

M. Ray Thomasson has dedicated the past 33 years of a 44-year exploration career in geology to advancing the use of multi-disciplinary teams in the integration of geology, petrophysics and geophysics in order to explore for hydrocarbons using the “play concept.”

M. Ray Thomasson grew up in Columbia, Missouri. His first introduction to geology was as a junior in high school when he worked during the summer as a field hand on a mining survey crew mapping phosphates in the Phosphoria formation in southeast Idaho. His interest in geology was kindled at that time and has only increased through the years. His interest in geophysics started with a job for United Geophysical as a jug hustler, assistant surveyor and computer during his freshman year in college.

Ray majored in geology at the University of Missouri where he received both undergraduate and Masters degrees. This was followed by two years of service as an intelligence officer with the U.S. Air Force. He was stationed at Lowry Air Force Base and learned to ski. This has remained a lifelong passion.

Ray joined the AAPG while an undergraduate. He resumed his academic pursuits at the University of Wisconsin. While at Wisconsin he spent two summers and part time during the school years working for Humble Oil Company as a field geologist under the supervision of Dr. L. R. Laudon. The product of those two summers were reports on (1) “The Geologic Reconnaissance of Nevada and South Central Idaho”, (2) “The Geologic Reconnaissance of Northern Washington and Southern British Columbia”. He selected an area in central Idaho for his dissertation and identified the first limestone turbidites in the United States. His dissertation was “Late Paleozoic Stratigraphy and Paleotectonics of Central and Eastern Idaho,” which dealt with the regional interfingering of a flysch sequence introduced from a tectonically active area on the west with a carbonate facies of shallow to deep water carbonates derived from the east. This facies transition took place from Mississippian through Wolfcampian time and is set in a structurally complex area.

On graduation, Ray was offered a job teaching paleontology and stratigraphy at the University of Illinois, but instead, cast his lot as a junior geologist with Shell Oil Company in Midland, Texas. While in Midland, Ray was active on several committees

with the WTGS and the local SEPM chapter and published papers on limestone turbidites in the Dimple limestone from the Marathon region of Texas and also on the Leonard shelf, slope and basin carbonate facies in the Sierra Lenardo Uplift on the west side of the Delaware Basin. While in Midland Ray was elected President of the Southwest Section of the AAPG.

After four years in Midland, Ray was sent by Shell to New Orleans, where he began an active career in the offshore Louisiana province, picking locations for numerous wildcat wells over a two-year period. Then Shell transferred him to the Offshore Texas Division where he worked as a geophysicist. After one year, he was reassigned to New Orleans where he became Division Geology Manager for the Offshore Division, preparing for federal lease sales. During this time period he was Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Public Information Committee of the AAPG.

His next assignment was as Chief Geologist for Shell's Southern Region. He then transferred to Shell Development Company as Manager of Geologic Research. It was during this period that he first became committed to the integration of geology, petrophysics and geophysics. One of his actions at Shell Development involved setting up two new sections that emphasized both the theoretical and the practical aspects of getting geologic data computerized in order to allow better integration with petrophysics and geophysics.

After a short assignment at Shell's head office as Manager of Exploration Economics and Acting Chief of Operations, he was assigned to Shell's combined Gulf Coast and Atlantic Offshore as Division Exploration Manager. It was during this assignment that he first started employing the concept of overlapping multi-disciplinary task forces that is a principle of management he has used up to the present. In the early 1970s practical integration of geology, petrophysics, geophysics and reservoir engineering became a necessity in order to use the new "bright spot" technology intelligently. During this time he served on the AAPG Public Information Committee and was again Chairman.

He left Exploration for an assignment to Shell's head office as Manager of Forecasting Planning and Economics. One of Ray's principal tasks was as a Shell spokesman giving presentations in Washington, D.C. where he spoke before the

Commerce, Defense and State Departments and the Administration. He also made presentations to the Executive Committees of Ford and GM and the senior executives of American and Chrysler, and to business groups across the country. This was done in an attempt to prepare the nation for an anticipated energy crisis. Shell's planning process was far advanced over the government's and as a result, Shell created a film of Ray's lecture on the "United States Energy Situation" and distributed it widely to business and government.

His next assignment was to London as Head of Strategic Studies for the Shell group of companies. He remained active with the AAPG as a member of the Corporate Liaison and the Energy Minerals committees.

