

David John Clappison

Attachments

EULOGY for Clappo at the Service on 25 November 2013

Doug Tucker

I would like everyone to know that although Clappo was doing it tough towards the end - very tough - he didn't lose his sense of humour. You know, that cryptic one-liner, often with a touch of self-deprecation, for which he is famous. I spoke to him three or four days before he died, and asked how he was making out in hospital.

"Oh Dougal" he said, "I'm not the worst patient, but I'm working at it".

He was tough and resilient to the end, which shouldn't be a surprise because to survive as a one pound, two and a half month premature baby born in Queensland in 1940 you had to be tough and resilient. And survive he did. Whisked off to Kalgoorlie for a few years before his folks settled in Stawell in 1950. In Stawell he led the utopian existence of all young boys growing up in the country in the 1950s - loads of space, bush and mullock heaps to explore, bikes to ride, footy and cricket played in the street.

Then to boarding school in Ballarat, where I met Clappo. It was a Boys Own type school, with lots of freedom, and Clappo embraced it. Clappo was a participant, having a go at everything. He built the first crystal set I'd ever seen, built model planes, sang in the choir, performed in the school play, and had a go at all sports. Including such innovations as bicycle hockey, after which the innovative and capable Clappo could fix his bike - the rest of us needed his help. It was at school that he was introduced to his great love, rowing, at which he was very successful, graduating to the first crew in 1959.

For a time he even became the worker's representative. Our behavioural indiscretions were punished by "fatigues", which had to be worked off by cutting hedges, gardening etc. The worst job was the 6 am peeling potatoes in a bucket of ice cold water while sitting outside in the cold Ballarat winter. It was Clappo who successfully led the push for warm water, and later, the occasional cup of tea.

With such leadership skills it came as no surprise that he was appointed School Captain in 1959.

Clappo was a good and disciplined student, but had to work at it. Tunbridge, the science teacher, declared his greatest success in a lifetime of teaching was to get two Clappisons – David and sister Nina – to pass chemistry. But pass he did and off he went to Melbourne University to become a geologist. Many of us were a little envious of Clappo because unlike us Clappo knew what he wanted to be from age five.

The rocks were clearly in his blood, and it was commitment to this goal that helped him through a

tough first year. He boarded in a small dark room in a workers cottage in north Melbourne, but leavened life with regular, near daily, visits to Trinity College as a non-resident. As you would expect of Clappo, he participated in all the college activities he was allowed to, and got to know all the characters. Things improved, for he became a resident member of college the next year, and he and I “wifed” together. For the uninitiated, that meant we shared a study.

He immediately got back into rowing. Clappo’s technique might not have been perfect, but pound for pound there was no-one, and I mean no-one, who could pull a stronger oar. And after college he continued his interest by coaching, riding along the banks of the Yarra with a megaphone, at great risk to life and limb – to pedestrians, that is. It was in the team environment of a rowing eight where many of Clappo’s virtues and values were on display - loyalty, commitment, participation, and responsibility – and never, ever, complain.

And he never ever did. Very stoic was Clappo. He also greatly appreciated apres' rowing – with his beloved pewter hung around his neck – he lived in fear of being separated from his pewter – he participated in all the post race activities, as he did in all college celebrations - renditions of Ole King Cole, numerous dirty ditties and occasionally Gaudeamus Igitur.

At Uni, Clappo was a dedicated and disciplined student. He never missed a lecture, or a practical session, and never failed an exam - well, that’s what he told me. He graduated with a MSc (Hons). To his friends, Clappo was the quintessential geologist, off to find his Eldorado. We reckoned Lassiter’s Reef had good reason to be nervous. And so to the field. Pernatty Lagoon, Braidwood, Cootamundra, Mudgee and many others. I know many of you have great stories of Clappo in the field. Of life in an old railway carriage at Mt. Gunson, the parties in the house at Cootamundra, and others.

