

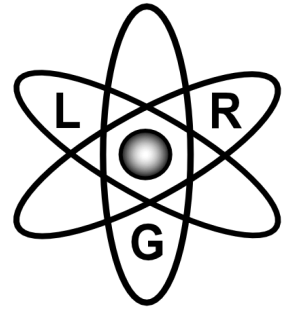
Laboratory  
Retiree  
Group  
Newsletter

Vol. 28 No. 1  
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# THE MAIN GATE



1947



Reaching Out From a  
Common Experience

## *"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.***

### **LANL Benefits Updates Norman Delamater**

As was noted in the last Main Gate, the Lab retirees have seen a benefits premium increase for 2023, mainly in the BCBS health plans and Davis Vision has also had a premium increase. There has been some confusion this year with the premium increase among some of our LRG members. Both Emyrean and Billing Services have mailed notices to all eligible retirees of the increases and the new premiums due. In some cases, retirees who had been getting cash payments each month may now begin to owe some amount each month due to this premium increase. In this situation the retiree must pay the new premium which Billing Services has calculated based on the retiree's situation and enrolled benefits. Our group's claims experience had been excellent for the last several years, but finally inflation in medical expenses and more claims has resulted in this year's higher premiums. The health coverages which we have as Lab retirees are generally more comprehensive and cost effective than can be obtained with other private policies and so is an excellent bargain available to us.

It has come to our attention that the University of California Retirement Administration Service Center (RASC) has had a number of customer service issues the last few years due to the Covid situation and reduced staffing. We participated recently in a Zoom conference with the leaders of the UC RASC as it is now being reorganized. It now has additional staff and a new Executive Director. They do recog-

nize the issues in dealing specifically with service issues of LANL retirees and survivors of LANL retirees in dealing with pension continuance issues. They recognize that it is very difficult to contact the RASC through the general phone line and are now working to establish a dedicated survivor unit with its own phone line and staff to deal with pension continuance to eligible survivors. Unfortunately, it takes up to 3 or more months to receive all required paperwork to establish the survivor pension. In this time, LANL benefits may be terminated until proof of a survivor pension is received by Emyrean. UC is working hard to make the process more timely. Watch in a future issue of New Dimensions for more details on the establishment of the RASC dedicated survivor unit. The new Director of the UC RASC is Bernadette Green, and the Client Relationship manager is Michelle Estes. Bernadette's email is [Bernadette.Green@ucop.edu](mailto:Bernadette.Green@ucop.edu).

A local Lab contact in HR who has been extremely helpful with retiree benefit issues and survivor issues is Konstance Kurrle and

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her email is [kkurrle@lanl.gov](mailto:kkurrle@lanl.gov), and her phone contact is 505-695-3707. She can provide answers for many of your issues and questions regarding Lab benefits and survivor issues.

Changes with Medicare for 2023 were discussed in the November Main Gate last year. An additional change for 2023 has to do with vaccine coverage. For those on Medicare, the vaccine coverage is expanded to all adult vaccines such as pneumonia, flu, hepatitis A and B, Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) and most importantly, Shingles is now a covered vaccine by Medicare. The Covid vaccine may well become an annual vaccine for most and this is also still covered by Medicare. For those retirees not yet on Medicare, the BCBS plans will also cover these vaccines with the appropriate co-pay and deductibles. Under the Inflation Reduction Act which was passed by Congress in 2022, Medicare is allowed to negotiate with drug companies to obtain more favorable prices on certain drugs which should lower prescription drug costs in the future. Also, a cap takes effect on out of pocket costs for prescription drugs. Our BCBS plans may already have a cap on the costs as well.

The Secure 2.0 law passed by Congress last year may also affect some Lab retirees this year. The main change is that the age when Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) begin from retirement plans is increased from age 72 to age 73 for those who attain age 72 in 2023. The age to start taking RMDs increases to age 73 in 2023 and to 75 in 2033. The penalty for failing to take an RMD will decrease to 25% of the RMD amount, from 50% currently, and 10% if corrected in a timely manner for IRAs. Starting in 2024, RMDs will no longer be required from Roth accounts in employer retirement plans. The Secure 2.0 law also has some changes affecting 529 education savings plans, details can be found at [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) or other sites online. We are now into tax season for tax year 2022. Some changes affecting all of us will be the standard deduction increase for 2022. For married filing jointly, the standard deduction is \$25,900 and if both are at least age 65, it increases to \$28,700. For single filers, the standard deduction is \$14,350 if age at least 65. Generally the standard deduction is usually taken by most taxpayers, unless there may be extraordinary medical expenses or large mortgage interest

deductions, then it may be best to itemize your deductions. Consult your tax adviser to determine what works best for you. The IRS has a free e-file program to file your taxes. Check the [irs.gov](http://irs.gov) website for details. Generally, to qualify for the IRS free e-file program your adjusted gross income may not exceed \$73,000 for tax year 2022. If you do not qualify for free e-file, you may then need to purchase tax programs like TurboTax, or contact a qualified accountant for more complex tax situations.

