

DRILLING AHEAD

IADC Book Committee plans legacy of knowledge before greybeards go fishin'

Mike Killalea, Editor & Publisher

THE BIG CREW CHANGE. That metaphor for the looming retirement of a broad swathe of E&P professionals sprang into the lexicon a few years back. Now its implications dominate conference panel discussions, technical papers, articles and plain conversations among E&P managers. A 20-year drilling depression not only eviscerated our muscle, but effectively resulted in a double-decade industry-wide hiring freeze. I have not Googled or otherwise researched this fact, but suspect this to be unique in the annals of modern industry. A dubious distinction, to be sure.

But so much for ancient history. Moving forward, the industry is ravenous for people, whether degreed engineers or technically adept non-engineers. However, weigh the wise words of **Kevin Lacy**, head of discipline-drilling & completions, **BP**, speaking at the 2006 IADC Annual Meeting: "You can't fix a mess in one year that took 20 years to create. I just hope we recognize we have to solve it jointly."

But an inevitable avalanche of retirements isn't the only problem. The stampede to pensions and leisure is amplified by our industry's welcome, if startling, upturn. On the offshore side alone, 119 new drilling rigs are slated to come on line through 2010, **Lehman Brothers** reports. Staffing those will require more than 12,000 people, according to data compiled by **Travis Fitts Jr.**, vice president-human resources, health, safety & environment, for **Scorpion Offshore**, speaking at IADC Drilling Gulf of Mexico 2006. Another 500 land rigs, both new and renovated, are anticipated to come on line by the end of this year, reports indicate.

Promotions will fill senior posts, but what about the rest? Mr Fitts has calculated that promoting 4,000 people translates to another 8,000 from elsewhere – presumably outside the industry.

These new-hires – let's eschew the colorful, yet denigrating appellation "worm" – will require extensive orientation, training and education. It's a lot of work, but the industry is bracing for it.

Capturing the knowledge inside gray-haired noggins before they go fishin' permanently is a no-brainer. But how?

IADC's newest committee is tackling that daunting challenge. The IADC Technical Publications Committee has shouldered the intimidating task of writing, editing, reviewing and publishing a series of technical handbooks spanning all aspects of drilling technology and operations. Under the leadership of chairman **Leon Robinson**, the group, informally dubbed the IADC Book Committee, envisions books on rig operations, bits, rules of thumb, tubular goods, managed pressure drilling, well control, and more. In all, there are about 2 dozen books planned, 5 being published later this year or early next. (**Gulf Publishing** will publish the books.)

These works are aimed at a broad audience – new drilling engineers, operations personnel, and eager-beaver university students.

This project offers an opportunity for today's battle-scarred industry veterans to bequeath a legacy to tomorrow's reliefs – the next Big Crew.

"This is an exciting and unique opportunity to leave something for the new people coming into the industry," Dr Robinson remarked, adding wryly, "There was very little when we entered the industry, and what there was was often wrong anyway."

Well, a lot of people publish books. This project stands out, though, because the books are peer-reviewed. "I know of no other books published that are peer reviewed," Dr Robinson said.

The committee is looking for authors, co-authors, editors and reviewers. Want to help? E-mail Dr Robinson at docleon@worldnet.att.net. There's a link from our home page, as well. Go to www.iadc.org, click on the "Committees" drop-down, and you'll see the link. It's a great effort, and I hope you'll support it.

Have a comment? You can reach Mike Killalea at mike.killalea@iadc.org. ☯