

The Bandera PROPHECY

June 26, 2020

The South Texas Geological Society elects Bandera man Ted Flanigan as honorary member

Ted Flanigan was born and raised in the Delmar Loop neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri. He attended the University of Missouri-Columbia and earned a B.S. degree in Geology in 1978. Ted says that he did not actually start out in geology, but rather had declared as an anthropology major in his freshman year. However, at the beginning of his second year, he found that a popular biology class that he wanted to take to satisfy an outside science requirement had been closed.

“Casting about for a suitable substitute, I settled on ‘Principles of Geology’, taught by the highly charismatic Professors Tom Freeman and George Viele. Within the first week, I realized that social science was not for me, and I never looked back.”

As Ted was completing his bachelor’s degree, he won the O. R. Grawe Award, a statewide recognition given by the Association of Missouri Geologists to the outstanding undergraduate geology major in Missouri. He then continued his education, enrolling in graduate school at The University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his M.A. degree in Geology in 1980. Under the supervision of Milo Backus, along with committee members Bill Muehlberger and Bob Morton, Ted conducted his thesis research on pore fluid pressure regimes in the Anahuac and Frio Formations of Brazoria County.

While in graduate school and looking forward to soon embarking on his career as a geologist, Ted had also recognized the importance of participation in professional societies. In 1979, he joined the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and the Society of Exploration Geophysicists as a student member.

With two geology degrees in hand, Ted was hired by Mobil Oil in Houston in 1980 and assigned to explore in the Permian Basin. His very first assignment was to characterize and map the petroleum potential of the greater Wolfcamp Formation of the Delaware Basin. Although his work was immediately applied at the time, some of his dreams and predictions concerning the Wolfcamp potential did not actually come to pass until the recent horizontal drilling boom in that basin. In other assignments, Ted originated exploration prospects and chased drilling rigs from San Angelo to Farmington, New Mexico and from Fort Stockton to Amarillo.

Shortly after beginning his Mobil job, Ted joined the Houston Geological Society, and also participated in the 1981 Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies annual convention in Corpus Christi, where he gave a presentation on his thesis work. It was at this same time that Ted began his first substantial experience in professional society service.

“One early fall day in 1981, my phone rang; it was Peggy Rice, Secretary of the Houston Geological Society, cold-calling to ask if I would volunteer to chair the 1982 Membership Directory committee. I was one of hundreds of new HGS members, one year out of school and totally flat-footed. I was a busy guy with lots of big things going on, but somehow, miraculously, the word ‘yes’ came out of my mouth,” he said.

Giving much credit to his database manager and the printing company representative, Ted and his committee were able to get the directory for the HGS, whose membership numbered in the thousands, published and mailed out on schedule.

In 1985, Mobil moved Ted to its Midland office, where he worked in production geology for fields in the Texas Panhandle and New Mexico, reservoir engineering for special projects, and property divestiture. After this move, he immediately joined the West Texas Geological Society, but because of his frequent travel to the field and unpredictable schedule, he refrained from taking on committee work.

In early 1988, Ted “took a gamble,” resigned from his job with Mobil, and moved to Reno, Nevada, to work on an emerging oil play in central Nevada.

“It was the grand adventure of my life,” he said.

He worked first on retainer to Amerind Oil Co., then as a consulting geologist for several companies, then as a staff geologist for Quest Petroleum Corporation, and finally as an independent geologist. He drilled the biggest well of his career at Blackburn field in 1992. The Petcon #18 Blackburn came in for over 4200 barrels/day, the highest and most prolific well in the field.

“We took the definitive drill stem test on Columbus Day, 1992, the putative 500th anniversary of the discovery of the New World,” he said.

Regardless of historical coincidence, that drilling success brought backing for a new exploratory program that played out through the decade.

While in Reno, Ted’s paper, “Borehole evaluation and completion; carbonate, volcanic, and clastic reservoirs of Nevada” published in the *Oil & Gas Journal* in 1989. He also threw himself into the fledgling Nevada Petroleum Society, serving as president (1990); editor of the *Newsletter* for four years; editor of field trip guidebooks (1991 and 1992); field trip chair (1992); author of a much-referenced paper on Blackburn field, published in “Oil Fields of the Great Basin” (1994); and numerous times as speaker. He represented Nevada in the AAPG House of Delegates for most of the 1990s and served as Facilities Chair for the 1995 AAPG Rocky Mountain Section meeting held in Reno. Ted also joined the long-established Geological Society of Nevada, which he describes as “a large group dominated by hard rock miners backed by high volume gold production. Their interest in oil exploration was largely limited to curiosity as to whether this odd phenomenon might aid them in their quest for gold.”

