

Travels Highlight Diverse Needs and Approaches

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President's Forum: www.spe.org



My grandmother used to say that everything comes to an end. This goes for my presidency (this is my second to last column) and also, I hope, for the worst of the global economic crisis, which has coincided quite by accident with my term of office.

News from the economic front in late May: the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development announced that the decline in economic growth is bottoming out, while the president of the European Central Bank stated that economic indicators are reaching an "inflection point." While

this only means that things are getting less bad, it is heartening nonetheless.

SPE membership remains strong, as our total number of members now is higher than this time last year. Our conferences, workshops, and Forums continue to attract a good, high-quality attendance. It seems that senior management in our industry still values SPE's offer when it comes to technology dissemination and learning. Our strategy of placing conferences and workshops close to major petroleum operations to help reduce or eliminate travel expenses seems to be working. SPE's numerous and varied online resources, which I have described in previous columns, are also proving especially popular at this time.

My visits to local sections continue. Recently I have been to Japan, Vietnam, South Africa, and the Middle East. What different places, with different approaches and needs. We may think that Japan, for instance, has few hydrocarbon resources of its own. Nevertheless, it has a relatively mature SPE section in Tokyo, an active student chapter at Kyoto University, and a recently established student chapter at Waseda University. The country conducts some very sophisticated research and development and many of the high-tech tools and steel we use in our operations originates in Japan. The Japanese national oil companies are global players with global interests, which will be reflected in future workshop topics. We will organize an Applied Technology Workshop with the Japanese Association of Petroleum Technology and major Japanese oil companies in Hokkaido in July 2010. Kyoto in springtime is magical—not just the university, with its wonderful people like Matsuoka-San, the student chapter faculty advisor, and student chapter past-president Henry Garcia, but also the cherry blossoms make it a place to remember.

Vietnam has a relatively young section (1994) and a vibrant student chapter at the Ho Chi Minh University of Technology, in Ho Chi Minh City. The Vietnam Section, chaired by Hugh Sykes, is a great example of how SPE can support and encourage students who are still attracted by our industry. The Vietnam Section has a vibrant social events calendar, including golf tournaments and barbecues. These events, which are sponsored yet those attending still pay a fee, generate a very healthy income—half of which is currently donated to the student chapters in the form of scholarships. I had the pleasure of handing out these welcome envelopes to at least 25 students when visiting both Hanoi University of Mining and Geology and Ho Chi Minh University of Technology. The other half of the section's revenue is donated to local charitable organizations, such as an orphanage.

South Africa is another country with few oil and gas resources of its own, but it has a lot to offer today's industry. During the time of the apartheid-regime boy-

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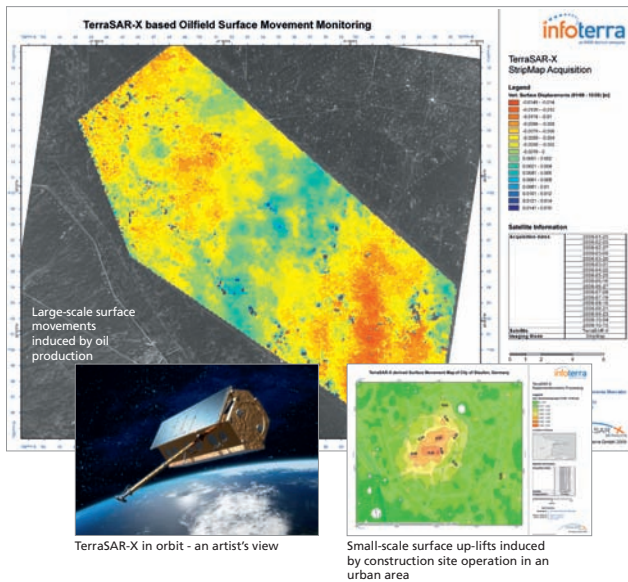
cotts, the government had to rely on its vast coal reserves to fuel the country's energy needs. The mining industry has developed some very sophisticated technology to generate gasoline from coal, and has also done a lot of work on capturing and reinjecting the large quantities of CO₂ generated by this process. The rest of the world is now interested in these technologies and we are talking to Cape Town University, which offers a course in petroleum engineering, about ways for our global membership to share this knowledge and experience.

The Middle East is totally different again. It is currently the region of greatest SPE membership growth. Last year, the Middle East region added just over 1,000 new members and has already exceeded that number of new members to date this year. I visited Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi during this stay. As traditional for SPE Presidents, I opened the Saudi Arabia Section's annual technology symposium. It never fails to amaze and delight me that the most senior executives in Saudi Aramco always take the time to speak at the conference. Those days seem long gone in many SPE regions. Saudi Arabia is taking a long-term view in the current lower oil price scenario. They realize that one day demand will increase once more and that countries like

India and China will want supplies immediately. There is much investment evident in new fields and a growing focus on "intelligent energy," including techniques such as remote control and real-time data gathering. It would be great to take SPE's Intelligent Energy Conference and Exhibition model to Saudi Arabia but the region may not be able to sustain any more new events. The SPE and a number of commercial organizations already run long-established annual meetings in the region.

Abu Dhabi is also looking to the future. It is currently constructing a city of the future, called Masdar City (The Source), in the middle of the desert. Masdar City is one of the most ambitious sustainable developments in the world today. In 10 years time it will house 50,000 people and it will be carbon neutral. The city will be fueled entirely by solar energy and will have very sophisticated public transportation systems. Perhaps one day Abu Dhabi will be exporting electrons rather than hydrocarbons.

As mentioned, my next column will be my last. Time flies, and I will reflect on what we have achieved this year. Please feel free to share your thoughts through our online President's Forum on SPE.org. After all, this is "Your SPE."
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