

ALLAN CRAWFORD KENDALL 1928 - 2013



A celebration of Allan's life was held at 11.30am on Friday 20 December at Macquarie Park, in Sydney.

Early life

Allan was born in Orange, NSW in 1928. Tennis was in the family. Allan was proud to be the nephew of the famous Australian tennis player and 1933 Wimbledon champion, Jack Crawford, who was his mother's brother.

In 1939 Allan's father built grass tennis courts in Albury, NSW, and ran a club where many future champions played, including Margaret Smith (later Court) and Rex Hartwig (Allan's very successful doubles partner). Kendall and Hartwig were the first country pair to win the national junior doubles title, and eventually won 38 doubles titles together.

Allan was coached by his father, although he used to declare that he was "uncoachable" with his unusual slices and chops on both forehand and backhand.

His father was also a musician, performing in cinema orchestras, and obviously passed on some musical genes to his son.

When he was 15, during the Second World War, Allan came to Sydney to attend The Scots' College, and lived in his Uncle Jack Crawford's home in Bondi. In tennis, Allan won the 1946 NSW Schoolboy's Singles Championship. In 1947 he had a magnificent final year in the juniors, winning the Australian, NSW and Victorian junior doubles titles with Rex Hartwig.

A new chapter in Allan's life began when he went to the University of Sydney. Allan loved personalities, little expecting that he would himself become one in the course of time, but even then, he moved among the university elite with grace and wit. He had emerged from his earlier, not so happy, university experience as a Medical student, to being what he was naturally, a student of the Humanities. Literature and History were his chosen favourites.

Allan joined the Sydney Dramatic Society (SUDS) in 1947, and later appeared in a production of *Amphytrion 38* with the lovely Trish Connolly, today an established figure on the American stage. Theatre gradually became the centre of his life, perhaps even overtaking his dedication to sport. One of his greatest attributes was his ability to persuade, so those of his friends who were not already addicted were quickly recruited, if not as actors, as stage crew or dress makers or administrators.

Allan was a triple blue, receiving the award for Lawn Tennis for the years 1948, 1949, 1950 and 1951, and for both Squash and Table Tennis in 1951. He captained the Sydney University tennis team which won the Inter-varsity at Brisbane in 1949. David Crane and John Cheadle were also members of that team. He was in the Sydney team which won the Inter-varsity in Hobart in 1950. He won the Sydney University Singles Championship eight times.

The table tennis team won the Inter-varsity in Melbourne, defeating Adelaide, the previous champions, by eleven rubbers to nil in the final. After the match Allan Kendall collected his cups and flew off to Adelaide to perform in "Pygmalion" before flying to Western Australia to represent New South Wales at squash.

Allan has endowed scholarships bearing his name for sport and drama at Sydney University and his old college, St Andrew's.

White City

Allan had a long association with tennis at White City, winning the singles championship in 1957, the doubles three times with his uncle Jack Crawford, and the mixed doubles four times with Norma Marsh. He played regularly there until 2009, when he was in his eighties.

International Tennis

Before tennis became fully professional, Allan travelled the international circuit. He has been quoted as saying:

I lived on tennis for eight years in Europe ... You were given expenses for playing, in varying amounts depending on how good you were. The amateur rules at that time allowed amateurs to get expenses – they were sometimes called ‘shamateurs’.

It was a difficult decision to give it up because life on the international circuit was delightful. I was constantly travelling. Many places that feature tennis tournaments are the great resorts of Europe. I played at Monte Carlo, St. Moritz and Baden Baden and other resorts in addition to the great national titles. In fact I played in all the countries of Europe except Finland.

He made a living in Europe through his tennis ability, appearing at Wimbledon and in the French and German championships.

The Monte Carlo Revue

Allan combined his interests in tennis and theatre by directing a revue at Monte Carlo for some years, in connection with the tennis championships. Australian tennis players who appeared included Bob Carmichael, Bob Howe, John Newcombe, and Fred Stolle.

Monte Carlo was the first tournament of the European season. Allan wrote sketches, and produced and acted in the cabaret. In this he drew on his theatrical experience at university and his time as a repertory actor in England. The Monte Carlo show became more famous than the tournament, and was filmed by British, Italian and German TV.

