's a Wonderful Life*, to prove the worth of his life, Jimmy Stewart's character George Bailey had to be shown what his hometown would have been like if he had not been born. John Quinn would not have needed such drastic course of action as his countless friends and colleagues were a constant reminder to him of how we felt about him. It is not an understatement to say that John Quinn was the rock upon which our modern Association has been built. John was born on December 22, 1921 in what was then, the Western Suburbs of Sydney – Ashfield. He grew up and went to school in the area. By all accounts, John was a handy Rugby League player. His skills were identified and he was graded by Wests in 1939 and was the Third Grade fullback that year.

While in New Guinea, John suffered an injury while playing in a League game. This injury would prevent him from playing league ever again.

In 1947, John married Mary Di Blasi and they purchased land at Hinkler Crescent, Lane Cove and built their home. They subsequently raised their two boys, Peter and Philip there.

In 1950, John gained his Referees' Ticket and he joined North Sydney Referees Association that year. At the time of his passing, he had been a member over 59 years. His Ticket Number was 63.

Detailed Association records for the 1950s and much of the 1960s are not available but John played an active role in Association matters throughout these years while also raising his family and his employment at Anthony Hordens as a Staff Welfare Officer. John was also a very talented drummer with the company band.

In, 1967, John was elected Social Secretary and did such a good job; he was awarded the Bob Purcell Trophy for that year. He remained as Social Secretary for the next five years from 1968 to 1972. During this time he transformed the social functions of our Association, the most important was in 1969 when the Annual Smoko was changed to a Ladies Night (which is now our Annual Presentation Night).

In 1968, John took on the additional role of Vice President, a position he held again in 1969. In 1970, he stepped up to Senior Vice President, a position he held also in 1971 and 1972.

In 1969, John was awarded the ultimate honour when he was made a Life Member of the Association. At the conclusion of the 1972 season, John was again awarded the Bob Purcell Trophy. However, John's greatest contribution to the Association and the lives of its members was yet to come.

In 1973, John was elected President, a position he would hold for the next 11 years until he did not seek re-election after the 1983 season.

John's tenure as President was coupled with him holding the position of Chairman of the Appointments Board/Director of Referees from 1969 to 1983.



John (right) with Bert Cowley running lines at a Referees Touch Football day. That's Keith Page in the middle.

After becoming Association President, John was deeply involved with the Association both on and off the field. He took an active interest in all the committees of the Association as well as taking a personal interest in the development of individual referees. Before John assumed these two leading and demanding roles, North Sydney did not have many new referees added to the graded ranks.

His years of hard work eventually paid off and the following members were graded under his guidance:

- Ron Atkinson, Hillary Griffiths, Colin Jones, Vince Smith & Steve Betts



John with Hillary Griffiths after Hillary was graded (1978).

His legacy continued even after he ceased active involvement at the end of 1983. John continued to lobby hard for our members with NSW Referees. The following are members who started their careers with John as their mentor and were graded after 1983:

- Robert Kiddle, Jim Neal, Steve Clark & Martin Ryan

It is well known that John immensely enjoyed refereeing the younger age groups (Under 6, 7 and 8s). From 1966 to 1983 (except for 1975), John refereed the Under 7 or Under 6 Grand Final, whichever was the lowest. He would always conclude each game by gathering the players around him in a circle and giving them a talk.

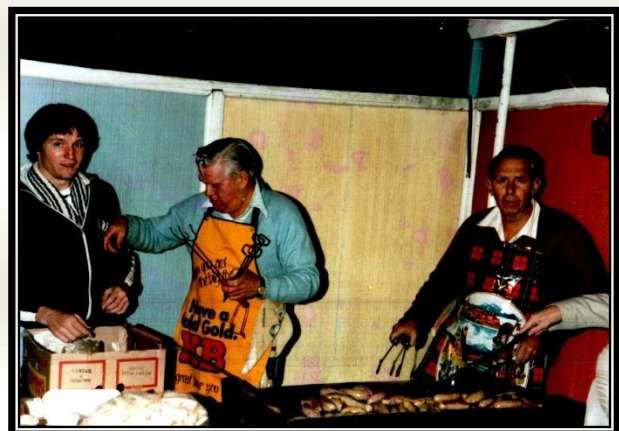
In fact, that is my first memory of John, seated in the middle of a circle of people only this time it was referees. The weekend after I gained my ticket, Brian Barry took me to a coaching seminar the Association was holding at St Leo's College. When we entered the hall, I noted a group of people gathered around a man sitting on a chair. I was then introduced to John Quinn (seated). John stated that "I would kill them with my moustache!"

