IRIS/PASSCAL Dedications Seismometer Testing Observatory to Jim Fowler

On March 28th, 2012, a beautiful Spring day, staff from the IRIS/PASSCAL Instrument Center, Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS), US Geological Survey, Sandia National Labs, and students assembled for the surprise dedication of the IRIS/PASSCAL Instrument Center seismometer testing vault to Jim Fowler, founding Program Manager for IRIS/PASSCAL (see "IRIS/PASSCAL Celebrates Career of Jim Fowler", March 9th, 2012).

Before a large gathering of more than 75 people, Bob Woodward, IRIS Director for Instrumentation Services, emceed a series of speakers that included Rick Aster of NMT/EES and David Simpson, President of IRIS. David Simpson presented Jim's wife, Cynthia, with a bouquet of flowers in recognition for her contribution during Jim's 25 years of service. Jim was then invited to the podium, where he thanked the staff of IRIS/PASSCAL and IRIS for "the easiest job he has ever had."

The facility was constructed in 2008, and was described by Bob Woodward as "world class." Its purpose is to test and calibrate highly sensitive broad-band seismometers in the IRIS/PASSCAL instrument fleet. Some 1500 sensors have been tested since the facility came on-line in mid-2009. Temperature stability is critical to testing such sensitive instruments, and the facility is unique in that it is a surface building that was constructed to mitigate the annual 100°F temperature variation routinely observed in Socorro. This was achieved through the use of several hundred tons of concrete buried at the center of the building, with three-foot-thick walls constructed of pumice mined locally from the Jemez mountains. The interior temperature of the building varies by no more than 1°F daily, and 20°F annually. This is achieved solely through passive technology without any active air handling. Another key feature is the use of two granodiorite slabs to ensure vibrational coherency between sensors placed on their surface, each measuring 10’x4’x10” and weighing 17,000 lbs. Bob Woodward described these slabs as oversized kitchen countertops.

At the close of the ceremonies, a granite plaque on the wall of the vault commemorating the event was then revealed. All attendees were invited to a tour of the facility, and then retired to the main building for a buffet lunch.

Photographs from the dedication, provided by IRIS/PASSCAL staff members Shane Ingate, Derry Webb, Michael Johnson, and Dave Thomas, appear below.
Bruce Beaudoin and David Simpson (to right), making final arrangements before Jim's arrival.

Rob Woolley of IRIS escorts Jim to the surprise dedication ceremony.

Jim and attendees listen to opening remarks by Bob Woodward.
As Bob introduces the event, members of the audience enjoy a near-perfect day in Socorro.

Bob reflects on Jim’s many contributions to IRIS and IRIS/PASSCAL over the last 25 years.
Bob brings Jim up for his well-deserved recognition.

Jim and Cynthia Fowler listen to several presentations by IRIS, IRIS/PASSCAL, and New Mexico Tech officials.

New Mexico Tech geophysics professor Rick Aster, the IRIS/PASSCAL P.I., elaborates on Jim's immeasurable value to the IRIS/PASSCAL program.
David Simpson, president of IRIS, speaks at length about Jim’s abundant contributions to the program.

David Simpson presents a bouquet of flowers to Cynthia Fowler in appreciation of her support of Jim Fowler’s career and of IRIS/PASSCAL.

Preparing for the big unveil: L-R PASSCAL Program Manager James Gridley, IRIS president David Simpson, Jim Fowler, Cynthia Fowler, Shane Ingate, Rick Aster, and PASSCAL Program director Bruce Beaudoin.

David and Jim look on as Shane Ingate unveils the plaque dedicating the vault in Jim’s honor. Shane was the designer of the new vault, and originated the suggestion to recognize Jim’s efforts by naming the vault after him.
A brief video of Jim's gracious speech during the dedication.

Cynthia, Bruce, Rick, and Bob listen as Jim reflects on his career and the life and times at IRIS/PASSCAL.

Jim expresses his appreciation for his many colleagues' efforts during his stint as PASSCAL Program Manager.
Bob makes closing remarks.

Rick congratulates Jim on the dedication.

After the dedication, Jim receives more congratulations from those attending.

The plaque was made from beautiful granite, of the same variety used for the vault's massive table tops.
A tour of the new vault followed the dedication ceremony. Here, candidate next-generation sensors are shown lying on top of the granite slabs, which themselves are supported by the U-shaped piers, reaching 10’ below grade. The vault’s passive temperature control ensures that the sensors can record ambient Earth motion.

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