

Historical Notes

Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies

Early in the year of 1950, A. P. Claudet, President, and Les Bowling, Past President, of the New Orleans Geological Society met with me, then President of the South Louisiana Geological Society, to discuss a joint meeting of the two societies at a neutral location. We decided to approach Dr. H. V. Howe at Louisiana State University about meeting at their School of Geology, in Baton Rouge.

The idea was enthusiastically approved and a meeting was set for May 12, 1950 in the auditorium of the school of geology for early afternoon. Many of the two society members from New Orleans, Lafayette, and Lake Charles attended, along with practically all of the LSU geology students and faculty. I do not recall who the featured speaker was, but the meeting met with an excellent response.

After the meeting, some of us decided to get together for a little R & R to discuss the subject. The ones that met were Aime Claudet, Schlumberger, Leslie Bowling, Hunt Oil, and D. D. Utterback, Houston Oil Company, all of the New Orleans society, along with Francis Stein, Tidewater, Vice-President of SLGS, Lafayette, W. B. Neill, Stanolind and myself, Philip Allin, Gulf Oil, Lake Charles, from the South Louisiana Society, which at that time was composed of members from Lafayette and Lake Charles (with the officers alternating each year between the two cities). Tom Philpott, with Carter in Shreveport, attended the meeting at LSU and was invited to join us that evening.

As I recall, we met at a round table in the Flamingo Lounge in Baton Rouge. We were all very happy because we thought the meeting had been such a success and concluded that we should plan to hold a joint meeting each year. Tom Philpott stated that he would talk to the Shreveport society about joining with us to hold a joint meeting of the three societies each year. The subject of a Louisiana section of the A.A.P.G. arose, but after much discussion, we felt that due to our membership which included many non-geologists, we were probably not qualified as a section of the A.A.P.G. In 1950, there were not an abundance of geologists living in the areas of Lake Charles and Lafayette, so quite a few landmen, brokers, engineers, and salesmen joined us in the South Louisiana the Geological Society. We were the only petroleum-oriented group organized in the area, and so they wanted to join our society. They were welcome as we wanted good attendance at our meetings, especially when we had out-of-town speakers. So we decided to enroll interested non-geologists.

At the lounge meeting in Baton Rouge, the subject of the 1949 A.A.P.G. Regional Meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi came up. It was sponsored by the New Orleans society who planned the meeting at a lot of expense plus several trips to Biloxi. A couple of days before the meeting, the A.A.P.G. business office from Tulsa came down and took over from New Orleans,

including the money. They (the New Orleans geologists) felt that their efforts were very unappreciated. The regional meeting was thoroughly discussed, with a lot of pros and cons. (There had been four such regional meetings: Biloxi, 1946; San Antonio, 1947, Houston, 1948; and Biloxi, 1949).

At first, we had been discussing a Louisiana state annual meeting, but then began considering a Gulf Coast meeting, and decided to recommend to our societies that we join with other societies on the Gulf Coast for a larger regional meeting. The papers presented at the meeting would be confined to the Gulf area.

Leslie Bowling gave a talk at the 1967 GCAGS Meeting, "WHY AND WHITHER GCAGS" and listed seven reasons as to why we proposed the organization. They follow, with some comments from me on the reasons.

1. An annual meeting, rotating among Gulf Coast locales so that each society would have an opportunity to host a meeting.
2. A rapid means of publication. This was one of the primary reasons. A. P. Claudet with Schlumberger gave a talk in Biloxi (in 1949) on a new tool being developed by Schlumberger, called the Microlog, and it was well received by the attending geologists. Claudet contacted the A.A.P.G. Bulletin Editor after the meeting to ask if the paper could be published and was told that it probably could, but it would take between four and six years. We all thought that was ridiculous because we knew that it would be outdated by then, and we felt that the geologists needed the information right away. A print of the paper should be available right away. This led to the *Transactions*, which has been a great success.
3. A less rigid editorial policy. We felt that there were a lot of subjects that probably would not be applicable for publishing in the A.A.P.G. Bulletin but would be useful to our geologists.
4. Less stringent membership requirements. One of our greatest concerns was our relationship with A.A.P.G. As stated earlier, some of our local societies membership requirements were not as stringent as the A.A.P.G. Therefore we had to convince the officers of A.A.P.G. that we were not trying to oppose them, but were an association of geological *societies*, not *individual* members like the A.A.P.G. We did not feel at that time that we were ready for us to be a section of A.A.P.G. We did hope that eventually we would form a section.
5. Communication with all facets of the industry. We felt that we were all receiving worthwhile feedback from the non-geologists belonging to our local groups.

6. More flexible policies with respect to convention management. At Biloxi, the registration fee on the application was strictly that: a *registration fee*. No other function was included such as the convention dinner, evening social, alumni luncheon, or the ladies functions. We heard that many of the attendees could not get reimbursed from their companies for anything except the registration fee. We decided that it would be better to include all convention activities in the registration fee. This would also help the host society in planning more accurate counts.
7. An organization free from politics. We felt that this was a necessity, and we hoped that it would be so. After deciding that we would proceed with the idea, we had an open discussion as to what societies we should contact to join with us. We decided on Mississippi, Southeastern, East Texas, South Texas, Corpus Christi, and Houston. The longest discussion was on the Houston society because it had so many members, it could control the proposed association. We thus decided to eliminate politics by allowing each society only one vote, regardless of its size.

We agreed to call the proposed association the "Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies" and made the following plans to proceed. We agreed unanimously that Les Bowling should act as chairman of our group. He would contact all of the societies, with a copy of the minutes, written by A.P. Claudet. The minutes have been published in the 1980 *Transactions*.

My responsibility was to try to convince the A.A.P.G. officials that we were not an opposition organization. It so happened that the President of the A.A.P.G., Clarence Moody, was scheduled to visit our society a short time later. I met Mr. Moody when he arrived in Lake Charles and we visited before and after the society meeting, discussing our project, as outlined above. I felt that he was sympathetic to the general idea, and that he was convinced that we were not organizing in opposition to the A.A.P.G. He assured me that he would not personally oppose the association. It was my understanding that Tom Philpott talked to him, and he also was given a positive response.

Shortly after our meeting, I resigned from my position with Gulf Oil in Lake Charles to accept a position with Union Sulphur & Oil in Houston. In a new job with a new company, and in a new city, my time was limited, so I did very little thereafter to advance the goals of the association. After joining the Houston Geological Society, I found that most of their members were confused about the GCAGS. W. R. (Bill) Canada, who had also recently moved from Lake Charles to Houston with Magnolia (Mobil), and I decided to have as many one-on-one conversations as possible with Houston geologists to explain and convince them of the merits of joining the GCAGS. I don't know if it helped, but Houston did vote to join with the others.

I would like to conclude by saying that all seven of the geologists at that round table in Baton Rouge made definite contributions to the conception of GCAGS. There was no chairman at that initial meeting, just a lot of comments and ideas thrown out for consideration by a lot of guys who were excited about a joint meeting of their societies, along with a lot of geology students. The joint meeting of the two societies (New Orleans and South Louisiana) and the ensuing discussion developed the proposal for the founding of GCAGS.

I think that most of the basic ideas that we had that day are still working today. Probably the most important one was the *Transactions*, which are now one of the most prized publications in the geological profession.

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