

## Presentation of the Distinguished Public Service Award to Robert A. Howie

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Mr. President, members of the society, and guests:

I was happy to be one of several members of MSA who nominated R.A. Howie for the Distinguished Public Service Award. Bob is a Fellow of the Geological Society of London and winner of its Murchison Award. He is Fellow and current President of the Gemmological Association, a Fellow and one-time President of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and last, but not least, a Fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America. The reason I nominated Bob was because I couldn't deal with the idea that I had received this award—and he hadn't! It didn't make sense to me. I am delighted that he asked me to introduce him. I don't know why, but I think he was intimidated by the idea of asking Ian Carmichael to do it.

Bob's life of service to the Earth science community is truly monumental, and I will take a few moments to describe it, especially those parts that are relevant to this award. You get only a hint of it in the Award's Luncheon Program, but you must realize that Bob, who is one of the most self-effacing men I have met, is the one who wrote it. You will notice that it is—invariably—in the form of an abstract: short, concise, informative.

I was a second-year Ph.D. candidate at Cambridge University when the legendary five volumes of Deer, Howie, and Zussman's *Rock-Forming Minerals* began to appear. Fortunately I had Fulbright grant from which to finance my purchase of the books. (Even in those days it took the backing of the US Government to pay for them!) Deer, Howie, and Zussman immediately became the hard-rocker's equivalent of the *Physician's Desk Reference*. In the 1960s and 1970s these encyclopedic reference volumes were indispensable to all of us, not in the least part because they contained references to things that no one (other than the great Abstractor, Bob Howie) would have ever known about.

First, you must understand that the order of authors for Deer, Howie, and Zussman is alphabetical, although no one would pretend that it represented the degree of effort expended on these volumes or, for that matter, the highly successful condensate, *An Introduction to the Rock-Forming Minerals*.

Second, most of you know that *second* editions of individual DHZ volumes began appearing in 1978, at roughly four-year intervals. We were all dismayed at the prices—many of our libraries were balking at purchasing them. Longmans was going to be asking \$400 for the 784-page amphibole volume in 1997. I had urged Jack Zussman to let MSA print and sell them in the *Reviews in Mineralogy* format for \$40 or less, but DHZ

had already asked the Geological Society of London to publish Volume 5B. The asking price is now only 3 to 4 times as high as it would have been if they had found their way into the *Reviews in Mineralogy* series. (MSA members may purchase these volumes through AAPG at a 60% discount.)

Five volumes of the proposed 10-volume series have appeared. According to Bob, *Feldspars* is 99% finished, and *Micas*, *Clays*, and others will follow. Thank you, Bob, for being *a* (dare I say *the?*) major player in this monumental, on-going service to our community.

Now let's talk about abstracts. It is as absolutely certain as anything can be in this postmodern era that Bob's contributions to scientific abstracting in general and to *Mineralogical Abstracts* in particular, will never be exceeded ... *unless*, of course, we can manage to genetically engineer a clone and extend its life well into the 22nd century. Bob began abstracting in 1956 soon after an inexcusable oversight occurred ... I'll let him tell you about it. He was so disturbed about it that within ten years he was the editor! He started off modestly, but within a decade or so he was up to writing 1600 abstracts per year, a pace he still maintains at age 76. And can you imagine proof-reading and indexing four to five thousand abstracts a year! Nowadays, electronic format has about taken over from the printed page, but Bob is still there, doing the service work so that less energetic mineralogists and petrologists, like us, can easily access the ever-expanding literature.

Bob shared a story with me that illustrates his commitment to serving the earth-science community. In all of Bob's 25-year career at King's College in the University of London, he missed only two days of work due to illness. One of those days he was at home in bed with the flu. After his elder son had taken him a cup of tea, he told his mother, "Dad must be *really* ill—he's not writing abstracts!"

It was a great sacrifice for Bob to travel to Denver. His disability of more than 50 years has made it most difficult to move about. Furthermore, well over a month ago, Bob's wife was seriously ill in hospital, and Bob was of course canceling plans to come to Denver. But she insisted that he make the effort to be with us today. I'm glad she did, but it deeply saddens me to tell you that his wife passed away just two weeks ago. Bob, we all extend our sincerest regrets, and every one of us feels very privileged to have you here.

Mr. President, it is with greatest respect and honor that I present to you R.A. Howie, the 1999 recipient of MSA's Distinguished Public Service Award.