

"Reaching Out From a Common Experience"

Greetings from a unique group of people - the retirees of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) is a non-profit corporation which seeks to maintain communications with and to serve the needs and interests of retirees from LANL. If you wish to join our organization, an application is available in this newsletter. For more information, please contact our President Dale Thompson at dalethompson@losalamos.com or by mail at P. O. Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

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Web Master: Paul Lewis <u>plewis0@comcast.net</u> The Laboratory Retiree Group web site is <u>www.lalrg.org</u>.

Health Issues by Glenn Lockhart

I have received complaints from two different women whose spouses died and the Social Security Administration declared the two women deceased also. Social Security notified The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (Medicare) that the women were dead, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield was also notified. So both women lost their Social Security pension and their health care insurance.

In both cases, the women had qualified for Medicare on their husband's eligibility (Spousal Eligibility). One woman (whose husband had died in the spring of 2016) had submitted all of the documents requested by Social Security, but was told that she was still dead. This woman enlisted the aid of U.S. Senator Tom Udall and was revitalized. She now has health insurance (after eight months) and has received her pension which was owed. (The check was sent to the wrong address.) I have not heard from the second woman.

A number of retirees have called about a decrease in their Social Security payment (the largest was \$67.00 per month). All of the retirees had received a Form SSA-4926-SM (1-2017) notifying them of the change. The confusion came about because of Federal law concerning increases in Part B premiums. The law states that unless the retiree receives an increase in pension, Social Security cannot increase the Part B premium. So some retirees received a very small pension increase, but received a larger increase in Part B premium. An actual case:

Before January 1, 2017, the retiree received a monthly check for \$743.00 (pension minus premium). This was calculated as:

Pension \$847.90 Minus Part B premium -<u>104.90</u>

Payment \$743.00

On January 1, the retiree received a \$2.10 raise in pension and a \$3.10 raise in Part B premium, resulting in a \$1.00 DECREASE in the monthly payment.

Not everyone got a decrease. An actual case:

Before January 1, 2017, the retiree received a monthly check for \$1,548.00. This was calculated as:

Pension \$1,652.90 Minus Part B premium -104.90

Payment \$1,548.00

On January 1, the retiree received a \$5.10 raise in pension and a \$5.10 raise in Part B premium, resulting in NO CHANGE in the monthly payment.

If you have questions on health care or other benefits, call me at (505) 672-3784, e-mail at mandmlockhart@cs.com, or snail mail at 91 Mimbres Drive, White Rock, NM 87547.

Adventure at the South Pole

Hank Oona (Figures are on page 5)

At a LANL retirees' breakfast, during a discussion about Antarctica, I shared that I had spent 1.5 years at the South Pole Station in the Antarctic. The actual pole that the earth rotates about is within a few hundred feet of the station. The retiree group members asked me to write a story for this newsletter and discuss my experience at this unique place. In this short report, I will show a small sampling of the most fascinating, very cold, and stimulating piece of the world called Antarctica.

I became a member of the expedition team after graduating from RPI. This scientific expedition was during the International Quiet Sun Year (IQSY), which was 52 years ago. It was sponsored by NSF's Office of Antarctic Programs through a contract to the Arctic Institute of North America. This time period was important because the sun's activity was supposed to be at minimal and should be reflected in the characteristics of the aurora. I was sent there to document this with cameras, spectrometers and with other instruments to study the ionosphere. After applying for this position, and being accepted, all the members had to get a complete physical and mental exam at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. The extreme isolation in Antarctica could be 8-12 months, and therefore a good medical and mental condition is a requirement.

Due to safety concerns, travel during the Antarctic winter becomes virtually impossible and therefore, re-supply and travel must be done during the late spring and summer months. Our group left the US in October from Rhode Island, stopped in San Francisco, then in Hawaii, and continued on to New Zealand. From this point on, travel must be done in a Navy C-130 transport that is equipped with skis, the appropriate landing gear for ice and snow. It is also important that one must be dressed and prepared for cold rough weather. After a 8-10 hour trip, the plane lands or skids to a stop on Williams Field which is the air strip on frozen sea ice near McMurdo. This is shown in Figure 1 with Mt. Erebus (an active volcano) in the background. Figure 2 shows ice formations which are caused by high pressure of the sea ice against a land mass. Several types of seals, penguins and other bird life can be found here. As we walk around, a Weddell seal promptly and happily greets us as seen in Figure 3.

