

PODOLSKY OIL COMPANY

Fairfield, IL

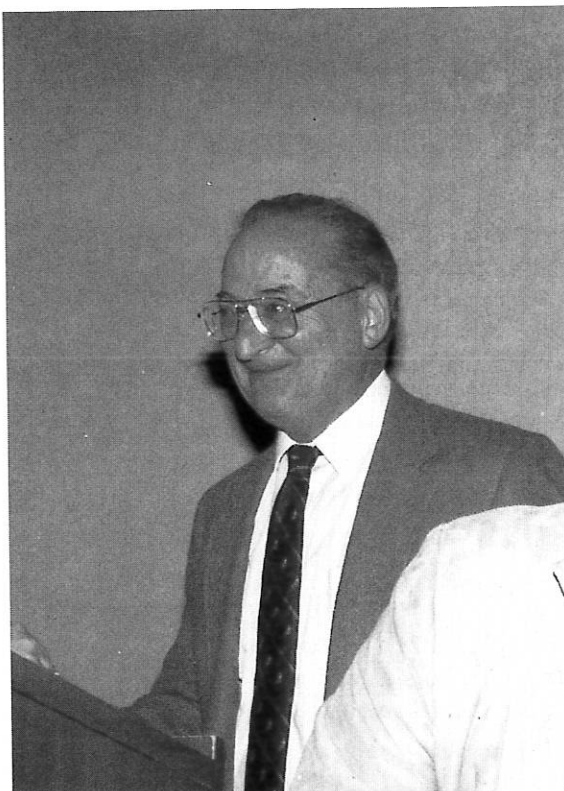
The history of Podolsky Oil Company and the history of the Illinois Oil Industry are often the same story. They both are tales of the American Dream, of risk and reward, hard work, and the belief in giving back more than you take. It is what Bernard Podolsky, known as "Bernie" throughout the oil fields, has dedicated his entire life toward.

Podolsky Oil Company really began in 1903, when Bernie's parents fled Eastern Europe to the new world of opportunity and the booming steel city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A successful beginning in America was wiped out during the Depression when the banks closed with the family's entire business accounts. The efforts of the entire family allowed a small grocery store to provide for six, while sending one son through medical school, another to successful ownership of an independent business, the third to an executive position in a steel fabricating plant, and the youngest through the University of Pittsburgh's School of Petroleum Engineering. In 1938, that completely green engineer stepped off the train in the bustling oil town of Effingham, Illinois, looking for work as one of the first Petroleum Engineers in the Illinois Basin.

Bernie was hired to work for Kingwood Oil Company by their geologist, Clarence Brehm. He helped Kingwood develop leases at the Salem Field, Bible Grove Consolidated, and the Clay City Anticline. He staked locations, supervised completions, and did reserve analysis on a slide rule and mechanical calculator. During this period he met his future wife, Naomi Zimmerly of Olney, who was working as a home supervisor for the University of Illinois Farm Security Administration. In May of 1941 Uncle Sam decided the US Army needed another second lieutenant in anti-aircraft artillery. After shipping all of his clothing to the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, the Army suddenly transferred Bernie to Puerto Rico. He never saw his luggage nor his comrades again. By the end of the war,

he was on the staff of the Panama Canal Zone Defense Command. He left the Army in 1946 as a Major.

Back in Olney, with two children and a wife, Bernie worked as an independent surveyor, engineer, and well-site geologist. He was employed by Robinson-Puckett Oil Company of Fairfield in 1947, working first on their Jasper County development projects, then on their Barnhill Field properties in Wayne County. In 1949 he helped Robinson-Puckett sell



Barnhill Field to Central Pipeline Company, then struck out on his own as an independent consulting engineer and geologist. In 1953 Perry Fulk took one of his deals and washed down a dry hole originally plugged as "brown sand, no show of oil." That excellent well opened the Barnhill Field Aux Vases production, and things leaped ahead.

By 1958 Bernie was drilling in the Mt. Auburn Trend with Phillips Petroleum Company. There Phillips' geologists Howie Schwab, Tom Land, Ed Morris and others were exposed to Silurian stratigraphy in "Podolsky's Geological Kindergarten." Later, Chicago Bears owner George Halas

joined in developing the area.

