

2020 MGPV Division Distinguished Geological Career Award to Cathy Busby: Acceptance

by Cathy J. Busby, University of California Davis
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First, I want to thank Keith Putirka for nominating me. He has been my close collaborator and a wonderful friend for 20 years. Then I want to go back through time and thank my mentors and collaborators and mentees. I was raised in a suburb of Ohio, where there are no rocks, but we had gravel driveways, and I spent many happy hours picking through them to find beautiful pieces of quartz and feldspar. The leader of my Girl Scouts troop taught us how to go camping, and I remember wondering what I could do to have a career outdoors, concluding that farming was the only way. It never occurred to me that a girl could be a scientist. Then my family moved to California, and my first boyfriend taught me how to backpack. I was turned on to geology by my LA Pierce Community College teachers Ruth LeBow and Barry Haskell, at the height of the plate tectonics revolution. Their field trips taught me a love of rocks and geologic time. When I transferred to Berkeley, Garniss Curtis, Clyde Warhaftig and Chuck Myer took a very active role in supporting me. I got started on a research project in the Sierra Nevada with the inspiring Jason Saleeby who was then at Berkeley (and also started out at Pierce). At Princeton I was given the freedom to pursue a PhD that was entirely my own design, under the brilliant supervision of John Suppe. I was extremely fortunate to win a faculty position at UC Santa Barbara straight out of graduate school, which made it possible for me to get tenure in the bag in time to give birth to three daughters within two years (numbers 2 and 3 were twins). I want to thank my mother (now in heaven) for coming to conferences and going in the field with me when they were young. She was fearless, being left in camp for the day in remote areas of Mexico with my babies; Claire, Sophia and Marion later grew up hiking cross-country on my fieldwork. At UCSB, Richard Fisher was my biggest advocate, in a large department that had only one other female faculty member. Women were sparse on the ground in those days, but I am thrilled to say that two of my three active NSF-funded projects have women as Co-PIs: Susan DeBari and Tina Niemi. Five years ago, I moved to UC Davis, seeking a department that is supportive of women. It's amazing what a difference it makes when nearly half the faculty are women – strong women! I feel very fortunate to have come of age at a time when field geology was valued and becoming open to women. I am a dirty boots, rocks in the box geologist to the core. But I could not have covered all that “real estate” (as John Crowell used to put it) without the dedication of my students and postdoctoral researchers over the past 37 years, and I thank them as well.

