

## Acceptance of the Dana Medal of the Mineralogical Society of America for 2007

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Ladies, gentlemen, colleagues and friends:

It is with the sincerest appreciation and not insignificant degree of humility that I accept the 2007 Dana Medal of the Mineralogical Society of America. I was, to say the least, flabbergasted when I received a telephone call from Bob Hazen back in the Fall of 2005 informing me that I had been chosen to receive this medal. I have always considered the Mineralogical Society of America to be my intellectual “home,” if you will, and there are even intellectual ties between James Dana and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. So it is indeed an honor to be so chosen.

I must confess, however, now that I’ve had over a year to think about what this award means, the more I have thought about it the more I have become convinced that any number of the people sitting in this room are equally qualified and deserving of such recognition. And I assure you this makes the award all the more precious.

I do have one minor concern about receiving the Dana medal, which is, as you know, a mid-career award. I believe that I first became interested in studying geology while I was an Amherst College freshman in 1967—and yes, that was 40 years ago. So I am wondering if I am now obligated to working just as long hours for the next 40 years, which would make me something like 98 years old by the time I can retire! And I was hoping to start playing more golf!

Matt, I thoroughly enjoyed your kind, generous, and amusing citation. You left out the part where I started hiding my popsicles inside a frozen turkey (purchased by weight, of course), but perhaps that is just as well.

But I think you are being overly generous in accrediting me with any real form of brilliance. In fact, it always seems that things come to me slowly and sometimes with considerable difficulty. But I do acknowledge having spent my share of all-nighters on the electron microprobe at the Geophysical Lab, MIT, RPI, and elsewhere. Perhaps it was too many of these all-nighters but I firmly believe that somewhere around 4 am the rocks started talking and revealing to me their most intimate secrets... All I can say is “Thank heavens electron microprobes are fully automated these days”—my stamina just isn’t what it used to be. But if I had to characterize my approach to science



it would be this: Look, look again, and keep on looking—and by that I mean with your eyes and any analytical instruments you can get your hands on because, after all, it is the natural world we are trying to understand. And all the while you are looking, try to make sense of what you see and when things stop making sense, that’s when the real fun begins.

I have been more than a little lucky in my life, and I am sure that has a lot to do with why I am standing here now. I grew up in a quirky but amazingly supportive family (we all liked popsicles) with parents who stressed intellectual achievement as one of the highest goals in life. I had superb mentors whose patience with my rate of comprehension I cannot thank enough. I’ve had students who would make any parent proud, and a wonderful, eclectic assortment of colleagues and friends, many of whom are here this evening. And now I am lucky to receive the Dana Medal. And for all these things I am thankful from the bottom of my heart.