

In Memoriam, Clay Castleberry

Robert De Cesaris

Director of Public Works for Butte County CA; Researcher and Collector of Antique Engineering Equipment, with Specialty in Slide Rules and Calculators



Clay Castleberry (April 28, 1927 - July 4, 2021)

Clayton “Clay” Castleberry, retired Butte County director of Public Works and Rotary of Oroville member for over 50 years, passed away unexpectedly on July 4, 2021, at the age of 94. Clay was born in Oklahoma and spent most of his youth in Monroe, Oregon. He served in the US Navy on the light cruiser Portsmouth during the very last phase of WWII, then, utilizing the GI Bill, attended Stanford University and graduated from Oregon State College with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1950. Clay worked for 30 years for Butte County, retiring as Director of Public Works in 1984.

Clay so enjoyed his work and his profession that he proceeded to work an additional 27 years, filling in as interim city and county engineer for 13 counties and 22 cities in northern California, and served as the first Director of Public Works for the new towns of Paradise, Truckee, and Elk Grove. His service to the Oroville and Butte County areas earned him the Sam Norris Lifetime Community Achievement Award and he also received an award from the state of California for his service of 50 years as a professional engineer. While working as public works director, Clay had the

idea of constructing a modern covered bridge over Oregon Gulch Creek, at Oregon City, CA, now also known as the “Castleberry Covered Bridge.” This has become an important addition to the Oregon City area, which has been designated a California Historical Landmark as the site of an early gold mining camp founded in 1848.

Clay was extremely active in his community throughout his life and served on the Oroville High School board of trustees, the Butte County Board of Education, and the Butte Community College board of trustees. He also taught Sunday School at the Congregational Church in the 1950s, and was scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 84.

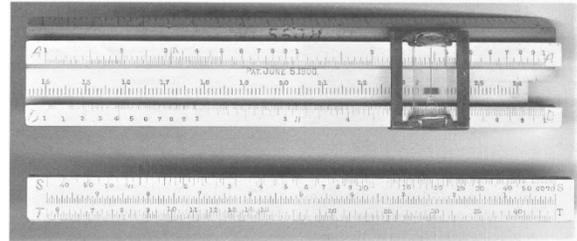
Clay loved engineering and the tools associated with his discipline. Later in life, he assembled a collection of antique engineering equipment that included a collection of over 750 slide rules and calculators. In his first article upon joining the Oughtred Society in 1999, Clay showed his enthusiasm for our hobby and challenged the membership to share their treasures and stories with the community by writing an article for the Journal. He wrote “Let’s share the knowledge of slide rules, satisfy curiosities, and tell everyone that these wonderful devices played such an important part in the development of science and mathematics.” Clay was an active contributor to the Journal and also displayed key parts of his collection regularly at numerous venues in northern California. He put on displays at county museums, city libraries, and community college campuses. As he noted, some of the displays were by request, but he also noted that if he encountered a good location, he would ask the librarian or curator if he might share his collection with the community, and was almost always successful. His displays at the Butte County Library, the Colusa County Library, and the City Library of Menlo Park, CA are especially well-documented.

Clay regularly attended our Oughtred Society West Coast Meetings and contributed numerous articles to the Journal, featuring some of his favorite rules and unusual items. A survey of his work includes articles on the Easterly Rafter Slide Rule, which covered John Easterly’s patent and circular designs and eventually the Easterly Picket 1082-ES linear slide rule. Clay was also the first to cover the Hemmi 22, which consisted of two pieces sliding against one

another, K&E paper-faced knock-offs from China, and a new variation of the Gilson Midget. Other articles included the initial reporting of a K&E 4032 (an early 4031 with a special K&E factory-designed magnifying cursor), an analysis of decimal-keeping cursors by various makers, and a review of stadia slide rules and related antique surveying equipment. Highlighting his broad interests, we note his article on the Equinoctial Ring Dial and Oughtred's contributions to its development, and a detailed review of Dr. Prince's Refracting Rule, made by Keuffel and Esser. Finally, Clay must also be recognized for having very faithful reproductions of both the K&E and Tavernier-Gravet Mannheim chisel cursors made; by adding a patina, his second attempt was nearly indistinguishable from the genuine article! During the period from 2008 to 2015, Clay gradually sold his collection at our OS meetings and on eBay, creating a college fund for his grandchildren.

