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## *A Perspective on the Arabian Peninsula*

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The Arabian Platform and the adjacent Middle East contain the most prolific petroleum systems in the world. Extraordinary source rocks beneath excellent reservoir sections often capped by salt or anhydrite seals combine to create the largest hydrocarbon accumulations in the world.

Working in the Arabian Platform/Middle East region requires an appreciation of culture, an understanding of history, and a knowledge of politics combined with oil and gas expertise to develop prospective projects. Politics as well as economics have often dictated the areas to be explored and the fields to be exploited. It is not always easy to understand why certain fields were drilled but never produced unless the areas are viewed within the context of their political and strategic significance.

Even in this "dream land" of oil and gas, exploration has often been difficult, and many have failed in attempts to discover new reserves. We must all remind ourselves that this was once a frontier province. In the early days of this century when exploration began in the region, these deserts and mountains were quite remote, and the problems of getting hydrocarbons to market were as difficult for the early discoveries in this region as our own problems with

bringing Prudhoe crude to the lower 48, or our current industry problems of exporting Caspian crude to Europe.

The early explorationists had their share of problems and biases, which prevented the drilling of the supergiant Burgan structure in Kuwait for more than a decade, and led to a string of more than 20 wildcat failures in a row for onshore Iran. In more recent times, wells have missed huge accumulations because of subtle stratigraphic variations developed on low-relief structures. Frontier and developing exploration trends still exist in the region including virtually unexplored basins in northern and southern Saudi Arabia, offshore portions of the Red Sea, and the Northern Gulf, as well as large portions of onshore Iraq. These provinces will be a large part of the world's hydrocarbon production in the 21st century.

Regarding future potential, we must not forget the importance of fresh water in this land of deserts. In many cases cultural conflicts, political boundaries, and oil and gas production are controlled more by the need for fresh water than by the need for income from the sale of hydrocarbons. In some areas, this is the prime driving force that dictates what and how much oil and gas may be produced.

Exploration or production projects in the region must be attractive to the host government as well as to your own management. Often the plays that have great appeal to our own companies might have no appeal to the government of the area. In all cases, strategies involving state-of-the-art exploration and production expertise combined with cultural sensitivity, historical perspective, and insights into world politics can lead to success in the region. ■

**Jere Jay** received his B.S. from the University of North Carolina and M.S. in Geology from Oregon State University in 1982. He began his career with Tenneco in Bakersfield before moving to ARCO in 1987. Jere is currently a Staff Exploration Geologist at ARCO International Oil and Gas Company located in Plano, Texas. He has worked various international projects covering the region from the Black Sea to South Iran. Prior to his International assignment, Jere worked frontier, exploration, and development projects in California, the Pacific Northwest, offshore Gulf Coast, and onshore Texas (Wilcox and Austin Chalk trends). Over his career, Jere has acquired a reputation for developing "new ventures" projects, often in the midst of mature producing trends.