

## ABSTRACTS

### **HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IN SOUTHERN LOUISIANA: A BRIEF LOOK AT COMMERCIAL DIVING AND THE ROLE OF PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

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The offshore oil and gas industry in southern Louisiana has a complex history marked by environmental, social, and political challenges. The move offshore produced its own unique contests, perhaps the most obvious of these including the construction drilling rigs and platforms that can withstand wave action, the development of techniques for cutting and welding metals underwater, and the transportation of materials and equipment over vast expanses of open water. A close look reveals that the social challenges are equally daunting: attracting and maintaining a workforce able and willing to live on a small metal structure for weeks at a time or to work hundreds and even thousands of feet below the water's surface; organizing a workforce to take action and achieve results quickly and efficiently; and establishing a huge and oftentimes uncertain industry amid isolated rural communities. This paper addresses these technological and social challenges.

The offshore oil and gas industry is perceived to have a specific beginning - the first successful completion of a well out of sight of land- but the people and technology that made this industry possible, and the social and political environments within which it evolved, date back centuries earlier. Both steady modification and sudden breakthroughs characterize this history. This paper explores this process with a brief overview of some of the highlights of this evolution and the specific example of diving and underwater welding to illustrate the complex interplay between human and technical achievements. Though supported with data from elsewhere, the information in this paper comes from workers who experienced this history firsthand.

### **THE OIL PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECTS OF ROY E. STRYKER, 1939-1950**

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Roy Stryker, a former economics lecturer at Columbia University, directed some of the most significant documentary photographic projects in American history even though he was not a photographer. Two of these assignments—as chief of the Photographic Division of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) during the New Deal era (1935-1942) and as director of the Standard Oil Company (New Jersey; SONJ) documentary photographic project (1943-1950)—resulted in an extensive pictorial history of the oil