



Arun Karle leads way for Indian oil industry through innovation

By Linda Hsieh, Associate Editor

THE OIL AND gas industry should probably thank NASA.

When **Arun Karle** obtained his Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Lamar Tech University in 1970, he wanted to explore a career in aerospace. At that time, however, NASA was firing people. So when **Schlumberger** came knocking during a round of campus interviews, Mr Karle accepted.

That has proven to be a stroke of luck for the E&P industry, as Mr Karle — now president of **Askara Enterprises** — has made decades of distinguished contributions to the industry as well as tremendous service to IADC, serving as vice chairman of the Indian Chapter since 2000.

A VARIED CAREER

Starting as a project engineer in Houston designing downhole tools, Mr Karle was soon promoted Engineering Divisional Manager. Over the years, Schlumberger moved him up through a series of managerial positions in which he oversaw operations and special projects in places such as Paris, Oman, Dubai, Egypt and India.

"Even though I stayed with one company, I moved into very different positions with very different experiences — and in very different countries," he remarked.

Whether he was marketing products or managing projects, Mr Karle added, he never lost his passion for creating new things. "Even when I'm doing marketing, I'm always looking for new gizmos to invent."

Mr Karle's daughter **Sangeeta** agreed that's one of her father's most distinguishing traits.

"He's a thinker and an innovator," she said. "He's the type of person who has a million ideas. Out of the million, we may



Arun Karle (left) attends the 14th Annual IADC SCA Technology Meet with wife Rashmi Karle and IADC President Lee Hunt in Mumbai, India, on 11 November, 2005.

be successful at only a handful of them. But he's constantly thinking of how to make new things work, whether it's new technology, new systems or developing new relationships."

In 1992, Mr Karle decided to venture out on his own. He first founded **Askara Enterprises**, then followed in 1994 with **Askara International**, based in Houston. Both offer technical and business consulting to foreign companies that provide equipment and services to the Indian oil and gas industry. Mr Karle's wife, **Rashmi**, and their daughters have all worked to make the company a success. "It's very much a family effort," he said.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

One of Mr Karle's goals has always been to bring new technologies to India, where he was born and raised. Whether at Schlumberger or Askara, Mr Karle has been able to find ways to do exactly that.

In 1980, when India's **Oil & Natural Gas Corp** was new to offshore drilling, he introduced the company to acid fracturing, which facilitated oil production from a particularly tight reservoir. In 1985, he

helped ONGC tap into HPHT wells by helping the company efficiently use coiled tubing and nitrogen units.

Then in 2003, Mr Karle was able to take a concept that had been foreign to India and turn it into reality: **Askara Enterprises** worked with **Nabors Industries** to bring the first modular rig to India. It began operating offshore India in June 2003.

It's these kinds of accomplishments that have made Mr Karle so valuable to both the Indian oil and gas industry and to IADC, said IADC Vice President-Middle East & Asia **Ken Fischer**.

"Arun is extremely knowledgeable about the Indian oil industry, and he has limitless energy in promoting IADC's growth in the region," Mr Fischer said.

In fact, he added, Mr Karle was instrumental in establishing the Indian Chapter in the first place. He and his staff have organized 14 of the chapter's technology meets, as well as coordinated the formation of the Service Tax Committee and the Safety Committee.

"You might call me a facilitator," Mr Karle said. "I'm the guy who gets all the guys together and makes sure things happen." For example, he recently organized a presentation given to an Indian committee investigating the BHN platform incident. "I didn't make the presentation, but I made sure the presentation got made."

"Up to now, safety hasn't taken as high a priority in Eastern culture as it has in Western culture. We're working on changing that," Mr Karle said.

He's also working on changing India's dependency on foreign oil, through improved technology and operations.

"A lot of work remains to be done," he said. "India imports 70% of its oil needs. We've got to do a lot more exploration and a lot more drilling."

Globally, Mr Karle sees several upcoming challenges for the industry, but he offered an optimistic forecast.

"With the price of oil going up like it is, I'm not sure at what point it's going to hurt the global economy or if it's going to make alternative energy more attractive," he said. "But I think the oil industry will remain strong for another 40, 50 years. I still remember when I started in 1970, the first question I asked was, 'How long will the oil last? Another 20, 30 years?' That was almost 40 years ago, and it's still going strong!" ■