

FAREWELL TO KEITH JAMES CATHRO **18 October 1932 - 31 August 2008**

Contributed by Jenny Restarick with substantial input from Pam Hoobin and Nikki Scarlett

Keith was born in Rose Bay, South Australia, to Frank and Ethalinda, the youngest of 4 children in the family.

He won a medallion as Dux of the Technical Course at Adelaide Technical High School in 1948 before gaining his degree at the University of Adelaide. His thesis, entitled "Heat transfer in the climbing-film evaporator" was submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Dept. of Mining, Metallurgical and Chemical Engineering, University of Adelaide, 1956.

During his university life, Keith gained work experience at several companies including some months spent in a refinery near Zeehan in Tasmania. He really enjoyed this experience and kept in contact for several years with one of the men he worked with there.

In one of those 6 degrees of separation accidents, he studied under another CSIRO scientist and CSIR Ski Club member, Bill Denholm, who in later years was a work colleague at CSIRO's Division of Mineral Chemistry.

Moving to Victoria in 1956, Keith started his CSIRO working life at Fishermens Bend, on a 12-month appointment with the Division of Industrial Chemistry, (later renamed Mineral Chemistry and then CSIRO Minerals) as the result of an Atomic Energy Commission placement. This appointment became permanent and he stayed until his retirement in 1996, from the Williamstown Road site. His first publication appeared in 1957 and the last in 2001, a grand total of 70 scientific papers.

During those years Keith's outstanding expertise in electrochemistry was acknowledged both in Australia and overseas and he was also instrumental in the development and commercialization of the Australian Magnesium Process for which the team were awarded a CSIRO Medal for the year 2000.

Other scientific projects throughout his years with CSIRO were work on solar collectors; high intensity zinc electro winning; a method for making thermally tempered glass ; Silica Low-Reflection Coatings for Collector Covers; hydrometallurgy of copper; cyanidation of gold; the CRASO Project; and a feasibility study of electro winning of lead. When the Division initiated its Energy Storage experiments, Keith was at the forefront of work on lead acid, and zinc bromine batteries as well as solar energy research.

Keith was a retiring character who was also regarded as a mildly eccentric genius and was renowned for the excessive hours he spent at work. He didn't socialise with work colleagues except for his membership of the CSIR Ski Club which he joined in the early 1970s, and became Work Party Coordinator from 1976-1977. He remained a member until his resignation on 17th April 2002. He was a keen cross-country skier and on visits to the snow when he didn't ski, he would participate in working bees to maintain or enhance one of the various lodges operated by the Club.

He liked to keep his work and social interests quite separate, but would often be found sitting in a back corner of work functions such as the Xmas parties or farewells for colleagues (frequently organized by the Mickey Rat(tie_ Club = MRC). He liked to be part of the "frivolities" even if he did not participate! He continued to come to the Friday lunch sessions held at the Monash Uni restaurant called "Wellingtons" after his retirement (the Wellies Lunch). Even when he could no longer drive, Ian Grey would bring him in. These sessions were a hangover from the Port Melbourne days where a pub lunch on Friday was a sacred thing!

He was always first to line-up on his bicycle (either the standard bike or his small fold-up one) to participate in the annual "Tour de Port Melbourne" wearing his yellow T-shirt with this printed across the front. Even in Oak Towers he liked to proudly wear this particular T-shirt.

For all of his retiring ways, Keith was very active in hobbies outside his work, being a keen and somewhat successful member of the Victorian Amateur Pistol Shooting Association from as early as 1958. He was actively involved with the building of the Pistol Shooting facility in Altona, part of the 1959 Victorian Team in the 2nd Nationals in the Centre Fire category and had many trophies and medals in his Kerferd Road home.

His great companions were his cats - his favourite was probably a Russian blue named Midget, followed by moggies Rastus, Mindy and Annie. Colleagues always used to get a cat update at the Friday Wellies lunch.

Although Keith lived in some of Melbourne's top addresses - Fairbairn Avenue in Toorak, and Kerferd Road in Albert Park, he was renowned for travelling overseas on conference visits etc and, upon arrival home, having 2 or more pay packets sitting waiting for him - this was in the days of actual monies in pay envelopes being handed to staff - nobody but Keith could have survived without collecting their wages on the due day!

In admiration of his brother Gordon, who served with the RAAF as part of the coastal watch in northern Australia, Keith gained his private unrestricted pilot's licence and was part owner of a Piper Tripacer plane. His many trips included SA, NSW, vast tracts of Victoria and at least one long trip with a couple of friends from the pistol shooting association. The CSIR Ski Club was very happy to receive, from Keith, some wonderful aerial photographs of Mt Hotham, clearly showing our lodge, The Drift Chalet, and how those amazing front windows look out on the panorama of Mary Slide and the Orchard ski slopes.

Keith subscribed to the Melbourne Film Festival and attended many sessions each year right up until his sight and mobility prevented him. He was still attending in 2005, and he would make a 3 or 4 line summary / critique / review of each film he viewed. This was just for his own interest as he was a prolific keeper of notes on everything!

In the last few years of his life, he became a volunteer of the Friends of the ABC, attending the South Melbourne office one day a week to help send out membership subscriptions and maintain mailing lists. Until about 3 years ago he also delivered large-print books to residents on behalf of the Port Philip Library service. He loved

electronics and continued to build "gadgets" at home, and wanted his soldering iron and multi-meter brought into Oak Towers (but NO!)

He loved using his computer for emails and Internet searches, Internet banking, on-line supermarket shopping and making his famous lists.

Since February 2008 Keith had made his home at "Oak Towers", a residential aged care facility in Oakleigh where he enjoyed the various activities (especially the Quiz session and the Men's afternoon) and in his own quiet way, the company of the fellow residents. He even had his computer set-up at Oak Towers but much to his chagrin, there was no Internet access there. However, he had become increasingly frail due to the escalation of the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease and glaucoma, and in November 2007 he was treated for a melanoma above his elbow. After a fall at Oak Towers, Keith was transferred to Epworth Freemason's Hospital for a short stay but luckily was sent home on 29 August.

Keith passed away in his 75th year and was remembered at a memorial service in Blair Chapel, Springvale. He is survived by his brother Gordon to whom we convey our sympathy and condolences.