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SIX QUESTIONS TO LIANE G. BENNING



Liane G. Benning is Professor in Interface Geochemistry at the German Research Center for Geosciences (GFZ) Helmholtz Centre, Potsdam (Germany) and Professor of Experimental Biogeochemistry at the School of Earth and Environment, University of Leeds (UK). Her research focuses on quantitatively defining the geochemical reaction mechanisms in inorganic and biogenic systems. Liane is also the current President of the European

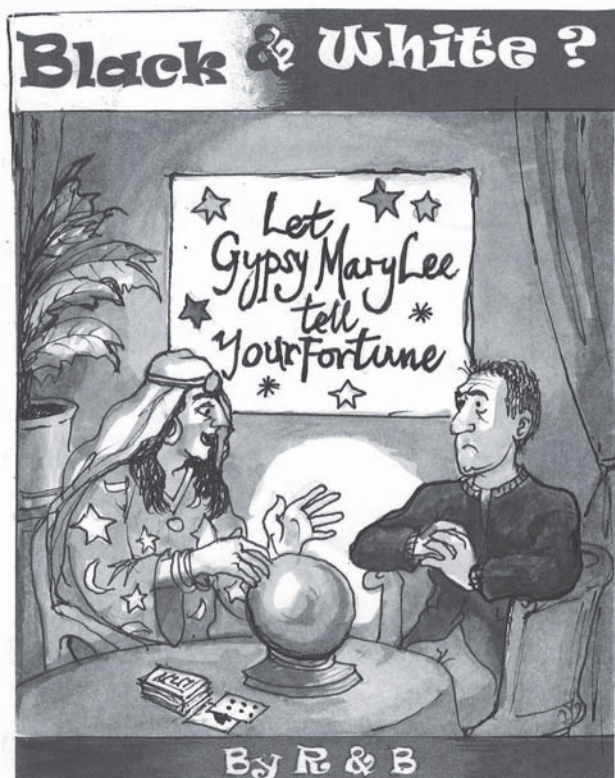
Association of Geochemistry, and a founding editor of *Geochemical Perspectives* and of *Geochemical Perspectives Letters*.

What or who inspired you to become a geochemist?

Although it sounds trite, it was my curiosity about how the Earth works that drove me to geosciences; the love of minerals and the desire to understand how they form or transform took me to geochemistry. Along the way I had amazing mentors (just to name two - my PhD and postdoc supervisors Terry Seward and Hu Barnes) who taught me what it is to be a scientist.

How do you think the field has changed since you were a student?

We ask the same questions as always – how does the Earth work? Yet, the analytical capabilities ('toys') at our disposition today allow us to address scientific questions at different levels of detail; however, invariably such advances lead to new exciting questions themselves.



I see fieldwork in distant lands –
Somalia, Afghanistan, Syria . . .

Which career choices were the most important?

Go abroad, explore new places and meet diverse scientists is the best way to become one. Don't be afraid of new challenges, new fields etc. and reinvent yourself and your science about every 10 years.

What has been your greatest obstacle?

Lack of enough time. Can someone invent another few weeks per year please?!

What inspires or motivates you?

Exciting new discoveries regardless if they are in my field or a totally unrelated field. As an experimentalist, I am also always excited by any novel scientific approaches that I can use in our own research. However, most importantly, a big part of my inspiration comes from my students and postdocs who (usually) make my scientific life worth fighting for.

What qualities do you look for in a potential PhD student?

Curiosity, focus, perseverance and tenacity.

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