The story he related to me on a number of occasions was his pride, as a resident of the home of the Stawell Gift, to be involved in the inaugural running of the O’Leary Thousand. Typical of Clappo, to organise a party of field geologists to race down the only street in O’Leary in the early hours of the morning when in party mode. Apocryphal? Maybe, as I never saw Clappo run, and I can’t find O’Leary on the map.

After years in the field, the Sydney office became a permanent base, with lots of time behind the desk, a role he didn’t feel suited him, nor in which he felt entirely relaxed. He would have much preferred to be in the field. Then marriage, first to Helen, then Sue. And parenthood.

Clappo was very proud of his son James, and rightly so, for you will go a long way before you find a finer young man than James Clappison.

As with the field, there are lots of stories of Clappo in the office, including what a kind and respectful boss he was. But a story of the office that came to my notice just in the past few days best encapsulates Clappo’s humour and cynicism.

It comes from Euan Leckie, and I hope he doesn’t mind me sharing it with you. Euan had been working with Clappo preparing the annual strategy plan for the mining division. When Euan saw the report he asked Clappo why such large and bold font on the front cover, to which Clappo replied – “you need large print for short sighted management”.

Clappo was a man of the '50s. His values were of the fifties, his life style and dare I say it, his fashion sense. At his 70th birthday I mentioned that he seemed to have spent his life modelling for Fletcher Jones. He didn't demur, nor did he change. It wasn't that he opposed change, he just ignored it. On one of our more serious moments I accused him of never changing, or moving with the times. "But I have Dougal, I have" he pleaded, "I've moved from Cascade Street to Sutherland Street".

More important to Clappo than rocks were people, and their friendships. He had a very friendly personality, and got on well with everyone. And everyone got on well with him. And he had friendships that went back to his days in Stawell. He was particularly proud that he and Gary Middleton had been mates since his first day of school in Stawell. For Clappo mateship was for life. Nothing cut him more deeply than to think he had been let down by a mate. For he would never let down a mate – he just couldn't, it wasn't the Clappo way.

Because people, friendships and mateship were so important to him he involved himself in lots of groups – his professional colleagues of the mining industry, his Friday lunch mates, the Swan supporters and the tennis group, and the folk at the Lord Dudley. He wasn't a groupy, but was always an active participant in the group, for you had an obligation to do your bit, pull your weight.

And so it was when he and I shared a flat in Tintern Ave Toorak with a couple of others, where he assumed the role of social secretary. We would arrive home from work to find the place a hive of activity. Clappo had returned from the bush, arranged a party for the next night to which all of Melbourne was invited, and half had already accepted. They were great parties, singing to Buddy Holly and Trini Lopez, and rocking to Swinging Safari, with Clappo in the vanguard. Of course he would return to the bush, and we were left to placate the neighbours in the full knowledge Clappo was due back in six weeks for a repeat event.

His other great contribution to our flat was as gourmet cook. Way before Jamie Oliver he would throw some butter into his fry pan, add whatever he could find in the flat, and produce what he labelled "empirical cooking". It was his signature dish, but fortunately for all of us in more recent times the signature dish has become a leg of ham. I was reminded of this a few days ago when a beautiful shepherds pie was cooked at the shed, and there it was, the original fry pan. Which in turn reminded me that Clappo was a hoarder – waste not, want not - so the basement and the attic at the shed are stuffed full of everything Clappo ever owned, starting with the toy train from Kalgoorlie days, still in its box.

A living museum of the life of Clappo.

And it is that life, a life of mateship and friendship, which has impacted the lives of so many of us, by making them more interesting, more diverse, and certainly more fun. I, like many, looked forward to being with Clappo, for we always had fun. Good food, good wine and long discussions, which became increasingly robust as the night wore on. But always in good humour. Although we joked about his "old man" attitudes, I admired his commitment to the values and standards of the '50s, and his steadfast refusal to change – for it meant he was always just "Clappo".

