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MISSISSIPPI GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Lisa Ivshin

Fellow members:

What a busy month February was! NAPE was large and impressive, GS was very well represented. I personally did not make it to the meeting but heard a lot of people saying that it was the best ever. The same has been said about Tellus sponsored luncheon at the Hilton. Tellus did a great job having it arranged and it is greatly appreciated.

Our meeting in February was very interesting. Tom Pickens talked about his approach to evaluate shale gas play. I think this presentation was fascinating and many of GS members came to hear him speak, we actually had a full house.

The Society's L. F. Boland Scholarship Fund will recognize and reward outstanding students at the March meeting. Dave Cate put a lot of work in getting it done and we thank him for it.

A lot of things happened in our country in February as well.

Politicians are telling us that we need to understand we are in bad shape, we are in crisis. What most people worry about is that no one has a clue what to do. So being an optimist helps.

In This Issue:

Other stories which took place in February are fascinating as well.

It is Sully and Suleman, the Pilot and the "Octomom". The incredible story about a pilot, who saved 155 lives by landing the plane just right. That is why people are so moved, we are still making Sullys. The "Octomom" however reminds me of Blago without the charm.

*Once again, please check Mississippi State Oil and Gas Board's new web site **http;// gis.ogb.state.ms.us/MSOGBOnline/** and let me know what you think about the new site.*

Make plans to be at the March meeting

I look forward to seeing you all there!

Sincerely,

Lisa

MGS MEETING SCHEDULE

When	What	Where
September 11, 2008	Fall BBQ	Jackson Yacht Club
October 9, 2008	Larry Baria & Ezat Heydari "Shale Layers in the Alabama Smackover Formation and the Implications for Sea Level Change in Regional Correlations"	River Hills
November 13, 2008	Dudley J. Hughes "The Global Warming Debate"	River Hills
December 6, 2008	MAPL / MGS Christmas Party	Colonial Country Club
January 8, 2009 11:30 – 1:00	Jeff Requarth and John Morris of Savannah Oil & Gas—Perseverance and Technology: Recent Exploration Success—North and South Winchester Field, Wayne Co., MS	Holmes Community College (Ridgeland Campus)
February 12, 2009	Tom J. Pickens — An Integrated Approach to Evaluate a Shale Gas Play.	River Hills
March 12, 2009	Honors Meeting: Boland Scholarships	River Hills
April 9, 2009	Bruce Martin—Ancestral Basin Architecture – A Possible Key to the Jurassic Haynesville Trend	River Hills
May, 2009	Spring Fling	Jackson Yacht Club

Pulling pipe with the rams closed is not a good idea

OFFICERS MEETINGS

August 5, 2008
September 2, 2008
October 7, 2008
November 11, 2008
December 2, 2008
January 6, 2009
February 3, 2009
March 3, 2009
April 7, 2009
May 5, 2009

March 12th is the MGS Honors Meeting and Boland Scholarships. Charlie Williams, Chairman of Honorary Memberships Committee, and Committeemen Dudley Hughes and Ralph Hines have recommended that Vaughan Watkins be named Honorary Member of the Mississippi Geological.

First Boland Committee in 1982

Standing left to right, Bill Moore, Chairman Charlie Williams, Marshall Kern.
Seated left to right, Jerry Zoble (Sec./Treas.), Mrs. Larry Boland (Peg), and Vaughan Watkins.

Recession Shock
The Oil Market and the Global Economy

By Daniel Yergin and David Hobbs

The past twelve months have seen unprecedented volatility in oil prices, with heights approaching almost $150 per barrel last summer, followed by a plunge to less than $40 over the past six months. What drove such extraordinary volatility? What is likely to happen over the next few years and the longer term? And what can be done to avoid extreme price swings of this sort?

It was a “demand shock” that set oil prices on their unprecedented upward trajectory. But it is now a “recession shock” that governs the oil market and is, to a considerable degree, responsible for the startling decline in oil prices. Moreover, with this plummeting price has come a sea change in market psychology. Anxiety about supply prevailed during the price run up. But now the focus is on the future of demand in the face of a global recession whose severity is unknown and the likelihood of new government policies aimed at reducing oil use. To be sure, it was not only demand that drove the oil price upward, but that is what provided the driving force.

How Did We Get Here?

Oil prices are a barometer of the world economy. The years between 2003 and 2007 saw the best global economic growth in a generation, which led to steadily increasing oil demand. After growing at only 1 percent annually throughout the 1980s and 1990s, global oil consumption rose by nearly 2 percent per year between 2002 and 2007.

