

Keith C Chandler 1938 to 2013

Prepared by Gary Blake

Keith was born in Thames to a family of five brothers and sisters who later settled on a farm near Matamata. It was a caring family and careful use had to be made of life's essentials. One brother told me he used candlelight to study for school certificate. His mother was a very able home manager and his father worked on the farm. Keith was hooked on forestry at an early age while his siblings opted for teaching, engineering, accountancy and farming.

Rugby, forestry and family dominated Keith's life but he managed to find time for his history and travel interests. His wife Catherine accompanied him to studies in Canberra where son Peter was born. The next posting was Tapanui where Mark was born, and then came John at Tuatapere. Later, when the family moved to Palmerston North courtesy of the NZ Forest Service, Anna was born.

While attending Matamata College in the 1950s, Keith and mates spent their holidays pruning trees. At 18 he secured a cadetship with the NZ Forest Service in Auckland where he completed a BSc degree in 1961 and a diploma of forestry from Canberra in 1963. He was bonded to the NZ Forest Service for five years and this time was spent at Tapanui from 1963 to 1964, and Tuatapere from 1964 to 1967. Here he played representative rugby for Western Southland and worked with Geoff Chavasse on Southland beech forest. In 1968 the Chandler family moved again, this time to Palmerston North where the bracken fern in the western hill country was almost big enough to be logged.

Another significant date was 1969. Two Chandler families and four other families purchased 61 hectares of hill land east of Waikanae, and with the help of the Forestry Encouragement Grant Scheme and Keith, planted pine, Douglas fir and poplar in our spare time. The wives, who were shareholders, kept an eye on the children. Kargan Forests Ltd operated without a hiccup for 37 years. We produced one crop of trees and sold the forest halfway through the second rotation. Keith, true to form, declared it an excellent hobby. It certainly kept us off the streets and sports fields.

From Palmerston North, Keith was posted to Kaingaroa forest but the large cold house did not find favour with the family and they moved into a new house at Linmore, Rotorua in 1971. Keith commuted to

Kaingaroa. At about this time, as a forest hydrologist, I often met up with the Chandler family. Bob Swanson from Canada and I were researching sap-flow measuring techniques on northern hemisphere conifer species in the Whakarewarewa forest park. In 1976 Keith joined PF Olsen and Co. The motivation to move from NZ Forest Service was the offer of a conservancy based in Hari Hari. This did not impress the family who felt there was more to life than moving every few years.

A close colleague said Keith was too nice to be a consultant. But he proved that nice guys can be consultants. In 1980, he left Olsens and formed Chandler, Fraser, Larsen Registered Forestry Consultants, later called Chandler Fraser Keating. The firm worked locally and internationally. Working for the World and Asian Development Banks, Keith's consultations took him to Equatorial Guinea, Asia, the Pacific and Chile. He was on the board of the Forestry Corporation of NZ and he carried out asset management work for groups such as Maori, Fletchers and other corporates.

In 1984 a second Rotorua house was on the books. Keith filled a rail wagon with kauri beams from the demolition of the Gear Meat Co at Petone and despatched it to Rotorua. The kauri was processed for the construction of their Wylie Street kauri house many saw-blades later.

In 1997 Keith's health problems led him to leave Chandler Fraser Keating and move to Auckland. He and Catherine formed Renewable Resources Management Ltd, which joined with the Boston company Grantham, Mayo and Ootolue to form GMO Sustainable Resource Management. By 2005 even this work became too much as his health deteriorated.

Despite his ups and downs Keith was always cheerful and full of good ideas. He had an understanding of how we humans tick and was willing to help when needed. He will be missed by Catherine, children Peter, Mark, John and Anna, and the 14 grand-children, but he will also be remembered for his loving and caring contribution to this large and vibrant family.

Their care over the past years has been highly commendable. For those of us who have been privileged to associate with him over the past 45 years it was his introduction to forestry which has played a major part in all our lives.

