

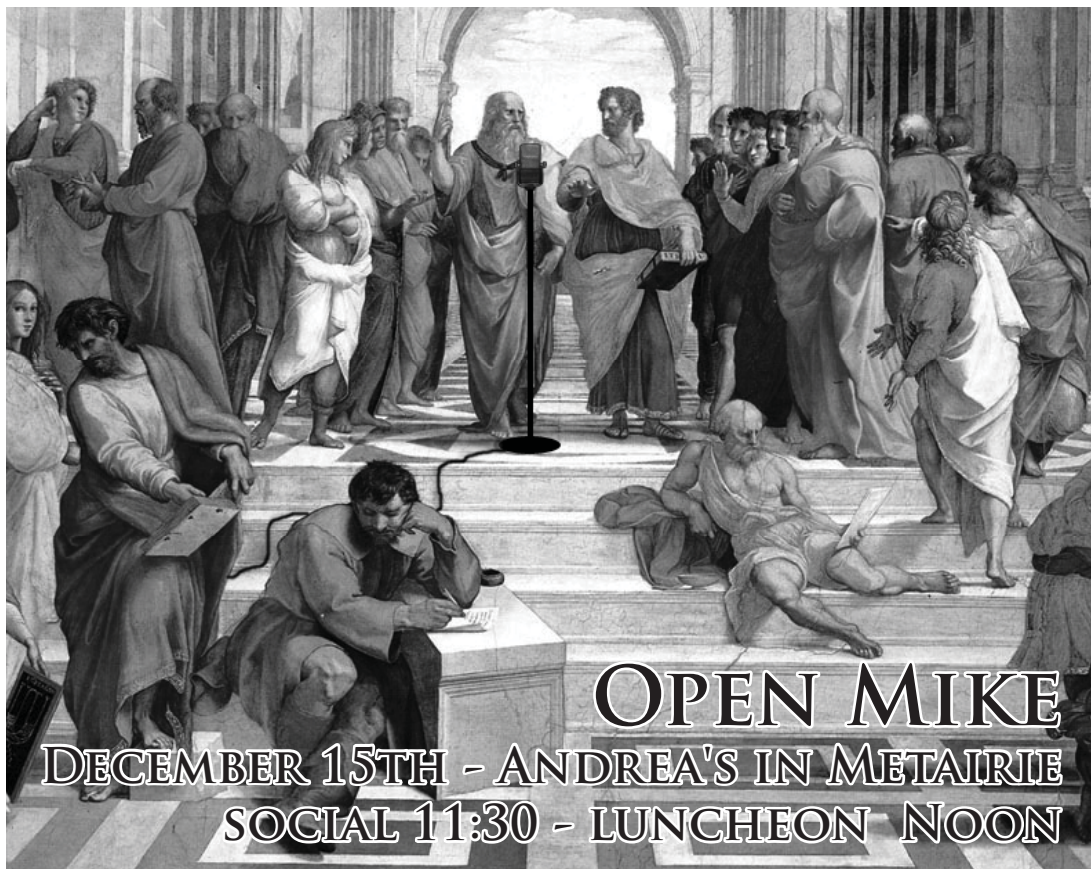


# NOC Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 7

October 2009

**New Orleans Chapter  
Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists**



**OPEN MIKE**  
**DECEMBER 15TH - ANDREA'S IN METAIRIE**  
**SOCIAL 11:30 - LUNCHEON NOON**

## Chairman's Message

The API Joint Industry luncheon, held at the recently reopened Roosevelt Hotel, was an excellent meeting highlighted by a very informative and entertaining talk by Dr. Michael Economides. The large group made up members of some 14 local organizations heard an energetic presentation supplemented by numerous graphic exhibits. Our chapter was well represented with 31 members in attendance, a 100% increase over last year.

Dr. Economides conveyed, with a wealth of backup data, what most of us realize, i.e., that America is being led down a primrose path that will soon turn into a very rocky road with regard to energy. While our politicians are busy chasing rainbows, China and Russia are working at how to slice up the world's energy pie. He pointed out that in the early 70's, the "big three", oil, natural gas and coal supplied 87% of the world's energy, at the beginning of this year they were at 87%, and based on all reliable data, in 30 years it will still be 87%. Taking nuclear and hydroelectric out the remaining 13%, the rest of the alternative energy sources barely represent a blip on the radar.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the Open Mike Meeting since I will be on a 7-day field trip to study surface geology in Key West and the Bahamas along with oceanic currents in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. (Bermuda Triangle? *Ed.*)

Since this will be our last meeting for this year, on behalf of myself, your officers and committee chairmen we wish you all "Happy Holidays".

