



John Clarence Karcher, Ph. D.
1894 - 1978
Inducted 1999

Clarence Karcher was born in Indiana but grew up on a farm in Oklahoma. He attended the University of Oklahoma where he earned a degree in physics in 1916. For his graduate studies, he accepted the Tyndale Fellowship in Physics at the University of Pennsylvania. During World War I, Karcher served in France as a technical attaché studying sound ranging units in the field. When he returned home to finish his graduate degree, Karcher began to apply his wartime experience by applying the use of seismic waves to geology. He collaborated with other scientists in trying to prove that sound waves could be reflected off various layers of rock within the earth. In 1921, working with colleagues on a farm near Oklahoma City, Karcher was able to successfully measure these reflected waves. By the end of the summer, his group produced the world's first geologic section through the use of reflection seismology. Everette DeGolyer, vice president of Amerada Petroleum, learned of Karcher's experiments and met the young inventor. The two formed Geophysical Research Corp., with Karcher as vice president. G.R.C. was contracted by Gulf Oil to conduct reflection seismic surveys, which identified more than 100 salt domes. In 1930, Karcher sold his interest in G.R.C. and organized Geophysical Service, Inc., the first independent company to provide reflection seismograph services. It became the foremost geophysical contracting company in the world.