By 2002, the Nevada play was withering, and Ted moved to Bandera, in search of lower risk prospecting opportunities. He partnered with his

old Missouri classmate, Riley Hanger, and together they formed East Guadalupe Resources, LLC. From 2003 to 2006, they worked up prospects in South Texas, meeting with success in the Edwards Formation in DeWitt County.

In 2007 to 2008, Ted consulted to Cimarex Energy Co. in Denver, Colorado and assessed the potential of the Mississippian Chainman Shale and Eocene Elko Shale as exploration targets on several hundred thousand company acres in northern Nevada. After a lull in activity due to the 2008 crash, Ted resumed work in South Texas in 2009, this time as a consulting geologist for Aminex USA, Inc. in San Antonio. He analyzed the redevelopment potential of Olmos and Escondido zones in several hundred wells at Somerset field in Atascosa and Bexar counties.

From 2010 to 2015, Ted worked with Ford Resources in San Antonio on pre-existing projects in Gonzales County, Texas, and also in Roosevelt County, New Mexico and northern Guatemala. The highlight of the Guatemalan work was the drilling of the City Peten #2X Ocultun, which came in as a substantial new natural gas field discovery in the Peten Basin.

Currently retired in Bandera, Ted looks back on his career as a petroleum geologist and realizes that although his interest in geology, the science part, blossomed at a specific point in time in his college days, the petroleum business part might have had a seed long before that.

“I have a specific memory of being propped up in front of the family black and white television, perhaps with a cup of milk and stack of graham crackers, as my favorite Saturday morning cartoons ended. The next program up was a dramatic documentary about sturdy oil & gas drillers and their drilling rigs. To me, this was utterly foreign and exotic, yet so mesmerizing that I never forgot it. That was the first time I saw this career path. I was only about 7 years old at the time, and so although it did not represent a turning point, it must have been a signpost along my way.”

As for the South Texas Geological Society, Ted immediately joined the group when he moved to Bandera in 2002, and began attending the monthly meetings, as well as participating in short courses and field trips. Then one morning in early 2009, Ted's famous phone rang, again. "It was John Long, chair of the Nominating Committee," Ted said, "asking if I would run unopposed for election to be the STGS editor. I had heard from multiple sources that most of the STGS board positions were worth doing, but just avoid that editor job at all costs. I swallowed hard and, once again, I said 'yes'."

So, in 2009, Ted was elected editor of the STGS *Bulletin*, and concomitantly as a director on the STGS Board.

Ted explains his editor's job in this way: "The core of the job was to procure suitable authors, edit their technical papers for eight *Bulletins* per year, and to maintain the monthly meeting announcements, calendar, advertising, etc., plus to produce the annual Membership Directory. The best part was that I had the services of an excellent printer/layout coordinator and an advertising chair who handled solicitation and billing for advertising. With the passage of time, I was able to 'automate' some aspects of the job, so that it became more manageable. By the time John Long called again the next spring, in 2010, I was ready to say 'yes' to a second year on the job. And so it went in 2011, '12, and '13. In 2014, however, the call was not from John Long, but from Chelsea McGovern, who was willing to take over the job of editor. There was a pattern here; when the professional society calls with a request, you just say 'yes'. That was the easiest 'yes' ever."

But even after five terms as editor, Ted was nowhere near the end of his service to the STGS. In 2014, instead of his usual editor nomination, he said yes to running for one of the executive committee positions, which he won, and so continued serving as a director on the STGS board.

Finally, Ted said yes one more time, and was elected for a three-year commitment on the board, serving as president-elect (2015-16), president (2016-17), and past president (2017-18). During those years, the board addressed important changes in the finances of *Bulletin*

publication, ultimately shifting from a predominantly printed format to an online publication.

The STGS and the geological profession are incredibly fortunate that Ted Flanigan always said yes. We have reaped great benefits from his dedicated and outstanding service.