1967
V. XVII

WHY AND WHITHER G.C.A.G.S.

LESLIE BOWLING
Oil and Gas Consultant
New Orleans, Louisiana

A B S T R A C T

The limitations of four AAPG sponsored regional meetings held in the Gulf Coast area between 1946-49 resulted in the design of an Association of Geological Societies for two purposes, to hold an annual meeting and to implement a means of rapid publication. GCAGS was founded May 15, 1951 and the first Annual Meeting was held in New Orleans on November 15, 16 and 17, 1951.

A strong wedge of disunity was driven into the Association in its embryonic stage. It was driven ever deeper until about 1957. Since that time the wound has been slowly healing.

The issue has been the question of GCAGS becoming a section of AAPG. The last blow was struck in 1967 with Mike Halbouty wielding the hammer. Mike, representing AAPG, submitted a resolution on March 2, 1967 inviting GCAGS to become a section of AAPG. It was amended by GCAGS, approved by AAPG and as of this date the invitation has been accepted and approved by a majority of the member societies.

GCAGS officially notified AAPG of its acceptance on July 10, 1967 and the Executive Committee of AAPG has approved. The formality of approval by the Business Committee of AAPG is awaited.

Henceforth it is anticipated the history of GCAGS will be an accumulation of dates and statistics, but, only if it maintains its autonomy and political freedom.

Eighteen years ago an idea was born and, like Topsy, it just growed. Topsy is the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies. This idea stemmed from the four regional meetings sponsored by The American Association of Petroleum Geologists held in 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1949 in Biloxi, San Antonio, Houston and Biloxi respectively. These meetings were hosted by local societies under AAPG rules of procedure.

The initial meeting was held at the suggestion of Earl Noble, president of AAPG in 1946, who must have appreciated the state of provincialism into which the profession and the AAPG was steadily progressing. AAPG, also like Topsy, just growed. Its scope of activity was no longer provincial USA, but worldwide.

The period 1946-49 was subsequent to World II and was the heyday of exploration in the Gulf Coast and in other provinces of the Americas as well as the beginning of exploration in new basins of the world, and in the Gulf Coast offshore. All industry had its eyes on the Gulf Coast.

New techniques, methods, tools and technicians were being introduced to the industry at a rapid rate which served to sharpen the pencil of the exploration earth scientists. The contributions of the service companies and their technicians are certainly due their just place in my opinion. They are recognized in GCAGS activities.

The four meetings previously mentioned clearly demonstrated to a few of us the limitations of the AAPG sponsored regional meetings, with particular respect to the Gulf Coast. Very few of the excellent papers presented were published, and those belatedly. It became crystal clear at the close of the Biloxi meeting in 1949 that the Gulf Coast needed:

1. An annual meeting
2. A rapid means of publication
3. A less rigid editorial policy
4. Less stringent membership requirements
5. Communication with all facets of the industry
6. More flexible policies with respect to convention management
7. An organization free from politics

An association of geological societies run by a steering committee composed of one representative from each member society with the aim of holding an annual meeting and publishing available papers was designed in 1949-50 and a reservation for convention space in November, 1951, was made.

A. P. Claudet, president of New Orleans Geological Society in 1950 was enthusiastic about the design and arranged a meeting in Baton Rouge on May 12, 1950 which was attended by T. H. Philpott, Phillip R. Allen, W. B Neal, D. D. Utterback and Francis Stein, all representatives of Louisiana geological societies. The general design was favorably received.

As a result, a resolution incorporating the previously mentioned needs and naming the New Orleans Geological Society as sponsor was submitted to the New Orleans Geological Society and adopted on November 21, 1950. The resolution, revised as a result of discussion, was forwarded to all geological societies in the Gulf Coast on December 1, 1950.

The letter of proposal of the New Orleans society dated December 1, 1950 was sent to the Corpus Christi, South Texas, Houston, East Texas, South Louisiana, Shreveport, New Orleans, Mississippi and Southeastern Geological Societies. All evidenced interest. By request, the Houston Geological Society hosted the initial meeting of representatives of the interested societies which was held in Houston, Texas on March 14, 1951 at The Houston Club. R. D. Sprague, Mississippi; E. L. Earl, Houston; Wm. F. Farley, South Louisiana; T. H. Philpott, Shreveport; John R. Sandidge, South Texas; R. K. Theis, East Texas; W. H. Wallace, Jr., Corpus

Christi and Leslie Bowling, New Orleans attended this meeting.

The design was favorably received and all agreed to submit it to their respective societies immediately for consideration and adoption. The South Texas and Houston societies indicated their preference for a section of AAPG rather than an association of societies.

