



## Association for Women Geoscientists

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ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN GEOSCIENTISTS ANNOUNCES:  
2005 OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD MOLLY MILLER  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, OCTOBER 17, 2005

STATESBORO, GEORGIA  
August 31, 2005

Dr. Molly Miller will receive the 2005 Association for Women Geoscientists Foundation (AWGF) Outstanding Educator Award at the AWG breakfast to be held at the Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America in Salt Lake City, UT on October 17, 2005.

One of Dr. Molly Miller's first memories of her interest in Earth Science dates to fourth grade. On a family camping trip at the Gilbert Lake State Park in the Catskills she found a brachiopod in an overgrown quarry. Since she already owned the Golden Guide to Fossils she figured out that there was an ocean there 350 million years ago. She describes this as the most exciting scientific discovery of her life. It's no wonder then, that as an educator she tries to provide all of her students with a similar discovery experience. Her success in this endeavor is attested to by her being the recipient of the 2005 AWG Outstanding Educator Award. Letters state, "Molly is a phenomenal teacher." "Of all the educators that I have encountered in my life, Molly stands out as the best." "Her enthusiasm and positive attitude swayed me to apply to Vanderbilt ... and while I was there Dr. Miller had an incredible influence on my career..." "I would not have pursued education beyond a bachelor's degree without Molly's support."

Molly's academic credentials are well known. She is widely recognized as an authority on paleontology, especially sediment animal interactions, and the Antarctic. She is the recipient of 10 NSF grants, and author or co-author of over 50 referred papers and 13 field trip guides. She has served as editor of GSA Today, the Journal of Paleontology and PALAIOS, has given lectures at almost 30 different colleges or universities, and the recipient of many other teaching awards.

It is the next two categories though, that really set Molly apart and explains why she is being honored with this award. Outreach in every sense of the word, to students, to colleagues, to teachers, to the public. When Molly gives her Antarctic lecture where she enters a room in full Antarctic field gear. She peels away the layers and equipment "describing their functions and then delivers a fascinating lecture on her geological discoveries and their implications for wider understandings of how planet Earth works." Another referee describes how reassurance from Molly quelled her own anxiety of her upcoming Antarctic field season.

As for providing an example, Molly is an intrepid role model; a generous scientist who promotes the work of others and created a professional life that we can all admire. Graduating in geology from the College of Wooster in 1969, she was thinking about switching to a more activist, people-

oriented career. This is a dilemma that many of our students share. Here, Molly's perspective may be helpful, because she now believes that staying in earth science was the right choice, that "increasing people's understanding and respect for the earth may be as much of a contribution in the long run as helping individuals or working on justice issues."

Molly came to this realization after exploring both kinds of service. Immediately after completing her undergraduate degree, she decided to join the Peace Corp and went to Ethiopia. But when she found out that Haile Selassie, dictator of Ethiopia, was welcoming Peace Corps science teachers in trade for continuation of the presence of the Navy in Asmara, now part of Eritrea she resigned. In Washington, with no job in site, she entered George Washington University as a grad student, assured that her TA stipend would allow her to pay her bills. There she met Calvin Miller, a Coast Guard officer by day and grad student by night; they were married 5 months after they met. This was 35 years ago - a grad school geo-romance with staying power. After completing her masters degree, Molly taught high school earth science while Calvin finished his masters degree. Then after a few months in New Zealand and a stint as ranger naturalists at Bryce Canyon they began a Ph.D. program at UCLA.

Molly attributes her success in graduate school and after to the guidance and support of her husband and good luck. She probably played more of a role in this good luck than she gives herself credit for. For example, today as departments and universities struggle with the two-body problem, Calvin, Molly and Vanderbilt University were already showing the way. Twenty-eight years ago, after finishing their Ph.D.'s both Miller took a single job at Vanderbilt. This was a time when many institutions still would not hire spouses due to "nepotism" problems. The Millers envisioned that sharing a job would allow both of them to develop professionally and to be equally involved in parenting their (anticipated) children; they also were sure that they as a couple brought more to an institution than any single individual. The small, forward-thinking department at Vanderbilt recognized Molly and Calvin's proposal to share a job as a win-win proposition and convinced the Vanderbilt administration to offer each one a half time job. Their requirements for tenure were the same as full-time faculty, but their teaching loads and salaries were half that of one faculty member. Their two children were born before either had tenure, spring at the end of their first year and Zach toward the end of their third. After tenure and after the kids were in school, Vanderbilt offered them full-time appointments, which they gladly accepted.

Throughout her career Molly is constantly trying new ideas, unconventional activities, and continues to create new paths. Her final word, "My wonderful career has been a matter of luck, not the result of "good works" on my part. Granted the randomness of things, it does seem important to seek out things to do that you really want to do, or that you feel are morally/ethically right." For the countless number of us who have benefited from Molly Miller's career it is our good luck that she is part of our geologic community.

AWG is proud to recognize Dr. Molly Miller with the 2005 AWGF Outstanding Educator Award. Please join us at breakfast on October 17 to honor this truly outstanding educator and inspirational role model.

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