Vera Pawlowsky-Glahn: 2006 William Christian Krumbein Medal of the International Association for Mathematical Geology

Dr Vera Pawlowsky-Glahn has been selected by the IAMG Awards Committee (Chair: Heinz Burger) as the twenty-sixth winner of the William Christian Krumbein Medal of the International Association for Mathematical Geology. Out of six nominees, she was judged the clear winner for 2006, based on aggregate point scores for the three main selection criteria, distinguished research, service to IAMG, and service to the profession.

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The Krumbein Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the IAMG. It has been awarded every year from 1978 to 1996, and every second year thereafter. Vera received her medal at the IAMG Awards Ceremony during the 2006 IAMG conference in Liège. September 2006, where she delivered an invited lecture entitled *Mathematical hypothesis underlying statistical data analysis*.

Vera was born in Barcelona in September 1951, the seventh of nine children, three boys and six girls. She attended the German School (Sankt Albertus Magnus) in Barcelona, finishing the Abitur in 1970. Her progress through school is interesting because of her experience in mathematics. Although she was best at mathematics she was a girl and her mathematics teachers disapproved with such comments as ‘It’s very strange that a girl is best at mathematics.’ Because of such comments she finished school promising herself never to study mathematics, and turned towards biology. There followed a period of what would now be called *gap years*. When she eventually decided to continue with academic studies at the University of Barcelona chance played a large role, fortunately for the future of mathematical geology. The queue at matriculation for biology was huge and there was no queue at all for mathematics. Mathematics had not been a problem at school despite her teachers’ views so why should there be any problem at university and so she matriculated into the mathematics stream.

Vera graduated in 1980 with a BSc in Mathematics from the University of Barcelona. She found the degree course too theoretical and abstract, too far away from any real situations so she took advantage of the possibility of following courses in another faculty, particularly in geology including tectonics and, with Dr J M Fonboté of the Department of Geomorphology and Geotectonics as an enthusiastic mentor, had found the excitement she sought in the interplay between mathematics and geology. Soon an interest in geostatistics was consolidated by courses at the French École Nationale Des Mines de Paris.

In 1982 she received her Master in Mathematics in the Department of Statistics, University of Barcelona. Her interest in geostatistics led her to study in the Free University of Berlin under Drs W Skala and H Burger. Her topic was the difficult problem of extending the regionalized analysis of real-valued measurements to compositional data. Her awareness of the long-standing problems associated with meaningful statistical analysis of compositional data and of the emerging methodology led her to study for a term in 1985 in the Department of Statistics in The University of Hong Kong. This was when I first met Vera and it was obvious that the statistical analysis of compositional data would never be the same. It was also the start of a great friendship and collaboration. Soon she completed her PhD in Natural Sciences (magna cum laude) in 1986 from the Free University of Berlin, later validated as a PhD in Geological Sciences in 1988 by the Spanish Department of Education. This work was eventually extended with Ricardo Olea, the 2005 Krumbein medallist, and published in Pawlowsky-Glahn, V and Olea, R