Reliable, friendly, and most of all, loyal to his mates.

I can assure you, he was there for a mate when needed. As others have commented, Clappo was the “classic” mate. Three of us from school, Clappo, myself and Adrian Harris became known as the ‘three blind mice’ for our propensity to sing the ditty when together and in party mode. In his last talk with Adrian, Clappo told him how much he was looking forward to us getting together last Saturday week and singing our signature song.

Sadly, it was not to be. And “two blind mice’ just doesn’t do it. From here on, many of us will have moments of reflection, maybe shed a tear, whenever we have ‘one for the road’. I know I will.

Today we celebrate the life of a good friend and mate. He was a good mate to many, or as Clappo would say, china plate.

Farewell, my friend.

Vale, Clappo.

Limericks in honour of Dave Clappison

Ken Maiden

A few moments of time would I crave
This is not going to be a big rave
No details chronological
Nothing seriously geological
Just a few words to say about Dave

He would have gone to that heavenly gate
He’d be asked his business to state
To the angelic sentry
Who stands guard at the entry
He’d have said “I’m a geologist, mate”

“After finishing my tertiary education
My career was in mineral exploration
I mapped granites intrusive
Sought deposits elusive
And encountered the joys and frustration

I logged drill core with keen observation
Swatted flies and fought dehydration
I chased gold and chased copper
Always seeking the whopper
Oh the excitement of great expectation

I worked in the sunshine and rain
I experienced the pleasure and pain
I tramped over the hills
And I supervised drills
And I'd just love to do it again

I excelled in report preparation
I valued my own reputation
I can also allege
I was a member of SMEDG
An illustrious organisation

I also enjoyed relaxation
Social functions and participation
There was nobody finer
With a cryptic one-liner
Which always caused such a sensation

I engaged in much conversation
It provided such brain stimulation
I mixed with the blokes
I enjoyed a few jokes -
It beats taking stress medication"

So I'm sure that our Dave's doing fine
Up there with the angels divine
In the celestial choir
In his finest attire
Or drinking a glass of red wine

We won't shed too many tears
'Cause we've all put on a few years
At the Dave Clappison Cruise
We won't drink too much booze
But in his honour we'll share a few beers.

Some thoughts, anecdotes and reminiscences

Nina Allen (Clappison)

Our mother Phyllis Moule was born in Chillagoe. Her father was a mining engineer and was in charge of the smelter in Chillagoe. She trained as an infant teacher and worked as a governess in North Queensland and later as a PA for the head of Phillip Morris in Brisbane where my parents met and married. (Our father was school captain at Toowoomba Grammar in 1929 and obtained

his MSc from Brisbane University. We enjoyed the parallel. I think he then worked for the North Australia Survey).

David was born in Brisbane and they moved to Kalgoorlie when he was one, when my father took up a position with Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie. I was born in Kalgoorlie. In 1950 we moved to Stawell and my father was employed by WMC. I'm not sure when GMK became part of WMC.

A lot of our childhood was spent playing around alluvial dumps with lovely ponds (the Kontiki raft and yabbing) and dams (swimming, fishing and yabbing). - I was allowed limited participation generally based on my usefulness, eg running home for the matches to remove the leeches, - and ruins of a crusher/stamper and fenced off mine shafts, and exploring the bush which was full of old mine shafts and mullock heaps and the remains of the structures which go with mines. Sometimes we were allowed to go into Dad's sample shed with him. It had long shelves loaded with lovely long round pieces of rock! My father had a terrific sense of local history and had absorbed countless stories from the 'old-timers' he met as he travelled around Victoria which he shared with us.

David went to Melbourne Uni to study Science with a clear sense of not following in the footsteps of the 'old man'. Nature dictated otherwise! As a brother David was absolutely always there for me. When we were small he would fight off any perceived foe or detractor, temporarily putting aside his seriously jaundiced view of younger sisters!. He always had a great group of friends and I had the feeling of acquiring multiple 'big brothers'. He had a dog called Boofy who also acquired a similarly large following!

