

A life dedicated to others

To know something of the late Philip Emlyn Thomas is to know what his life symbolised – that of making a difference to the lives of others.

Em's family migrated to Australia from a small Welsh mining village when he was just 10 years old. He loved his new home by the shores of Lake Macquarie and became a passionate sailor. After attending Newcastle Boy's High School, he studied organic chemistry at Newcastle University College at Tighes Hill. There, his interest was aroused in the very new technique of spectroscopy – an interest that led to a very fulfilling career which meant a great deal of travel to many parts of the world.



But his real commitment was to the people in his life, his home, his friends and his work.

Throughout his successful career, Philip's strength was his unique leadership skills, achieved mainly through his natural ability to teach and mentor others. In 1974 Philip was made the Managing Director of Techtron Pty.Ltd, (later to become Varian O.S.I.) - a scientific instrument company which specialises in spectroscopy. He was responsible for its worldwide operations. Jennie Thomas, his wife, explained that even as the company expanded, Philip's relationship with his staff remained the same.

“No matter how many employees, each and every one of them was important to Em, they were his ‘family’.” Such was Philip's commitment to his employees that he set up a medical centre at the factory with full time nurses, a visiting doctor and safety development officers.

In 1996, Em was forced to take early retirement for health reasons. He sorely missed his ‘family’ and judging by the hundreds of messages of thanks, they missed him too. Em chose to return to his beloved Lake Macquarie. He died in 2001, and in memory of his life's interests and his commitment to helping others, Jennie has endowed scholarships in Health, Music and Environmental Studies at the University of Newcastle. Her aim is to help young people follow their dreams and make the most of their talents as they take over the ‘baton of life’ from those who have gone before.