

Vita

Erich John Weissbart was born on April 11, 1957 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The author was graduated from Hamilton High School West in 1975, and then went directly into the workforce where he labored as a mechanic/engineering technician for many years. He entered Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia in 1993. There he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Geology in May 1995 and a Master of Science Degree in Geology in May 1997. The author graduated summa cum laude as an undergraduate, was voted outstanding senior by the faculty, and was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa shortly thereafter.