The history of GCAGS would normally have been a dry annual summary of statistics from this point except for a sequence of events beginning with the business committee meeting of the AAPG in St. Louis in March, 1951. One of the District Representatives delivered a scathing tirade at the annual business meeting denouncing the embryonic GCAGS and its supporters for the formation of a rump organization that was neither affiliated with nor under the jurisdiction of AAPG as a section or in any other manner.

This wedge was to be driven ever deeper over the next six years during which it became a real threat at times to the unity of GCAGS. The wound has been slowly healing since 1957.

The birthday of GCAGS was May 15, 1951. The Corpus Christi, Houston, East Texas, Shreveport, South Louisiana, Mississippi and New Orleans Geological Societies had individually approved the the proposals submitted to their delegates at the March 14, 1951 meeting. Their respective delegates again met on May 15, 1951 in Houston and adopted the resolutions previously considered. South Texas rejected the design in favor of a section.

The Steering Committee then proceeded to organize, to arrange a program and to publish the Transactions for the first Annual Meeting held November 15, 16, 17, 1951 in New Orleans. I will admit the ink of the first Transactions was slightly wet.

Whereas there were no provisions in the by-laws of AAPG in 1951 for the affiliation of an Association of Geological Societies, an inquiry was directed to AAPG in August, 1951, to determine such requirements and whether amendments to the by-laws could be affected to accomplish affiliation of GCAGS.

The previously mentioned wedge was struck a strong blow when Houston advised on December 20, 1951, immediately after the first Annual Meeting, that it was withdrawing from GCAGS as a protest against lack of progress in forming a section.

However, it indicated a desire to maintain a provisional position and invited GCAGS delegates and delegates from non-member societies to hold a meeting in Houston to discuss the matter. Houston advised of its intention at such meeting of submitting a proposed constitution and by-laws in accord with AAPG standards and that in one of the by-laws would be expressed the aim of the Association to become a section of AAPG.

GCAGS petitioned AAPG for affiliation on January 7, 1952. AAPG advised it should be organized and operating to the extent that it should be able to submit its constitution and by-laws, aims and chain of authority. In the interest of time the constitutional requirement might be waived if the individual member societies would ratify the request for affiliation. This was subsequently accomplished with some travail. Houston initially rejected affiliation in favor of a section and East Texas tabled action until the question of sectionizing was settled. As a result, AAPG could not consider the application of GCAGS for affiliation. Affiliation of its member societies is now a requirement of GCAGS.

The invitation of the Houston Society was accepted and the Steering Committee meeting was held on January 9, 1952. All delegates were present, including the delegate from the Houston Society, a provisional member, and one from the South Texas Society, a non-member society.

The Houston and South Texas Societies pounded the wedge for making GCAGS a section of AAPG. The member societies were in favor of a status quo position. However, in an effort to reach accord the member societies agreed to resubmit the question of becoming a section to their respective societies with the votes of AAPG members to be counted separately.

Houston submitted a proposed constitution in accord with its expressed intentions. It was reviewed, revised as of Appril 22 and submitted to all member societies on April 30, 1952 for consideration and approval. Shreveport and Jackson rejected it.

The second annual meeting of GCAGS was held in Corpus Christi on November 6, 7, and 8, 1952. Its success further impressed the need for this type of operating medium.

During early 1953 a constitution committee reviewed the revised draft of April 22, 1952, made further amendments and submitted it to the Steering Committee on February 16, 1953. It was approved and forwarded on that date to AAPG for approval as to form. It was rejected by AAPG and a revised form acceptable to AAPG was submitted to GCAGS. This constitutional form was rejected by the majority of the GCAGS member societies, including Houston.

In the meantime, the member societies of GCAGS had individually considered the question of becoming a section of AAPG. I believe the basic issue at that time of becoming a section was retrogression to the point of beginning, loss of autonomy and domination by two member societies. Corpus Christi, South Louisiana, New Orleans and East Texas indicated their preference to maintain the status quo position.

The Baton Rouge Geological Society became a member of GCAGS in October, 1952 and the South Texas and Tallahassee Societies in 1953. Though not a prerequisite, South Texas favored the immediate formation of a Section.

The third year of life of GCAGS was somewhat more peaceful. The annual meeting was held in Shreveport with the usual success.

The constitution, as ultimately revised February 19, 1954 and as rejected by AAPG, was formally adopted on August 23, 1954. The question of GCAGS becoming a section of AAPG was again at issue though not as heated as in previous years. The question of publication of papers in the Bulletin of the AAPG that had been published in the Transactions of GCAGS was raised and resolved, not necessarily to the satisfaction of everyone.

The fourth annual meeting was held in Houston in 1954 with the usual success. The Beaumont Geological

Society became a non-voting member of GCAGS in 1955, subject to their affiliation with AAPG.

