

Engaging communicator will be missed

GEORGE & BETTY LIVED IN CASTLETON FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS

BRIGHTON — A sailor, golfer, writer, raconteur and engaging communicator, popular *Northumberland Today* columnist George Roland Chandler touched many lives before passing away quietly last week in his 84th year.

In fact, his daughter Leslie Chandler recalled, his friends knew he was ill simply from the sudden cessation of e-mails from his address.

"He spent years in advertising. It gave him, I think, the confidence and experience to speak his mind frequently," she said.

Chandler was born in Toronto in 1931, the son of a member of the Toronto Fire Department. His own pursuit at the time was music, which is how he met the fabled blue-eyed lady he would refer to affectionately in his columns over the years.

"Dad was in the fourth squadron in the pipe band, and he met her in full regalia — kilt and all — at the Warriors' Day Parade at the CNE," Leslie said.

"I think she fell for his knees."

Whatever the attraction, Chandler married Betty Peacock, with whom he would welcome daughters Robin and Leslie — and share six blissful decades. When Chandler had finished pursuing a career in advertising in Toronto, they began looking around for retirement options. They knew about the East Northumberland area through visits with friends (and circumstances like stop-overs during her years at Queen's University, Leslie said), and it seemed a wonderful choice.

"Between friends and familiarity, I think they were pretty comfortable," she said.

They moved to Castleton first, where they would spend 10 years. Then, about dozen years ago, they moved to Brighton.

"Of course, the big thing about Brighton - the thing that was irresistible - was his love of Presqu'ile Park," his daughter stated.

The Chandlers immediately became Friends of Presqu'ile Park, and perpetual holders of a park pass that gathered no dust.

"They used it, if not every day, most days of the week, year-round. My dad walked and hiked constantly. He knew all the trails. Even in the winter, if the trails were impassable, they would be on the beach or by the lighthouse."

The Chandlers used the park for more than fitness — it became another backyard for them, a place to bring the pizza they had just baked or a cup of coffee to sip.

Leslie had taken her children camping there years earlier, but discovered it anew through her parents' eyes. It amazed her that the Lake Ontario she saw from her home in Toronto was the same peaceful paradise that nourished her parents' souls.

It was something her father clung to, she added, when her sister Robin Hanley died in 2010.

"I think walking alone in the park was his way of coming to terms, sitting on the beach, watching the sunset," Leslie recalled.

"It was difficult for him to talk about. But I think he was able to find something there that got him through."

In retirement Chandler continued to enjoy a good golf game, with even a hole-in-one to his credit. He was a member of the Pine Ridge Golf Club for several years.

He was also a valuable member of the Colborne Legion, serving on its executive for a number of years.

But Chandler sometimes liked his activities a bit more on the adventurous side, with a definite marine flavour. A longtime member of the Queen City Yacht Club in Toronto, he loved getting out on Lake Ontario (as well as throughout the Great Lakes). He also participated in conference races up and down the Eastern Seaboard and the Caribbean.

Through it all, the remarkable relationship he shared with his bride remained the most important thing in his life. They had their 60th anniversary last spring, and still enjoyed their special dinner times together.

"Every night at dinner, they would sit down. Dad would set the table, and always lit candles and poured a glass of wine. They would still be talking after they

had finished eating — I never knew when to call them, because I didn't want to interrupt," Leslie said.

These conversations might even carry on into the evening, the Chandlers taking their glasses of wine to the balcony.

"She was his longest and truest friend," Leslie stated.

"She was a good listener and he was a good talker, but they didn't run out of things to say after 60 years. I find that so admirable, that they could sit and share reflections and ideas."

Often, readers of a Chandler column would be receiving his thoughts after they had been run past his wife, she added.

"She would tell him when he was full of crap."

She was also there to hold his hand, along with Leslie, when he passed peacefully away.

Chandler is also survived by sons-in-law Keith Hanley and Kent Slootsky, grandchildren Zachary Slootsky, Kendall Slootsky-Chandler, John Hanley, Bryden Hanley and Erin May Hanley, step-grandchildren Erin Williams, Matt Williams and Justin Slootsky, and great-grandchildren Rory Kivisto and Kiera Williams.

Leslie relayed his wish that there be no funeral or service.

"Rather, he wanted a gathering of the clans at the Colborne Legion Hall, where we can stand about and 'tell lies about what a great guy I was.'"

The date has been set for May 31 at the Legion — where the flags were lowered on his passing — between 1 and 4 p.m.

The Legion hall is located at 92 King St. W. in Colborne and, in lieu of flowers, in-memoriam donations can be made to the Friends of Presqu'ile Park 25th Anniversary Fund (www.friendsofpresquile.ca) or to Quinte Sailability (<http://quintesailability.ca>).

In an obituary Leslie wrote, which will appear in Saturday's *Globe and Mail*, she added another wish from her father.

"George would also like it very much if you took the time to walk in the woods or along the shores of a lake; to sit quietly and listen to music that moves you; to have a laugh with someone you love."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Popular *Northumberland Today* columnist George Chandler was not exactly tied to his desk. He was a sailor, golfer and avid Friends of Presqu'ile Park member as well.

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