

GEOLOGY ALUMNI SOCIETY AWARD

BOB BRETNALL, 2014 RECIPIENT

Robert Edward Brettnall, Jr. was born September 1955 in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. As with all military brats, moving from place-to-place every three to four years was a way of life; Robert lived in Mississippi, Massachusetts, Florida, the Azores, and Georgia by the time he completed the sixth grade. Robert and his family were able to settle down in June 1967 in St. Petersburg, Florida where his parents bought the home they still live in today.

During his junior year in high school, Robert's name was bobbed to Bob, but he is still Robert to most of his family. After graduating from high school in June 1973, Bob worked at low-wage, easy-to-do jobs in the restaurant and hospitality trade and dabbled in gaining a formal education by attending a few courses at St. Petersburg Junior College. He was eventually employed by a general contractor, where he gained an appreciation for hard work using his hands, and for planning.

Life for Bob improved greatly when he married his high school sweet-heart and soul-mate, Annie, in March 1975. With Annie's and his family's encouragement, Bob decided higher education was better than building condominiums, so he began his college "career" in September 1979 as a Biology major at the Tampa campus of USF. He made it successfully through three quarters, where he was staggered by a "C" in a general genetics course. Pondering his choice of majors, Bob took an introduction to oceanography course taught from a geological point of view, and soon after switched his major to geology and loved it (well most of it). He was particularly interested in hydrogeology and applied geophysics taught by Dr. Mark Stewart, soon conducting surface geophysics studies for local consulting firms, with his trusty side-kick Steve Camp providing assistance. Occasionally, the two of them would be press-ganged into helping a graduate student or other professor with their research. Dr. Stewart was also instrumental in having Bob and Mark Culbreth author the groundwater section of the May 1982 "Proceedings: Tampa Bay Area Scientific Information Symposium." After graduating from USF in April 1983 with a BA from the College of Natural Sciences, Bob immediately entered the geology graduate program at USF, where he completed his studies and thesis. His thesis was funded by the SWFWMD and titled "Electromagnetic Signature of the Salt-Water/Fresh-Water Transition Zone, West-Central Florida." Bob is still waiting to hear from someone about the movie rights.

While contemplating the writing portion of his thesis, he was bitten by the career-money bug. Somebody was actually going to pay him a good salary to do what he enjoyed: planning and executing major hydrogeological studies. He began his full-time professional career in September 1985 at ERM-South, Inc. in Tampa, FL. With the threat of having to start over, Bob finally completed writing and defending his thesis and graduated with a MS degree in April 1988. He has worked for a couple other environmental consulting firms in the Tampa Bay area including Groundwater Technology, Inc. and Atlanta Testing & Engineering, Inc./QORE Property Sciences, Inc. and obtained his Florida professional geologist license in February 1990. Bob has been employed by HSW Engineering, Inc. since September 2000, and has been in Gainesville, FL with HSW since April 2003.



Along the way, Bob was encouraged by his loving wife to widen his horizons, to get a hobby, or do something different. In conspiracy with Eileen Rodriguez, Bob was convinced to attend a meeting arranged by Dr. Len Vacher. Little did Bob know that by November 1997 he would be the President of the newly formed USF Geology Alumni Society. Bob served as President through May 2000, and during that time, oversaw the initiation of the RAD Jr Endowment, annual alumni banquet, equipment exposition (remember digging up the university president's TV cable outside the alumni center with a drill rig?), career fair, and ice-breaker/rockbreaker. Bob and Dr. Chuck Conner were also instrumental in obtaining the property currently used as the Geopark.

Bob began teaching as an adjunct professor at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida in January 2008 and continues to do so today. His popular course, Earth and Space Science, has matured from a strictly lecture course, to one in which open discussion is promoted.

PREVIOUS GAS AWARD WINNERS

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| 2002 | TOM SCOTT | 2008 | SAM UPCHURCH |
| 2003 | JIM TERRY | 2009 | SKIP DAVIS |
| 2004 | DAVE MOORE | 2010 | CHRIS LANGEVIN |
| 2005 | WALT SCHMIDT | 2011 | ERIK BOICE |
| 2006 | CRAIG HUTCHINSON | 2012 | BILL HARRISON |
| 2007 | MARY HANEY | 2013 | LEN VACHER |