

Geothermal Achievement Awards, 2007

The Geothermal Pioneer Award is given for outstanding achievements in the development of geothermal resources. It recognizes the pioneering efforts of members of the geothermal community who have made lasting contributions to the industry, worldwide.



Mitch Stark (left) speaking prior to presenting the Pioneer Award to Paul Hirtz (right).

2007 Recipient Paul Hirtz Mitch Stark (Calpine) presented the award to Paul Hirtz (Thermochem). Mr. Stark said, "I was very pleased when I was asked to introduce Paul. Earlier in the meeting, Chris Klein talked about pioneers in geochemistry. Those he mentioned, I think, have either passed away or retired; they are no longer practicing geochemists. But I think I speak for a lot of us by saying Paul is right there in the league with the dozen or so names Chris mentioned. What is amazing is that Paul's been able to be in the forefront of science and technology, not from the comfort of a university faculty position, but while running a business—an excellent business—the core of which is a lab unique in some of the kinds of analyses it can do, always producing top quality and indispensable data at a fair price. "Paul runs an excellent business and he's an excellent businessman. He has been a pioneer in corrosion management and mitigation. His lab has shown us how to sample and analyze, to get good data on which to base our conclusions. Tracer-flow testing was very much a Paul Hirtz invention. He's currently working on laser counting or laser measurements of steam quality. Paul just doesn't take things at face value; he wants to do things differently just to see what happens." Paul Hirtz responded, saying, "When I first heard I was going to receive this award, I thought there was some mistake. One of my first geothermal jobs was flow testing the first commercial well down in Coso with Susan Petty in 1982. With a couple of quick calculations, I realized I've been spending half my life doing this. You know you've been in this industry a long time when you're working on projects like Brawley, Bottle Rock, and Coldwater Creek for the second time. Many of these basically were dozed into the ground a number of years ago, and they're coming back to life again. So it's an exciting time in geothermal. "I'd like to think this award is more for my company's innovations and development rather than just for being old and stubborn. I would like to thank all the people I've worked with, and none of this would have been possible without the exceptionally bright and forward-thinking people in geosciences and engineering I've worked with—and all the companies over the years. I really appreciate the award and thank you."