

## Awards and Citations

### Response by Patricia H. Kelley for the presentation of the 2020 Paleontological Society Pojeta Award



Thanks to the Pojeta Award Committee and the Paleontological Society Council for selecting me for this award, to my former student Kelly Cronin for the kind introduction, and to Anne Raymond for the written citation. Anne has been a dear friend and colleague longer than anyone else. We were students together; we've shared both angst and laughter, and often laughter at the angst. And congratulations to today's other awardees—an amazing group of women!

I'm humbled to receive the award named for John and Mary Lou Pojeta, whose service to paleontology and the Paleontological Society was boundless. Long before I knew John, I admired his work on bivalves (he would have said “pelecypods”). When I took the position of Program Director of Geology and Paleontology at the National Science Foundation and

we moved to D.C., the Pojetas became close friends. My family and I have treasured their kindness and generosity—as have numerous other paleontologists. Hugs to you, Mary Lou!

I too have found great satisfaction in serving paleontology and the Paleontological Society.

When I began my first tenure-track position at the University of Mississippi, I felt very isolated. I was the first and only woman in the School of Engineering, surrounded mostly by engineers with little understanding of paleontology. My students, who were about my age, were my only colleagues in paleontology. Then, I went to SEGSA and met other paleontologists who would become lifelong friends, including Carl Stock, Johnny Waters, and Joe Carter. They were just organizing the Southeastern Section of the Paleontological Society and I was welcomed warmly. I was quickly pressed into service to organize the first symposium sponsored by the nascent section (and the first of a couple dozen I've organized), and I discovered what fun it was to work with other paleontologists towards the goal of advancing our science.

Many other “paleofriends” provided encouragement and support as I took on new service roles. My long-time coauthor Thor Hansen was always there for moral support. Chris Maples tutored me on how to be a technical editor of the *Journal of Paleontology* (back when we had to circle every hyphen and underline capital letters in blue pencil), which started me on a total of 35 years and counting on journal editorial boards. Nominating Committee Chair Richard Bambach thought it was time for a woman to be President of the PS (there had only been three in almost a century) and he was confident I could do it. I found serving the Society as President very satisfying. Our biggest challenge was the transition to online publication of our journals, with lots of kinks to be ironed out. Working with the other members of the Executive Committee—Bill Ausich, Carl Stock, and Tom Kammer—and the rest of Council was a pleasure as we collaborated to advance our science. I also thank a series of PS Councilors who have kept me on the Distinguished Lecture circuit for the past 14 years. It's been exciting to share my research and to serve as an ambassador for evolution, sometimes to hostile audiences. I love making new friends and meeting up with colleagues and their students—especially now in retirement as I miss my own students. I have been privileged to work with a long line of (primarily Master's) students, who have energized and challenged and entertained me. I thank all my students for this, and for putting up with my obsessions, from Devo to Monty Python to Johnny Depp.

Lastly, I thank my family—my parents, who encouraged my career (even though my mom wondered why I didn't stay home to raise my babies); my loyal brother David, who still texts me many times a day; my devoted husband Jonathan,

who shared household and childrearing duties to enable my career; and my precious children Timothy and Katherine, of whom I am so proud, and who in turn are proud of me. And now we are on to the next generation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I've been holed up in Seattle helping take care of my grandchildren. With no opportunity to interact with others beyond family, four-year-old Owen has been accosting strangers on hiking trails and boasting "My Grandmomoo is a paleontologist!" Indeed,

I am proud to be a paleontologist and gratified to have had the opportunity to serve my colleagues, my science, and my Society. I encourage you to do the same. Thank you!

Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences  
University of North Carolina, Wilmington  
Wilmington, NC 28403-5944  
<[kelleyp@uncw.edu](mailto:kelleyp@uncw.edu)>