A Legend Well Built

A brilliant intellectual. An inquisitive researcher. The godfather of western Canadian petroleum geology.

Those are among the accolades friends and admirers have used to describe Charles Stelck, OC, P.Geol., PhD. But here’s the one thing he most wanted people to remember: a revered mentor and teacher.

Dr. Stelck’s legendary career started in 1937, the year he earned a geology degree from the University of Alberta.

In the 1940s, Stelck explored Canada’s Far North by dog sled, unearthing evidence that coral reefs had once existed there. He hypothesized that Alberta also had oil-rich reefs—which led to some of the province’s most important petroleum discoveries.

Stelck later spent 35 years teaching geology at the U of A. It was this work that satisfied him most.

“I think the most important thing I did was turn out another generation of kids. . .you’d be amazed at what they did, by luck or by smarts. That’s my contribution,” he told an interviewer in 1984 for the Petroleum Oral History Project.

“Teaching the kids to have faith in their geology in order to make discoveries. That would be the big thing I’d want to be remembered for.”

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