

Three Decades & Counting

It was fitting, in the year that we celebrated three decades of the Southern Hemisphere's longest running mountain bike event, that our guest starter was the same person who said "Go" way back in 1986. And just as he did then, as soon as Paul Kennett set 800-plus riders on their way around the very same Akatarawa Ranges, he grabbed his bike and joined in for what was the 30th Karapoti Classic.



It is fitting too, on such an occasion, to pay tribute to those who have been supporting Karapoti almost as long. Riders like Peter Schmidt, who has ridden 27 consecutive Karapoti's. Paul's brother Simon, who has either raced or organised at every Karapoti and was actually the first person to crack three hours.

Serial volunteers should also get a mention. It takes almost 100 helpers to make Karapoti tick. First and foremost our families remain forever invaluable for what amounts to slave labour. Then people like Jason McCrystal, Gen Gage, Nick Crocker, Beth and Richard Paddock, Al Wallace, Andrew Kitchen, Leon Zwetloot and others too numerous to list have been key crew for longer than they care to remember. But we remember!

Everyone should remember, too, the contributions that sponsors make every year. For us, some have become more like family. Ground Effect turned 20 last year and have been Karapoti sponsors for the same number of years. Cactus Outdoor have been with us only a few years less and Whittaker's Chocolates are in their 14th year. Fine Signs in Petone have been supporting us since 2003, but have been riding Karapoti for longer and often turn up to help out.

Every year we ride Karapoti three or four times prior to race day, initially to check out nothing has changed and then closer to race day to chop back overgrown bush, re-find the best ride lines through technical sections such as the Rock Garden, and cut new drainage channels to clear the worst puddles and bogs... I never tire of this epic ride and hope you never tire of this epic race.