



Oliver C. "Kip" Harper 1972

O. C. Harper's election to the Hall of Fame rests on a number of accomplishments, but it was extraordinarily difficult to get facts out of him. He is not inclined to take credit for any of his many achievements, and when it is pressed upon him he immediately tries to share it with others.

Even so, his is a remarkable story. He was born in Chicago in 1897 and majored in geology at the University of Chicago. He flew for the United States Air Corps in World War I and then took up geology as a profession with what is now Cities Service in Kansas and Oklahoma. In 1922 he went to work for Gulf Production Company at Sweetwater. At that time there was a little, but only a little, production in the Westbrook Field of Mitchell County. The sub-surface configuration of the Permian Basin was almost entirely unknown, and it remained so even after the Santa Rita discovery at Texon in 1923.

Using what was learned from these wells, together with a scattering of dry holes Gulf had drilled, "Kip" Harper and a colleague, Ernest Closuit, began the task of attempting to solve the Basin's geological mysteries. It was Harper in 1924 who put the finishing touches on one of the most significant pieces of geological evaluation ever seen in the United States: the recognition and delineation of the Central Basin Platform. Many oil fields, with a total yield in the hundreds of millions of barrels, have resulted from this discovery.

Later, as an independent, O. C. Harper continued to learn more about the earth and to test his beliefs. He was responsible for the Harper and Foster fields, for interesting Amon Carter in drilling the Wasson Field discovery well, and for at least six other field discoveries. He is another in that great line of geologists turned independent who learned from their failures and helped make the Basin one of the premier oil provinces in the world.

O.C. Harper is a successful man as the world measures such things, but he is also a man who carries success lightly and who values the respect, admiration, and warm regard given him by his many friends. His selection is another case of the honor finding the man.