

## Air and Space this Week

### Item of the Week

## GSA Gilbert Award 2020 to NASM's James Zimbelman

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*Jim Zimbelman is a friend and colleague of long standing, and we have worked together on many projects. He has been awarded the Geological Society of America's G.K. Gilbert Award, the highest offered by GSA's Planetary Science division. G.K. Gilbert is considered by many to be the "father" of Geomorphology, and the list of past awardees is a real honor role. Those of you who know Jim know how well-deserved this recognition is.*

*This is the first of the Items of the Week prepared after the changes in Air and Space this Week associated with its new supporting website.*

*I am super glad to start the new-look A+StW with this particular topic!*

Research scientists pursue research funding opportunities, perform the contracted research, and share their results with the appropriate professional communities (and, ideally, with the public, which often funded (part of) the research in the first place). The "sharing of results" occurs in print, in any number of scientific journals, in person, at annual science conferences. Professional associations and others award their members who have performed/served their science with distinction.

Planetary scientists typically belong to one of more of these association: The Geological Society of America, the American Geophysical Union, and the American Astronomical Society (Division of Planetary Sciences). All three host a major annual convention, and manage several important scientific journals. In addition, almost all planetary scientists attend the annual Lunar and Planetary Science Conference in March.

This Week's Item is about a long-term friend and colleague, Dr. **James R. Zimbelman**, of the [Center for Earth and Planetary Studies](#) at NASM. Jim has just been named the 2020 awardee of the GSA's G.K. Gilbert Award, the most important recognition the GSA bestows on a planetary scientist. A most well-deserved thing, indeed! The list of past awardees is a who's-who of the field.

The Gilbert Award recognizes "outstanding contributions to the solution of fundamental problems in planetary geology in the broadest sense." Jim has, in his words, built a career around "flowing and blowing," the modification of a planetary surface by volcanic activity and the action of the wind. I have had the pleasure of assisting his field work in both disciplines, and we've covered a lot of the American Southwest and other interesting places looking at terrestrial analogs to the volcanic and aeolian features being revealed by spacecraft exploration

of the planets. I have very fond memories of our trips together and the insightful and thoughtful conversations they fostered. Jim has published many papers on both topics, and has authored/edited several major textbooks in the field, including his latest, *The Volcanoes of Mars*, by JZ, David Crown, Peter Mouginiis-Mark, and Tracy Gregg, coming up from Elsevier.

The Gilbert Award for 2020 was not Jim's first professional recognition from the GSA. He also won the Ron Greeley Award for Distinguished Service for 2013. Jim has led/served on many proposal review panels, conducted many paper reviews, and performed other services to the planetary geology community. This one is extra meaningful for Jim (and me), because Ron Greeley was our dissertation advisor at Arizona State. Ron's service to ASU and NASA was the stuff of legend, so winning an award named for him is a big deal for those who contribute greatly behind the scenes.

Jim had a very strong "research-service-teaching" triad, even though he was not at a teaching institution. It started early; both he and I moonlighted as post-Doc's at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City. He enjoys working with learners of all ages and has been consistently one of the most E/PO-oriented curators/historians/scientists on NASM's professional staff. His mentoring skills have been outstanding, too, evidenced by the success of his past interns Ken Edgett, at Malin Space Science Systems and an expert on the martian surface, and Laurie Leshin, who now is the President of Worcester Polytechnical Institute in Massachusetts.

Last, but by no means least, Jim is one of the kindest gentlemen you would ever care to meet. I love it when appropriate recognition comes to those who deserve it, and live up to the honor it conveys!

The 2020 Award is a fitting way to cap a fine career. Congratulations, my friend!

**See Jim's NASM Bio: <https://airandspace.si.edu/people/staff/jim-zimbelman>**

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