

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

CLARKSON HILL OGLESBY (1908 – 1992)

In Frankfurt airport, on the morning of August 23, 1992, Clarkson H. Oglesby, Cyrus Palmer Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering, aged 83, was traveling with his wife, Ardis, to take a Stanford Alumni Association Danube River tour, when he died of heart failure. In his career, which spanned over 40 years at Stanford, Clarkson Oglesby was mentor, friend and teacher to generations of students who went on to make careers in the transportation and construction industries. Word spread quickly to his many friends and associates around the world about the passing of this special Stanford professor. Although we all knew that he had been suffering declining health for the past few years, none of us was surprised that Clark Oglesby was embarking on yet another voyage of discovery at this time, because he had always lived his life so fully, and with such boundless enthusiasm for exploring new ideas and new places. He will be remembered for his pivotal contributions in two related areas: Highway Engineering, in which he literally "wrote the book"; and Construction Engineering and Management, which he established as a rigorous academic discipline through curriculum design, research, writing and teaching.

Clarkson Hill Oglesby was born on November 9, 1908, in Clarksville, Missouri. He spent his childhood in Arizona, completing high school and junior college in Phoenix. Clark came to Stanford to complete his civil engineering degree in 1930, after working with the Arizona Highway Department for two years. He graduated in 1932 "With great distinction" and returned to Stanford in 1934 to pursue graduate study after another two-year stint with the Arizona Highway Department. He completed his "Engineer" degree in 1936, earning distinction as a member of both Phi Beta Kappa and Stanford's original chapter of Tau Beta Pi.

He returned to work in the Arizona Highway Department, where he worked in both the design office, and as head of survey parties on site. During this time, his landlady arranged for Clark to participate in a dinner and an evening of playing "Hearts" with a special guest named Ardis Hansen, who worked nearby as a librarian. The blind date led to their wedding in 1938 and to a 54-year marriage. In June of 1941, Clark joined the construction firm, Vincent and Pringle, where he became chief engineer by 1943. But his love of higher education prevailed, and in September of that year he returned to Stanford to teach in the Army Specialized Training Program, launching an academic career that would stretch over the next half century.

As World War II ended, civil engineers returning to campus were expressing interest in studying construction engineering and management. Clark Oglesby's own experience in design and construction in the public and private sectors had convinced him that there was a need for formal training of civil engineers in construction engineering and management. Until that time, construction site engineering and management had been viewed by civil engineers as a vocational rather than an academic pursuit. Stanford's administration only reluctantly agreed to the idea of construction classes, but a turnout of over 70 students in the first class convinced them that he had his hand on the pulse of the student body.

The courses in Construction Engineering and Methods and Construction Estimating that Clark originated were hugely successful. He garnered the support of civil engineering chair, Eugene Grant, who had been Clark's mentor, and Engineering Dean, Fred Terman, to recruit a new faculty member (John Fondahl) and launch the first graduate program in Construction Engineering and Management, starting in 1955. With the addition of Professors Henry Parker and James Douglas, the graduate civil engineering program in construction engineering and management at Stanford expanded its scope and depth, and became a model for similar efforts at U.C. Berkeley, Michigan, Georgia Tech., Penn State, Purdue, MIT and other universities in the US, as well as at many leading civil engineering programs worldwide.

Clarkson Oglesby pioneered the idea of this type of program, designed its curriculum, and took a leading role in defining and conducting research, and in writing a series of textbooks that would allow other universities to introduce classes in this new field. With the help of the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks, he initiated research on construction methods analysis in the 1950s. His books on *Methods Improvement for Construction Managers* (1972), co-authored with Professor Henry Parker, and *Productivity Improvement in Construction* (1988), co-authored with Professors Henry Parker and Gregory Howell, built on the results of this research and have been used worldwide to teach principles of industrial engineering and organizational behavior to construction managers.

In the late 1960s he brought Dr. Nancy Morse Samelson, a noted industrial psychologist, to Stanford and, together with her and Professor Henry Parker, launched a 15-year program of research on human aspects of construction safety. This led to the establishment of an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) center of excellence in construction safety at Stanford. The findings of this research have been widely implemented and have undoubtedly extended and enriched the lives of millions of construction workers worldwide. At the same time that he was launching Stanford's program in construction engineering and management, Clark Oglesby remained a leader in field of highway engineering where he had begun his career. Oglesby's *Highway Engineering* textbook became a standard in this field. He completed his revisions for the 5th edition of this classic text shortly before he died.

For his extraordinary contributions in defining and advancing the field of construction engineering, Clark Oglesby received numerous professional and academic awards and honors. Among these are the Golden Beaver Award (from the Heavy Construction Industry), the Carroll Dunn Award from the Construction Industry Institute, the American Society of Civil Engineers' Peurifoy Research Award, the National Society of Professional Engineers Outstanding Educator Award, election to honorary life membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers, and election to membership of the National Academy of Engineering. Through all of his busy professional life, Clark pursued his interests in music as a chorister in the First Congregational Church Choir and he traveled to all corners of the world with his wife, and dedicated travel partner, Ardis.

Retirement from Stanford in 1974 gave Clark more time to pursue the things he really loved -- teaching, research, writing, choir and traveling! He continued to teach classes at Stanford into his late seventies; he continued to serve on PhD committees into his eighties; he kept on writing, revising his *Highway Engineering* book twice and writing the *Construction Productivity Improvement* book after his retirement; he continued to attend seminars until this

year; and he continued to sing in the choir and to travel until the end of his life. His zest for living and his unquenchable curiosity uplifted and inspired all who came to know him.

The professional and academic accomplishments of Clarkson Oglesby are truly remarkable. However, he will probably be remembered longest and most fondly for the mentorship and advice that he provided to more than two generations of colleagues and students, including the members of this memorial resolution committee. He had an innate ability to perceive the needs, aspirations and talents of other people, and he had the motivation and interest to help them succeed in life. When a student or friend needed advice, Clark Oglesby was never too busy to listen with genuine concern, and then to ask exquisitely framed questions that enabled students or colleagues to know their own minds, and then to make informed decisions that might launch or redirect their careers or personal affairs. At a dinner held in 1991 to establish a graduate fellowship in his honor, past students of Professor Oglesby -- many now leaders of large companies or agencies in the construction industry -- stood up one after another, choking on their words, as they expressed their appreciation for the measured guidance, the sage counsel, and the deep and caring friendship shown to them by Professor Clarkson Oglesby.

In his life, and right up to his death, his wisdom, humility, warmth and enthusiasm were, and remain, an inspiration to his colleagues, his students, his peers, and his community.

Clarkson Oglesby is survived by his wife, Ardis, by his daughters Virginia Hancock, Judith Donaghey, and Marjorie Zellner, and four grandchildren.

Raymond E. Levitt (Chair)
John W. Fondahl
Boyd C. Paulson, Jr.