

# Memorial to Robert Whitcomb Karpinski

## 1906-1982

DAVID B. WALCH

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San Luis Obispo, California 93407*

Robert Whitcomb Karpinski died at his home in San Luis Obispo County, California, on Saturday, October 31, 1982. Since his retirement in 1969 from the geology faculty of the University of Chicago, Karpinski had been extremely active in geology circles on the central west coast and in the organization of a friends-of-the-library group for Cal Poly State University Library.

Karpinski was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on May 17, 1906. He received his B.S. from the University of Michigan (1926) and a Docteur de Sciences degree from the University of Nancy, France (1931). Before beginning his teaching career at Flint College in Michigan, he worked for the Michigan Highway Department conducting geological surveys. He also served as chief geologist and director of mining exploration in Indochina for the Union Financière Privée of Paris (1928-1930). During World War II, he served as minerals economist and analyst in Morocco and Washington D.C. He then worked for Standard Oil in Peru, Europe, Africa, and North America before settling at the University of Chicago.



Karpinski's involvement in consulting continued in both the public and private sectors. Republic Steel, Rock Island Railway, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Housing Authority are just a few of the organizations that asked for his help from time to time. He was a founding member of the Geochemical Society and of the International Advising Group of the International Association of Hydrogeologists. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and a member of the Indian and Illinois Academies of Science, the Geological Society of France, and the Académie des Sciences, Nancy, France. He wrote articles on economic and engineering geology for a number of English- and French-language technical journals.

In retirement, Karpinski volunteered his time and expertise to encourage support of geological interest and inquiry in the San Luis Obispo area. He lobbied for the establishment of an engineering geology department at Cal Poly and staunchly supported undergraduate education in all the geological sciences. The certification of a young geology faculty member is directly attributable to project secured and overseen by Karpinski. He enthusiastically contributed a lifetime's collection of books and writings to the Cal Poly University Library and solicited similar donations from his friends and peers.

The university and the community will remember Robert Karpinski as an interested and caring individual, always willing to share his ideological thoughts and intellectual gifts.

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