2022 MGPV Division Distinguished Geological Career Award to Jane Selverstone: Acceptance

Jane Selverstone, University of New Mexico
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Thank you, Zach, for those very kind words. I am profoundly honored to receive the MGPV Distinguished Geologic Career Award, particularly in a room full of others equally deserving of this recognition.

In addition to Zach, I would like to express my deep thanks to Frank Spear, Jan Tullis, and the late Peter Molnar for co-sponsoring my nomination for this award. It is humbling and gratifying to have my career recognized by such an all-star cast, across such a range of disciplines. Special thanks also to Lincoln Hollister, my undergraduate mentor and most loyal supporter ever since. Linc taught me to tease out the histories of metamorphic rocks from petrographic analysis. Frank, in turn, added thermodynamics to my arsenal during my incredibly stimulating years working with him at MIT. Peter taught me to keep an eye on the big picture, always. Jan took an interest in me at a time when there were few women in the geosciences; it was an honor to later spend a sabbatical with her, looking at how fluid composition affects rock strength. Zach dragged me kicking and screaming into the stable isotope lab to document scales of fluid-rock interactions using chlorine isotopes. Zach was also my main intellectual sparring partner for the last 20 years of my career.

I was first introduced to the geology of the Alps by Gerhard Franz and Giulio Morteani. I will always appreciate the fact that they urged me to come to the field before reading any Alpine literature, in order to see the rocks without any preconceived notions – not many people would have been this open minded. Their friendship has been unwavering over the last four decades.

Gary Axen deserves special mention for our long and productive collaboration, combining structural and petrologic data from some of the ugliest metamorphic rocks on the planet to test hypotheses about the mechanical behavior of the crust.

Special thanks to all the students with whom I interacted over the years. It is hard to express in words the satisfaction and joy that came from working with you. I know that I let some of you flounder beyond your comfort levels, but I strongly believe that the best science comes from moments of discomfort. In particular, I would like to call out Kurt Steffen, Jaime Barnes, the late Tim Wawrzyniec, Aaron Cavosie, and Alexis Ault. You challenged me relentlessly and kept me on my scientific toes.

Careers don't come out of nowhere. Families matter. My parents encouraged me to read widely and deeply, allowed me to drop out of high school, and let me run wild among the rocks along the coast of Maine. All these things shaped me as a scientist. My children, Ben and Sonia, think rocks are boring, but they have always been proud to have a professor for a mom, and they never complained when I went off to do fieldwork. And my husband, David Gutzler, should win an award for his flexibility, patience, and good humor over the years. I owe him so many brownie points that I will never get out of debt.

I would also like to acknowledge the role of serendipity in successful careers. I have been fortunate to be in the right place at the right time for opportunities to find me. Flexible thinking let me seize those opportunities, rather than just marching ahead on whatever path I was on beforehand. Having an open mind and a willingness to venture in new directions are useful traits.

I will end with a quote from a poem by e.e. cummings that has guided me throughout my career: "I would rather learn from one bird how to sing than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance". I have had the great good fortune to learn from many birds – human and geological – how to tell the stories encapsulated in metamorphic rocks. It's been a fun ride. Thank you all.