This growth in demand occurred during a period when expansion of supply was constrained by shortages of people, equipment, and engineering skills, which led to rapidly rising costs, and by delays in investment. As a series of IHS/CERA indices show, these costs more than doubled between 2004 and 2008.

As oil approached the previously untouched $100 barrier in 2007, other factors began to play a larger role. The impact of financial markets became more and more evident, with investors becoming increasingly active. A weakening dollar led to a “flight to commodities” among investors, with a growing emphasis on oil and other commodities as an asset class, as a hedge against equity markets and political events, and as a storehouse of value. The impact of speculation and hedging on the price was self-reinforcing, leading to more speculation and hedging. Another contributor to rising prices was a belief in what became know as “decoupling,” the conviction that the world economy had developed to the point that Europe and emerging markets would be insulated or even immune from a U.S. economic downturn.

Finally, there emerged an underlying, if often unstated, belief that the oil price itself no longer mattered. The oil price spikes of the 1970s had led to quick economic downturns. But during the middle of this decade, as prices rose into the high double digits and crossed the $100 barrier, the global economy continued to grow. Many concluded, either explicitly or implicitly, that price did not matter. Demand, many came to feel, was inflexible, and any supply response would be constrained. Whatever else happened, it was thought, consumption in emerging markets would surely continue to grow at a torrid pace.

The “Recession Shock”

All these factors continued to carry oil up, until the high point of $147.27 last July (see chart next page). But by then, the “breakpoint” had already been reached. The underpinnings of the price surge were eroding. Rising oil prices eventually did generate a demand response. It just took a little longer than expected. In fact, it turned out that “peak gasoline demand” in the United States had been reached in 2007. The following year, in response to prices at the pump that at times exceeded $4.00 per gallon, demand declined by more than one million barrels per day (mbd). Government policies, such as the December 2007 U.S. increases in fuel efficiency standards, reinforced this trend.

Rising gasoline prices hit consumer confidence and drained household purchasing power. Increasing oil prices created unexpected burdens for many businesses, but dealt particularly powerful blows to certain industries, most notably autos and airlines. Auto buyers changed their minds about the kinds of cars they wanted far faster than automakers, with their five-year timelines, could adapt.

Then came the “recession shock”. The decade’s long period of economic expansion led to overleveraging on a global scale, and this came to an end with the financial crisis that began to unfold in mid-2007. The financial crisis brought on a severe recession. The global economy grew at a 3.8 percent average annual rate from 2003 to 2007. Global growth dropped to 2.4 percent in 2008. And the world economy is projected to shrink this year. The economic slowdown has led to further reductions in oil demand. Despite continued growth in emerging markets, declines in the developed world will mean a drop in global demand for both 2008 and 2009 — the first time oil demand has fallen since the early 1980s. The decline this year could be as much as a million barrels a day.

While fundamentals have driven the price decline, financial deleveraging has accelerated it. The financial crisis has forced many investors who had placed money in commodity markets — including oil futures — out of the market.

The reversal has been steep and swift. It took three years for oil prices to increase from the upper $40s to $147. The $100 downward plunge occurred in only four months.

The New Surplus

A key question for the future is what will happen to oil supply. Based on projects already underway, the world's aggregate oil production capacity is expected to grow steadily in the short term — more than offsetting declines from existing fields. This growth in supply, combined with modest demand growth, means spare capacity — unused oil production capacity — is rising and could reach as much as 8 percent of demand by next year.

