

Prelude to the Discovery of Braslau Field

By Charlie Worrel

I was startled when I received the March 2004, issue of the South Texas Geological Society Bulletin. I first looked at the cover. My first reaction was that someone had made a mistake. I recognized names from many years ago. Then I noticed the date: "1963". Then I glanced to the right side of the page and Behold! There was a paper on the Braslau Field by me, Charlie Worrel, and my really great partner of many years, Bud Forney. Then I read the editor's column and realized what had happened: a really good idea.

This leads me to recall facts about the discovery of Braslau Field. In 1958, we had a geological idea that a prospect existed in the area. We presented this idea to some trusted friends. Argo Oil Corp. said they would take a half-interest in the prospect if we could get a farm-out from the Humble Oil and Refining Co. (now: Exxon-Mobil). Several other local companies stated they would be interested if Argo took the majority interest.

We had all agreed verbally that we should go ahead with the idea of drilling the well. This was blowout country and we knew we had to set pipe above the Wilcox to prevent a blowout in the Wilcox sands.

I had been visiting with the Humble Oil Co., whose District Office was based in Corpus Christi, on my visits to Corpus and had a good relationship with them. One Friday afternoon I called them and they stated that they were pretty sure that another company was going to make a proposal Monday morning on this property. My goal was to beat them to the punch.

I called Argo that Friday and found out that all the decision-makers were out of town. However, Howard Stover, the assistant Land Man, assured me that he had taken notes on all of our meetings and they were going to take the interest.

So, on Sunday night, I went to Corpus Christi and early Monday morning, I was at Humble's office. I requested a farm-out on the property and my request was approved. I drove back to San Antonio and called Argo to tell them the good news. Steve Blount was in charge of the office. He said "Charlie, you better come on

over to the office so we can discuss this in person." When I arrived, everyone was in Steve's office and they informed me that the geological department had been conducting a seismic review of the area and had just about wiped the prospect out. Steve suggested that we call Humble and see how firm they felt the commitment was to drill the well.

We did that and Humble said: "As far as the Humble Company is concerned, this is a firm commitment to drill a 10,000 Wilcox test." Steve Blount said "Argo has verbally committed to a one-half interest and we will stick to our agreement, wet or dry", or words to that effect. All of the other partners said if Argo was going to take their interest, they would, too."

We all felt pretty bad about drilling this well because of the seismic interpretation. We did have a reasonable subsurface interpretation that an anticlinal structure might exist in the area.

We had the drilling of the well set up to drill to 7,870' and run an electric log before setting protection pipe. This was well above where we thought the Slick (Wilcox) sand would come in. It was either New Year's Eve or New Year's night when we ran the first log. The Schlumberger engineer came into the dog house and said "You have a pretty nice looking sand on the log". We said that really can't be, because this log was set up well above the Wilcox. He replied: "Some one better come look at this film." Sure enough, we had what appeared to be a gas sand at the bottom of the hole from 7,648' to 7,678'. To shorten this story, we bottomed the well at 10,000'. Along the way, the well blew out in the Upper Lyne sand but was controlled safely.

None of us had any idea that a 150' fault traversed the crest of this structure. Discovering it that night turned out to be the key to production.

I credit the Argo Oil Corporation and our other partners with the discovery of this field, for sticking to our verbal agreement, particularly in light of the fact that the seismic interpretation did not agree with the subsurface interpretation.