The ABC

In 1965 Allan retired from the tennis circuit for a career in broadcasting. He worked for the ABC's Education Department and in 1966 became the first producer of *Play School*, still the longest running Australian TV children's show. Allan was associated with it for 20 years. In 2006, largely because of the long-time impact of *Play School*, the *Bulletin* magazine chose him as one of the 100 most influential Australians.

Noni Hazlehurst once said, "Allan Kendall and Henrietta Clark knew exactly what they were doing." But when I started with *Play School* I had absolutely no idea what I was doing - that I ever came to do so was entirely Allan's doing.

A combination of circumstances gave Allan the core of certainty that infused his work on *Play School*. One was his study of Psychology during his record number of years at Sydney University. Another was his visit in 1964 to the BBC where he imbibed the wisdom of producers in its children's department, returning to the ABC with the format of *Play School*. He initially saw it as a vehicle for his own theatrical enthusiasms, but as he viewed completed programs with pre-school children he became intrigued by the way in which they responded actively to the comparatively new medium of television.

Senior Tennis

In later years, when he was in his 50s, Allan was a prominent player in international veterans' tennis, partnering Norma Marsh and Alan Bailey. In 1983 he had an extended tour of Europe and the United States, playing the veterans' circuits. He won 36 national titles in a dozen different countries. In 1986 he was ranked No. 2 in the world in the veterans' 55-year group and was the Australian national champion in that age group. In 1995 he was ranked No.5 in the ITF Veterans Rankings for Men's 65.



His Australian Representative Blazer pocket 1987 - 1996

His long-term tennis doubles partner, Alan Bailey sent the following message:

Allan and I have had a close tie through tennis since our junior days. In those days he would stay on the court all day, never tired, and was unbeatable using his slice, lob and dropshots.

During a 1959–60 overseas tour, Allan helped to organise a tennis circuit that included Wimbledon. Also we played together very successfully throughout Europe.

Since 1970 until about ten years ago we had many doubles wins in senior events both overseas and here in Australia. We were close tennis pals and shared our sporting lives with enduring friendship. Mave and my memories of Allan include sitting at an outside café after a tennis match where Allan would light up his first cigarette of about six over one cup of coffee! This was the usual routine until he had emergency surgery for bowel cancer and there were no cigarettes after that.

Allan had a remarkable memory for all his tennis matches played over more than 50 years. He could recall the place, whether overseas or at home, whom he played and he even remembered the score. He could entertain you for many hours recalling the plays and skits he produced after the tournaments in Monte Carlo where he had the players dress up and take part.

Quoting Allan Kendall himself:

“After I joined the ABC I continued going to Monte Carlo on rec. leave, which gave me 13 consecutive years there and after five years, when you can take a year’s leave without pay, I played in many of the tournaments of previous years. That was my farewell to international tennis.”

Allan continued to play veteran’s tennis in Australia, and won the Australian Veterans’ Singles Championships three times in his age group, as well as eight doubles titles and two mixed doubles. Allan was an outstanding lawn tennis player and toured the world playing tennis at the elite level. A number of events, cups and scholarships have all been named in Allan’s honour, and rightly so. He is a servant of the game and someone Tennis NSW is very proud of. Allan donated a number of special items to the Australian Tennis Museum over the years, many from his uncle Jack Crawford. For this we are very grateful. Ken Rosewall saw him play with Rex Hartwig at many hardcourt events in Rockdale and in the Badge competition at The White City Club, where Allan was a member for many years. We know Allan had a long history in tennis and it was a huge part of his life.

He will always be remembered in NSW tennis circles.

In 1995 Allan became an author, when ABC Books published his book, *Australia’s Wimbledon Champions*, with chapters on the 13 Australian Wimbledon champions up to that date, including of course a long chapter on his uncle Jack Crawford, the 1933 champion. The book is now an essential reference book for historians of tennis, and he continued to earn money from it throughout his life.

Quoting from a June 1995 ACT newsletter “Vetset” article, ‘a nephew of the great Jack Crawford, Allan has been a stalwart of the Veteran’s movement from the early years and a prolific winner of national titles at home and abroad. Currently he is ranked number four in the world in the 65+ category.’ At that time Allan was releasing his book on “Australia’s Wimbledon Champions”.

Thanks, and with acknowledgement to Alan Walker, Henrietta Clark, Ruth Wilson, Jackson Hills, Ross Farr Jones, John Greenup and his great tennis mate Alan Bailey.

Robyn Castle, December 2013.