

## C. E. BREHM Mt. Vernon, Illinois

C. E. Brehm was one of the independent leaders in an Illinois business that produced an estimated \$267 million worth of oil statewide during 1976. That may not be much compared with Texas or Louisiana, but it was enough to keep about 600 firms, ranging from Shell and Texaco to a number of one-man operations, active in exploration and production throughout the state.

Brehm at age 67, seemed to be living proof of the profit to be found in oil. He was the prototypic Horatio Alger, one who started with little and parlayed his way to a position of respect. As a youth on his father's Kansas farm in the early 1920's, Brehm learned early of the vagaries of oil.

C. E. Brehm's father raised cattle, and a post-war economic slump had severely depressed the market. Oil presented a chance to turn the family finances around. "We had drilling that had been approaching the farm for about six miles," Brehm recalled. "They got right up to the edge of his property and hit a dry hole. The oil just dog-legged right around his farm." Unable to keep up with the mortgage, his father sold the farm.

"So you see, I learned the oil business the hard way," Brehm said. After completing college in 1932, Brehm was again faced with dim economic prospects. His degree in architecture would do him little good during the depression. A college course in surveying landed him a job with the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey under the Works Projects Administration, and when that expired he found work in Louisiana as a surveyor with an oil company.

He moved up with the company, managed to earn two degrees in geology and won the position of chief geologist with the Effingham, Illinois - based Kingwood Oil Company in 1938. Two years later, Brehm struck out on his own as a consulting geologist. "I found considerable oil, and I had an interest in the properties I found," he said. "I pyramided that into getting an oil drilling rig." Before long, he was consulting strictly for himself.

Later he became sole owner of C. E. Brehm Drilling and Producing, a firm at one time boasting 116 employees, four drilling rigs and about 500 producing oil wells in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Wyoming. He was also the president of Brehm Petroleum Ltd., a Canadian oil producing firm, chairman of the board of American Stratigraphic Co., a world wide oil consulting outfit, and majority owner of a Mount Vernon Chevrolet dealership. Mr. Brehm's company team included Wilton Webb, James Thompson, D. L. Scott, Leon Hall, Denzil Osborn and Helen Carr, just to name a few.

The Illinois Oil and Gas Association presented him its "Wildcatter of the Year Award," for finding the most significant new deposits during the year on three different occasions. He was the first person named Wildcatter of the Year in two consecutive years.

C. E. Brehm was appointed member of the Oil and Gas Board in the Department of Mines and Minerals in 1949 by Governor Adlai Stevenson and appointed again on January 17, 1955 by Governor William Stratton. He was president of the IOPA Tri-State for 1957-58 and was awarded the Old Timers Award for Outstanding Leadership & Industry Statesmanship by the IOPA Tri-State Illinois/Kentucky 1978-79. The State of Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals awarded him the title Outstanding Oil Producer in 1979.

C. E. Brehm died of Leukemia in 1980. Brehm Oil continues to operate today. Bob Schaubert is a 33 year employee, acting as Manager of Field Operations. Carolyne Hayes is a 13 year employee, currently Office Manager; Teresa Simpson is currently Secretary/Treasurer; and Bob Herr, III, is currently Operations Manager.

