

## Robert Crawford, In Memoriam

Paul Baakman



**From 1984 to 1987 I had the privilege** of working alongside Robert Crawford at Queen Mary Hospital. One of my first experiences there was sitting with my boss in his sauna, discussing the philosophy of treatment. This was followed by chocolate milk at midnight.

Robert showed himself to be an inspirational leader who valued everyone's point of view in staff meetings before making a decision. Instead of a formulaic standardised approach, Robert promoted a deep involvement with patients. Psychodrama was one route to this therapeutic intimacy. As a young therapist I was amazed and delighted to learn that it can be OK to laugh or cry with the people we work with, to be personally present, and to enjoy our patients.

Robert made it possible for psychodrama to become the main treatment modality at the hospital. Psychodrama was used every day in small group sessions and three times a week in a large group. Nurses, staff, local community members, and even a farmer joined in. Robert also enabled residential psychodrama training workshops to be held at the hospital. Patients and community members were invited for a morning or a day.

To this day my work as a psychotherapist is informed by what I learned and experienced in Robert's therapeutic community and I am eternally grateful for this.

In 2019 Robert was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to mental health and addiction services. Here is an excerpt:

*Dr Robert Crawford was the Superintendent of the Queen Mary Hospital in Hanmer Springs, a Residential Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre, from 1976 to 1991.*

*Dr Crawford brought an innovative and bold approach to treating people with addictions, introducing ground-breaking educational, physical and psychotherapeutic models for recovery, such as Psychodrama. Under his leadership, Queen Mary Hospital became a centre of excellence for expanding the treatment modalities for families affected by addiction, and the training of health professionals and others working nationally in treatment and rehabilitation. He established a successful Kaupapa Māori/Taha Māori programme, Te Aroha o to Hau Angiangi, which provided a model of cultural healing. The programme ran from 1990 to 2003 and influenced and encouraged the development of Māori treatment services in New Zealand. He also authored a number of publications and served in various national governance and advisory roles, including on the treatment committee of the Alcoholic Liquor*

*Advisory Council, the Medical Society on Alcoholism, and the Doctors Health Advisory Service. In 1999 he was appointed Director of the Christchurch Institute for Training in Psychodrama. In 2018 Dr Crawford was awarded Distinguished Membership of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association.*

Robert was buried in Hanmer Springs on the 13th of August. Messages from CITP, AANZPA and NZAP were conveyed to the family. At the funeral, ex-patients, staff members and other medical colleagues spoke with love and appreciation of the transformative experiences during their time at Queen Mary Hospital. The power of the Psychodrama method within the treatment programme was mentioned a number of times. One ex-patient played guitar and sang a moving rendition of the Serenity Prayer.

Robert was heartbroken when the hospital was closed. He was an inspirational activist who never tired of speaking up for the underdog. In relation to our culture around alcohol and our collective denial of the huge harm this causes, he was a maverick ('a person who shows independence of thought and action, especially by refusing to adhere to the policies of a group to which he or she belongs'). He saw no difference between knighted booze-barons and other drug-dealers. By being outspoken he challenged the lobby that keeps alcohol in place as 'the number one damaging drug' which keeps creating large numbers of casualties. By speaking up he ruffled many

feathers. I hope we may collectively continue with the 'ruffling of feathers' and carry the spirit of Robert's work into the future.