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10-22-2021

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Edwin B., "Alumnus Recognized for Service to Engineering Geology Profession" (2021). *University of Mississippi News*. 309.

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Alumnus Recognized for Service to Engineering Geology Profession

Charlie Wildman receives AEG Piteau Outstanding Young Member Award

 OCTOBER 22, 2021 BY **EDWIN B. SMITH**

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Charlie Wildman. Submitted photo

A University of Mississippi engineering alumnus is the recipient of a rare honor from the Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists in recognition of his exceptional professional service.

John C. "Charlie" Wildman (BSGE 09) was presented the Douglas R. Piteau Outstanding Young Member Award during the association's annual meeting. Wildman is only the 31st person to be presented the award in the organization's 64-year history.

He is a geological and geotechnical engineer in the hydraulic structures group at Arcadis, North America Inc., a global design, engineering and management consulting company based in the Netherlands.

"The Piteau Award is basically the Heisman Trophy for our practice, except that the Piteau Award is not awarded every year, like the Heisman is," Wildman said. "This is my first international award. All other awards and recognitions have been either at the university or local level. It was also the first award I have received where I had to give an acceptance speech."

A Day to Remember

As outstanding as receiving the award was, Wildman said he learned about it at the end of what was already a most memorable workday.

"My line of work is predominantly water and coastal infrastructure," he said. "I was on a site visit near Limones, Panama, where we were evaluating two sites for a proposed pier that the U.S. and Panamanian governments are interested in building."

Required to take some preliminary and rudimentary bathymetric, or seafloor bottom, evaluations, Wildman's crew boarded a fishing charter, took the boat out and, on the way to the sites, let a few lines out in the water.

"I caught a handful of bonita, a big-eyed jack and an about 7-foot shark en route to the pier locations," Wildman said. "We also spotted a sea turtle that had gotten wrapped up in a buoy, so we pulled the fishing lines in and brought the sea turtle partially onboard so that we could dislodge the buoy from the turtle."

"Once we got the turtle free from the buoy, we released it back into the water, and then made it to the proposed pier locations."

Following the seafloor assessments at both sites, the team met at a dilapidated community pavilion in the village of Limones with about a dozen U.S. and Panamanian military officials, including the regional U.S. Army and U.S. Navy section chiefs and high-ranking officers in both Panama's National Border Service, known as SENAFRONT, and SENAN, roughly equivalent to the Coast Guard.

"What made this meeting unique was that with all the brass around the table, we – the engineers – were the stars of the show," Wildman said. "They traveled out to Limones to hear what we had to say. I didn't expect as the youngest and least-decorated member in the room to be the center of attention and the voice that they came to hear."

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Campus Briefs

Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

When Wildman finally made it to his hotel room in David, Panama, that night, an email message was waiting for him from Bill Godwin, AEG president.

"I met Bill at an AEG meeting in 2007, when I was a junior at Ole Miss," Wildman said. "All I could think was, 'Man! Bill Godwin. I didn't expect to hear from him today.' Then I read the email that said I had been selected to be the 31st recipient of the Piteau Award. My reaction was basically, 'Well, I'll be damned!' What a way to cap off an unforgettable day."

A Legacy of Service and Excellence

From the time he enrolled as a freshman at Ole Miss, Wildman has excelled in technical accomplishments, service to the association and service to the engineering geology profession. He received numerous awards, including the prestigious John D. Adler Engineering Fellowship, and was recognized as the Most Outstanding Senior Student in the **Department of Geology and Geological Engineering** in 2008.

"I was vice president and then president of the Ole Miss Club of New York City and co-founded the 2016 Rebels Ride United charity bike ride, where another Ole Miss alum and I raised about \$5K for the Oxford-University United Way," Wildman said.

"We cycled from the Ole Miss at Vandy game to the Egg Bowl in Oxford. And in 2020, I contributed a chapter in the American Bar Association's The Community Resilience Handbook."

After earning his bachelor's degree, Wildman worked for Parsons Brinckerhoff in Dallas, doing geotechnical work related to highways, levees, dams, tunnels and large building foundations around Texas and in the mid-Atlantic. He then transferred to New York City to do on-site construction management of the first phase of the Second Avenue Subway project.

While in New York, Wildman gained notoriety as one of NYC's premier home brewers and soon thereafter quit engineering to brew beer professionally for a startup brewery in Queens. He moved on to brew for a production brewery in central Maryland that, at the time, was producing beer for 37 states and nine countries.

Back to the Books and Beyond

Wildman shifted his professional focus back to engineering via graduate school. However, the summer before starting graduate school at the University of New Orleans, he and a friend completed a 25-day, 2,000-mile charity bicycle ride from Cumberland, Maryland, to Telluride, Colorado, which generated about \$12,000 for a New Orleans-area disabilities nonprofit.

Hired by Arcadis during his first semester of graduate school, Wildman was one of two Louisiana Coasts, Oceans, Ports and Rivers Institute scholarship recipients in 2017, and was one of five grand prize winners for UNO's inaugural Three-Minute Thesis competition in 2018.

He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the AEG and the New Orleans Geological Society. Wildman serves on ASCE's national Science, Policy, Education and Economic Decision committee within the Infrastructure Resilience Division. He received his master's degree in civil engineering from UNO in 2018 and earned postbaccalaureate recognition for specialty work in coastal engineering, coastal sciences and hazard policy studies during his graduate tenure.

Praise from a Professor

"Charlie has had a fascinating journey in his career that is an example to other young members when navigating the world of engineering geology," said Lance Yarbrough, UM associate professor of geology and geological engineering, who nominated Wildman for the Piteau Award.

"Since completing his undergraduate, Charlie has worked on a multitude of engineering geology and geotechnical projects involving flood hazards, liquefaction-induced settlement, bridge improvements, shoreline protection, tunneling, wind farms, dams, rail and other transportation infrastructure.

"During his work, he has mentored others and supported the community by sharing this knowledge through seminars, scientific publications and presentations."

While moving around the nation, Wildman continued to serve AEG as the newsletter editor for the New

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Wildman is the 31st person to be presented the AEG Piteau award in the organization's 64-year-history. Submitted photo



Wildman with his dog, Rusty. Submitted photo

York-Philadelphia section and the student-to-professional liaison for the Dallas-Fort Worth chapter. He is working with Region 6 and the Lower Mississippi Valley chapter to develop more interest for the association in the New Orleans area.

Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

Wildman acknowledged that he feels indebted to **Ole Miss Engineering** for giving him the foundation that led to his career achievements.

"When I started my college search, I had no interest in attending Ole Miss," he said. "But after visiting the campus and town, I quickly fell in love with the campus and town, and it quickly became my No. 1 choice for college. More importantly, it set the groundwork for practicing this line of work.

"I really pride myself on being just as good a geologist as I am an engineer and vice versa. The geological engineering curriculum at Ole Miss really helps me stand apart from my peers, as my peers generally only speak geology or only speak engineering. When you can speak both professional languages, you can really understand the interactions between in situ geology and engineered structures."

A native of Lafayette, Louisiana, Wildman lives in New Orleans. His hobbies include bicycle touring, kayak touring, snowboarding, attending bluegrass festivals and brewing.

 FILED UNDER: **2021/11-NOVEMBER ENGINEERING E-NEWSLETTER, IN PROGRESS, SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING**