

2009 MEDALS & AWARDS

BROMERY AWARD FOR THE MINORITIES

Presented to **John T. Leftwich**



John T. Leftwich
Halliburton Company

Citation by Terry Engelder

The Bromery Award recognizes minority professionals “who have made significant contributions to research in the geological sciences, or those who have been instrumental in opening the geoscience field to other minorities.”

John Thomas Leftwich, Jr. received his B.S. from Virginia State University, his M.S. at the University of Massachusetts, and his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University.

He has been Professor of Geology at Old Dominion University where he was awarded a “Chair of Excellence” by the US Department of Energy, and has worked at corporations including Exxon, Meridian, Shell, and Halliburton. John is an expert petroleum geologist with many years experience in both the onshore and offshore Gulf of Mexico. John has managed as many as seven exploration and production fields simultaneously. His research investigations have focused on abnormal pressures and undercompaction in sedimentary basins. Most notably, he documented the relationship between undercompaction and smectite-illite transformation in the Texas Gulf Coast.

John is a member of eight professional societies and is a certified petroleum geologist. He has been honored by universities, professional societies, corporations, and federal agencies for his research and teaching, but perhaps his greatest honors come from organizations not as well known in our professional ranks. John has been a 20-year volunteer at elementary schools up through

community colleges and has adopted 18 schools nationwide.

John was a founding member of the National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists (NABGG), serving as president for six terms: 1984–90. In 1986–89, thousands of jobs were lost in the oil sector and many NABGG members left the society, but John carried NABGG almost single-handedly through the difficult years of reduced membership and little money. NABGG now has over four hundred members and is a GSA associated society, a testament to John’s singular effort. His illustrious career is so varied not only because he has so many interests but also because he has applied these interests in meeting the needs in the greater community.

Response by John T. Leftwich, Jr.

Thank you Terry, Terry was my Ph.D. advisor at Penn State and I thank him for being a lifelong mentor and a friend. Ladies and gentlemen, I feel very honored to be this year’s recipient of the Bromery Award. I would like to extend a very special thanks to the Bromery Family for establishing this award. Thanks also to the National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists (NABGG) for the nomination and I express my sincere thanks to the Geological Society of America (GSA) for selecting me as this year’s recipient of the award. I of course share this award with my wife, Jackie who is here with me tonight and who has constantly supported me through out my career and many endeavors. She has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. Behind every success there is a line of support. Time does not permit me to thank each and every one of you individually but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you.

I was truly blessed as an undergraduate at Virginia State University for it was there that I met the late Dr. Mack Gipson who had recently established a geology department at Virginia State. As fate would have it I took an Earth Science course as an elective where I met Professor Gipson who encouraged me to seek a career in Geology. In my sophomore year I changed my major from Biology to Geology and in the summer of 1969 became the first graduate of the department and the seventh African American to graduate in the United States with a degree in Geology. It was during the summer of 1968 that several students and myself were fortunate to get summer internships with the U.S. Geological Survey. Dr. Gipson was acquainted with Dr. Bromery at the University of Massachusetts who in turn was affiliated with the United

States Geological Survey (USGS). Bromery enabled us to get summer internships and we had great summer experiences. Eventually I chose the University of Massachusetts for graduate school and started my graduate education with a full fellowship.

So, in a manner of speaking I have enjoyed a series Bromery Awards. First, he assisted me in finding a path to my dream of continuing my education. In addition to all of the wonderful things Bromery taught us that you could achieve if you were so inclined as to attach a magnetometer to the rear of an aircraft and fly it over a terrene full of Oliverian gneiss domes. He gave me a second award in the form of a message and that is, in addition to your technical excellence you must also remember that there is nothing more valuable than your integrity and your developing good values, such as appreciation and respect for others. It is more important and a much higher ideal to be concerned about the welfare of others than about yourself.

So I would like to ask each of you to continue mentoring young people, help them find internships and involve them in your research, put them on your teams, teach them to make observations and design the right experiments. Provide opportunities for them to learn and become good scientists. But above all, help them to expect, understand and respect the character, differences, and diversity in science and in life.

I thank each and every one of you as you have enriched my life beyond measure. With your discussions of blueschists problems, out of sequence thrusts, ignimbrites, pigeonites, deviatoric stress, how thrust sheets move, life in hostile environments, panspermia, mantle ichor, Archean atmospheres, dislocation glide etc. you have shown me things beyond my wildest dreams.

I would like to commend GSA for their continuing to support underrepresented groups and programs to educate all of our young people so that they can grow intellectually, appreciate the world of science, and help shape the destiny of humankind.

In a Universe so vast that there are as many stars as there are grains of sand on all the beaches of the world looms one of the biggest questions of all. Is there intelligent life elsewhere in the Universe? What will these intelligent beings be like? Well Earthlings developed science and technology, at some point in their evolution they listen in on the hydrogen ion frequency. They care about other members of their society and about something greater than themselves and as they have done for thousands of years they continue to bury their dead with flowers. Thank you.