



# University Honors & Awards

Home / Awards

## Rolla Harger

### Awards

#### National Academies (1933)

American Association for the Advancement of Science



### About Rolla Harger

Rolla Neil Harger was born in Decatur County, Kansas on January 14, 1890. He was the son of William Delashmutt and Margaret Elizabeth (Neil). Harger earned his B.A. from Washburn College in 1915, his M.A. from the University of Kansas in 1917, and his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1922 where he was a National Research Council Fellow. He began his teaching career as a laboratory instructor in chemistry at Washburn College from 1913-1915. He became assistant professor in biochemistry and toxicology at the IU School of Medicine from 1922-1929, associate professor from 1929-1933, and professor from 1933-1960. From 1933-1956 he served as chairman of the department. Harger's research focused on poisons, alcohol, ether, vitamins, and he invented the Drunkometer in 1931, an early version of the Breathalyzer that tested intoxication levels. The Drunkometer used a balloon into which people breathed and was the first practical breath test to measure whether people were drunk. The device was patented in 1936. He was an expert witness and consultant in many notable cases. Harger was a member of the committee on driver intoxication for the National Safety Council that drafted a model act to legalize the use of evidence from chemical tests for intoxication and to set limits of body alcohol concentration for motorists. He was also a member of the Indianapolis Safety Council, the American Chemical Society, American Society of Biological Chemists, American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Medicine, American Society of Forensic Scientists, and Sigma Xi. Harger died on August 8, 1983.

<https://honorsandawards.iu.edu/awards/honoree/8816.html>

## IUPUI Timeline

[Back to All Timelines](#)

## TIMELINE

## Prof. Rolla N. Harger assigns his Drunk-o-meter invention to Indiana University Foundation

Harger's invention is the first patent handled by the Indiana University Foundation to develop it for profit to the university. Used around the world, the Drunk-o-meter is the first practical tool for measuring alcohol in the body and predates the Breathalyzer.



<https://indyencyclopedia.org/timeline/prof-rolla-n-harger-assigns-his-drunk-o-meter-invention-to-indiana-university-foundation/>



<https://automotivehistory.org/first-dui-arrest/>



"Drunkometer" Display at the 1934 Indiana State Fair (Indiana Historical Society)

<https://images.indianahistory.org/digital/collection/dc034/id/365/>



# ***Rolla N. Harger Dies; Invented Drunkometer***

## *About the Archive*

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Dr. Rolla N. Harger, who in 1931 invented the Drunkometer to test intoxicated drivers, died Monday at his home here. He was 93 years old.

Dr. Harger had been a professor emeritus of biochemistry and toxicology at Indiana University since 1960 and a consultant on toxicology to the university's School of Medicine since 1963.

The Drunkometer, which used a balloon into which people breathed, was the first practical breath test to measure whether people were drunk. The device was patented in 1936.

Breathalyzer tests have been used more recently to determine drunkenness.

In 1938 Dr. Harger was one of five members on a subcommittee of the National Safety Council that drafted a model act to legalize the use of evidence from chemical tests for intoxication and to set limits of body alcohol concentration for motorists. The act was incorporated into drunken driving laws nationwide.

Dr. Harger was chairman of the Indiana University School of Medicine's department of biochemistry and pharmacology from 1933 to 1956 and worked as professor of biochemistry and toxicology from 1922 to 1960. Funeral services will be held Thursday.