

When 1964 Teretonga Champion and old friend, Colin Bunce drove Keith Douglas around Teretonga Park in J Fraser and Sons hearse, it was probably the fastest Keith had ever been around his much loved circuit and certainly fastest the Fraser hearse has ever gone. This last lap brought to a close 76 years of a life devoted to a myriad of interests but none more dear to him than Invercargill's iconic department store, the Southland Sports Car Club and matters motoring. Keith's working life on leaving school, began with H & J Smith Ltd. 50 years later he retired as a Director of the company after working his way through most departments. "Mr Douglas" as he was known throughout the store sat in a tiny cubicle halfway up the stairs surrounded by so much paper it was difficult to see the desk, let alone any sort of order.

During his retirement he wrote the history of the company to celebrate 100 years in business. His dedication to the one employer is rare in today's world.

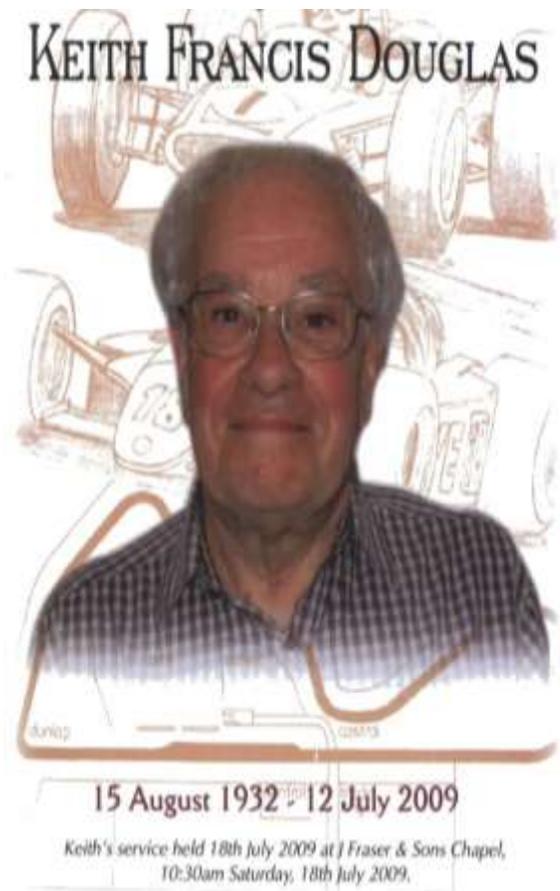
His other lifelong commitment was to the Southland Sports Car Club and Teretonga Park motor racing circuit. Keith Douglas has been synonymous with New Zealand's oldest permanent motor racing facility for so long, his recent passing leaves a legacy of dedication to the administration of Southland's popular race track which will be almost impossible to replace. He would be one of the longest serving administrators in any Southland sporting organization.

Joining the Southland Sports Car Club in 1958 Keith competed briefly in speed events but quickly realized his interest lay in running the meetings rather than competing in them. During the next 50 years he rose to the top positions within the club, becoming Club President from 1963 to 1966, International Race Committee Chairman 1979, Teretonga Race Committee Chairman from 1964 to 2007, and more recently, race secretary.

His vast knowledge and canny southern approach was recognized nationally as he was elected by all NZ member clubs to the position of Executive member of Motorsport New Zealand in 1969/73 then again in 1985. He became the Vice-President of the national body in 1973 till 1983 then again in 1986/88.

Keith was awarded the Motorsport New Zealand Award of Merit in 1983 in recognition of his services to motorsport and in 2002 was made a Member d'Honneur, an award recognizing those who have given or are continuing to give services above and beyond that expected.

During those years, Keith has dealt with people from all walks of life from young trainee staff members to the greatest of Formula One World Champions. His guidance was firm, in many cases unequivocal, but always fair. He has seen the difficulties of constructing a race track in the wastes of Sandy Point, and enjoyed the growth of International motor racing during the great years of the 1960's Tasman Series which attracted all the top drivers from the Formula One world including nine



World Champions. In latter years the International glamour has faded but has been replaced by an even more popular Club and National racing scene.

His other interests included model railways, cooking and writing. He first edited the Southland Sports Car Club "Bulletin" for many years, then in 1982 co-wrote the first of three history books on Teretonga Park, called "Teretonga 25".

Like all good New Zealand motorists, Keith joined the Automobile Association 57 years ago and after joining the District Council in the 1970's he became District Chairman from 1986 to 1989. He was proactive in the merger of 15 AA's around New Zealand, was involved with the Regional Land Transport Committee, the Milford Road Congestion Group, the stock effluent working group and various State Highway strategies. Keith was the resident expert on ACC levies for the motor vehicle account and reviewed many local authority City and District roading plans.

He was heavily involved on the Centennial Organising Committee for the AA and was about to undertake the huge task of researching the documents recording the history of the AA in Southland.

The Model Engineers Club also benefited from Keith's enthusiasm for things mechanical. It gave him great pleasure to see the enjoyment on children's faces when the Club held their open days at Surrey Park.

Keith realized in the latter years it was time to hand over to a younger breed of administrator but his counsel was still respected to this day.

The numbers of people and cars which formed a guard of honour along the entrance to Teretonga Park and lined the fence to watch as Keith was driven enthusiastically around the circuit by one of his oldest friends is testament to the respect he was held in by the New Zealand motorsport fraternity.

Keith Douglas is survived by his wife June and stepson, Barry Smith.

Donald McDonald
August 2009