*Lou*

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Hank E. Ecroyd, Senior Explorationist  
hecroyd@aol.com

3636 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 210  
Metairie, LA 70002

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louis@louisgilbert.com

## JACK THORSON PETROLEUM GEOLOGIST

Northcoast Oil Company  
610 East Rutland St  
Covington, LA 70433-3221

Phone 985-898-3577  
Fax 985-898-3585

jack@northcoastoil.com

## Silverpit "not crater"

Science, as we all know, is not a democracy and being popular is not the same thing as being right. However if the majority view counts for anything, then a recent debate at the Geological Society has indicated that the less glamorous "withdrawal" hypothesis for the origin of the Silverpit Structure (S. North Sea) has now overtaken the impact crater idea, which (in a sign of the times) was portrayed throughout as the "traditional" explanation.

The crater-like structure was discovered by petroleum geoscientists Simon Stewart of BP and Philip Allen, then of Production Geoscience Ltd, during routine analysis of seismic data. Allen noticed an unusual set of concentric rings and hung an image of them on the wall of his office, hoping someone else might be able to shed light on the mystery. Stewart, visiting the company on an unrelated matter, saw the image and suggested it might be

an impact feature. The discovery coupled with the impact hypothesis were reported in Nature in 2002. Since that time considerable debate has surrounded the idea, with other geologists – notably Prof. John Underhill of Edinburgh, advocating some form of collapse due to the withdrawal of material – salt - from below.



The debate, which took place on 6 October, formed the first of a series of Petroleum Group debates sponsored by BP and attracted an audience of about 100.

Channel 4 News science correspondent Julian Rush opened the proceedings and chaired the debate. Speaking first, Simon Stewart presented a simple model that in his view was diagnostic for any withdrawal structure, namely that the profile of collapse should be traceable throughout the section below the structure and the zone of withdrawn material. He contended that this condition was not fulfilled in the seismic sections of Silverpit, and adduced other lines of evidence – such as the (disputed) central "rebound" spike – which he said could not be explained by withdrawal.

Speaking for the opposing view, John Underhill presented a detailed analysis of the structural trends in this part of the North Sea, including new data on the presence of NW-SE trending dykes (related to the igneous centres on the Isle of Mull, invisible on older, low-resolution scans). These, he believes, are what mobilised the salt and then initiated its withdrawal in the Paleogene.

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Office: 504-371-5967  
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Underhill maintains that his theory is consistent with aeromagnetic results, the known extent of the distribution of devolatilised coal and unusual Chalk diagenesis, and velocity effects. Underhill further suggested that the correct interpretation of these structures would have commercial implications for prospectivity through depth conversion and the understanding of Bunter gas occurrence – and, crucially, of the gas's chemical and isotopic composition.

The audience, made up dominantly of hydrocarbon industry seismic interpreters with a scattering of researchers and academics, preferred the Underhill model - for which, after a 20-minute period of debate, they voted overwhelmingly, 80:20.

From *Geoscientist*, Geol. Soc. London  
Dec. 2009 issue

## Roy Walther Petroleum Geologist

2421 Prancer Street  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70131

504-392-8513 phone/fax  
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[johnjurason@jurasinoilgas.com](mailto:johnjurason@jurasinoilgas.com)

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## *Right Energy, Ltd.*

C.M. "Max" Jacobs  
Petroleum Geologist

P.O. Box 1023  
Mandeville, LA 70470-1023  
Off. (985) 502-9104

## CONTACTS

Administrative Secretary  
Carol St. Germain  
504-267-3466,  
cstg6755@aol.com

Reservations, Ed Barry  
504-835-2508

Chairman, Louis Lemarie'  
504-393-8659, jlmarie@cox.net

Vice-Chairman, Michael Fein  
504-885-0004  
mikfe@wtoffshore.net

Treasurer, Reese Pinney  
504-566-9802 X-121  
rbpinney@bellsouth.net

Secretary,  
Historical & Remembrances  
Al Baker 504-836-2710  
abaker1006@aol.com

