

## **The Somewhat Accidental Discovery of the Mobile Bay Gas Field: A Story of Perseverance and Good Fortune**

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In 1979, NASA's SkyLab was still in orbit, Jimmy Carter was President, the US was suffering from the Second OPEC Oil Crisis, the Sony Walkman was introduced and Terry Bradshaw's Pittsburgh Steelers took Super Bowl XIII from the Dallas Cowboys. I was Exploration Manager for Mobil in New Orleans, and the Mobile Bay Field was discovered.

Today, Jimmy Carter has been a former President for over 30 years, the Walkman is an antique, Terry Bradshaw is a 61-year old actor and sports commentator. However, Mobile Bay is still producing gas and will continue to do so for at least another thirty years.

An oil or gas discovery often comes from a combination of luck, sound technical and management decisions, overcoming legal, environmental and operational difficulties - and perseverance at critical times. This story of the discovery of gas at 20,450 feet in the Mobile Bay #76-1 well in 1979 includes all of the above. Located in the very heart of a major Gulf Coast recreational and historical area - an offshore Civil War Battlefield no less - Mobile Bay #76-1 presented a unique set of technical and environmental challenges. This paper will describe the technical aspects of how this discovery came about, but unlike most such papers, the passage of time allows the author an opportunity to provide a new generation of geologists a glimpse of how the industry and the technical story has evolved. The real story here is one from a personal and human perspective and how the character and experience of some of the individuals involved had such a great impact on the successful and surprising outcome.