He chaired the AAPG Education Committee, was an Associate AAPG Editor and on the AAPG Research Committee in the mid to late 1970s. Ray had taken an active interest in visiting schools to give lectures and was sponsored by Shell to do this when he was a Shell recruiter for four years. This led to his involvement with the Visiting Geologist Program and he gave many lectures at universities representing the AAPG. In the fall of 1994 he presented two Visiting Geologist Program talks to the University of Beijing in China.

His last assignment at Shell Oil Company was as Chief Geologist. During this year he was successful in getting all of Shell's management to look at the problem of geological-geophysical integration and how this could improve Shell's play development.

On leaving Shell he took a position as Vice President of Exploration for McCormick Oil & Gas and remained there until he formed Spectrum Oil and Gas in 1980. Spectrum was a small independent oil company dedicated to exploration using the synergistic, multi-disciplinary team approach to play-making that Ray learned at Shell. Although he and the company failed, it was one of the learning steps for future success as an exploration manager.

He next consulted for Texas Crude Oil Company and then became president and CEO of Pend Oreille Oil Company, an independent. He increased cash flow in two years from \$20 million to over \$60 million. Here he applied the same integrated

approach to exploration with success. He left that position in 1985 and started his independent career.

Ray next moved his career base to Denver and with financial backing from a small Denver independent, he started creating exploration plays in the Mid-continent, Rocky Mountain and California provinces. During this period Ray was an AAPG Distinguished Lecturer. His topic was "Seismic Prediction of Porosity and Hydrocarbon Traps in Carbonate Rocks." He rejoined the AAPG Corporate Liaison Committee during 1989 through 1992.

In 1990 he became a member of the AAPG Geophysics Committee and was Chairman from 1991 through 1995. Under his leadership, that committee (1) reinstated "The Best of SEG-AAPG Exchange," (2) started a program to develop "Geologic-Geophysical Integrated Studies for Colleges," (3) initiated a 3-D Seismic Atlas, (4) initiated a collection of "Gravity-Magnetic Exploration Case Histories," (5) has initiated closer ties for the AAPG with SEG, SPWLA and SPE and (6) organized the first workshop on visualization as an Archie conference for which he was a co-convenor for the AAPG.

In 1990 he was asked to create and head a task force to make a quick evaluation of the resource potential of the Rocky Mountain province for the AAPG. With the help of 53 of the region's experts, in a very short period of time, they were able to provide substance for an Oil Resource Evaluation Delphi conducted at the Bureau of Economic Geology in Austin, Texas for the DOE.

In 1981 Ray was asked by AGI to investigate the creation of a Foundation for that organization. He was a founder and the first chairman (1984-1986) of the AGI Foundation. He was also a member in 1981 of a three-person committee to look at starting a Development Board for the University of Missouri and is a founding member of that board. He recently was honored by the University of Missouri and was presented with a University of Missouri Leaders Award.

Ray has appeared on several energy panels and has testified in Washington before both House and Senate Committees on the energy reserves remaining to be discovered and to be developed in the United States.

Ray taught an AAPG course on “Stratigraphic Geophysics in Carbonate Exploration” and has presented many papers at national GSA, AAPG and AAAS conventions. His publications include such diverse subjects as (1) limestone turbidites and stratigraphy in West Texas, (2) stratigraphy, structure and sedimentation in the western United States, (3) United States and International energy forecasts, (4) principles of exploration, and articles emphasizing the need for more and better integration of geology, petrophysics and geophysics, and (5) the regional geology and also exploration opportunities in the Rocky Mountains. He was the first editor having started the Geophysical Corner for the AAPG EXPLORER, and also started and was the first editor of The Geologic Column for the SEG LEADING EDGE. The latter was published as a separate special publication by SEG.

Ray started his present company, Thomasson Partner Associates, Inc. in 1991. In 1994 TPA, Inc. was instrumental in the discovery of a new field in the Wind River Basin (Cave Gulch Field), which is in the giant category (greater than one trillion cubic feet of gas). He recently received the Distinguished Alumnae Award from the University of Wisconsin Department of Geology and Geophysics and the Distinguished Alumnae Award from the University of Missouri. He has received the Distinguished Service Award and Honorary Membership Award from the American Association of Petroleum Geologists; he was President-Elect in 1998-1999 and President in 1999-2000. He recently received the Michael T. Halbouty Award, the highest award AAPG gives for service. Ray is a past President of the American Geological Institute, where he has received two awards including the William B. Heroy, Jr. Award.

Ray has four daughters, four grandchildren and is married to Merrill Shields, who is an attorney and retired as Chief of Staff for Gale Norton, the ex-Attorney General of Colorado. Ray and Merrill have a home on a mountain in western North Carolina, where Ray gardens and restores his soul.