

Creative Petroleum Exploration

Edward A. Beaumont¹

¹Senior Geologist, Cimarex Energy, Tulsa, Oklahoma (tedbeaumont@gmail.com)

Abstract

Oil and Gas-finding is an art that requires a creative flair. Modern theory says that creativity is a skill that can be learned and developed through attention and practice. If oil is "first found in the mind" as Wallace Pratt (1952) taught us, then developing skills that enhance creativity should be a goal of all explorationists.

What characterizes effective explorers? Are they creative? A study conducted by Norman Foster and myself showed that effective explorationists are creative.

How is creativity related to petroleum exploration? Finding significant oil and gas accumulations involves creating new ideas. Parke Dickey (1958) put it best when he said, "We usually find oil in a new place with an old idea; sometimes we find oil in an old place with a new idea, but we seldom find much oil in an old 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."

Is creativity all that characterizes effective explorers? No, besides creativity, there are many other personal traits that they seem to possess such as persistence, resourcefulness, and enthusiasm.

Most of us don't possess all of the traits of effective explorers, and therefore being part of teams whose members have professional and personal skills that complement our skills is an effective strategy. The lone explorationist who finds lots of oil or gas by themselves, without help, is a myth.

Creative exploration is a skill. With attention and practice, it can be learned and applied by anyone. Exposure to the theory and practice of creativity in petroleum exploration gives explorationists a start toward the ultimate goal of being "oil finders."

Everyone needs to find his/her own path to creativity. Some techniques are more effective for certain individuals than others.