Mr. G. Moses Knebel, president of AAPG in 1955 raised the question of sectionizing GCAGS. After investigating, he was in accord with GCAGS, except for distribution of the Transactions which he considered inadequate.

1956 was rather quiet with the annual meeting being held in San Antonio with the usual success. The host, South Texas Geological Society, was very disappointed in that a sizeable profit remained in spite of its efforts to break even.

The wedge was struck another blow in 1957. GCAGS extended AAPG an invitation to hold a meeting of its Executive Committee in New Orleans. An attempt at having the invitation amended to designate the GCAGS meeting as a regional meeting of AAPG failed. The Steering Committee of GCAGS was not authorized and there was not time for the member societies to individually approve.

In addition, I was appointed Chairman of the Business Committee of AAPG, the first on the present annual basis, in 1957. I was approached as to the possibility of sectionizing GCAGS. My advice was candidly to keep their cotton chopping hands off! The question of the GCAGS becoming a section of AAPG has been a matter at issue many times in the interim 1957 to 1966, particularly when individuals from the Gulf Coast become officers of AAPG. The issue apparently is a favorite for a crusade. Any number of committees over the life of GCAGS reviewed the issue and their recommendations have been the same — reject or table action.

Mike Halbouty made what may be the last approach when he stormed the Executive Committee of GCAGS in Lafayette in 1966. As a result Al Borland, chairman, appointed Duward Dassow, Raymond Fairchild and myself as a committee to again review the issue.

I reviewed the available GCAGS files and the review and recommendation of the committee formed during 1965 for the same purpose. It became obvious that any further review would be repetitious. Legal opinions were obtained from three attorneys on the status of the GCAGS if it became a section of AAPG under the existing constitution of the AAPG. The common opinion was loss of autonomy by GCAGS. These legal opinions were forwarded to AAPG for review by their counsel and a reply was invited. The answer was similar to that of previous requests . . . . . a bunch of gobbledegook.

The results of our committee efforts were presented to the Executive Committee meeting of GCAGS on March 2, 1967 in San Antonio. Mike Halbouty presented a resolution, approved by the Executive Committee of AAPG, inviting GCAGS to become a section of the AAPG. Our committee was charged to review the resolution submitted and were invited to amend it if we so desired.

To be brief, I give you the position of the issue as of even date. I quote the resolution as presented by Mike and the amended resolution presented by GCAGS to AAPG which was subsequently approved by AAPG:

"Whereas the Executive Committee of the AAPG at its meeting on February 10, 1967 unanimously adopted the following resolution: "That the American Association of Petroleum Geologists formally invite the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies to become a section of AAPG, and to state expressly that, as a section of AAPG, GCAGS may retain its present name and have exclusive authority to maintain its freedom and its own autonomy related to scheduling of meetings, finances, publications, selection of speakers, and other pertinent matters; furthermore, the geological boundaries now established by GCAGS are recognized by AAPG, and any change in these boundaries must be initiated by GCAGS; and futher, that GCAGS has the right to withdraw as a section at any time."

"Whereas said resolution was presented to the Executive Committee of the GCAGS at its scheduled official meeting in San Antonio on March 2, 1967 by M. T. Halbouty, President of AAPG."

Whereas Mr. Halbouty indicated the Executive Committee of the AAPG would consider any revisions in said resolution by GCAGS.

Then be it resolved "that GCAGS accept the invitation of AAPG to become identified as a section of AAPG with the understanding that irrespective of present, revised or future definitions and/or requirements of a section (or any other category under which the two associations may be related at any time or from time to time) under the constitution and by-laws of AAPG, both shall:

(1) retain and maintain complete autonomy and shall be completely independent in all affairs of the respective associations, including but not limited to policies, geographical boundaries, meetings, speakers, editorial policies, publications, finances, reports and any other matters pertinent to the respective associations.

(2) Either association may withdraw from the relationship by tendering written notice to the other, to become effective thirty (30) days after date of notice".

This amended resolution has been approved by GCAGS. AAPG was officially advised of the acceptance of the invitation on July 10, 1967.

In summary, GCAGS has demonstrated the sound principles on which it is based. It is a non-political, democratic, dynamic and flexible organization. It has no quarrel nor has it ever interfered with the plans, aims or goals of any other organization. The soundness of the basic principles on which it was founded is evidenced by its success and by the formation of similar associations or federations throughout the country.

In my opinion, two of the basic reasons for its outstanding success are (1) it is an association of societies, not of individual membership and, as a result, it is politically a free organization and (2) its communications with all facets of the industry are optimum.

Whither G.C.A.G.C.? I would conclude that G.C.A.G.S. will continue along its present successful road only, and I repeat only, if it maintains its autonomy, its present non-political democratic and flexible aspects and its present communications.