

Awards and Citations

Response by Héctor Gerardo Porras for the presentation of the 2014 Harrell L. Strimple Award of the Paleontological Society



Héctor Gerardo Porras

When I received an email saying that the Paleontological Society was naming me as the winner of the Harrel L. Strimple 2014 award, I did not tell anyone—I thought it might be a mistake, and expected a second email where I would be told about the mistake, an apology, and all would follow its course. Some weeks later, The Paleontological Society published the award-winners names, and my name was there. I began to receive emails from paleontologists, mostly showing support and congratulations for the award. One of the winners is an icon of North American Paleontology, one email said: “Congratulations, you will share the ceremony with a paleontology legend”, another said: “You should prepare a good speech for the award ceremony”, and I thought, what could I say that might be of interest to them? So I decided not to prepare any speech with pretty far-fetched words, and say what I was feeling in the moment, the first thing that would come to my mind.

When I stepped forward and was behind the microphone I said: I have not prepared a speech! I will say what I feel, whatever comes to my mind first: early in the morning, while jogging, I passed in front of this building and saw many young students going in with their back packs and their posters where surely they would participate this day, and I asked myself, will this be their first time participating in a congress? They must be nervous. What dreams and goals do they have? How many will accomplish them? And I started to remember back in 2003 when students interested in fossils started to arrive to Múzquiz, excited but with few resources, some of them asking me permission to camp in my backyard because they did not have enough to pay a hotel room. Other times, while in the field, the food ran out days before the work was done, and I could tell you endless anecdotes like this, and this way we kept growing, some of them now occupy very important positions inside paleontology in Mexico.

I tell you this because I should not be here tonight (receiving this award). It's not possible some experts would say—I had no resources, no knowledge, I did not know any paleontologists, I had everything against me, it was madness to try. I want to tell the students it is possible, do not stop, break the rules if necessary (without harming anyone) if you are studying paleontology it's because it is your passion, there are other careers where you can earn more, go on, do not stop. Some moments ago I was telling

Esperanza how much I liked helping students, I don't know how many studies and thesis, majors or Ph.D.s have been done with the fossils I have rescued, I only know there is much to be done.

I thank The Paleontological Society for giving me this very important moment in my life.

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