

Don L. Sparks
1939-
Inducted 2023

Don L. Sparks was born in Pampa, Texas. He graduated from Amarillo High School in 1957 as an honor graduate. He attended the University of Texas where he graduated with a B.S. in Petroleum Engineering in 1962. He went to work for Shell Oil Company in Midland before he was called to serve in the U.S. Navy in 1962. He was honorable discharged in 1965 and returned to Shell as an Exploitation Engineer, responsible for all drilling procedures and completion of development wells in West Texas.

In 1969, Mr. Sparks went to work for Freeport Oil Company in Midland as a Division Engineer where he was responsible for all drilling operations west of the Mississippi River including all economic and reserve estimates and design of all drilling programs. In 1971, he was hired by Baily, Sipes, Williamson and Runyan as a consulting engineer. Then, in 1973, he opened a private consulting firm and then, along with Ernest Angelo, formed Discovery Operating, Inc. In 1975, Sparks bought out Mr. Angelo and Discovery Operating has since evolved into a classic, small family owned and operated independent oil and gas company with 31 employees. Discovery operates 420 wells located within a 300-400 mile radius of Midland, producing approximately 10,700 barrels of crude oil and condensate and 13 million cubic feet of natural gas per day. Sparks' team was responsible for finding the Gwyn, JKT, West, Ka-Ze-Sa, Discovery, WOD, Helen, Kathie, WJS and VJK fields in West Texas. Sparks' expertise is in maximizing production from these high cost, tight sand gas fields. Discovery was the first company to use a cut brine system to drill in Schleicher County, Texas. Discovery Operating will celebrate 50 years in 2023.

In early 2000, Sparks worked with Halliburton in their development of logs for the Wolfcamp and Spraberry shales. This logging suite and analysis has been the basis of choosing the landing zones in the horizontal wells drilled and completed in the Midland Basin today.

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