

2010 MEDALS & AWARDS

ISRAEL C. RUSSELL AWARD

Presented to
William M. Last



William M. Last
University of Manitoba

Citation by Fawn Ginn

It is an honor and a great pleasure for me to deliver the citation for the inaugural Israel Cook Russell award for major contributions to the field of limnogeology to Bill Last.

Bill has made major contributions to the field through three decades of research, teaching and editorial activities. He is recognized internationally as a leading authority on limnogeology and lacustrine evaporites and as a world leader on research related to saline lake basins. He has authored over 130 research papers dealing with lakes and lake sediments and has authored or edited a total 21 monographs and books, many of which are key references in paleolimnology and limnogeology.

Like Isreal Russell, Bill is an avid field researcher who loves to experience nature first hand. The salt lakes of North America and Australia are his primary laboratories, and for many years these continental evaporitic settings were not well studied. Anyone who has been on a field trip with Bill can't help but feel his excitement for his research as he wades in to the muddiest and saltiest lakes without hesitation. He pioneered work in the fundamentals of saline lake geology, where he has shown that the mineral record in saline lakes can provide precise and accurate information on past lake conditions. This research paved the way to quantitative interpretation of lake histories, with applications to Quaternary and pre-

Quaternary environmental change. Bill's Lake Sedimentology Lab at University of Manitoba is one of the world's most active and productive labs dedicated to limnogeology. The lab has attracted limnogeologists world-wide, and has been host to many scholars. This stream of colleagues has helped him develop collaborative lake sediment research on a global basis.

In addition to research, Bill has made major contributions to the field of limnogeology with his editorial work. During his tenure as co-editor-in-chief of *Journal of Paleolimnology*, he has been universally acknowledged as greatly expanding the coverage and influence of this journal. He initiated and co-edited several research volumes of the book series *Developments in Paleoenvironmental Research*, which have become essential references in the field. He has served on editorial boards and as associate editor on eight other journals.

Bill is an excellent and dedicated teacher and mentor. His enthusiasm in the lecture theater is second to none. Anyone who has listened to a lecture or seminar by Bill will catch his unbridled enthusiasm for whatever the topic is he is presenting. His commitment and passion for his work has inspired many students and colleagues to pursue new avenues of scientific research.

Bill has been an active member of GSA for over 30 years and a Fellow since 1999. As the representative for GSA at University of Manitoba since 1982, he strongly encourages membership and participation in GSA meetings.

Bill's contributions to the field of limnogeology have and continue to be essential to its forward momentum. Bill is bringing distinction to this award by being the first recipient. His humility makes it even more meaningful.

Response by William M. Last

I would like to thank Fawn for her kind words and generous comments about my career, and the Limnogeology Division for presenting me with the Israel Cook Russell award. Being appreciated by ones colleagues and professional peers is very gratifying. I am delighted and humbled by this expression of appreciation. I am also deeply honored to have my name associated in any way with I. C. Russell, one of the pre-eminent explorers in the early days of our profession and certainly a giant in the ranks of geolimnologists.

When Fawn first approached me about the Russell award nomination, I must admit I was a bit hesitant. "Achievements

in limnogeology through contributions in research, teaching and service" sounded suspiciously like "good job over the past 40 years; goodbye and be sure to send us a postcard from the cottage". Although I have been working with lakes and lake sediments for my entire career, I really feel like I am just starting in the field. While it is true that I am getting to an age at which my employer is regularly sending me reminders about retirement planning, it is my intention to keep doing limnogeology for a few more decades. There are there simply too many uncored lakes and countless fascinating geochemical systems to slow down now; and with lacustrine carbonates and evaporites on Mars, we have a whole new planet to explore from a geolimnological perspective.

A few years ago in accepting the Sedimentary Geology Division's Sloss Award, Mike Arthur professed "the field of sedimentary geology is quite robust today". I would certainly echo this sentiment about our interdisciplinary field of limnogeology; explosive might be a better word to describe the past few decades of growth in this field. I am quite sure most of us old-timers can remember the days, not too distant, in which organizing a full session of papers on lakes at a GSA meeting would be almost impossible. Today we have an abundance of sessions like the ones organized here in Denver by Dan Deocampo, Mike Rosen, David Finkelstein and Tom Johnson. In the past few years, we have seen this surge of interest in lacustrine systems translate into the creation of the Limnogeology Division of GSA and sister organizations like the International Paleolimnology Association, International Association of Limnogeology, and International Society for Salt Lake Research, to name just a few. During my years of co-editing *Journal of Paleolimnology*, John Smol and I were constantly amazed by the exponential growth of contributions dealing with the physical and geochemical aspects of lake records. I may be considered a Pollyanna, but I really do not have any profound concerns about the state of our field nor of the level of funding of limnogeology projects in academia.

I cannot remember a time in my life that I was not fascinated with lakes. Growing up literally meters away from Lake Michigan meant my every waking hour as a youngster was spent on or in this large freshwater basin. Although I entered university intent only on doing "science" (earth science was not a teachable subject in my high school), I was quickly attracted to geology, admittedly due mainly to the fact that I could spend time outdoors while my friends were cooped up

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in labs replicating experiments or dissecting frogs. In my formal education at Wisconsin and Manitoba, I was truly blessed to have teachers, supervisors and colleagues who were willing to share their knowledge and expertise, and were patient enough to provide opportunities to work in the field. Manitoba during the early 1970's was somewhat of a hotbed of lake investigations, from which the relatively large scientific community providing me with more than ample exposure to a great variety of limnogeology projects.

Probably one of the best undergraduate courses I ever took was Jim Teller's geolimnology course (to my knowledge the only formal course in North America at that time dealing exclusively with the geology of lakes). At this time, Jim was laying the foundations for his career work on Lake Agassiz and I eagerly took part in this project. From Agassiz, to my thinking at least, it was a short jump into Lake Manitoba and then farther westward into the salty puddles of the

Canadian Prairies, southern Australia, and South America.

I am delighted to receive this inaugural I. C. Russell award. I regard my many colleagues and students in Canada, United States, Australia, and China as sharing this award because they have all greatly helped me along the way.