First, I must thank Gary for his most generous introduction and citation. It is a different experience to be following a citation like that, for my usual role is reading the citation, not being cited. And I want to thank all my colleagues, but especially Rene Clary and Kathy Lohff, for supporting my nomination.

In 1997, I had the honor and great pleasure of being the citationist for my good friend and colleague, Ken Bork. I have always remembered his response, and I hope he doesn’t mind, but I have used a small part of it as a model for my response.

Ken answered four potential questions: NO, YES, YES, and YES; before we knew what the questions were. And I give you these slightly different answers: NO, YES, and really YES to the last one, but to slightly different questions.

1. NO – I certainly did not ever, in my wildest dreams, think that I would be standing here today receiving the Mary Rabbitt History of Geology Award for 2018. When I look over the list of past awardees, it is deeply moving and humbling to know that I will be listed with such outstanding scholars as Michele Aldrich, Bob Dott, Sally Newcomb, Gary Rosenberg, Ursula Marvin, Hugh Torrens, the two Kens – Taylor and Bork; just to mention a few. I was on the review committee for this award for several years, but this year, oddly, I was not sent the usual material for review; things were running late this year, I assumed, not thinking that I was being considered for the Award. So, NO, I never imagined that I would ever be standing here before my friends and colleagues, and part of my family, as I am today. Our daughter, Tania, and our son, Jack, could not come as they had planned to do.

2. YES – I am delighted that my work in the history of geology, and in the history of the oil and gas industry, is being recognized. Words cannot describe how thrilled I was when I received word that I was the Awardee for 2018. So, am I delighted? A resounding YES.

3. YES – I had plenty of help getting to where I stand today; at one of the high points of my professional career, and one that I hope still has a gentle slope to it as I go forward from today. But I have been helped, nurtured, and mentored by so many people; some of whom are in this room today and you know who you are. It was during my graduate work at Cornell University that I was introduced to the history of geology by Professors John Wells (paleontology) and Arthur Bloom (geomorphology). For them, however, the history was an integral part of studying any geologic concept; learning the history was basic to learning the subject. With such a fine History of Sciences Collections at Cornell University Kroch Library, often when discussing Hutton’s work or the map of William Smith, we would be in the Library looking at the originals – how great is that! Later in my own teaching, I followed their example by having the history as part of the normal subject matter.
I have been so very fortunate to have colleagues who were willing to assist me in many projects. For them to freely give of their time and knowledge to work with me has been one of life’s great pleasures. I shall always be grateful for the privilege of working with my colleague from Brazil, Dr. Silvia Figueirôa, as we sorted out the life and work of Charles F. Hartt, whom Gary mentioned in his introduction. I remember going with Silvia to see a colleague of hers in Rio de Janeiro who had saved a small round plaque with the likeness of Hartt’s face, which was presented to me. That item now hangs in a place of honor in the Department that he founded at Cornell University in 1868. I have fond memories of traveling with Hugh Torrens down a back road of West Virginia to locate the exposures that were sketched in 1854 by another Englishman, James Buckman. And then having the shared excitement of comparing Buckman’s sketch with an outcrop before us, and 145 years later, we were looking at the outcrop he sketched. Fortunately for us, weathering is a slow process. How blessed I have been to have colleagues like Silvia and Hugh, and others, who were willing to share their time with me.

There has always been great family support. They accepted me disappearing for hours, first with yellow pads and pencils, then with my old Commodore 64 as I moved, slightly, into the modern world. Or when I spent entire summers at Cornell teaching and doing research, or twice going to Brazil for a month each time. I was immersed in my world of history searching for details of someone’s work or determining how an idea was developed and when. Because my family tolerated those absences for so many years, I offer this public thank you with all my heart.

I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the contribution of archivists and librarians who collect, catalogue, and maintain the many repositories of historical documents, letters, personal papers, and artifacts. Without those collections, we historians would have very little to say.

Finally, I offer this, perhaps more for the younger members of our group, but it is really for all of us, and with apologies to James Hutton – remember and believe that the study of the past can always illuminate the present.

Thank you to all my colleagues and friends in the History & Philosophy Division. My thanks, again, to Gary for that wonderful citation, and to Renee for her support over many years. And I want my wife, Heather, to come up and accept the Award with me, for I would not be here without her support and understanding.

Thank you, Bill Brice