

Not all quakes are earthquakes!!

During my short tour as an exploration geologist for Shell Oil Company I had the task of “sitting on a well.” Sitting on a well was the terminology for the job of a geologist being on site during the drilling operation of an oil well or a test hole. Since it was a 24/7 job, it was often relegated to the more junior of the geological staff.

I remember “sitting on a well” that was in the southern portion of the Texas hill country, not far from Rock Springs, Texas. The terrain was rolling hills, rocky soil and mesquite bushes that were almost the size of small trees. The geologist usually had a small trailer house in which he had his equipment for microscopic examination of the well cuttings which the drilling crew brought to him. The well cuttings were the rock fragments that were washed out of the borehole as the drill progressed to the target depth. The cuttings were washed and collected in groups of 2, 5 or 10 feet of depth increments, depending on the sensitivity required for formation identification.

On a nice Texas summer afternoon (100+ °F). I was peering through a microscope to examine the latest cuttings when the trailer house began to rock to the extent that the microscope almost fell off the table. Of course I headed for the door to determine what was happening. As I stuck my head out the door my face came about one foot from the face of one of the biggest Texas bulls I had ever seen! He was scratching his neck on an edge of the trailer house. I was very happy that he was more startled than I. He turned and ran away!

— Fred Rueter —