Certainly, as we will see, Antarctica is a unique, beautiful place. It contains 90% of the world's ice and snow but Antarctica is a desert; the snow accumulation is less than an inch/year. The average snow thickness is 5000 feet and it has the world's largest glacier, the Beardmore Glacier.

It has the prettiest sunsets and sunrises and each one lasts for a couple of weeks and both happen only once a year. The night and day both are 6 months long and during the six months of darkness is when my work starts. During the night time the temperature drops to a range of -80F° to -110F° and during the daytime (six months of daylight) -40F° to -60F° are common. It has the lowest temperatures ever recorded on the earth of around -130F°.

Antarctica is the size of the US and Europe combined. At the South Pole Station the elevation is 9300 feet above sea level and the snow thickness is about 9250 feet and there is about 50 feet of land underneath. A fact, that not very many know, is that Antarctica was responsible for the creation of India and the Himalayas. About 100 million years ago a large piece of Antarctica (India) broke off and due to the motion of plate tectonics it moved north. It hit Nepal and went underneath, forcing the Himalayas to grow.

The next part of the flight to the South Pole will take us through an area of mountains and glaciers as seen in Figure 4. South Pole Station is about 1000 miles from McMurdo and I will be spending the rest of the year at the coordinate 90° South. Until the sun sets, most of my time will be spent unpacking instruments, getting familiar with them and my job.

Figure 5 shows a picture of the South Pole Station. Since snow is a very good heat insulator, the living quarters, the kitchen, dining area and lab spaces are under the snow. This complex is divided into several buildings separated by hallways. The hallways stay at -70°F year round. Inside the buildings it is comfortable 68°F. The hallway serves as a freezer for storage of food and in addition, is a convenient place to cool down the beer or soft drinks if they are too warm. It takes a couple of minutes to get them to the appropriate temperature.

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Los Alamos January 2017 Barranca Mesa Snow Fall



Figures to go with the article "Adventure at the South Pole" On page 3



Figure 1 Williams Field. Mt. Erebus is in the background.

Figure 2 Ice formations caused by highpressure sea ice.





Figure 3 Prompt greeting by a Weddell seal.

Figure 4 Mountains between McMurdo and the South Pole.





Figure 5 South Pole Station. Picture taken from an antenna tower.

Figure 6 The sun at the Aurora laboratory. The sun is setting behind the building.





Figure 7 Aurora overhead. The motion is very rapid.

Figure 8 Star trails, 24-hour open shutter.





Figure 9 Sitting on a sastrugi.

Figure 10 Ice crystals. Several inches in size.





William T. Coughlin Thomas Davis Gary D. Kavanaugh Roy D. Stone Nancy Hastings Johnny O. Atencio Spencer W. Hill Donald R. Cochran David Reitzel Frank W. Clinard John H. Acomb Wilma Baxter Sidney Singer Christopher J. Martinez Robert Blackstone, Jr. Mary Grace Lucero Robert T. Brown Calvin C. Longmire Raymond Pederson Dexter Sutherland Marilyn D. Rexroth Marvin V. Harlow, Jr.

LANL

In Memoriam 10-30-2016—02-19-2017 By Jack Clifford

John A. Stephenson Walter P. Wolff Margarie Webster Wilson Connie Stephens Jean Furnish Michael E. Lazarus Leslie Hawkins Rosina V. Gray Olin E. Thomas Phillip G. Young, Jr.

++++++VOLUNTEERS WANTED++++++

DOE will begin competition for LANL's prime contract this year (2017).

LRG is seeking volunteers to write letters and postcards for mass mailings, make and answer phone calls, attend meetings, stuff mailings, and other unattractive but vital work.

Most of the work will occur in the Santa Fe/ Los Alamos area. We do not know when the work will begin, but we do know that we have to protect our health insurance.

Donations to the LRG Legal Fund will be accepted at P.O. Box 546, Los Alamos NM 87544

To volunteer, write LRG, P.O. Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544 or

e-mail sgirard@losalamos.com with your Name

Mailing address Home phone e-mail address

Coffee and Conversation (and Breakfast)

1st Tuesday of the month, 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Morning Glory Baking Co.

(Across from the High School) Coffee or tea is free.

White Rock Senior Center Opens

The Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) wishes to notify members of a new place to eat lunch in White Rock. The newly renovated White Rock Senior Center (WRSC) now serves lunch on weekdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The WRSC is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Reservations for lunch are necessary and may be made <u>before</u> <u>10:00 a.m</u>. for lunch any weekday by calling 672-2034, or by signing up for future lunches at the sign-in computer in the main building located at 133 Longview Drive.

