Clay Pettefer

Claiborne L. “Clay” Pettefer of Lake Charles died on April 22 at age 86. Clay married his sweetheart, Marie Keller, in 1948, and they had five children, all of whom live in the area.

Clay entered the Army Air Corps during World War II and trained as a flight navigator for the B-17. After being honorably discharged, Clay worked for Cities Service Refinery for over 15 years, where he made many friends.

Clay started and owned Clay’s Marine for over 25 years. Clay’s Marine was one of the most successful Mercury outboard dealerships in the country. The reputation Clay had for making friends with customers and serving people exceeded his many achievements in the boating industry. Clay made his encounters with people fun and memorable. People loved being around Clay.

All five of his children followed in Clay’s entrepreneurial footsteps. Two of Clay’s sons followed him into the boating business. His oldest son, Jerry, owns Jerry’s Marine in Sulphur and is still racing boats today. His youngest son, Bill, builds the Marshrunner Boats that Clay designed.

Clay’s love for boating was evident early on. On their first date, he took Marie for her first motorcycle and boat rides. The boat rides continued. Clay raced boats for years, winning three world championships. He helped organize the first boat race in Lake Charles. That race evolved into the Contraband Days Festival. He also cofounded the Calcasieu Boat Club and served on its board and the Contraband Days’ board for many years.

Clay was an avid hunter and fisherman. He made a habit of bringing people fishing and to his hunting camp, and great friendships developed. His sons treasure the memories of time spent with Dad at the duck camp.

Clay is survived by his wonderful wife, Marie Keller Pettefer; son, Jerry and his wife Karen and their children Darrell and Dianne; son, Donald and his wife Cheryl and their children James and Ashley; daughter, Eva Thompson and her husband Frank and children Bro. Joshua, Mary, Levi and Esther; son, Paul and his wife April and daughters Hannah, Rebecca, Abigail and Elisabeth; and son, Bill and wife Lynell and his son Harley. He is also survived by nine great-grandchildren.

Visitation is 4-7 p.m. Thursday, with a memorial service starting at 7 p.m., all at Trinity Baptist Church. A graveside service will be at 10 a.m. Friday at Prien Memorial Park Cemetery. Officiating the services will be Clay’s son, Paul Pettefer. King’s Funeral Home is providing funeral services.

Hear more stories about Clay and share your own at www.ClayPettefer.com. Feel free to bring your pictures and stories to share with the family.