

# BUSINESS

HOUSTON CHRONICLE • SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2021 • SECTION B ★★

## Oil field outlook slightly brighter

Schlumberger posts first quarterly profit since end of 2019

By Paul Takahashi  
STAFF WRITER

Schlumberger on Friday reported its first profitable quarter in a year, a further sign that the industry is recovering from recent oil busts and the economic fallout from the ongoing global pandemic.

The Houston oil field services company made \$374 million in the fourth quarter, compared with a \$54 million loss in the third quarter of 2020. It marked the first profitable quarter since the fourth quarter of 2019, when the company posted profit of \$333 million.

"Oil prices have risen, buoyed by recent supply-led OPEC+ policy, the ongoing COVID-19 vaccine rollout and multinational economic stimulus actions — driving optimism for an oil demand recovery throughout 2021," Schlumberger CEO Olivier Le Peuch said in a statement. "We believe this sets the stage for oil demand to recover to 2019 levels no later than 2023, or earlier as per recent industry analysts' reports, reinforcing a multiyear cycle recovery as the global economy strengthens."

Oil field service companies, which have taken the brunt of the economic fallout from the oil crash last year, are more confident about the sector's recovery with crude prices above \$50 a barrel and the rising number of operating drilling rigs indicating that drillers are ramping up production. The number of rigs is up by more than 100 since August, according to the company's weekly tally.

Schlumberger said its fourth quarter earnings were fed by growth in the company's digital services as exploration and production companies increasingly focus on software and technological efficiencies as they tightened

*Oil field continues on B6*

## Apple sued for alleged emoji theft



Mark Mulligan / Staff photographer

Katrina Parrott of League City and her business Cub Club Investment have filed a copyright infringement suit against Apple for creating a similar set of emojis to the ones she copyrighted as iDiversicons. Parrott says she developed the emojis for inclusion.

### League City woman says the Silicon Valley tech giant appropriated her diversity ideas

By Amanda Drane  
STAFF WRITER

A League City woman says Apple's racially diverse emoji line is "substantially similar" to those in an app she developed seven years ago. Now, she's suing the tech giant for damages.

Katrina Parrott, who is Black, got the idea from her daughter in 2013 and founded Cub Club Investments to launch iDiversicons on the Apple App Store several months later, according to her

complaint. Tech leaders in Silicon Valley saw its potential, the suit alleges, but after a back-and-forth between Parrott and Apple executives, Apple decided to create its own emojis rather than work with her.

The copyright infringement suit was filed Sept. 18 in the Waco Division of the U.S. District Court's Western District of Texas, which has developed expertise in the area of intellectual property, according to Parrott's attorney, Todd Patterson. Look-

ing to bring the fight to its own turf, Apple has filed for a change of venue, he said, and he's awaiting the court's decision.

Apple did not respond to requests for comment.

Shortly after launching in the app store, Parrott joined the Unicode Consortium, a Silicon Valley nonprofit devoted to software standards, she said in her lawsuit. She said she worked to alert tech leaders to the issue of diversity and inclusion.

Apple participated in consortium meetings and became interested in Parrott's work, the suit alleges. Parrott said she provided

