Theron Wasson, international petroleum geologist and engineer, died August 6, 1970, at MacNeal Memorial Hospital in Berwyn, Illinois. He was 83 years old.

Wasson was born on a farm near Springville, Erie County, New York, April 23, 1887. He became interested in geology in high school (the Griffith Institute in Springville) through field trips conducted by an inspiring teacher around an area of fossiliferous Devonian rocks. After graduation in 1905, he attended Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in 1910. In 1919 and 1920, he did graduate work in geology at Columbia University in New York City.

In the years 1903-1909 Wasson worked on several surveys of coal mines, railroads, pipelines and oil and gas fields in New York and Pennsylvania. In 1907 he ran well elevations and collected well logs in the Zoar gas field in western New York for the first structural study of the field.

Wasson spent the years 1910-1915 on various engineering jobs in California. While in the engineering department of the Great Western Power Company of San Francisco he designed the hydraulic-fill Almanor Dam on the Feather River which at the time of completion impounded the largest artificial body of water in California.

Before enlisting in the United States Army, he was an assistant in the State Geological Survey of New Jersey (1916), a field geologist for the Twin State Oil Company, Tulsa, Oklahoma (1917), and a topographer in the Topographic Branch of the United States Geological Survey for a short time in 1917. During his service in the Army, 1917-1919, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the First Army Engineers' School at Langres, France, in May, 1918. During the occupation of the Rhineland he was city engineer of Sinzig, Germany, in 1919.

Wasson's career in petroleum geology began in earnest in 1920 after his graduate studies at Columbia. He went to Fort Worth, Texas, as geologist for the American Oil Engineering Corporation, and from there to Ecuador early in 1921 to explore concessions on the Pacific Coast of that country.
Later that year, he explored concessions east of the Andes Mountains in Ecuador with Joseph H. Sinclair, consulting geologist of New York.

Early in 1922 he began his distinguished career with the Pure Oil Company. With the title of Chief Geologist he supervised the company's exploration program in the United States, Canada, and South America until 1952 when he became senior geologist and advisor to the executive committee of the company. In 1954 he entered private practice as a consulting geologist.

Wasson was the leader in the Pure Oil Company's outstanding performance as a discoverer of oil and gas fields. He built a highly competent geological department, personally generated imaginative oil-finding ideas ahead of the orthodox explorers of the day, and encouraged his staff to blaze more trails. Through his daring, the Michigan Basin was opened up in 1927, and the Illinois Basin in 1936. His enthusiasm for East Texas and the Gulf Coast led to the discovery of the Sweet Lake Oil Field in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, the giant Van oil field in Van Zandt County, Texas, and others. He was one of the first to recognize the exploratory potential of geophysics. His company's position in the Van field stems partly from his recognition ahead of competitors of the significance of a geophysical anomaly. Owing to his encouragement, the Pure Oil Company was among the early explorers of the Louisiana offshore. The company, with Superior Oil Company, discovered the Creole oil field, the first offshore discovery in 1937 following a reflection seismograph survey. Later on, other discoveries were made. Unquestionably, Wasson's outstanding record as an oil finder would have been more outstanding if management had acted upon more of his original and farsighted recommendations.

Wasson was the rare combination of imaginative explorationist and engineer. His idea of diverting the Washita River around the Cumberland oil field in southern Oklahoma in order to prevent flooding of the field by a dam under construction on the Red River was a practical solution to a problem that puzzled others. He had not forgotten his engineering experience in California. Also, he pioneered in the unitization of fields by recommending the Van field unit based on the productive sand body volume under each lease.

He found time to be active in professional affairs. A list of his publications is attached. He was a Fellow of The Geological Society of America and of the American Geographical Society. He was a member of the Western Society of Engineers, the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the Society of Economic Geologists (vice-president, 1954), the American Geophysical Union, and the Society of American Military Engineers. He was also associated with the Houston,
Tulsa, and Illinois Geological Societies, the Paleontological Research Institution, and the American Polar Society.

As a member of the American Petroleum Institute, he served on the institute's committee on oil reserves (1938-1955) and on the advisory committee for fundamental research on the occurrence and recovery of petroleum (1940-1950). His many other activities in the fields of petroleum and geology include member of the advisory council, department of geological engineering, Princeton University (1941-1955), member of the advisory committee, department of geology, Northwestern University (1949-1952), and U.S. Delegate, United Nations Scientific Conference on Conservation and Utilization of Natural Resources, Lake Success, New York (1949).

Wasson was a member of Tau Beta Pi, honorary engineering fraternity. In 1951 Carnegie Institute of Technology honored him with the Award of Merit. In 1955 he received the Certificate of Appreciation of the American Petroleum Institute with citation for his service on the reserves committee (1938-1955). In 1961 the American Association of Petroleum Geologists recognized his many contributions by making him an Honorary Member. In addition, Wasson is honored and revered by the many geologists who worked under his inspiring directions.

He is survived by his wife, Ann M., Isabel B. Wasson, first wife and mother of his children, daughter Elizabeth (Mrs. E. A. Bergstrom), daughter Anne (Mrs. Anne W. Harney), son Edward B., geologist, 13 grandchildren, and a sister, Florence Christ.

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