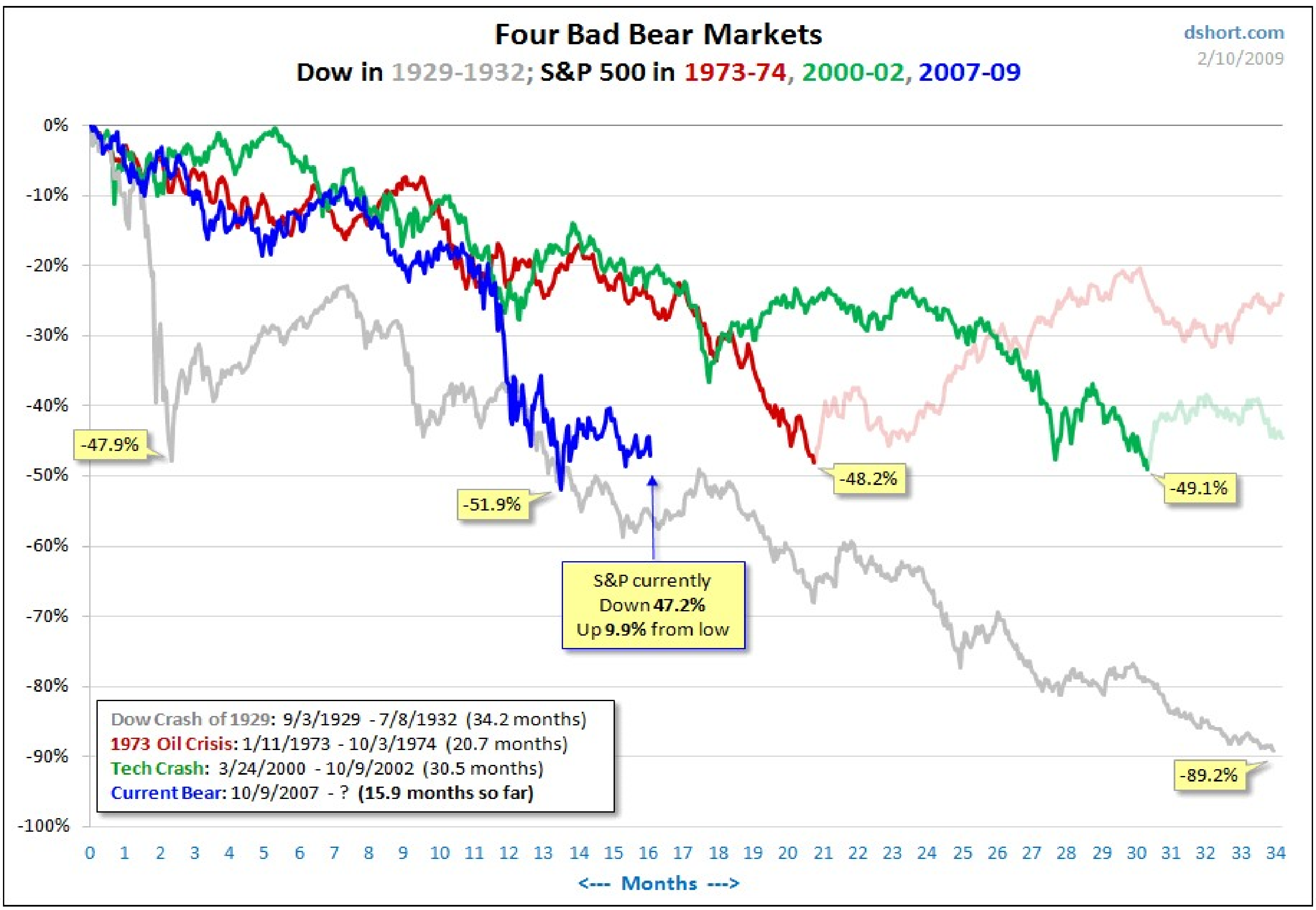
If prices remain low, however, investments in new capacity will slow, and this trend could be amplified by government policies aimed at both energy security and climate change. Amidst the current apprehension, it is difficult to look beyond today's economic emergency. But the cycle will turn around again. What happens then? Will investment slow so much that the seeds of the next disruptive oil price spike will take root? That certainly would not happen in the first years of a recovery, but such a scenario is certainly possible towards the middle of the next decade.

The global recession — now considered the worst since World War II — has underlined the inescapability of overall economic cycles and individual cycles in specific markets. The same goes for the dramatic turns in the oil market.

Government stimulus programs and new regulatory systems will be accompanied by a new emphasis on transparency in markets, and this focus will apply to the petroleum market. Uncertainty increases the magnitude of oil market swings, and better information can reduce uncertainty. At the same time, the oil business is so large, complex, diversified, and international that there is no escape from some price fluctuations. The oil market is part of the world economy, and the price of petroleum will reflect the strength or weakness of the global economy. And today it is very much the weakness of the world economy — the shuttering of factories, the slowdown in world trade, the lack of credit, and the pessimism and fears of consumers — that is represented in the oil price.

But during the most recent period of oil price increases, there was also uncertainty about many important factors. Greater transparency and availability of market information and data represent important tools for limiting future volatility in oil prices and ensuring a more appropriate match over time between supply and demand.

Daniel Yergin is the Chairman of Cambridge Energy Research Associates and Executive Vice President of IHS, its parent company. He is also author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power (new edition, January 2009). David Hobbs is Head of Research at CERA.



Workforce Issues and Concerns about Geology Programs
Rick L. Ericksen, DPA President

Having been intimately involved in state registration/licensure for more than a decade now, there has been an evolving and disturbing trend of institutions of higher learning changing the curriculum that is required to obtain a degree in "geology." The alterations put in place by many of these institutions, for whatever reasons that are used for the justification, have resulted in graduates who are less than prepared to enter into today's workforce. Many "geology" departments require a minimum number of students to sign up for a particular geology course or the department cannot offer it (generally mandated by the school's administration). To a school's administration, this is a cost issue. However, from a "geology" department's perspective it is an issue of graduating students who are thoroughly knowledgeable in geology. Some institutions have skirted the issue of requiring core courses that lead to a degree in geology by simply changing the name of the major from "geology" to that of "geoscience." In one case with which I am familiar, a person can earn a degree in "Geoscience" with less than 20 semester hours of actual geology course work (Note: generally speaking, a degree in geology heretofore required a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in geology courses).