*Apple continues on B6*



## BUSINESS

### APPLE

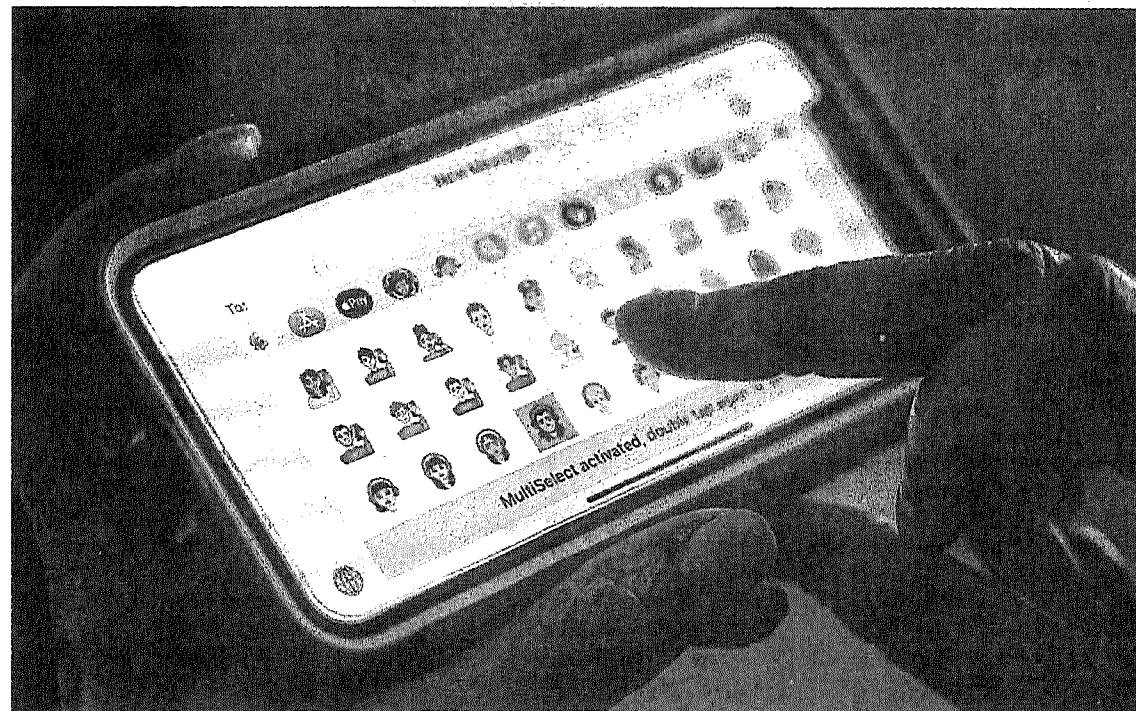
From page B1

Apple a thumb drive containing her emoji creations in May 2014, and that September the two parties began discussing implementation.

Parrott said in court papers that she learned the following month that Apple would use its own designers. Once Apple launched its diverse emoji line in April 2015, app sales at Parrott's company dropped off, the lawsuit states.

Parrott's suit alleges that if unchecked, Apple's actions could set a precedent that a big tech company could misappropriate the proprietary works of smaller companies rather than work with them directly. Parrott also alleges Apple harms the minority communities the emojis were supposed to support.

"This could have been something really magnanimous, to see a giant embrace a Black-woman-owned small business. To help her succeed," she said in an interview. "And instead it was the exact opposite."



Mark Mulligan / Staff photographer

**Katrina Parrott scrolls through some of her favorite iDiversicons on her phone at her League City home office on Friday. She has sued Apple for copyright infringement.**

Parrott's lightbulb moment came in 2013 when her daughter, then a junior at University of Texas in Austin, turned to her during

a weekend visit home and said, "It sure would be nice to be able to send an emoji to my friends that looks like me." Parrott, 55 at the

time, had previously managed logistics and procurement teams at NASA, and she decided to deploy her skills toward building a new

kind of team.

She hired a software developer, an illustrator and got to work, investing her life's savings in the startup. When she started talking about the concept in Silicon Valley boardrooms full of older white men, she said, racially diverse emojis were something people had started talking about, but not very seriously.

"They didn't move as fast as I did," she said.

Apple engineers and executives wanted to know how she'd done it, what color palettes she used, she said in an interview. She recalled the moment when she pulled an Apple executive aside and suggested the company provide iPhone users five skin tone options they can select for themselves rather than the company choose for them.

"They benefited tremendously from me but I was not able to capitalize," she said, noting sales at her company now are barely enough to keep her gas tank full. "Once they came on the scene, mine took a backseat."

[amanda.drane@chron.com](mailto:amanda.drane@chron.com)  
[twitter.com/amandadrane](https://twitter.com/amandadrane)