Membership, Tony Carollo  
504-885-0004  
tcarollo@bellsouth.net

Website, Dave Broadbridge  
david@kimsuoi.com

Newsletter, Tom Klekamp  
985-845-4046  
klekamp@bellsouth.net

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email: gex-lex@cox.net

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## **NASA Challenges 350 Rocketeers Nationwide to Aim a Mile High**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – NASA has invited more than 350 student rocketeers from middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities – 37 teams nationwide – to take part in the 2009–2010 NASA Student Launch Projects. Their challenge is to build powerful rockets of their own design, complete with a working science payload, and launch them to an altitude of 1 mile.

These annual rocketeering projects are the Student Launch Initiative for middle school and high school teams and the University Student Launch Initiative for colleges and universities. Both challenges are designed to inspire students to parlay their interests in science, technology, engineering and mathematics into rewarding careers in fields critical to NASA's mission of exploration and scientific discovery.

Beginning in the fall school term, each team will spend approximately eight months designing, building and field-testing their rocket. They address the same physics, propulsion and flight challenges faced by professional rocket engineers. The students also must challenge themselves as scientists, creating a unique, on-board science experiment that can survive the mile-high flight and yield test results after the vehicle parachutes back to Earth.

In addition, teams will create a project Web site, write multiple preliminary and post-launch reports, and develop educational engagement projects for schools and youth organizations in their communities. The goal is to inspire even younger generations of future explorers.

The Student Launch Projects will conclude April 15-18, 2010, when the teams gather at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. Marshall manages the projects. NASA engineers will put the students' rockets through a professional design review similar to that undertaken for every NASA launch.

## **NOGS plans field studies volume**

METAIRIE, La. – New Orleans Chapter SIPES member Carlo Christina has called for independent geologists, geophysicists and companies to come forward to help in the compilation of Volume IV – Oil and Gas Fields of Southeast Louisiana. The popular and widely referenced series of field studies was last published in 1987, when Willis Conatser and Mike Fein compiled the Volume III Supplement.

Volume IV will be published by the New Orleans Geological Society and would have immediate usefulness to SIPES independent geologists who generally lack the data and resources of the majors or larger independents. Christina said he is looking for structure maps on two or three key horizons, a type log, one or more cross-sections and possibly a seismic line. "Some of the data is available through SONRIS, and through hearings maps," Christina said, "but there are scores of fields where we have little background."

The volume will initially be published one field at a time through the New Orleans Geological Society's NOGS Log. Christina added "Past field studies were lumped into onshore, offshore and salt dome volumes." He added, "This volume may erase those boundaries—we're not limiting this just to onshore, but to state waters and possibly the Federal OCS."

The Volume IV project has been in the planning stage for several years. Volume IV initiator Tom Bergeon of Century Exploration said recently, "With Katrina, the downturn in the economy, and increased demands of the workplace it was pushed further and further down in value-order."

The list of possible candidate field studies include

AVONDALE  
BAYOU SEGNETTE  
BAYOU VILLARS  
BAYWOOD

BAYWOOD EAST  
DENHAM SPRINGS  
FLAT ROCK  
FREELAND  
IRENE  
JUDGE DIGBY  
LOCKHART CROSSING  
MANTI DISCOVERIES  
MONTEGUT  
MORGANZA  
PORT HUDSON  
SHALLOW - various  
SHIP SHOAL - various

Christina reported he has already formed a contact list of thirty geologists who he believes can contribute to the project.

If you have a field – one on which you worked and would like to share your science and craft – contact Carlo Christina.

## Upcoming Conventions, Conferences and Expos

TITLE	DATES	LOCATION
APPEX	02-04 March	London, UK
AAPG - Annual Convention	11-14 April 2009	New Orleans
GCAGS Annual Convention	10-12 October 2010	San Antonio
SIPES - 47TH Annual Meeting	21-24 June 2010	Colorado Springs, CO
AAPG 2011 Annual Meeting	10-13 April 2011	Houston
AAPG Rocky Mtn Meeting	25-29 June 2011	Casper, WY
GCAGS Annual Convention	October 2011	Mexico (Venue TBD)

SOCIETY OF INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL  
EARTH SCIENTISTS  
NEW ORLEANS CHAPTER  
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