State registration/licensure programs that are in place in 29 states across the U.S. require that those who wish to become registered/licensed must successfully pass two (2) geologic, competency examinations and have a degree in geology generally consisting of a minimum of 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in geologic course work. These examinations are continuously updated and maintained by the Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG®). Without going into detail, I must note that they test across a wide-spectrum of geologic practice and geologic knowledge, not just one or two specific areas of geologic practice but geologic practice in general whether it is petroleum geology, environmental geology, mining geology, etc.

Interestingly, the scope of the examinations and how geology students are being prepared was a topic noted by Dr. David E. King, Jr., a professor of geology at Alabama's Auburn University. His published comments, (The Alabama Geologist, Spring, 2008, Volume 2, No. 1), are as follows:

"...the amount of course work required for most baccalaureate degrees at universities has decreased (by mandate of the administration) by twenty percent or more. Today's B.S. degree is not the same as the one earned by me and almost anyone who is reading this article. Many courses that were considered essential to geologic education have now been eliminated, downgraded, or made into electives within geology programs...." Further, based on the content of the ASBOG® examinations "...many of those areas are no longer included in the typical undergraduate curriculum (or would be electives that a significant number of a typical B.S. graduate would take for their degrees). These include: Quaternary geology, geomorphology, surficial processes, seismology, hydrogeology, environmental geochemistry..." (or for that matter, general geochemistry), "...engineering geology, economic geology, energy resources..." (petroleum geology, coal geology, etc.), "... imagery, modeling, and graphical methods..." For that matter, can you believe that many geology programs now no longer even require Field Camp! I still can vividly remember mine and how it brought my overall geologic education into focus.

Dr. King raises significant, valid points that all underscore the premise that those who are now receiving at least undergraduate degrees in geology from U.S. institutions (and likely countries other than the U.S.) lack the requisite geologic education background in what used to be the classic geology major track. So what to do?

There are multiple solutions to the problem and the following are two of but a few potential solutions that have been suggested for thought:

1) Develop an accreditation program to be utilized by geology/geoscience departments (this was initiated with a survey conducted by a committee of the Geological Society of America (GSA) that has now been turned over to the American Geological Institute (AGI) for further consideration and possible implementation). Note that there is and has been an accreditation body for engineers that is similar to the one suggested for geology, i.e. the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology or ABET);

2) Use the diverse geologic domain blueprint of geologic competency examinations as a guide for geology/geoscience departments in offering adequate geology courses (This would work well perhaps for those departments who possess small teaching faculties. It would also be a potentially lower cost alternative to a full fledged accreditation program).

The ball is currently in the AGI's court as to where it will go with the potential formation of an accreditation body. The other suggested solution could be implemented with some difficulty but it remains a potential solution unless proven otherwise. The time for implementation of some sort of guidelines is overdue.

Until next time,

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

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MGS BOLAND SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Society's L. F. Boland Scholarship Fund is open to donations (tax deductible) year round. Your contribution will help the Society recognize and reward outstanding earth science students at its annual Honors Day meeting on March 12, 2009.

Since inception in 1980, the Society has honored 112 students with the Boland Award. If you would like to contribute, please contact Dave Cate at 601-718-9397 or mail your check (L. F. Boland Scholarship Fund) to him at 217 W. Capitol St., Jackson, MS 39201.

The MGS gratefully acknowledges this years contributors to the L. F. Boland Scholarship Fund for the 2008-2009 year.

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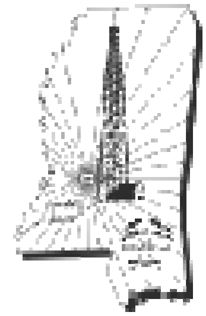
Recently a volcano that had been dormant for 9,000 years near the coast of Chile erupted spectacularly, hurling liquified metals and lightning many miles into the sky.
The results, which you see here, are called a 'dirty thunderstorm' and are quite rare.
Nobody is certain what causes them, but according to National Geographic it's believed to be 'the result of rock fragments, ash, and ice particles in the plume colliding to produce



"You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend, is about the end of any nation. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it."

~~~~~ The late Dr. Adrian Rogers, 1931 - 2005 ~~~~~
~~~~~