When I went to boarding school he would visit me on Sundays - sometimes - and give me little bits of advice. He was at Ballarat Grammar, I was at Queens. When I went to Melbourne to study, the age difference was no longer a factor in our relationship and were able to enjoy each others company as equals. When he 'defected' to Sydney we were typical Clappisons with our lack of communication!! but that sense of him being there for me if I needed him was always present.

As a family we always loved our times of getting together. A very strong memory of such times is of my father and David 'muttering' together endlessly! David was a most genuinely caring and kind person. He was extremely hospitable. He loved bringing people together. He had a great and quite mad sense of humour which he retained to the end. I have some tortured memories of him reducing me to helpless laughter in me in most embarrassing situations, eg in church!

Bill Brook

Clappo came to Broken Hill for student employment with The Zinc Corporation in the '61-'62 vacation and was assigned as my field assistant in phosphate exploration in far-western NSW and far-western SA, as we sprayed gallons of acidified ammonium molybdate (the field test for P) on all of the sedimentary rocks we found and looked for the bright yellow positive result. At the time we were a bit puzzled that the tillites always gave a positive result! We shared a caravan in NSW but opted for pub life in SA. He was a great assistant and companion and little did I know that I would mourn his death 52 years later.

I had the honour of meeting his father Reg, the inventor of the Clappison Wedge and sister, Nina, at the first Australian diamond drilling symposium in Adelaide in 1965(?) where I gave a paper on drill rod orientation and use of the Clappison Wedge at Mount Lyell. The Clappison Wedge was a thing of beauty in design, looks and operation, and was both recoverable and reusable.

Some 30 years passed before our paths crossed again, when Dave came to work in Fiji on the Faddys-Mistry prospect near Nadi in the early 90's. He later did some contract work for our little

Fiji prospecting company, Geopacific Limited, and had the joy of finding a nice 10 gm flatmake to the south of Nadi, which was promptly named, "Kalapos."

It is still there.

He later became a director, albeit briefly, of the then unlisted parent company, Geopacific Resources NL, in representing the shareholding of Newmont. For the past forty odd years we remained in close personal contact, with a last conversation just six days before he died and although he did not know, "how much longer the lump in his pancreas would give him on the planet," he planned to be "back on the street in a few days," and come to Fiji to stay "in a fancy resort and drink some beer and wine." Sadly, the lump took control a few days later.

His turn of phrase, slashing wit, situation assessment, take-no-prisoners attitude were legendary. His jocular view of himself, as embodied in the snake and the football comparison and the reminder, at the end of the day, that it was "beer o'clock," will live on in many vocabularies.

David Tonkin

Dave would be scornful of my lack of resolve, so best get started.

Dave and I began our first jobs in Melbourne one week apart in May 1965, with Chapman, Wood, Griswold and Evans Pty Ltd, a Canadian – Australian mining consulting firm. The company later became Mineral Engineers Pty Ltd, after Blue Evans bought out his Canadian partners. All our consulting for CWG & E was done for a single client, Austminex Pty Ltd, a joint venture between CWG & E and Vernon J Taylor of the Republican National Bank of Dallas, Texas. Americans could at that time claim a tax concession for mineral exploration and I believe Mr Taylor's outlay cost him only US\$0.60 for every dollar spent.

On most jobs Dave and I were assigned together, as the company had few employees. In fact all employees were friends as well as colleagues.

Our first job was at Braidwood, NSW, using geochemical stream sediment surveys to search for base metals (gold was not a target then, as the price was pegged to the US\$). This was before the advent of Atomic Absorption Spectrometry, so all analyses were performed by us or a technician, using wet chemical methods. On jobs like this we would be a party of 3 or 4, staying away for months at a time, so we became quite close, spending our spare time (we worked a 5 ½ day week) socialising together or playing sport; Dave and I were serious squash rivals until not that long ago.

