

Devoted islander with larrikin touch

William Edwin (Ted) Chapman

Shearer, farmer, bush lawyer, politician, fisherman

Born: December 16, 1933; Kangaroo Island

Died: July 25, 2005; Adelaide

KANGAROO Island was home to the son of Ross and Gladys Chapman. And except for a short period at Adelaide's Sturt Street school during World War II, Kangaroo Island was where Ted Chapman was educated. He grew up with craypots and their spoils, and his childhood dream was to build a bridge to the mainland (so his Gran Dayman of Port Adelaide could visit at any time).

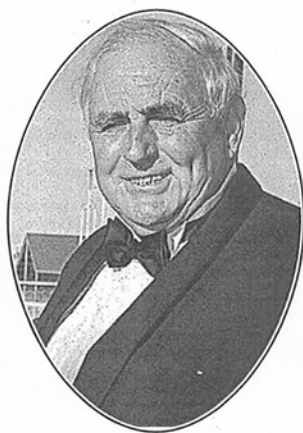
At 16, he bought a scrub block known as Gum Valley at Western River on the island. He cleared and fenced it, lived in a hut and cut and sold yakka gum. He worked as a fencer and, having learned to shear, he worked the sheds across the Mid North. He was five times champion shearer at the Parndana Show.

Ted married Patricia Harvey from Stonyfell in 1955. He built her a four-room shed with running cold water. Over the next 15 years, they built a shearing contracting business and livestock and wool and petrol cartage - and had five children (the first of whom, Billy, died at six).

Ted had them all christened on the one day, a bit like a sheep dip. He finally built them a real house.

He served on the Kangaroo Island Council, the hospital board and the Parndana Lodge while employing up to 50 roustabouts, wool-pressers, classers and shearers at Gum Valley and Parndana.

Garnie Wilson, the first Aboriginal wool classer in Australia and later chairman of the Aboriginal Lands Trust, worked for Ted



for more than 10 years and they became great mates.

Many young men, such as boat builder Rob Ayliffe, graduated from the Ted Chapman School of Hard Work.

Ted loved a bet and enjoyed horse racing, but his passion was fishing.

He was not one for rules or regulations, including net licences. One night, at Snellings Beach after a successful fish, he was approached by a man with a torch.

Ted called out: "Who's that?"

The reply was: "I am a fishing inspector."

Ted said: "Thank goodness for that. I thought you were the owner of this net."

Ted could sit for hours in his small dinghy on the swelling seas beneath the cliffs of Gum Valley. No oars. No life jackets. A small outboard motor that would never seem to

start. Hauling in the King George whiting with a smile of triumph on his face.

In 1972, Ted married Coralie Harris, who was to produce two more daughters.

The following year, Ted went to Adelaide to sort a few things out as member for Alexandra, the first islander to be elected to Parliament. He was state minister for agriculture and fisheries between 1979 and 1982 and he became a key figure in the Liberal Party.

After his retirement from Parliament in 1992, he continued to champion the transfer of dry-land farming technology to Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. He served on boards and committees such as Scale Fishery, St Vincent Gulf Prawn, SA Dental Service and the Repatriation Hospital.

He insisted on books balancing. And in a special meeting of one board, held to discuss future planning, he was asked to write down where he would like to be in 10 years' time.

He wrote: "In the arms of a beautiful blonde." When one of his daughters said he wasn't taking this exercise seriously, he responded: "You might think you know everything but, let me tell you, the board liked my idea the best."

Ted Chapman survived a tractor accident in the 1954 floods at Oakbank, a back injury building the Stokes Bay tennis court in the 1960s, being rammed by a bull in the 1970s, breaking nearly every bone in his body in a 1980s car smash and having heart attacks in the 1990s; but his health failed during the last two years.

He is survived by his children, Vickie, Jim, Della, Trish, Sasha and Amber, and eight grandchildren.

Vickie Chapman