GSA PRESIDENT'S MEDAL

Presented to
Dava Sobel

Dava Sobel
Author
"Galileo's Daughter and Longitude"

Beginning fresh out of college as a technical writer for IBM, I moved quickly into journalism in 1970, just in time for the first Earth Day. My favorite jobs were as science writer for the Cornell University News Bureau, where my beat included everything from astronomy to veterinary medicine, and reporter in the Science News department of *The New York Times*, covering psychology and psychiatry. My most unforgettable assignment required me to live 25 days as a research subject in a "chronophysiology" laboratory, where the boarded-up windows and specially trained technicians kept me from knowing whether it was day or night.

I was born in 1947 in the Bronx, right near the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden, so that I could walk to either by myself from an early age. My best academic credential is undoubtedly my diploma from the Bronx High School of Science. My home life, too, provided excellent career preparation, since my mother had trained as a chemist, and no one in my family thought it odd or unusual for a girl to be interested in science.

I am extremely gratified by the warm reception my books have received—not just in terms of good reviews or ratings on bestseller lists, but also events that followed their publication. *Longitude* helped place a memorial to John Harrison in Westminster Abbey. Astronomers who read *Galileo's Daughter* named a crater on Venus for Suor Maria Celeste, and also a feature on the asteroid Eros for her mother, Marina Gamba. Thanks to *The Planets*, an asteroid discovered in 1994 by David Levy and Carolyn Shoemaker has been officially registered as (30935) Davasobel.

Right now I am writing a play about Copernicus and the events that made him buck common sense and received wisdom to defend the Earth's motion around the Sun. The theme of the piece is a familiar favorite of mine: the great transformation of humankind's worldview through science.