

# GK-12 Graduate Fellows Program

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### Geologist and Geochemist



Jemez Mountains, NM. Basaltic lava flows ~ 40 Ma.

I have to blame my uncle Bob for my becoming a Geologist. As a kid, my uncle and I would go to auctions and yard sales on Saturday mornings. In addition to the junk that we would accumulate, we would stop at any new road cut along the highway to look for fossils, or dig around in nearby open pit coal quarries. Then I would go home and my Mom would indicate that I was not going into the house with all of those rocks! On rainy Saturdays, my uncle and I would try to catalogue what we had found using fossil and rock books. Today, on my shelf and on the floor of my house, are some of the samples uncle Bob and I collected.

I went to a small college in Amish country in southern Pennsylvania where I majored in chemistry and geology. I worked as a tutor in chemistry and physics to make my pizza money, but mostly I lived in Ganser Library and my laboratories. It was the most fun I ever had (if you can believe that) mostly because I could read anything I wanted and I learned how and why things worked! And, because you really cannot work ALL the time, I became a radio DJ at the college station (WIXQ 91.7 FM) where I played obscure rock and roll on Friday nights after they kicked us out of the library.

I did my PhD work in southwestern Greenland during two summer seasons. Summer in the high arctic is late May to early August. I camped on the coast in a tent for 5 to 6 weeks and for two summers only saw about 6 days of blue sky! Mostly it was rainy or drizzly, temperatures in the mid-40's, and on July 4<sup>th</sup> I had two inches of snow on my tent! In Greenland there are no trees, grass is rare, but there is plenty of moss and lichen. It is like being in a black and white world. But the rock is exposed everywhere, and where I was working the rock was 2.5 billion years old! You could walk all day (daylight for 22 hours) and follow the rock; tracking out its bends and folds, up one hill and down another. Then back to your tent for dinner, a couple of hours of writing up your notes, and sleep. By the time I was ready to fly back the first season I had collected 1500 pounds of rock!



Upper Paleozoic section, Abiquiu, NM

People often confuse Geologists with Archaeologists. Even though none of us, men or women, look like Indiana Jones. We almost never have harrowing escapes, meet beautiful men or women, go to cocktail parties, or even dress very well. Mostly we are always looking at the ground, observing the landscape, or picking up rocks. But as I tell my friends who spend every day inside, rocks are everywhere – and that's a great excuse to travel!



Inscription Rock, NM. Cretaceous sandstone with ripple marks and cross-bedding.