

An excursion into the oilpatch jargon of drilling

After management had identified a *play* in which they were interested and after a team of geologists and geophysicists had worked up a *prospect* that management deemed worth drilling as a *wildcat*, the company's *landmen* were sent out to get leases on the property. A team was sent out to *make location*, and soon the rig was in place and the hole was *spudded* and we were *turning to the right*.

Going through the surface muds, the rig might drill a thousand feet a day, but soon it slowed down as it got to harder rocks. At some intermediate depth the driller would *set casing* and then have to drill out the cement before proceeding. Eventually one of us was sent out *well-sitting* to *pick a core point* or the objective, and so we would settle into the *mudlogger's* trailer and log the samples and the drill times. If we did take a core, we'd be there when the core barrel came out to get our corechips to examine. Inevitably the drill string would twist off or the bit cones would come loose, and the driller would have to *go fishing* for junk in the hole, which could take days before we were *making hole* again. In our 15,000' wells, even under normal operations it took ten or twelve hours to circulate *bottoms up* and then *trip out* and back into the hole, providing for long lulls in the actual drilling. Tripping out first required going *bottoms up* to flush out the last cuttings, and then 15,000 feet of pipe would be pulled out the hole, 90 feet at a time, a new bit would go in, and that same 15,000 feet of pipe would go back in the hole, each 90-foot *stand* at a time.

Finally we would get to our objective, which the driller inevitably called a "sand", and we'd find we had drilled a *dry hole*, or a *duster* (even though there was plenty of water in the hole). We never admitted to drilling a duster at the time, because we were supposed to be maintaining a *tight hole*, so when scouts came around and casually asked how things were going, we equally casually replied that it was "too soon to tell". Then Schlumberger (or Dresser if our company was being too cheap to pay for *Big Blue*) would come out to run the *well logs* once we got to *TD* (total depth), and the Haliburton (*Big Red*) truck would come to plug the hole with cement, and another of our wildcats would be labeled "*P&A*" (plugged and abandoned).