Clay is survived by his son, Stephen, daughter-in-law Nieret, and grandchildren Kei and Cole, of Nevada City. He was preceded in death by his wife, Donna, and his sister, Jean Castleberry Malcom, of Vancouver, WA. To emphasize the words that carried the news of his passing in the Chico Enterprise Record, "Clay was a fabulous gentleman in the true sense of the word. He was a gentle man with a great

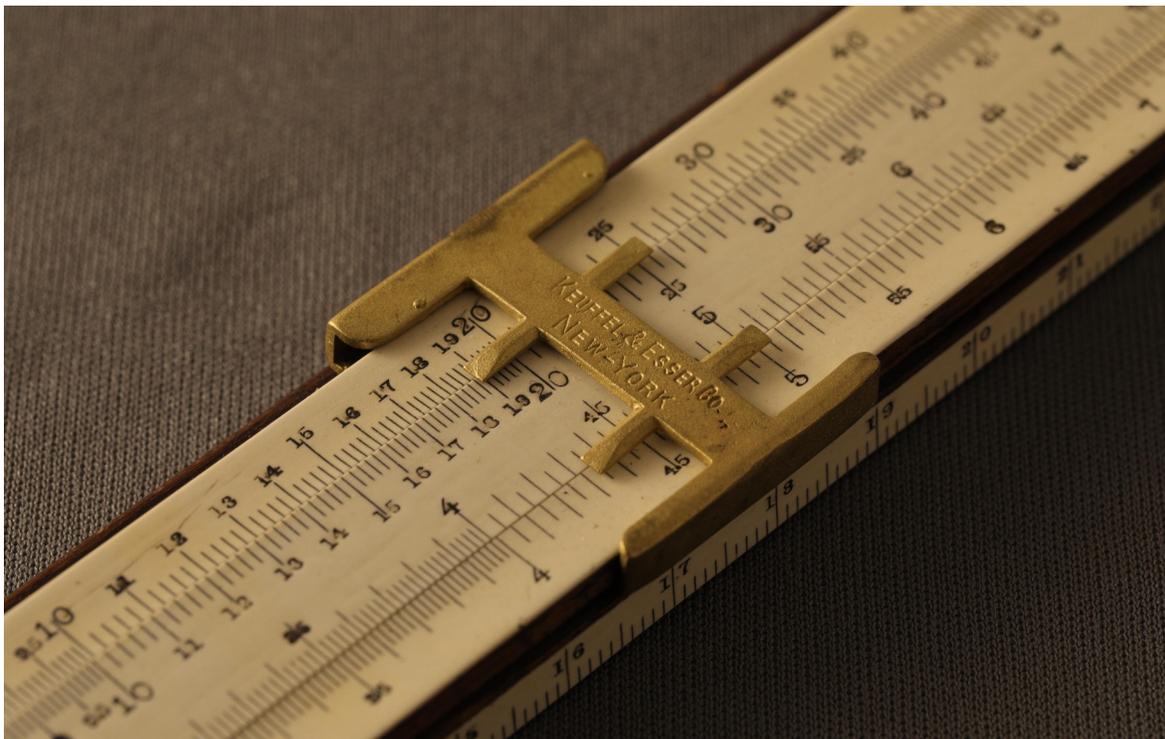
deal of integrity, humor, and professionalism." All of us who knew Clay from our interaction with him know these words to be absolutely true; we will all miss his presence, his knowledge, his wit and his discussions at our meetings.



The K&E Model 4032 with Factory Magnifier



Clay's Display at Colusa County Library, California



One of Clay's Investment Cast Replica K&E Cursors