

## 2015 Joe Webb Peoples Award

It was Joe Webb who brought me to Connecticut in 1963 and kept me at Wesleyan. After finishing my Master's in the Pyrenees and PhD in the Italian Alps, I wanted to study older orogenic belts and found a map of the Appalachians. I decided to send letters of inquiry to several East Coast institutions asking for possible post-doc positions. To my surprise I received three offers. Joe Webb's letter was the most personal! He mentioned Connecticut's river, its extensive woodlands and ... numerous outcrops of Paleozoic rocks.

Two months later we were on board a ship that brought us to New York. Upon arrival we "borrowed" a 10 year old Cadillac that Dutch students had left on the quay of the Holland- America line with the key under the mat, and drove north. The only problem we had was with the weird baskets that hung of the walls of large gateways across I-95. We had no quarters, just a few dollar bills. When we reached People's Place at Wesleyan, the flag was out; a yellow flag with red cocktail glass that invited faculty to its regular Friday afternoon gathering. We were immediately made to

feel welcome!

It was Joe Webb who kept me at Wesleyan. The University of Utrecht was the first with Newcastle to develop a new geophysical tool and construct a paleomagnetic lab in Europe. Measuring samples from Italy in the damp bowels of a WW2 German bunker we were able to show that the Italian peninsula had rotated 40 degrees counter clock relative to central Europe since Permian time. Plate tectonics had begun! Joe Webb was very interested in the rotations and suggested that I start looking at Appalachia's youngest rocks, the basaltic dike swarms that intersect all of its formations. Using plans provided by the USGS, Jim Balsley and I transformed a regular chainsaw into a rock drill. I packed my wife, son, Italian dog and... drill into an old station wagon and drove south. Joe Webb had given me geologic quadrangle maps for various states. In Virginia and North Carolina I had little problems locating and sampling the dikes. However, Joe Webb who grew up in Tennessee, had forgotten to tell me that yellow clay seams in the southern states, that cut the lateritic soils... had frequently been interpreted and mapped as basalt dikes. Coring clays did not work too well.

Back at Wesleyan we build a paleomagnetic lab (the second in the US after the USGS in Menlo Park) and were able to date the dikes as Jurassic. Working with the Marine group of the University of Rhode Island on dredged samples from the Reykjanes Ridge I found that the first magnetic band east of the central anomaly had indeed, as predicted, a reverse remnant magnetization. Vine and Mathew's ocean floor spreading theory had found support.

In the following decade I was approached by several institutions to join them and teach geophysics, but every time Joe Webb asked "what do they have to offer that we don't have here". Wesleyan had and has an ideal working environment with great colleagues, excellent undergraduates and a small but vibrant graduate program! I stayed!! For the reasons mentioned and for the friendship Joe Webb Peoples extended to a much younger colleague, this Award has special relevance for me. Thank you for this honor.