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PRESENTATION OF THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF
AMERICA AWARD FOR 1971 TO ROBERT A. BERNER

RAYMOND SIEVER

Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bob Berner is, among other things, a man of good taste. Those who have been in or around his laboratories while he was experimenting with gaseous and liquid species of sulfur and reduced carbon may question his sense of smell, but never his taste. His good taste ranges from music to mineralogy, in neither of which does he confine himself to the baroque. That good sense has guided him to a series of problems that were both important and susceptible to solution. It has enabled him to cut through to the essence of a problem and tackle it with a combination of the best methodology that modern geology, mineralogy, and geochemistry have to offer.

Though some of you may not see the appropriateness, (I do), he started his first geologic work in the field, measuring crossbedding in Colorado with Lou Briggs of the University of Michigan. But his first summer after he came to Harvard he spent at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, where Alfred Redfield encouraged him to poke around a beautiful but smelly salt marsh in Barnstable on Cape Cod. When Bob saw sulfide in the raw, he was clearly a goner, hooked on how black odoriferous junk could turn into pretty little cubes of pyrite. That was the start of a path that led him to the study of the mineralogy of poorly crystallized species of FeS and their chemical stability and the biogeochemical environments in which they form. And along the way he got to go to sea, where he instantly demonstrated a remarkable aptitude for leadership in one of the lesser publicized activities of oceanographers, being seasick.

For the past ten years Bob has been mining some of the major lodes of sedimentary mineralogy and geochemistry (not excluding his first love, the fool's gold field). His approach, whether it is to carbonates, sulfides, clay minerals, or anything else, is characteristic: find out what people have done, check their numbers for inconsistencies, analyze where the problem is, combine experiments in the laboratory with appropriate observation and measurement in the field, and then synthesize a general theoretical framework to hang the whole problem on. He learned early never to neglect the interaction of the

biological and mineralogical world but rather to explore it. In combining chemical, mineralogical, and geological approaches, as exemplified by his opening the door to our understanding the importance of diffusion processes in compacting sediments undergoing early diagenesis, he continues to show us how some very complicated natural processes can be abstracted to simplified models that can be treated in an analytical fashion. Most recently we have seen a full exposition of this approach in his new book, "Chemical Sedimentology" which I suspect will be mined by workers in this field for a long time to come.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor and great personal pleasure in presenting to you Robert A. Berner for the Mineralogical Society Award for 1971.

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ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF
AMERICA AWARD FOR 1971

ROBERT A. BERNER, *Dept. of Geology and Geophysics*
Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut 06520.

Mr. President, Ray, Ladies and Gentlemen:

One year ago in Milwaukee I was informed that I would receive the Mineralogical Society of America Award at the next MSA-GSA national meeting. Since that time I have often wondered "Why me?" I remember about ten years ago standing knee deep in the sewage of the Mystic River near Boston, Massachusetts, trying to obtain a sediment sample sufficiently enriched in mackinawite or greigite to enable proof that either mineral actually forms and persists in sediments. Some children passing by on a nearby bridge looked down at me, and began to laugh. In my defense, I yelled to them that I was finding gold (actually it was fool's gold) in the muck and that they might help me. After a short pause the reply came back, "Heck, it aint worth it, mistah!" However, my presence here today suggests that such lunacy, after all, might have been "worth it." I consider this award as a recognition that the mineralogy and chemistry of sediment diagenesis, my major interest over the past ten years, is a subject worthy of pursuit.

As is customary I would like to acknowledge some of the people