In 1960, along with William E. (Ed) Brubeck of Mt. Carmel and Shakespeare Oil Company of Salem, Bernie purchased the Cumberland Gasoline Company production. Many of those wells still form the core of his leasehold.

Carl Hilliard started working for Podolsky Oil in 1953 and is still working part time; production superintendent Wesley Price started in 1958 and retired after 33 years with the company; engineer Myron Goldblatt decided after thirty years it was time to get a real job - golf. Bernard, hasn't found any pursuit more challenging or more enjoyable than the oil business. He still runs the show at almost eighty years young - still optimistic, still skeptical of "sure things." He is convinced that this industry provides a crucial resource for America, and that he can provide a promising future for his employees, partners, and the many loyal contractors and professionals with whom he has worked for years.

Some of the experience and much of the load has been passed on to a new generation - Bernie's son Michael Podolsky, a geologist; James Steere, a former Marathon engineer; John R. (Bob) Kinney, a geologist who grew up in a Wayne County farm family; Margot Young, a German-born accountant and office manager; and Dawn Bunnage, a secretary and land manager, originally from Ellery, Illinois. Along with ten of the finest long-term field employees in the Illinois oil business, and several excellent contract pumpers, this group strives to keep the oil fields safe, clean, and profitable. At the same time, Bernie is always pushing his company to think ahead, work smart, and look to the future. The company continues to pursue growth through production purchases, infill drilling, workovers, secondary recovery projects, and new

field exploration. The company utilizes such new technologies as computer mapping and three-dimensional seismic surveys, and expects to prudently explore future horizontal drilling and tertiary recovery projects. Bernie has built an organization that intends to be among the best in the energy business for many years to come. Tough enough to stand the hard times, flexible enough to change, but ready to take on the opportunities that the future always brings.

The oil industry has been a two-way street for Bernard and his company. While he has benefited from the industry, he has always felt that he owed something in return. Podolsky Oil has long stressed conservation of energy, land, and water. In conjunction with the Wayne County Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service he developed the "Wayne County Method" for reclaiming brine damaged soil. For this work he was given the Wayne County Soil Conservation District's "Non-Ag Man of the Year" award in 1973. In 1991 Bernie and his son Michael were co-recipients of the Illinois "Statewide Outstanding Tree Farmer" Award in recognition of work in conservation forestry. He was recognized for planting thousands of trees over his career and managing his timberland acreage for long term production. During the 10 years Bernie was President of the Fairfield Park District, he modernized the District's financial and management structure while building new recreation facilities and a senior citizen center. He served as President of the Illinois Oil and Gas Association from 1966 to 1968, was named winner of the IOGA Lifetime Achievement Award in 1989, and he was Chairman of the Illinois Basin Chapter of the American Petroleum Institute. He has been an Illinois representative to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission since he was first appointed by Governor Ogilvie. Bernard Podolsky was President of the Illinois Basin Chapter of the Society of Petroleum Engineers in 1963 and later served as Eastern Section Director on the SPE National Board of Directors. In 1992 he received that organization's Regional Service Award for thirty years of dedicated service and faithful leadership. Bernie had been Chairman of the Oil and Gas Board of the Illinois State Department of Mines and Minerals, then served again as an active member of that Board in the recent overhaul of the State Oil and Gas Division Regulations. Always an avid supporter of the Illinois State Geological Survey, he is currently involved in the attempt to assure financing for their future oil and gas research projects.

Beyond the committees, the chairmanships, the numerous charities, the civic organizations, and awards, Bernard Podolsky has always felt gratitude to his industry, community, and nation for the opportunities he has been given. The repayment for that good fortune has been a daily attempt to set a good example. There has always been time to check out someone's "Indian Rock" or "meteorite." He always has an ear for the young geologist or engineer who asks for advice or needs encouragement; or the out-of-state heir who wants to understand what "mineral rights" might mean. The only cost would be a pop quiz on mineralogy - which, if passed, was usually rewarded with a jade fidget stone or fluorite crystal.

This is then, both the legacy and the charge that Bernard Podolsky has provided for those who work for him and with him. That, as Samuel Johnson said, "Great works are performed, not by strength, but by perseverance."

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