# YOUNG SCIENTIST AWARD (DONATH MEDAL)

**Presented to Paul A. Kapp**

Paul A. Kapp
*University of Arizona*

### *Citation by George E. Gehrels*

It is a great honor to introduce Paul Kapp as the recipient of the Donath Medal (Young Scientist Award) for 2008. Paul's contributions are primarily in the field of tectonics, with specific emphasis on the geologic, geophysical, and geochemical processes involved in continental collision.

Paul received his B.S. in geology/geophysics from the University of Arizona, where he was an active participant in several different research projects and a leader in the undergraduate geology club. Paul then went to work with An Yin at UCLA and conducted his dissertation research on the tectonic evolution of central Tibet. This was the perfect project for Paul, as he was one of the first geologists to bring modern concepts and analytical tools into a region the size of California. Through ~12 months of field mapping and related geochemical and petrologic work, Paul demonstrated that one of the previously mapped sutures in central Tibet is instead an extensional structure (probably the largest core complex on Earth) that exhumes Tibetan lower crust.

Paul finished his Ph.D. in 2001 and immediately took a faculty position at the University of Arizona. Although Tibet remains Paul's primary research focus, he has recently initiated projects on compressional and extensional structures in the western USA, the forearc region of the central Andes, and gneiss domes of eastern Egypt. An additional research theme concerns the role of wind abrasion in shaping orogenic belts and the use of yardangs to constrain paleoclimate and paleowind patterns.

In addition to this stellar research, Kapp is an outstanding teacher of structural geology and tectonics courses and an effective and inspirational advisor of undergraduate and graduate students.

We accordingly congratulate Dr. Kapp on his impressive accomplishments to date and look forward to his continued leadership in tectonics research and education.

### *Response by Paul A. Kapp*

Setting many feelings of humility aside—it is a great honor to be awarded the Donath Medal this evening in front of so many colleagues and friends. I thank the Geological Society of America and the Donath family for endowing this award.

It is a special pleasure to be introduced by George Gehrels, who took me under his wing 15 years ago when I was an undergraduate at Arizona. My geology career started with mopping floors in George's lab. This evolved into assisting George on projects addressing terrane accretion in Alaska and the evolution of the Himalayan thrust belt in Nepal. During my undergraduate years, I aped George to the point that I became known in the department as "Little George." Today—well, I still try to be like George!

Also inspirational early on at Arizona were Bob Butler, George Davis, Bill Dickinson, and Peter Coney. Coney taught me that "straight lines are drawn by simple minds" and to not "get lost in the noise." I also learned an enormous amount from Brian Currie, who was my TA for structural geology and sed/strat. And then there was his advisor, Peter DeCelles. My first interaction with Pete was in the jungles of southwestern Nepal. Pete did not want an undergraduate along and told me sternly, "You won't slow us down. If you get sick, you are going alone on a double-decker bus straight back to Kathmandu". On the same trip was Jay Quade—a real-life Indiana Jones in sandals. I am as honored now as I was then to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from these outstanding scientists.

My passion for geology was sparked at Arizona, but it was at UCLA that I started to grow as a scientist. I had a fantastic mix of advisors—An Yin, Mark Harrison, and Craig Manning. An was my primary advisor and is well known for his sayings: "You are good, but not great"; "Sharpen your tool, sharpen your tool, and one day you will kill the monkey"; "One tired warrior can defeat ten well-rested warriors." I think that is when my insomnia started. I had an outstanding group of peers at UCLA: Mike Murphy, Eric Cowgill, Liz Catlos, Mike Taylor, Jessica D'Andrea, and Alex Robinson. Murphy was the ringleader of the group referred to as the squirrels by ourselves and the Asian mafia by others. I owe Murphy special thanks for mentoring me during my first field season in Tibet and showing me how to live life to the fullest. Also participating that first season was Ding Lin, with whom I have since worked in Tibet on a broad array of projects funded by the National Science Foundation tectonics program, the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund, and the National Geographic Society. I thank Ding Lin immensely for an enjoyable and stimulating collaboration.

I also spent two long field seasons in Tibet with Jessica D'Andrea, soon after which she changed her name to Jessica Kapp. Maybe there is something to the idea that body odor is an aphrodisiac. I thank Jess for always reminding me how precious every day is and accepting me for who I am despite all of my quirks, one of which includes being a geo-aholic. I can only hope that our two boys, Drew and Kai, will grow up to be as understanding—or at least good field assistants.

For the past seven years since graduate school, I again owe great thanks to many of my colleagues at the University of Arizona. I have also benefited from a dynamic group of graduate and undergraduate students who keep me realizing that I first and foremost remain a student. Keeping me on a very steep learning curve is the geology itself. I devote a lot of time to doing field geology and making and studying maps. This practice, instilled in me largely by An Yin, is the driver behind my science and has taken me on a thrilling ride from Precambrian to active tectonics, from blueschists to basin fill—and most recently to wind erosion and dust. I am currently known in the department as "Yardang Man," thanks to Pete Reiners.

In closing, Greg Davis, my academic grandfather, and his former graduate student, Brian Darby, who has been a buddy of mine since high school, would often say that there is nothing better than great friends and great geology. I have been blessed with both. I am also grateful and honored to be a part of a supportive and truly outstanding community of earth scientists. I thank you all!