Authigenic smectite, recently reported to occur over large areas of the deep sea, forms in fan deposits as young as 0.4 m.y. at temperatures less than 10°C and has been found at burial depths less than 10 m. Scanning electron microscopy shows that crystallization of authigenic smectite is related to the progressive downhole dissolution of biogenic silica and volcanic glass. Sandstone cemented with only a few percent smectite retains high porosities (25 to 30%) but permeabilities are greatly reduced (<100 md).

Ancient sandstone turbidites commonly have their original interparticle pore space filled with carbonate cement. Textural evidence (few grain contacts, low grain density) indicates that, as in the DSDP cores, much carbonate cement in ancient sandstone turbidites is the product of an early pre-compaction cementation. At greater depths, these relatively uncompacted calcite-supported sandstones may once again become prospective petroleum reservoirs as decarbonatization generates secondary porosity.

KVENVOLDEN, KEITH, A., MICHAEL E. FIELD, and SAMUEL H. CLARKE, U.S. Geol. Survey, Menlo Park, CA

Thermogenic Hydrocarbon Gases in Unconsolidated Seafloor Deposits, Northern California Continental Margin

Modern unconsolidated sediment overlying a diapir-like structure in the Eel River Basin, offshore northern California, contains an unusual mixture of gas and gasoline-range hydrocarbons. Although concentrations of methane in a 2-m gravity core at a single sampling locality (water depth of 500 m) are in the same range as found in modern anoxic sediments, the concentrations of higher molecular weight hydrocarbon gases are anomalously high relative to background. For example, ethane, propane, isobutane, and n-butane are about 18, 5, 10, and 2 times, respectively, more abundant than the highest concentrations of these same hydrocarbons observed elsewhere in the same region. Associated with these high gas concentrations are anomalous contents of gasoline-range hydrocarbons. Much of the methane and part of the ethane appear to be derived from modern microbial processes. Most of the ethane and the higher hydrocarbons, however, probably have a thermogenic origin deep within the sediment of the Eel River Basin. These hydrocarbons may reach the surface through fractures in the diapir-like structure and seep into overlying unconsolidated sediments that are ponded locally within structural and bathymetric depressions on the surface of this structure. Thus, the hydrocarbons in these near-surface sediments may be derived from petroleum that has formed and accumulated in Tertiary sedimentary rocks of the Eel River Basin.

LABO, J., and JOHN COUSINS, Mobil Oil Corp., Denver, CO

Exploring for Niagaran Pinnacle Reefs in Southern Michigan Basin

The search for hydrocarbon-bearing Silurian Niagaran pinnacle reefs commenced when exploration technology became sufficiently advanced to accurately locate areally small reefs. Starting in 1947, gravity methods were used to locate 90 reefs in southwest Ontario and southeast Michigan but, as the reef trend was pursued westward, gravity data became unreliable owing to the presence of highly variable, surface glacial till. Initial efforts with single fold seismic were also unsuccessful for the same reason. It required the development of CDP seismic techniques with adequate surface static correction before exploration could successfully be expanded into the rest of the reef trend.

First, it was necessary to define reef seismic characteristics as it was not possible to see the reef directly. A synthetic seismogram study of known reefs in southeast Michigan indicated the initial indirect criteria: (a) thinning of seismic intervals above the reef and (b) pull-up below the reef interval. A CDP seismic survey confirmed these criteria and allowed optimization of field parameters.

The first prospect drilled satisfied the seismic criteria and, in addition, exhibited a salt-solution feature common above reefs in southeast Michigan. However, high-velocity infill material was drilled instead of a reef. A second prospect was selected with the additional criterion of an isochron thick around the reef interval. This feature proved to be a residual salt pillow inside the isochron interval. To reduce the risk of encountering salt features a third prospect was selected south of the salt limit (as defined by geologic mapping). The prospect was modeled with best fit of seismic data for the reef case. This resulted in the Mobil No. 1A Brown Niagaran discovery. Several similar seismic features were drilled confirming the reef seismic characteristics.

LAGESON, DAVID R., Geol. Survey Wyoming, Laramie, WY

Stewart Peak Culmination, Idaho-Wyoming Thrust Belt, as Compared with Other Fold-and-Thrust Belt Culminations

The Stewart Peak culmination, located in the northern Salt River Range of the Idaho-Wyoming thrust belt, is an anticlinorium in the hanging wall of the Absaroka thrust fault. The culmination is topographically and structurally higher than areas to the north or south and consists of the oldest rocks exposed in the thrust belt. Rocks from the lower part of the Absaroka thrust sheet, ranging in age from Middle Cambrian to Mississippian, are stacked by an anastomosing network of imbricate thrust faults. Fold geometries include kink, chevron, and open concentric forms which deformed by a flexural-slip mechanism.

Structural culminations are an important and predictable component of most fold-and-thrust belts. Down-plunge projections from culminations into adjacent depressions are often the key to unraveling complex structural relations. Several factors may contribute to the development of a culmination.

Surface geologic mapping, integrated with down-plunge projections and geophysical data, indicate that the Stewart Peak culmination is the result of polyphase uplift and arching of the Absaroka thrust sheet by motion on younger and structurally lower thrust faults,