

Rafe Kowron remembered

LONG-TERM Oatley resident Rafael 'Rafe' Kowron passed away at age 91 on April 11.

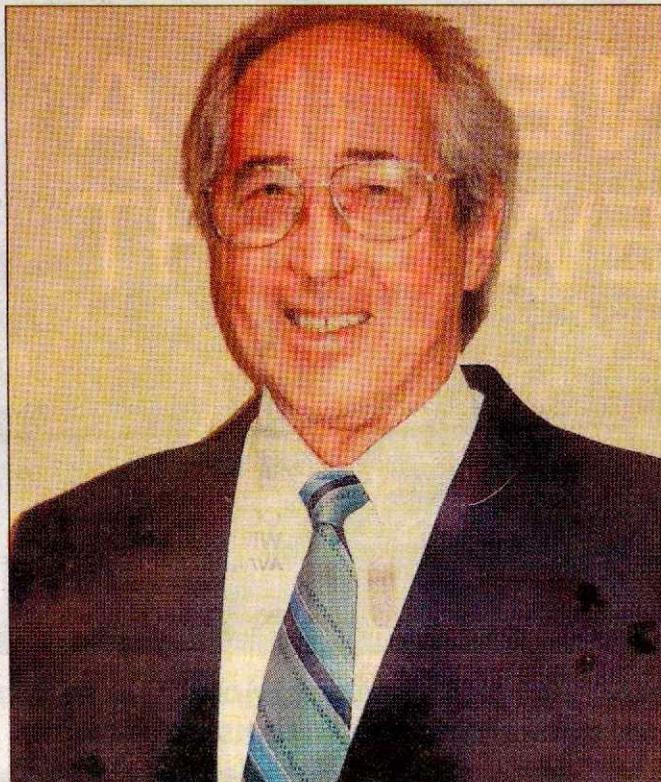
"Rafe's parents, Polish born Stefan Skowronski, a civil engineer, and his Chinese born wife Jessie, met in Shanghai where Stefan had gone, to be free of then political disturbances in Europe," said Oatley resident Cliff Crane.

"From there the couple then moved, about 1926, firstly to Java for a short period, then on to New Zealand, where they changed their surname to Kowron, before finally arriving in Australia in 1929.

"The Kowrons lived for a while at Bondi, when Rafe, first of their three children, was born.

"By 1934 when Rafe was aged three or four, he had moved with his parents into a natural cave on a large and high rock outcrop block the Kowrons had bought in Headland Road, North Curl Curl.

"Stefan had made the cave liveable to Council requirements while he and Jessie, excavated, blasted and



Rafe Kowron was a founding member of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Society, and was involved with Oatley Heritage Group and Oatley RSL and Community Club.

hewed the rock to progressively, over some 14 years, build a unique stone home incorporating the cave.

"His parents sent Rafe first to a Catholic School but after bullying there because of

his mixed-race appearance he was moved into a public school and ultimately had excellent academic results.

"Rafe as a youngster thought he would like to be a chef or a magician and in his



LEGACY: Rafael 'Rafe' Kowron. His legacy includes many involvements with his wife Moyia in the life of the Oatley community.

early apprenticeship years was employed at a Redfern Picture Theatre.

"Rafe served a five-year apprenticeship in electrical trades with Stromberg-Carlson and completed a Technical College course in electrical trades, later working with Astor Radio Service gaining experience in radar, shipping communications, two way radio, and police communication networks, then television from 1956.

"In the late 1950s Rafe commenced his own repair and service business at Penshurst, retiring at age 68 in 1998.

"Rafe and Moyia came to live in Oatley about 1955.

They will be forever remembered as the couple whose agitation to stop vandalism and destruction of the nearby bushland when they moved to Oatley, led to formation of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society (OFF).

"They were two of the six-person steering committee established in 1955 to lay the basic framework of the Society and to plan future activities.

"The Kowrons' contribution to OFF was prominently acknowledged by fellow long-time OFF member Alan Fairley's 2005 'Being Green' -history of the first 50 years of OFF. In 1972 Rafe and Moyia were made Life Members

of OFF.

"The Kowrons were active members of Oatley Heritage Group with Rafe serving 10 years as Vice President and also sharing the Presidency for a short time.

"The Kowron family - parents and four children - have also been involved with the Oatley Amateur Swimming Club for decades. Rafe continued swimming regularly each Sunday up until only a couple of weeks before his death, being prevented by the severe weather conditions.

"From 2001 to 2007 Rafe served as a board member of the Oatley RSL and Community Club. For a number of years he ran the Oatley RSL Toastmasters, and also was involved in the operations of the RSL Youth Club. He was made a life member of the RSL and Community Club.

"Blessed with a fine singing voice, Rafe sang in St. Joseph's (Oatley) Church Choir, and was one time President of the (former) Hurstville Musical Society.

"Rafe will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by many."