

**AAPG Annual Meeting
March 10-13, 2002
Houston, Texas**

Harrison C. Jamison¹ (1) Consultant, Tucson, AZ

Prudhoe Bay Revisited - A 35-Year Perspective

Thirty-five years ago a team of explorers discovered the largest oil field in North America, estimated then to contain reserves of 9.6 billion bbls of oil and 26 Tcf of gas. Some of the geologists' and geophysicists' experiences make up part of this story.

Compared to current technology, we used unsophisticated geology, archaic geophysics and primitive construction and drilling techniques. Field development, now estimated ultimately to yield more than 12 billion bbls of oil, and the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System provided the infrastructure that made subsequent smaller discoveries economic, fields such as Kuparuk, Endicott, Milne Point, Lisburne, Point McIntyre, West Sak, and Alpine.

At the 1979 AAPG convention in Houston, I presented a paper titled Prudhoe Bay -- A 10 Year Perspective. My co-authors and I stressed three conditions for future exploration success on the North Slope: 1) Continuity and persistence of exploration effort 2) Stable and predictable investment climate 3) Exploration operations not unduly restricted by federal, state, and local regulatory procedures. We stated that future sizable discoveries in other areas of the North Slope were likely if these conditions were met.

These same points apply today. Exploration proceeds vigorously west of Prudhoe in the National Petroleum Reserve -- Alaska, north in the Beaufort Sea offshore and south in the Foothills. Only to the east in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has the search been blocked and the legacy of Prudhoe Bay left unresolved.