

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY
OF AMERICA AWARD

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Mr. President, Dr. Larsen, Fellows and Members:

You must excuse me if I proceed first to the main substance of my remarks—while you may still be inclined to listen—and express my response of appreciation last.

If we lend fairly sensitive ears and eyes to what is said and written about radioactive age determinations we are impressed by the fact that their value is assessed very differently by two rather distinct groups; those who accept age determinations at their face value with *not enough* question, and those who maintain a rather extreme front of skepticism



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about all such determinations. My remarks are aimed mainly at the non-believers.

We may grant that much of their skepticism is warranted, as witness the seesaw history of the development of age research. Nor can their misgivings be allayed by the latest utterances and determinations which have been made by those of us who practise age research: true enough, they say, some determinations are reasonable but why so much discordance in the rash of determinations which have appeared during the last few years? At this point we may turn to the offensive. This very state of apparent confusion in many of the determinations is merely a reflection of the tremendous and heartening development of a whole host of new methods which have mushroomed during the past few years, each with the usual allotment of teething troubles and beginner's errors.

It must be remembered too that the development of an age method is usually exasperatingly slow because of the extraordinary variety of disciplines (geology, geochemistry, mineralogy, radioactivity, various analytical procedures including those which deal with isotope analysis, and many more if you wish) which become involved. Rapid and successful development is often hindered solely by lack of liaison. But here, too, we have grounds for fullest optimism because of recent and increasing full participation (rather than interested co-operation) of physicists and physical chemists in age research. I am even aware of physicists of repute (bless their hearts) who, secretly perhaps, have begun to consider themselves geologists or mineralogists: their enthusiasm for age research has even sent them to the field where they have actually been seen collecting specimens! We welcome them with all our hearts, if I may say so on behalf of mineralogists and geologists.

I make no claim to be prescient, but the writing on the wall is unmistakable, as I see it. If the current activity is maintained and if the close liaison which is now developing persists, we are entitled to look forward to an era in which age determinations of excellent quality should abound and which should serve as an indispensable aid in the solution of a host of geological problems of correlation, both on a fairly local scale and on a global scale.

It is no easy task to accurately express my appreciation of the Award. I cannot hide the fact that I felt honored and delighted with the news, but in accepting the Award I wish to do so with humility and with the hope and belief that it will act as the incentive to my research as it is intended.