From that moment on I gained a mentor and valued friend, a person who was there for me when I needed help and support.

From Grand Final Day 1983 throughout the off-season to the AGM in February 1984, we were an Association in turmoil. It is not something deserves to be dwelt on here, suffice to say that John did not deserve what happened and he did not seek re-election for 1984. That was the only time I disagreed with John as I felt he should have stood for election and sought a mandate from the members. These problems caused John great angst and he did not attend an Association meeting or function for a number of years. Our loss was certainly the Junior League's gain.

John had already been made a Life Member of the Junior League in 1980. When his services were available, he was elected Secretary of the Junior League (the role of Secretary would later evolve into the Junior League Administrator) in 1984 and held that position in 1985 and 1986.

In 1987 he was elected President of the Junior League and also in 1988 and 1989. In 1990 he assumed the role of Treasurer of the Junior League and held that position until 2007 when he was forced to retire due to declining health. In 1987, the District Club elected John a Life Member. In 1990 he added the additional role of Junior Representative Team Secretary. This was another position he held until his health declined.



John always cooked a great BBQ. That's Robert Kiddle on the left and I believe Chris Hopkins' father in the middle.

His work for Junior League and the Junior Reps was recognised when he was elected a Life Member of the NSWRL Junior League Association.

During the troubles of the late 1990s, the Junior League turned to John and asked him to again be Chairman of the Appointments Board and at John's request I joined him as the Secretary. I learned so much from him during our time together doing the appointments.

John did have a hard time coming to grips with technology, especially emails calling them the "emachine". He did eventually bow to technology and had a fax machine installed in his home, courtesy of the District Club.

Even as his health declined, he took a great interest in the progress of our members and was very pleased that Jon Stone was graded last year.

To be elected a Life Member of one body is a great achievement in itself but to be elected a Life Member of four different bodies is an extraordinary achievement that speaks volumes for the love and dedication that John had for Rugby League.

Perhaps it is a testimony to the toughness of John's generation, having endured the Great Depression and a World War, but John's resilience to adversity was amazing. In early 1999, John was to receive a Special Recognition Award as part of the 1998 NSW Annual Sports Awards (presented by the NSW Sports Federation). This was to recognise John's years of service to the game of Rugby League at all levels.

A few weeks before the ceremony, John was in North Shore Private Hospital undergoing heart by-pass and heart valve surgery. For a while we did not think that he was going to make the ceremony but the day before, he was discharged from hospital.

Although only out of hospital one day, John attended the Awards presentation which was held at NSW Parliament House in the presence of the then Premier of NSW Hon. Bob Carr, Minister for Sport and Recreation Hon. Gabrielle Harrison and the Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation Brad Hazard. Master of Ceremonies was Ken Sutcliffe.

John accepted his award with great dignity and humility, especially as he only came out of hospital the day before. When he met with the Minister afterwards, she said that it was the only time since entering Parliament that she was speechless with someone owing to John's lifetime dedication to sport and his attendance at the awards after what he has been through those last few weeks.



Association Life Members at function during the 1993 season.

Back Row (L to R): John Boyle, Colin Jones, Ron Carey, Bert Cowley, John Montgomery,
Brian Barry, Geoff McManus, John Byrne and Brian Minnett.

Front Row (L to R): Bill Lalor, Unknown, Ray Smyth and John Quinn.

To those of us who knew John, we will miss him greatly but take comfort that wisdom he bestowed on us and the friendship he gave us will remain with us always.

