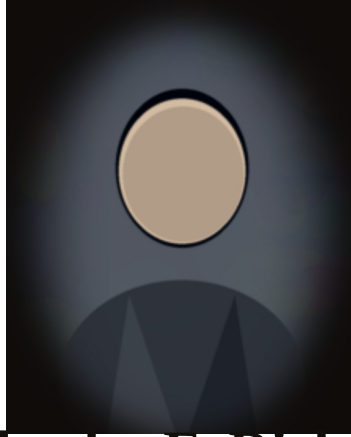




Charles F. Richter

April 26, 1900 - September 30, 1985

Pasadena, California

Charles Francis Richter - American seismologist and physicist who gave the world a practical scale for earthquake magnitude - died in Pasadena, California, on September 30, 1985. He was eighty-five. Born April 26, 1900, in Overpeck, Ohio, he studied at Stanford and Caltech, then spent decades at the Seismological Laboratory translating ground motion into numbers ordinary people could grasp when the earth refused to stay still.

Working with Beno Gutenberg and others, he developed what became known as the Richter magnitude scale - a logarithmic measure that let newspapers, emergency managers, and schoolchildren speak the same rough language about quakes. He insisted the scale measured magnitude, not damage, and spent a career correcting the public's appetite for dramatizing every tremor. His papers, catalogs, and teaching helped turn California's restless geology into a discipline rather than a superstition.

Pasadena was home and laboratory. He died of congestive heart failure, having lived long enough to hear his own name become a household verb.

Ohio childhood gave him patience; Southern California gave him data. He treated seismograms the way a careful cartographer treats coastlines - with respect for the jagged truth.

He died in Pasadena on September 30, 1985. Somewhere a needle is still scratching a drum as the ground remembers how to move.

Richter's gift was usable precision - turning chaos underfoot into a shared measurement. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 30 remembers the Ohio-born Caltech scientist who taught America how to count an earthquake.

Services

Died in Pasadena, California, September 30, 1985. Seismologist and physicist; Richter magnitude scale; Caltech Seismological Laboratory.

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