

Haut Protects Environment While Improving Oil, Natural Gas Production

Story by Steve Kaelble/ Photo by Vic Cherubini

A best-selling book from the 1980s proclaimed: "All I ever really needed to know, I learned in kindergarten." Richard Haut, Ph.D., can relate to that feeling—his present career in environmental research was strongly influenced by childhood advice from his mother.

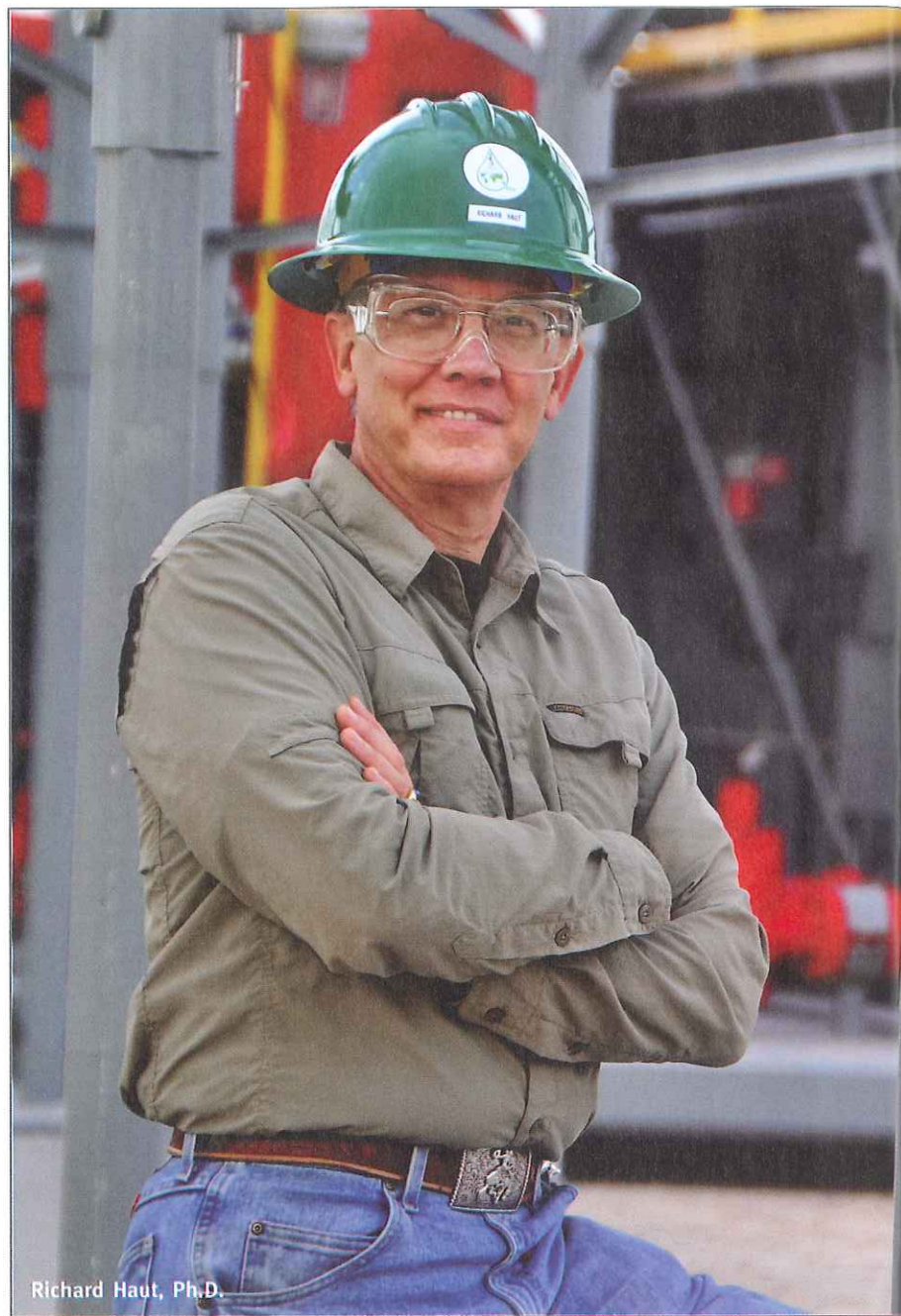
"My mom told me three things that really stayed with me," he recalls. That advice: Leave the world better than you found it; always remember to take just what you need and nothing more; and, if you harm somebody or something, make it right.

Today, Haut is senior research scientist at the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), which focuses much of its attention on helping human civilization live in harmony with nature.

Haut earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Rose-Hulman in 1974, followed by a master's in aerospace engineering from the University of Tennessee and a Ph.D. from Old Dominion University. An interest in fluid mechanics led him to the oil and gas industry, where he spent much of his career at Exxon.

Needless to say, that industry hasn't always gotten along well with environmentalists. Haut's current work is all about exploring ways to make the business more environmentally friendly by demonstrating that where there is a will, there's a way for the environment and the energy business to coexist successfully.

At HARC, Haut has been principal investigator for the Environmentally Friendly Drilling Systems program, aimed at reducing the impact of petroleum drilling and production. It identifies new technologies and helps to commercialize them. Haut also has been director of HARC's Sustainable Technologies



Richard Haut, Ph.D.

Group, investigating everything from green building systems and materials reducing emissions into the air.

Haut's sphere of influence is growing all the time. He helped create the Houston chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, and played a key role in the Solar America Communities demonstration project in Houston. His expertise was tapped following the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and he chairs the Environmental Advisory Group of the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America. Haut sees tremendous future in clean-burning natural gas, noting that America has a 175-year supply, and that automakers are working to build cars that are powered by natural gas. ■