

Awards and Citations

Response by Judy Scotchmoor for the presentation of the 2016 Paleontological Society Pojeta Award



Judy Scotchmoor

This is an incredible honor.... I have such fond memories of arriving at GSA meetings and heading straight to the Paleo Society booth and share hugs with the Pojetas. So to receive an award in their name, well, it is beautifully overwhelming.

Regretfully, memories of my very first GSA meeting were perhaps a little less than “fond.” In 1994, I had come straight from a middle school science-teaching career to Director of Education and Public Programs at the UCMP. I had never attended a scientific society meeting. I really had no idea what I was doing, but I was well taken care of. Bill Clemens promised to introduce me to Ken McKinney who chaired the PS Education Committee, and Jere Lipps and Jim Valentine dropped me off at a graduate student seminar and explained that there would be a series of short talks followed by some questions. My instructions: “Don’t worry if you don’t understand it all, just enjoy it and we will pick you up afterwards to take you to the Paleo Society luncheon.”

Seemed simple enough. So after the first presentation, a guy stood up to ask a question and just tore into this poor student. I felt just awful. After the second presentation...same guy...same treatment. I couldn’t believe it! So after several of these, the seminar came to an end, and I met up with Jere and Jim and they asked how it went. I said “Well I understood the science OK, but the behavior was outrageous.

There was this one guy who was a complete jerk. He just tore into every student. He was absolutely brutal. I couldn’t believe it!”

I was still talking about it as we walked to the luncheon and sat down. Only moments later, I noticed “the jerk” and he was heading for our table. I whispered to Jere, “That’s the guy! That’s the jerk!” “Oh really?” Jere responded and waved to the guy. “Steve, I would like you to meet our new education and outreach person. Judy, this is Stephen Jay Gould.”

Yep.... That was my start. Thankfully the paleo community was always very forgiving of my blunders and **always** supportive of outreach efforts. Regretfully, there will always be those who doubt science and some who even malign science, but science always prevails. And at the end of the day (even in this crazy election year), we remember that we love what we do and we manage to smile.

I am sorry that I am not there to thank each of you in person—especially John and Mary Lou. It was an honor to work with so many of you. I can’t thank you all enough for this award and all that you continue to do to support science education.

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