The Golden Age of Shale (Re) Discovery: Thoughts from the Onset of the Eagle Ford and a Toolbox for the Future

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Abstract

Over the past decade “shales” have experienced a Golden Age of (Re)Discovery across North America. However, given the efficacy and velocity at which Industry operates, it is increasingly perceived that the major NAM opportunities have been captured. Yet, as we all know, these reservoirs are rarely shales but rather a complex mélange of lithologies that span the unconventional resource triangle. So, to continue successfully creating Tier One value in this vast resource space, learning to “see” differently to “think” differently, combined with the Classical, empirically-based “ACB” discovery method, offer an alternate and compelling gateway to new world class discovery.

By 1978, it was common knowledge that the Eagle Ford, S.TX , was a major hydrocarbon resource yet, ironically, it took some 30 years to be “discovered”. Fast forward to 2005 - shale exploration was booming yet disproportionately focused on THE Barnett shale model: siliceous, brittle, fractured, high Ro, 50+% adsorbed gas storage (NOT!), etc. But what about a deeper, hotter, softer, unfractured, 100% compression storage, liquids-rich, limey mudrock that had already been “tested” hundreds of times for over 40 years? An early Eagle Ford vignette will illustrate how “seeing” differently and the “ACB” method informed BR/COP’s 2005-2008 early mover characterization and capture of a material portion of the play’s sweet spot. And, moving forward, it is suggested this toolbox will continue to be equally invaluable as we explore across the resource triangle.