We spent much of 1966 and all of 1967 at Mt Gunson, endeavouring to establish the existence of an economic copper resource. Dave was there first, living on site initially in an old railway carriage, with only a large hessian water bag in which to cool a bottle of beer. Later in the year, we had what must have been one of the first modern exploration camps, made up of ATCO accommodation, ablution and cooking units. Our water came from the Woomera Pipeline, 36 km away, via a fragile PVC pipe. The only communication was by Flying Doctor radio, with which we could send and receive telegrams, both business and personal. We spent our breaks in Port Augusta, 150 km away via the Stuart Highway, which at that time consisted of a 200-metre-wide maze of sand tracks, horribly corrugated when dry and dodging huge puddles after heavy rain.

After racking up a lot of time in-lieu working at Gunson, Dave and I decided to make a round-the-world trip in 1968, another rite of passage for us both (and quite costly at \$2,400 in dollars of the day). Dave had introduced me to skiing at Perisher Valley the year before, and our main objective was to spend a month skiing in Austria, but we also spent time in Hong Kong, Rome, London,

British Columbia and Fiji. CWG & E arranged several mine visits for us in Canada, as well as a day skiing at Banff.

The rest of 1968 was spent working mainly in northern Australia. Operating out of Adelaide River in the Northern Territory, we spent some time working for United Uranium. Later that year we were in the Pilbara, looking for iron ore deposits along the De Grey and Oakover Rivers. Each of us was assigned a Land Rover and a field assistant-driver. Working from a mobile caravan camp we scouted targets identified from an earlier aerial survey we made with our American chief geologist, (Dr) Jack Silman. My diary records almost daily punctures on this trip, so I guess this was before the advent of heavier-ply tyres.

Between late 1968 and early 1970 we were stationed at Cootamundra, NSW. By this time the company was operating as Mineral Engineers and the client was CSR Ltd. At Coota we were again looking for base metals, using stream sediment and soil geochemistry, followed by IP and diamond drilling. Dave and I, together with another geologist Rob Neil, shared a rented house in the town, getting us out of the hotel, but not away from the party scene. Sometime in 1969 (I think) Blue Evans sold Mineral Engineers to CSR and it became the forerunner of Pacminex and eventually CSR Minerals Division. Although Rob Neil stayed for a while, our North American colleagues moved on and before long only Dave and I were left from the original Mineral Engineers takeover. Besides us two, the CSR acquisition included the properties at Cootamundra and Mt Gunson, so I hope it was worth their while.

From 1970 Dave and I managed our own projects for CSR/Pacminex (we were Clapminex and Tonkminex according to Dave), so we did not really work closely again. However, we continued our friendship and maintained contact, sharing the catastrophes of unemployment, marriage, children, divorce, re-marriage and all. I will miss him for a long time.

Diane Fehon

I am so saddened to hear this news about David. He was a lovely man – being my boss for many years, I had a lot of respect for him. He had a very gentle nature and a fantastic sense of humour. I remember many happy times with him at CSR. I do regret not being brave enough to go to the Pacminex/CRS re-union. If I had had more nerve, no doubt I would have been able to catch up with him then – my loss.

Geyza Lorinczi

In 1966, Dave and I spent several weeks at the Mt. Gunson copper deposit in South Australia. Just two of us camping with a 14-foot caravan in tow. Our basic assignment was to map the geology and to see how we could best fill-in the large gaps between copper-bearing outcrops. One of the techniques we tried was biogeochemistry; sampling twigs of a specific species of acacia and determining the amount of trace copper the vegetation carried.

We did manage to come up with anomalies (patterns of metal concentration). The next question was how to follow up on the validity of the anomalies. How do we know if the copper anomalies in twigs mean concealed mineralization near-surface? Short of any modern tools at camp, Dave and I decided to grab picks and shovels for digging rather long and deep trenches in areas of

potential interest. It was tough in the heat of South Australia!

