



ASTROPHYSICIST – NASA SCIENTIST - RESEARCHER

MEET **WILLIAM BOTTKE, Ph.D.**, FHS CLASS OF 1984, DIRECTOR FOR THE \$5M INSTITUTE FOR THE SCIENCE OF EXPLORATION, NASA'S SSERI PROGRAM.

William Bottke, Ph.D.

Space exploration, astronauts, and planets have been life-long interests of Dr. William Bottke, Valedictorian, FHS Class of 1984, and Director of NASA's *ISET-SSERVI* team and SwRI's Dept. of Space Studies in Boulder, Colorado.

"I was always fascinated by space. Many of my earliest memories are of the Apollo program and astronauts landing on the moon," explains Dr. Bottke. "I have always wanted to do what I am doing now, which is to study our system of worlds and understand how they formed and evolved.

Dr. Bottke's interest in science and mathematics was honed by educators in the Faribault Public Schools. He notes, "I have very fond memories of my childhood and high school years in Faribault, as well as my education in Faribault Public Schools."

He recalls that the district's technology program, which introduced him to the internet via the Minnesota Education Computing Consortium, had a "huge influence on my development." He notes, further, that "everything that is big now across the world was also there when I was in high school, though in a more primitive form." He explains that a 7th grade math teacher inspired him to "do much more with the new technology than I would have thought possible." Exposure to math and technology influenced his academic and professional life.

After graduating from Faribault Senior High School, Dr. Bottke pursued a B.S. in Physics and Astrophysics, graduating with high distinction from the University of Minnesota in 1988. By 1995, he had completed his doctorate in Planetary Science at the University of Arizona. Later, he pursued postdoctorate fellowships at Caltech and Cornell University. These experiences led him to the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) in Boulder, Colorado, where he works on planetary research.

He became Director for the Department of Space Studies at SwRI in 2013, where he supervises about forty scientists. He also held additional leadership positions, such as Director of the *Center for Lunar Origin and Evolution* of NASA's Lunar Science Institute from 2008-2013. In addition, he is on the science teams for NASA's upcoming *Osiris-REx*, *Lucy*, and *Psyche* missions. He has published over 400 academic articles and was an editor for *Asteroids III* (2002) & *Asteroids IV* (2015), published by the University of Arizona Press.

His contribution to space science is recognized with The Gerard P. Kuiper Memorial Award, Texaco Prize Fellowship, the Paolo Farinella Award, and Asteroid 1995 HN2 is named (7355) Bottke. He was also a Shoemaker and Kavli Lecturer.

Dr. Bottke notes that he's had "twenty-eight years of experience working to understand the origin, evolution, and nature of our solar system, which includes planets, asteroids, comets, and meteorites."

His love of life-long learning was cultivated by great teachers. He recalls an excellent Geometry teacher whose maxim he passed on to his own children: math is important because it "teaches you how to think." Dr. Bottke feels he owes a "huge debt of gratitude" for the quality education he received in the Faribault Public Schools.

Dr. Bottke resides in Longmont, Colorado, with his wife of 21 years, Veronica Riojas Bottke. They have three daughters. He is the son of May Bottke, retired Lincoln Elementary kindergarten teacher, and William Frederick Bottke, Sr.