

## MEMORIAL

---



WILLIAM DARWIN KLEINPELL  
(1898-1959)

William D. "Bill" Kleinpell died suddenly of a heart attack on April 21, 1959, at Las Cruces, Baja California.

Bill and his wife, Fay, and several close friends had flown to Las Cruces for a few days of fishing. He was fully enjoying the outing, and had just landed a fish, when he simply leaned back in his seat, closed his eyes, and was gone. He left us just as he would have wanted it.

Those of us who knew Bill intimately realize how greatly his loss will be felt by the community, the oil industry, and the geological profession. Each new assignment was a challenge which he tackled vigorously and thoroughly enjoyed; and somehow he always found or made time to discuss "geology" with students or contemporaries in this or related fields of science.

Bill was born in New York on April 9, 1898, but spent most of his early life in Chicago where he completed his primary schooling. The family moved to California in 1913. Bill attended Lincoln High in Los Angeles, then went on to Stanford University, where he

majored in mining and geology, receiving his B.A. degree from that institution in 1921.

His early professional work carried him to Mexico and South America and then back to California to join the first group of geologists formed by the Marland Oil Company in California. This was the start of a long and very close friendship with Ralph D. Reed, who was supervising the geological work for the company, and with Chester Cassel, who was Bill's teammate in the many constructive field studies throughout the state.

Bill joined the Union Oil Company of California in 1927, as division geologist for the San Joaquin Valley, with headquarters in Bakersfield. He was particularly optimistic about the chances of finding new deposits of oil and gas in the Central Valley, and recognized the importance of improving the geologic knowledge of that area. In fact, Bill considered Bakersfield an ideal place to live and work and in 1932 decided to open his own consulting office there. He located in the Haberfelde Building and maintained offices in the same building until his death. His intimate knowledge of the geology of this part of California contributed substantially to the successful exploration and development of many areas in the Central Valley. He was recognized as one of the leading authorities on the structural history and stratigraphy of this part of the state.

He was a member of the board of directors of the Kern County Land Company and the Intex Oil Company, and acted in an advisory capacity to several other companies and independent operators.

Bill's membership in A.A.P.G. dates from 1925. He served on various Association committees and was particularly well known for the tactful but capable way he served the Association in his capacity as district editor of the *Bulletin*. He was also a member of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers, the American Geographic Society, various wildlife conservation societies, the Petroleum Club of Los Angeles, and the Bakersfield Petroleum Club.

Bill had a tremendous interest in the younger men and their problems. We doubt if any one will ever know the extent of Bill's help since he never sought credit for himself. He was delighted to offer constructive criticism, to point out what should be done to fill in gaps in our geologic knowledge, and to suggest where and how certain specific studies might contribute to this end. Some idea of the nature of his contributions may be gained by referring to acknowledgments by such authors as Ralph Reed in *Geology of California*, Reed and Hollister in *Structural Evolution of Southern California*, and Robert M. Kleinpell in his comprehensive volume on *Miocene Stratigraphy of California*.

In recent years Bill enjoyed nothing better than attending various meetings and conventions throughout the country, to visit with his innumerable friends. Those same friends and business associates were always welcome in his home on Oleander Avenue in Bakersfield. His warm hospitality, keen sense of humor, and infectious laughter on these occasions will always remain a pleasant memory.

Chet Cassel recently wrote to one of the authors about the early "Marland" days. In speaking of the geological group that worked so closely together in the field, Chet gave a lucid description of Bill's philosophy by describing a personal incident—"I entered this group as a cub geologist and was a bit overawed by the number of rather remarkable and competent men that I ran into. One day I remarked to Bill that I sure felt I was 'up against some awful tough competition.' Bill's reply was instant: 'not up against, Chet, *in with*'."

"It was my privilege soon after to work with Bill as junior member of a field party, and that's the way it was—"in with." Bill wasn't competing against anyone, ever, nor did he give a hoot about advancement, if this meant sacrificing his way of life. Life for him was something to be lived now, to be enjoyed in all possible directions, and to be kept warm with friendship."

Bill loved Honolulu and often took his family to enjoy the Island's friendly hospi-

tality. One of his favorite spots was on the beach adjoining the Outrigger Club, but even the alluring charm of this tropical setting could not overcome his love of hunting; and on more than one occasion he has flown home to be on hand for the opening of the quail, dove, or duck season.

He is survived by his wife, Fay; two daughters, Jean (Mrs. Donald Horton) of Honolulu and Kay (Mrs. Harold Rosoff) of Pasadena; three grandchildren, Jill, Sue, and William Rosoff; and two brothers, Robert M. Kleinpell of Berkeley and Wilke Kleinpell of Pasadena.

A simple, but beautifully eloquent, memorial service was held on Saturday, April 25, at the First Congregational Church in Bakersfield; where a host of his friends and associates gathered to bid him "Aloha." He was buried in the Greenlawn Cemetery in that same city.

Yes, Bill will be missed by the entire oil fraternity, but it certainly was great to have known him. A memorial, "Kleinpell's Corner," has been established in the Bakersfield Petroleum Club to perpetuate his spirit of conviviality and good fellowship.

THOMAS J. FITZGERALD, VERNON L. KING, EARL B. NOBLE

Bakersfield and Los Angeles  
California  
September 22, 1959