At the end of a particularly hot day, Dave carried on complaining about the wisdom of our action, and as an extension of his monologue he trailed off by changing my first name to MANUAL. When we returned to our office in Melbourne, my middle name was also changed to TWIG.

Dave and I maintained a special friendship over the years and I don't think he ever called me anything other than MANUAL TWIG.

I will miss a great friend and a good human being in Dave.

Lex Hansen

More than a work colleague - he was a true friend - very involved in my (Hansen) family activities and always asked about and followed our children's activities and progress through various phases of their lives - and further his genuine interest flowed through to my grandchildren - a straight shooter - genuine friend - the classic 'mate'.

Graham Hamilton

Hall, just north of Canberra. I had returned from Mt Isa late 1974 or 75 and was assigned to a drilling programme that Clappo had designed. Monday morning I got to the site of the first hole and checked the position (grid co-ords on pegs!!) many, many times because there was a house right where the hole was planned. I clearly remember ringing Clappo from a solitary phone booth at Hall to tell him the "news". You can imagine what he said about my navigational skills and whether I was sober at the time. I met the house owners later that day - two police working in Canberra - they had the house transported there over the weekend! The hole was moved and the rig set up behind a wall of hay bales - a sweetener for the owners to allow drilling during the day only.

Cudgegong - near Mudgee. Many great memories of the Cudgegong pub that Clappo maintained had a magnetic attraction for the Toyota - it could not pass by without stopping in the car park. The farm house that was the camp while we were there with Peter Mewkill and Clappo as the host. Starting the grid on the moly project near Aarons Pass with Clappo using a brunton compass and not getting a consistent bearing when he realised that he had his magnetic pen in his shirt pocket - he threw the pen away in exasperation and then spent quite some time trying to find it again.

Kim Stanton-Cook

Dave and SMEDG. Dave was a committee member for many years and a great promoter of SMEDG, taking on the onerous task of the pre-internet mail-outs with his usual enthusiasm, cheerful good humour. Neussy asked me to sum up Dave in one word - I thought for a while and came up with 'hospitable', a word that incorporated Dave's capacity to host friendly gatherings at 'The Shed', to shout a round at the Rugby Club, to arrange the post-meeting dinners and always make those around him feel comfortable. Many of us noticed that Clappo had slowed down in the last year and had missed a Cruise or two but, to my shame, did not enquire enough to find out he was pretty crook until too late. His legacy for me will be to look out for the rest of you. Raise your glasses to toast a great gentleman geologist!

Euan Leckie

My favourite story about Clappo is about him preparing the annual Strategic Plan for the Minerals Division. I worked with him on part of this each year. When I asked him why the bold front cover for the final document one year he replied "you need large print for short-sighted management".

I still use that line!

In the early 1970s I was involved in a project which was drilling the old Tasmania Mine in Beaconsfield, Tasmania. This became a mine and had the well-known roof collapse which generated lots of publicity with the rescue work for the two trapped miners. We were trying to get an intersection on the lode below the old workings which had gone down to 1500ft deep. An engineer came over from Associated Diamond Drilling in Melbourne (David Hughes?) and showed me how to set a directional wedge in a diamond drillhole to send the hole in the desired direction. I used this wedge, which was known as the "Clappison Wedge" and it worked well allowing us to get an intersection to confirm the lode around 1800ft down.

Years later and I joined CSR. When I met David and asked him about the name of the wedge he said it had been developed by his father in Broken Hill for directional drilling there. Thus it was named after his father.

Clappo's One-Liners

"If you get the urge to exercise, lie down till it passes"

"Water!?! That stuff will rust you"

"Picked it like a nostril"

"Clean body, clean mind. Take your pick"

"A wine stain on the rich tapestry of life"