

Creative Exploration

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Abstract

How is creativity related to petroleum exploration? Finding significant oil and gas accumulations involves creating new ideas. Parke Dickey put it best when he said, “We usually find oil in a new place with an old idea, sometimes we find oil with an old place with a new idea, but we seldom find much oil in an oil place with an old idea. Several times in the past we thought we were running out of oil whereas actually we were only running out of ideas.

Essentially, the North American Prospect Exposition (NAPE) is all about ideas. As you wander through the prospect booths you will see Dickey’s statement illustrated by the prospects that are for sale. Look for the creative new ideas and when you find them try to not to be too critical at first.

Most of the time, the best and most creative new play concepts are the hardest to recognize. They can be in areas that have few wells and no production. Sometimes they are created by applying new technology to an old area – horizontally drilling an old field for example. Also, they might involve a new target in an old, heavily drilled area. One recent example is the source rock oil play.

It helps when reviewing a prospect to be careful not to judge too quickly. As conservatively trained scientists, it is important to realize that we have a tendency to overly discount what remains unknown to us. When the Barnett Shale play began, I thought that shales would never make effective reservoirs.

What is the next big play? Give yourself a chance to find it by keeping your mind open to new ideas. That new idea that launches you could be at a NAPE booth this year.