

2014 MEDALS & AWARDS

GSA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Presented to
P. Geoffrey Feiss



P. Geoffrey Feiss
GSA Foundation

Citation by Chris Hepburn

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to present to you, P. Geoffrey Feiss, the GSA Distinguished Service Awardee this year. Geoff has had a distinguished career as an economic geologist, professor and college administrator, which included stints as a Department Chair (UNC Chapel Hill), Dean (UNC Chapel Hill and William and Mary) and Provost (William and Mary). He has given freely of his time to our science and often has been sought to be a member or chair of committees for many organizations beyond GSA, such as NAGT, AGI and the Natl. Academy of Sciences/Natl. Research Council. Geoff's broad understanding of our science and wise counsel have also led him to be asked to serve on at least a dozen academic department review committees. Over the years Geoff has served GSA in many capacities, including being on some 12 committees and panels and chairing the SE Section, the Geoscience and Public Policy Committee and the Congressional Science Fellowship Selection Committee. However, I believe, his most important contributions to the Society have been through his work for the GSA Foundation. In 2009 Geoff was a Trustee and Vice-Chair of the Foundation when he retired as Provost from William and Mary and moved to Colorado to enjoy the mountains. Soon after, however, the Foundation Board asked Geoff to put off his retirement and take on the duty of President

of the Foundation. Geoff agreed, and the rest is history. At the Foundation Geoff worked harder than ever, despite the fact that this was supposedly a half-time position. Through his skills and dedication, the Foundation has been revamped, modernized, and brought into a close, collegial working relationship with GSA, thereby strengthening both organizations. Through his efforts fundraising has increased, and this year, for the first time in history, the Foundation will make available to GSA over \$1 million dollars for its programs. Geoff is set to step down as President of the Foundation at the end of the year, perhaps, to finally retire (we'll see?), but he leaves with notable and enduring contributions to both GSA and the GSA Foundation. Changes Geoff initiated will help the Society to accomplish its goals for a long time to come. For this he clearly deserves the recognition afforded by this award, and our heart-felt thanks.

Response by P. Geoffrey Feiss

Thank you, Chris Hepburn, for your citation. This is especially meaningful as Chris was one of the first grad students I met at Harvard in 1965 and served as a role model for me in those years. An equal thanks go to the GSA Council for thinking that I deserve this recognition.

GSA has always been my professional home. I attended my first professional meeting in 1969 when I was able to go to the first Penrose Conference in Tucson organized by, among others, Brian Skinner. My first GSA Annual Meeting was that fall in Atlantic City. In those benighted days of the Smoker - the predecessor of the Welcoming Party, I and probably a dozen fellow graduate students, with an equal number of uninvited cockroaches, poured ourselves into a hotel room last remodeled when Atlantic City was a suburb of the capital of Mauritania. I recall filling the closet, floor to ceiling with sleeping bags, assuming the maids would not notice that the room was a bit overbooked. GSA must have gotten a great rate on the convention center before legalized gambling in New Jersey.

From 1969 to today, the rhythm and cycle of GSA meetings has been as regular as the seasons. I may have missed two or three annual meetings in the past forty-five years. I have attended too many section meetings to count. I gave my first professional talks and posters at GSA meetings, lead my first field trips for GSA, and proudly published in GSA journals. I never had a GSA Research award, but my wife did.

Beyond these abundant opportunities to present my science to others, however, GSA allowed me to meet new collaborators in research, to keep in touch with friends from undergraduate and graduate school, and to maintain professional affiliations with the five or six academic departments that I have called home over the years. Part of this annual rhythm of GSA meetings was always the new ideas, the reinvigoration, and the stimulation of the intellectual smorgasbord that is a GSA meeting.

I also had the pleasure, and pleasure it has been, to serve GSA. Whether as a section officer, technical program chair, committee member, or otherwise, this service to GSA has allowed me to begin to count as friends the remarkable individuals who have and continue to lead GSA - friends I would have otherwise never made had I remained cocooned and cloistered in the narrow confines of my academic subspecialties.

Hence, it means a great deal to me to be recognized for service to GSA. It has been and continues to be a labor of love, a payback for all the personal and intellectual opportunities GSA has provided me, and my way of "paying it forward" to future generations of geoscientists. I can only hope they have as much fun being a student of the Earth as I have had.

I thank Bob Hatcher for inviting me to serve the Foundation Board of Trustees a decade ago, Bob Rutford for his leadership and tough-love mentoring (those who know Bob understand), Margaret Eggers and all the trustees I have worked with for their confidence in me, and Jack Hess for his collegial, wise, and calm leadership.

The Foundation staff are gems. Anna Christensen, Geni Klagstad, Jo Bell, Chris Tallackson, Debbie Marcinkowski, and Ann Crawford have made me look good every day. The professional staff at GSA are, as their status implies, consummate professionals and a pleasure to work with. I should also acknowledge a debt to my father, Julian Feiss, a mining engineer whose active service to the AIME when I was a teenager modeled for me the importance, indeed the necessity, of serving one's professional organization. And, of course, thanks to my fellow geologist and wife, Nancy West, for tolerating yet another set of meetings and frequent out-of-town trips and for never doubting the rewards that come with serving a great learned society like GSA.