To Mary, Philip and family, we extend our deepest sympathies on your loss and thank you for sharing your husband and father with us.

Michael Quailey
Chairman

Memories of John Quinn

From Colin Jones (on hearing of John's passing)

"Strangely enough, today I was required to referee a game at work shortly after receiving the sad news. It gave me extra focus for a task which I normally would not have to give a second thought to. The players wanted to know why I was wearing a black arm-band...and I found it difficult to express myself without losing some composure after the game. All I could say was that I have lost a dear friend."

From John Byrne

"A JQ moment that is probably insignificant to all and sundry but I remember it as if it was yesterday. In the mid 60's (I think it was 64) having received my junior referees' badge, my first appointment was to run the line at Waverton Park. Mr. Quinn was the referee. He had to draw the attention of the young (13) John Byrne, proudly decked out in his brand new gear, that he did not need the foam padding that came in his brand new, white shorts."

From John Kay and Daniel Ruhan (from a letter to the Quinn Family)

"My name is John Kay; I am a referee with North Sydney Referring Association (NSRA). Nine years ago myself and Daniel Ruhan joined the NSRA, and it was nine years ago that Mr. Q or John took us under his wing and taught us the finer details of becoming a referee and as I remember him saying, there is a big difference between being a referee and a being a good referee. If I ever had a problem I could always rely on Mr. Q to help me out. On behalf of Daniel and myself I would like to pass on our condolences to your whole family. A truly great man has passed away and he will never be forgotten by many people. Again I am very sorry for your loss and I wish happiness on your entire family through these tough times."

From Brian Daveron

"There was a Norths Referees' executive meeting at JQ's place in approx 1974 after our Smoko and when it came to social matters, John asked members how they thought the Smoko went. As Assistant Secretary I commented that a number of the members did not think the drummer performed well (I did not know at that time that John played the drums). John became slightly upset at my comments and said that he thought the drummer performed very well and that the members who complained knew very little of being a drummer. After the meeting Mary Quinn proved a good supper and there was no mention of the drummer again."

From ANTHONY Smith

I was refereeing an Under 8 match at Warrina St very early on in my career. At the end of the game, Mr. Quinn comes over to me (I was scared of him) and said "Good game Nathan.... lots of work to do, but at least your boots are shiny!"

From Stan Watson

"John Quinn gave me the nickname of "The Sarge" or "The Sergeant". That nickname was given to me from the day that I was introduced to John Quinn. Whenever I rang John's house to speak to him and identified myself as Stan Watson, John would not know who it was and would repeat a few times "Who is it?" until I said "It's the Sarge". John Quinn may have called former and current players by their playing position number but he certainly gave the referees a name and called them by that name."

From Geoff McManus

"Just a memory of John at one of our ladies nights at Mowbray Gardens referring to the quality of the ladies "frocking" such a quaint term I haven't ever heard it said since."

From Martin Ryan

"Like so many, I have a vivid recollection of John Quinn giving my team a short lecture on the rules, after I played a game at Waverton Park in 1971. It's strange I would remember such a thing - I can attribute it only to John Quinn's most distinctive, gravelly voice.

My next recollection was of my first ever training session with the Referees Association. It was a hot February evening in 1979. As I arrived, I observed a dozen or so referees exercising in a circle, with the same gravelly voice orchestrating proceedings from a director's chair in the centre. Yes, it was him again.

I soon learned that nothing happened in Junior League in North Sydney that John Quinn did not know about, very little happened in which he was not involved, and much of the remainder was inspired or lead by John himself.

Over the next three decades I received advice and direction from John that helped me to be a better referee. Much of the advice was quite prescriptive and freely bestowed, often prefaced with a remark like "do you know what your problem is?" This was another distinctive part of John's personal style.

I am a much better person for the privilege of having known John Quinn. By knowing John I came to experience what wholehearted devotion looks like, and feels like. John constantly showed wholehearted devotion to the Rugby League community of North Sydney. May he rest in peace."