

L. M. Klauber, Ex-SDG&E Leader, Dies

San Diego Native Also Recognized As Leading Expert On Reptiles

Laurence M. Klauber, 84, a former president and chairman of the board of San Diego Gas & Electric Co. and a noted herpetologist, died yesterday in a hospital.

Death came to the retired executive and civic leader at 12:50 p.m. Ill since the first of the year, he had been hospitalized the last 2½ weeks.

Services will be at 11 a.m. tomorrow in Benbough Mortuary. The family suggested memorial contributions to the San Diego Museum of Natural History or the San Diego Zoo.

YOUNGEST OF 12

Klauber, a native San Diegan, was the youngest of 12 children of Abraham Klauber, an Austrian-born merchant who settled in San Diego in 1869, and his wife, Theresa.

Although he was by profession an electrical engineer, he was an amateur naturalist whose contributions included what is considered the most comprehensive work extant on the rattlesnake.

Recognizing his achievements in his vocation and his avocation, the University of California in 1941 awarded Klauber the degree of doctor of laws.

Klauber was graduated in 1908 from Stanford University. Two years later, he joined the staff of San Diego Consolidated Gas and Electric Co., now San Diego Gas and Electric Co., as a salesman.

It was the beginning of a 43-year association with the company. Even after his retirement in 1953, Klauber reported almost daily to his office. His son, Philip, is a vice president with the company.

ON SMOG BOARD

Klauber's civic contributions were many. He served as chairman of the San Diego Library Commission, an officer of the Chamber of Commerce and a president of the Rotary Club.

During World War II, he was appointed chairman of the Civilian Defense Council. Later he served as chairman of a citizens' committee to combat smog.

As a boy, Klauber had a few pet snakes but his interest was not particularly scientific. That



LAURENCE M. KLAUBER
... services tomorrow

he later became an expert on the subject was almost accidental.

In 1921, the late Dr. Harry Wegeforth, founder of the San Diego Zoo, found himself with a collection of snakes he could not identify. Having heard that Klauber once kept some snakes, Wegeforth asked him to help him identify the reptiles.

Klauber obliged and, in his own words, quickly found out that "I knew nothing at all about snakes." So he got some books and started studying.

LIFETIME STUDY

It was the beginning of what was to become a lifetime study. Klauber spent 11 years researching and writing his two-volume work, "Rattlesnakes: Their Habits, Life Histories and Influence on Mankind."

The 1,580-page work was published in 1956 and later went

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L. M. Klauber's Funeral Tomorrow

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into a second printing. Klauber gave the proceeds to the San Diego Zoological Society, of which he was a former director.

Through the years, Klauber's snake specimen collection grew to 36,000—8,000 of them rattlesnakes, many of which he helped catch during expeditions to the desert. He kept the major part of the collection in the basement of his home at 233 W. Juniper St.

Asked if he kept live specimens, Klauber replied, "I've found it's more practical to study poisonous snakes when they're dead."

He has what was considered the world's finest library on reptiles, about 8,000 books, pamphlets and papers. For 47 years he was consulting curator of reptiles for the Zoo.

For his work in the field of herpetology, Klauber was honored repeatedly. He served two terms as president of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists and also was president of the Society of Systematic Zoology and the Western Society of Naturalists.

He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Although Klauber never claimed to be more than an amateur naturalist, scientists considered him of professional status.

Klauber was one of the Abraham Klaubers' two surviving children. His sister, Leda Klauber, lives in La Jolla.

Klauber also is survived by his widow, Grace; his son, Philip, and a daughter, Mrs. David Means Miller, all of San Diego.