

Acceptance of the Mineralogical Society of America Award for 2015

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Thank you, Mr. President and to the MSA Award committee. I am deeply honored to receive the award; it is a wonderful vote of confidence in the work we've done. I'd like to express my deepest thanks to the nominees who wrote support letters and who also organized a fascinating special session in honor of the award at the 2015 GSA meeting.

The list of previous MSA Award recipients is both intimidating and humbling. Insofar as this might be seen as a predictor of what is to come, I feel that I have much to live up to. But it is comforting to think that all of the work I've done never really felt like work at all; it was too much fun. I've had the opportunity to be mentored by some excellent scientists who were selfless with their time and have made so many close friends and colleagues along the way.

I am a very proud product of the State University of New York system, and getting my Ph.D. with Scott McLennan certainly changed the course of my life. Scott was just getting involved in the Mars Exploration Rover mission when I joined as a graduate student, and he provided an opportunity for two other graduate students and myself to join in planning rover experiments at JPL. This was an amazing opportunity for a graduate student and I'm forever grateful, especially to Steve Squyres and the MER science and engineering teams for making it an unforgettable experience. As if this wasn't enough, as a Ph.D. advisor Scott is unflinchingly enthusiastic, supportive, generous, selfless with his time, and above all, patient. Put another way, Scott shows his students the way to the light switch, but lets them turn it on for themselves. I have taken two critical life lessons from Scott: the first is to be confident in the ideas you generate and proud of the work you have done, and the second is to never be afraid to venture into new territory and to keep an open mind toward new problems and new data. These two lessons paved the way for what followed, and I am proud of everything I have done and every paper we have written.

The Department of Geosciences at Stony Brook was, and still is, a powerhouse in mineralogy and aqueous geochemistry, but it is also unique in the congeniality of the faculty toward one another and toward the students. The faculty at Stony Brook expose their students to a multitude of geochemical and mineralogical approaches, and I greatly benefited from this as a student there. I discovered experimental mineralogy with Don Lindsley in the mornings we spent together in his lab, and I learned the value of meticulous laboratory work. I was introduced to aqueous geochemistry by Martin Schoonen and Rich Reeder and crystallography by John Parise. At the same time, Darby Dyar at Mount Holyoke acted as an important mentor, which continued as I graduated.

After meeting Andy Knoll on the MER mission, I thought it would be fun to venture off in a new direction. At Harvard I



became immediately fascinated in the history of life and environments on Earth. It was not very easy to apply my skill set to a completely new area, and with Andy's mentoring and patience, along with many wonderful friends and colleagues there, I felt that my research started to gain some traction in an exciting new area. I am lucky that I've also entered a community who are wholly supportive and so enthusiastic. I've learned that engaging in science with other people is a very intimate endeavor. Sharing ideas, establishing trust, and being comfortable enough with another person to talk openly about what you don't know or don't understand is a process that is unique to the human experience. I've made many friends along the way, and the best part about engaging in science is sharing it with other people. I thank all of my friends and colleagues, in particular Joel Hurowitz, Dave Johnston, Francis Macdonald, Justin Strauss, Sara Pruss, Phoebe Cohen, Jon Wilson, Woody Fischer, John Grotzinger, Frances Abbotts, Paul Wright, Rachel Wood, Peir Pufahl, and Steve Guggenheim.

We've moved a few times over the last few years, and I thank the friends and colleagues I've made along the way, especially Tony Prave, Aubrey Zerkle, Mark Claire, Peter Cawood, and Ed Tipper. We're lucky to have settled in a place like Oxford. The Department of Earth Sciences is about as close to Stony Brook as I could find in its vibrancy, support network, and congeniality. I'm grateful to be joined by a number of fantastic students and postdocs as our research group has grown over the last year.

I also thank my family, who have been so patient and unflinchingly supportive every step of the way. Last, but certainly not least, I thank my wife Rebecca, who couldn't be here today because she is pregnant with our first child. Her love and support has always provided the inner fire that drives everything I've ever tried to do. With our new arrival on the way, we're both happy to have reached the point in our lives where we know it's not just about us anymore. Thank you all once again.