The lunches are \$4.00 for persons 60 or older, \$7.50 for persons under 60. The lunches include the meat or fish entre with vegetables, salad bar, drink, and a fruit or pudding dessert. If you do not yet belong to the Senior Center, there is no cost to join.

Dale Thompson

Looking for articles for the Main Gate. Experiences, humor, travels, work. With or without pictures. From a paragraph to a page and a half. E-mail them to jns@rt66.com

White Rock Addresses are now "White Rock, NM 87547".



LABORATORY RETIREE GROUP (LRG) MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

LRG has two classes of membership. Participation in all LRG social or educational events is open to **all members regardless of membership classification**.

ACTIVE Member: A Los Alamos National Laboratory employee who has retired from a prime contractor of LANL (UCRS, PERS, LANS or OTHER). Active members pay dues of \$12.00 per calendar year, have voting privileges at Annual Meetings, and are eligible to serve as LRG Officers and/or Directors. Active Members receive copies of the LRG DIRECTORY and LRG's publication, *The Main Gate*. A spouse (or ex-spouse) may become an Active Member upon death (or divorce) of the Active Member with payment of \$12.00 yearly dues.

FRIEND: A person who is not a LANL retiree but supports LRG. Friends pay dues of \$15.00 per year to cover the cost of printing and postage for issues of *The Main Gate*. Friends cannot vote, hold office or receive the directory.

THE LABORATORY RETIREE GROUP, INC. (LRG) New Membership O Renewal O Friend O Change of Address Check here if requested information remains unchanged (including phone no. and e-mail) Check here if you DO NOT want to be listed in the DIRECTORY				
Lab Retiree:				Year Retired
System: UCR	(Last Name) S PERS LANS OTHER	(First Name) (circle one)	(MI)	
Spouse:		,	,	Retiree? Yes No
System: UCR	(Last Name) S PERS LANS OTHER	(First Name) (circle one)	(MI)	Year Retired
Friend:		,		_
	(Last Name)	(First Name)	(MI)	
Address:		City:	State:	Zip:
Telephone: ()E-r	nail? No Yes:		
Payment: Please send dues payment by check to the following address: LRG, PO Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544				
Check#:	DuesAmount:\$	Los Alamos Empl Scholarship Fund De	oyees' onation:\$	Total:\$

Laboratory Retiree Group LRG, Inc. PO Box 546 Los Alamos, NM 87544

Address Service Requested

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As the sun sets, and six months of darkness starts, I finally start my job. It takes a couple of weeks for the sun to set or rise. The sun gets lower and lower as it goes around the horizon as it sets. Figure 6 shows my lab. On the top of this building there are all-sky cameras, spectrometers, photometers and a variety of other instruments. All of these operate continuously.

Aurora is generated by electrons and protons due to activity on the sun. As they arrive at the earth and collide with oxygen and nitrogen atoms in the ionosphere, light is produced, see Figure 7. This light is analyzed via a spectrometer. The spectrum produced reflects the conditions on the sun and the ionosphere. Auroras are mainly seen at the north and south poles. The magnetic fields are concentrated near the poles and the electrons and protons get trapped by the field. They collide with the rarefied atmosphere and produce light mainly at the poles. The green color is due to oxygen.

The proof that we were really at the South Pole can be done by taking a 24-hour picture of the stars. The aurora tower has protective transparent plastic domes. The shutters were opened for 24 hours (the time it takes the earth to make one rotation). There was some interference from auroras and clouds but the star trails are clearly seen as anticipated as seen in Figure 8.

Since there is only one sunrise during the year, taking a walk in one is a treat. On a clear, brisk morning the temperature was -90°F and some of us wanted to take a walk and see the "after winter" sastrugi (wind eroded snow) formations. Figure 9 shows one of these. As can be seen, they are useful during and after a long hike. The only problem with hikes at these temperatures is the bathroom break and what happens to human exposed flesh in about 10 seconds. Another distinctive formation in this environment is shown in the next picture, Figure 10. These ice crystals are formed in areas with very little air motion but have a small amount of humidity. They are several inches in size.

In conclusion, this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I would do it again if I could. I have encouraged others to do it and they have. I encouraged my brother Hain to do it, and he did. My brother and I both have geologic features named after us; he with OONA cliffs, and myself with OONA mountain. Both features can be found on GOOGLE EARTH.