



Gabriel Moulin Portraiture, San Francisco

*William A Stenger*

# WILLIAM A. CLEVINGER

1919–2009

Elected in 1990

*“For exceptional contributions in geotechnical engineering,  
management, and service to the profession.”*

BY RUDOLPH BONAPARTE

**W**ILLIAM ALBERT CLEVINGER, an eminent geotechnical engineer and expert on the design of earth and rockfill embankment dams, died July 9, 2009, at the age of 89 in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho.

Bill was born in Wheatland, Wyoming, on September 12, 1919, the eldest of three children. He received his BS degree in civil engineering from the University of Wyoming in 1943 and joined the US Army Corps of Engineers as a supervisor in its Soil Mechanics School. He saw active duty during World War II and rose to the rank of lieutenant. While in the service, he met and married Janet (Jan) Tucker of Spokane, Washington.

From 1946 to 1956 he worked first as a materials engineer (soil mechanics) and then as head of the Soil Properties Section for the US Bureau of Reclamation in Denver. During his tenure at the bureau, he undertook advanced studies in irrigation engineering in 1947–1948 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. He also gained substantial experience in the geotechnical engineering aspects of the design of dams, reservoirs, and related water management structures.

He joined the geotechnical engineering firm Woodward-Clyde Consultants (WCC) in 1956 and immediately became the principal in charge of its Denver office. He stayed with WCC for 28 years, and from 1973 to 1980 chaired the WCC

board. After his semiretirement in 1984 he continued to take on occasional assignments as an independent consultant on dam projects.

His professional practice at both the Bureau of Reclamation and WCC centered on the investigation, design, and construction of earth and rockfill dams. Based on his experience and expertise he coauthored (with James L. Sherard, Richard J. Woodward, and Stanley F. Gizienski) the 1963 landmark book on the topic, *Earth and Earth-Rock Dams: Engineering Problems of Design and Construction* (John Wiley and Sons), as well as nearly 20 technical papers. He also served on the National Research Council Committee on the Safety of Dams, which authored the 1977 report *A Review of the Programs of the US Bureau of Reclamation for the Safety of Existing Dams*.

During his career Bill consulted on some 500 dam projects in the United States and more than 20 other countries. These projects include, to name just a few, the Teton Dam (Idaho); Grayrocks Dam (Wyoming); Martin Dam (Florida); Merrill Creek Dam (New Jersey); Oroville and San Luis Dams (California); Tarbela Dam (Pakistan); Narrows, Dillon, and Valmont Dams (Colorado); and Wolf Creek Dam (Tennessee).

He was a keenly insightful and intuitive engineer, always bringing smart ideas and sound judgment to the table. He was highly sought after as a consultant, by public and private dam owners, architect/engineer firms involved in dam design, and contractors involved in dam construction. He served on numerous dam safety review teams and boards, and was involved in a number of root cause investigations of dam failures.

In addition to dams, Bill's consulting practice extended to fossil and nuclear power plants, industrial facilities, highways and airfields, and irrigation facilities. Representative of his international experience were projects in Argentina, Canada, China, Greece, Iceland, Peru, Spain, Thailand, and Venezuela.

His long history of exemplary service to the profession included numerous national offices and many technical and professional committees. He was president of the Consulting Engineers Council of Colorado; vice president, senior vice

president, and president of the American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC) and chair of its Public Relations and Business Development Committees; and president of the Colorado Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). Other committee memberships included the ACEC Civil Works Committee and ASCE Committee on Embankment Dams and Slopes. He was a director for the US Committee on Large Dams and a member of the US National Committee of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage. As ACEC president, he served on the Interprofessional Council on Environmental Design (ICED), the Legislative Advisory Committee, and the National Council of Professional Service Firms. He was a registered professional engineer in California, Colorado, New Mexico, Washington, and Wyoming.

He was recognized for his achievements and contributions with a Distinguished Service Award from the Consulting Engineers Council of California and a Superior Service Award from the US Bureau of Reclamation. He was named the Woodward Lecturer by WCC and a member of the University of Wyoming Alumni Hall of Fame. In addition to his election to the NAE, he was inducted into the Sigma Tau engineering honor society (which subsequently merged into Tau Beta Pi).

After retiring from WCC, Bill and Jan moved to Sequim, Washington, on the Olympic Peninsula, where they enjoyed golf and Bill loved to fish. He delighted in visits from old friends and colleagues and the chance to share time fishing with his guests. He and Jan also stayed active in the lives of their four grown children and their families.

Jan passed away on March 11, 2012, in Coeur d'Alene, at the age of 92. They are survived by sons William, Thomas, and Patrick, daughter Martha, 11 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren.