

## 1 WELCOME

**Host:** Hello, and welcome to the June 2006 edition of Stateside Sounds, a Subscription to Better English. My name is Tyler, and it is my pleasure to be your host for this month's program. As always, we have prepared dialogue after dialogue after dialogue so that you can hear and practice English as it is really spoken. Plus you are bound to learn something new as we discuss Julia Roberts in NY, rising oil prices, how to live to be 100, the bird flu and many other fascinating subjects. In order to get the most out of this edition, we recommend that you review our letter "How to Get the Most out of Your Subscription." So if you're ready, we're ready. Thanks for joining us, and let's get started.

## 2 CURRENT EVENT I

### Is There Enough Black Gold?

Difficulty  
Scale

**Host:** The recent **surge**<sup>1</sup> in gas prices is sounding **alarm bells**<sup>2</sup> the world over that oil production is **peaking**.<sup>3</sup> Consumers are worried that there may not be enough **black gold**<sup>4</sup> for future generations. Let's listen as Patrick and Denny, two next-door neighbors, talk about some recent news on the subject.

**Denny:** **Man**,<sup>5</sup> I can't believe I just paid almost \$3.00 a gallon for gas yesterday!

**Patrick:** Yeah, the gas companies are really **gouging**<sup>6</sup> us these days. No wonder there's so much panic at the **pumps**.<sup>7</sup>

**Denny:** **No kiddin'**<sup>8</sup> You gotta wonder whether there really is a problem with **oil reserves**.<sup>9</sup> With these **sky-high**<sup>10</sup> prices, how can the average person afford to drive?

**Patrick:** I know I can't. You know, I was just reading an **article**<sup>11</sup> on the subject.

**Denny:** Really? **Fill me in**.<sup>12</sup>

**Patrick:** Well, it said that any **peak**<sup>13</sup> in production is not likely to happen for years.

**Denny:** Wow. That's good news if it's true. Do you think the article was credible?

#### Conversational Come-back

This dialogue is full of little phrases you can use to give a response to what someone says:

- Man!
- Yeah!
- No wonder.
- No kidding!
- Really?
- Wow.
- Well...
- That's good news.
- I think so.
- You know what else?
- Right.
- Huh?
- I guess so.

**Note:** *n.* = noun; *v.* = verb; *adj.* = adjective; *adv.* = adverb; *p.* = phrase; slang = informal way to say something

<sup>1</sup> *n.* surge = increase

<sup>2</sup> *n.* alarm bells = worries

<sup>3</sup> *v.* peaking (to peak) = to reach the highest point

<sup>4</sup> *n.* black gold (slang) = oil

<sup>5</sup> *p.* Man = an expression of surprise or disbelief

<sup>6</sup> *v.* gouging (to gouge) = to charge an unreasonably high price for something

<sup>7</sup> *n.* pumps = the area of a gas station where you put gas into a car

<sup>8</sup> *p.* no kiddin' (slang) = I agree with you

<sup>9</sup> *n.* reserves = supplies

<sup>10</sup> *adj.* sky-high = very high

<sup>11</sup> Much of this dialogue is based on an Special Report on the oil industry from the April 2, 2006, edition of The Economist.

<sup>12</sup> *p.* fill me in = give me more information

<sup>13</sup> *n.* peak = highest point; top

**Patrick:** Uh, I think so. It was based on a **US Geological Survey**.<sup>14</sup> It said that the world has around three trillion barrels of conventional oil still in the ground.

**Denny:** Really? That sure seems like a lot of oil.

**Patrick:** And you know what else? Only one-third of that oil has actually been **produced**!<sup>15</sup>

**Denny:** Wow! So it means that there should be plenty!

**Patrick:** Yeah, I think they said the production peak would be after 2025. Exxon Mobile has basically said the same thing—that a peak in production shouldn't happen for decades.

**Denny:** I guess it's just the near term political situation that has everyone spooked.

**Patrick:** Right, plus **refining**<sup>16</sup> capacity. Generally, the energy supply should be strong for years to come.

**Denny:** You mean because there's more to this than oil...solar, hybrid fuels, and the like.

**Patrick:** Right. Even sticking with oil for a minute...Oil production doesn't fall **off a cliff**<sup>17</sup> when a field starts to dry up. And new technologies like multi-lateral drilling mean that they can produce higher **yields**<sup>18</sup> of oil.

**Denny:** Huh? Multi what? What exactly does that mean?

**Patrick:** Multi-lateral. It means that one well has two or more branches connected back to the main drilling hole.

**Denny:** Oh. Gee, thanks! You know, I just saw on the news something about a new drilling technology that can **extract**<sup>19</sup> heavy oil. I think they said that by using this technology, they could also obtain a larger amount of oil.

**Patrick:** Uh huh...and what else did they say?

**Denny:** I think they said if they could **pinpoint**<sup>20</sup> exactly where the oil was located, then they could get more oil. And now detection of oil deposits is much better than it ever used to be.

**Patrick:** Hey, every cloud has a **silver lining**!<sup>21</sup> I hear that they've been developing the conversion of natural gas to liquids. And natural gas reserves are huge! With the development of alternative fuels, there'll be tons of fuel to **go around**.<sup>22</sup>

**Denny:** Hey, maybe we've been **making a mountain out of a molehill**<sup>23</sup> about this situation. Gas prices have gotta **drop**<sup>24</sup> sooner or later, right?

**Patrick:** Let's hope so. Well, at least it's cheaper than a gallon of bottled water!

<sup>14</sup> See [www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)

<sup>15</sup> The meaning is that about 1 trillion barrels of oil have been produced in the past, and that 3 trillion barrels are still in the ground.

<sup>16</sup> *n.* refining = making gasoline from oil

<sup>17</sup> *p.* fall off a cliff = fall fast

<sup>18</sup> *n.* yields = returns, % of total

<sup>19</sup> *v.* extract (to extract) = to obtain a substance from

a source


<sup>20</sup> *v.* pinpoint (to pinpoint) = to determine exactly

<sup>21</sup> *p.* every cloud has a silver lining = every negative situation has a positive side

<sup>22</sup> *p.* go around = to be in adequate supply

<sup>23</sup> *p.* making a mountain out of a molehill = to make a big problem out of a small one

<sup>24</sup> *v.* drop (to drop) = to decrease



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**Track 3: Listening Comprehension**

**Q1.** How much did Denny pay for gas yesterday?

**A1:** Denny paid almost \$3.00 a gallon for gas yesterday.

**Q2.** According to one study, how much oil does the world have that is still in the ground?

**A2:** The world has around three trillion barrels of conventional oil still in the ground.

**Q3:** When will the peak in oil production happen?

**A3.** The peak in oil production should be after 2025.

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**Track 4: Useful Phrases**

1. No wonder there's so much panic.
2. That's good news, if it's true.
3. And you know what else...
4. Let's hope so.

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**Track 5: Flash Cards**

1. Yeah, the gas companies are really *gouging* us these days.
2. Oil production doesn't *fall off a cliff* when a field starts to dry up.
3. Hey, *every cloud has a silver lining!*
4. Maybe we've been *making a mountain out of a molehill.*

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**Track 6: SLOW Version of *Current Event***