

## Awards and Citations

### Response by Jonathan Payne for the presentation of the 2015 Schuchert Award of the Paleontological Society



Jonathan Payne

Thank you, Andy, for your kind words. And thank you to the Paleontological Society for choosing to recognize my research with this award. It is an honor to be named alongside so many of the people who have inspired, instructed, and befriended me over the past two decades.

I was introduced to paleontology by a geochemist. When I was six, Rich April of Colgate University took his two older kids, my brother, and me out to a quarry in Devonian rocks from the Hamilton Group to look for trilobites. As most of you have no doubt already guessed, we found many more brachiopods than trilobites. But Rich found one beautiful specimen of *Dipleura dekayi* (Green, 1832) and gave it to me because I was the only kid over five and therefore least likely to break it. It took a few more years, but I eventually found one on my own, a more complete and slightly larger individual. I found it not while fossil hunting, but rather, in the course of throwing rocks into a stream with a friend. That specimen is in my office today.

Does this abbreviated prehistory of a paleontologist explain anything that came later? Probably a little bit. Rich's daughter also went into the Earth sciences. On the other hand, his son and my brother—the two youngest in our field team—did not. But, as every paleontologist knows, it is difficult to perform statistics on small samples. Viewed from a distance of 35 years, however,

I believe these formative events in my scientific life do illustrate a few general principles. First, paleontology is not a solo enterprise, even for preschoolers. Second, the best discoveries are often ones you weren't even trying to make. And third, geochemists are our friends.

There are, of course, many more, equally worthy potential recipients of our society's awards than there are awards to give. I view these awards as recognizing not only individuals who have worked hard and been fortunate but also, and perhaps more importantly, aspects of our discipline that are thriving. When I consider the state of our field today, what strikes me most is the stunning level of collaboration both within the discipline, for example via the construction of data sets at scales that were only recently unimaginable, and with other disciplines, including ecology, microbiology, sedimentary geology, planetary geology, geodynamics, geochemistry, computer science, and statistics. In preparing these remarks, I discovered that I have already co-authored papers with 126 different people, many in this room today and many more working in the other disciplines I just listed. I anticipated none of this when I entered graduate school, and it thrills me that there are undoubtedly equally as many surprises awaiting all of us in the coming decades.

I cannot leave this stage without thanking at least some of the many, many individuals who have shared their time,

knowledge, and passion to make me a better scientist. I have received much more than I have given; hopefully I can start to make up that debt in the next phase of my career.

Markes Johnson introduced me to the joys of international fieldwork in Baja California when I was an undergraduate at Williams College. Will Crane, Patrick Russell, and Alison Kopelman provided the camaraderie that always seems to set geology departments apart.

At Harvard, Andy Knoll modeled a Renaissance approach to scientific discovery and synthesis that continues to awe and inspire me. Charles Marshall and Richard Bambach spent long hours over the lunch table teaching me paleoecology and quantitative methods, while Dan Schrag and John Hayes pushed me to learn much more geochemistry than I initially intended. Fellow graduate students Kevin, Susannah, Shuhai, Tamara, Molly, Dave, Woody, and Phoebe and post-docs Yanan, Jochen, Matt, and Sara provided a vibrant community of fellow young paleontologists and geobiologists with whom to grow and learn. I am particularly thankful to Andrew Bush and Robin Kodner for sacrificing their time and their health to accompany me on field seasons in southern China. Lee Kump at Penn State was the most gracious host I could imagine for what turned into the world's shortest post-doc (two months).

And, for the past decade, I have benefited from wonderful colleagues, collaborators, and students at Stanford. I am particularly thankful for all that I have learned from the graduate students and post-docs in my lab: Brian, Ellen, Jessica, Brianna, Aviv, Adam, Kim, Caitlin, Xiaowei, Will, Seth, Katja, Paul, Juan Carlos, Nick, Matt, and Noel.

Beyond Stanford, Dan Lehrmann of Trinity University taught me nearly everything I know about carbonate rocks. I strive to emulate his rigor in the field and dedication to students. Over the course of numerous field seasons, Wei Jiayang and Yu Meiyi, of the Guizhou Geological Survey and Guizhou University, and Demir Altiner, of the Middle East Technical Institute, have become not only colleagues but also dear friends. And the Geozoic body-size working group at NESCent turned out to be the most engaging and entertaining group of collaborators I could ever hope for.

For as long as I can remember, my family has encouraged me to learn because it is fun, and inspired me to think more clearly and more broadly about work and about life. My children, Oliver and Tessa, continually remind me how exciting it is to learn about fossils, volcanoes, and supernovas for the first time. Being a parent has made me more appreciative than ever of my parents, Hank and Deborah, for giving me the tools to make my childhood dreams come true, and of my brother, Sam, for sharing an early passion for numbers that has turned out to be useful for more than just following baseball. Finally, I am deeply and permanently in debt to my wife, Ellen, for her love and support as well as for making sacrifices both personal and professional that have enabled me to do the work that is being recognized today.

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