As we all age, we may encounter various health issue for ourselves or loved ones. An excellent resource on health issues associated with neurological disease like stroke, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, dementia and ALS is the magazine Brain&Life. This magazine is published by the American Neurological Association and offers free subscriptions for printed or online copies of the magazine to interested persons. See the website [brainandlife.org](http://brainandlife.org) for details on subscribing. This resource has many articles of interest on aging issues and associated neurological disease for those of us who are retired and may encounter these issues. For example, the latest issue has articles on what neurologists are learning about persistent symptoms of Long Covid. Another article interviews nonagenarians on sharing their secrets for longevity. Their secrets include such things as Keep moving, Engage your mind, Eat more whole foods, Be a social butterfly, Get plenty of restful sleep, and Find ways to Reduce Stress.

From the bookshelf: The Los Alamos Mesa Public Library obtains many new and interesting books each month. One book in particular which I have found to be of interest is "Existential Physics" by Sabine Hossenfelder, a respected particle physicist and now a popularizer of science in general with her YouTube videos. This book labels itself as a scientist's guide to life's biggest questions and explores the boundaries of science and religion. It is a thought provoking book to engage one's mind with these topics. Find your own favorite book at your local library or bookstore.

Finally with the new year, many of us may have made some resolutions to live a healthier life by exercising more and eating healthy. Here are some tips from AARP on some healthy foods we might all eat for our heart health.

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These are called heart health superfoods. Details are at [aarp.org](http://aarp.org), but the foods on the list include such things as beets, walnuts, tofu, olives and olive oil, garbanzo beans, oatmeal, salmon, blueberries, broccoli and chili peppers. Eat well! We hope that 2023 will be a healthy and happy one for our readers.



## **E. Alan Wadlinger President (acting) of LRG**

Alan is the present acting President of the Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG), serving from January 1 to June 30 of 2023.

Alan received a BS in physics from Ursinus College, Collegeville, PA, and a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

He was a research Associate with the University of Virginia, from 1972 to 1978, and performed pion scattering experiments at the Los Alamos Meson Physics Facility.

He joined the Los Alamos National Laboratory January 3, 1978, the first day of existence of AT2 in the new Accelerator Technology Division, working on accelerator theory and experiments for the Neutral Particle Accelerator in Space as well as other accelerator and laser projects. He wrote a number of papers and technical notes on accelerator theory and experiments.

He moved to the Dynamic Experiment Division in 1996 working at PHERMEX and a little at DARHT doing flash X-ray experiments on dynamic devices.

Alan volunteered for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life for 15 years. Joined the New Mexico Freemasons in 1996 and was 5 times Master of Los Alamos Pajarito Masonic Lodge and was a District Deputy Grand Master. Masons are dedicated to ethics and charity.

He has been on the Board of Directors of the Los Alamos Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) for a number of years.

## **Laboratory Retiree Group Annual Meeting Announcement**

Dear LRG members

This is a preliminary announcement for our annual May meeting which is open to all LRG (Lab Retiree Group) active members. We will vote for 5 new Board members.

We remind you that the LRG is primarily dedicated to the promotion of the social welfare of retirees and maintaining the benefits from the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Our Active Members are those people who meet Eligibility requirements who are age 50 or older and work for, have worked for, or have retired from, a prime contractor responsible for operation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Widows or widowers of deceased Active members are also eligible for Active Membership.

The participation of active members in the LRG is essential to keep the LRG as an effective organization. Important publications provided to members are the three Main Gates per year that provide interesting and important information to members and the yearly published directory of members which is useful for contacting old friends and colleagues. Also, we have board members who can help retirees with information on LAB benefits and know people to call if they need help.

The efforts of the LRG are directed by the Board of Directors who are elected at the annual meeting to 3 year terms on a rotating basis. The Board meets monthly via Zoom at 2:00pm Los Alamos time (Mountain Standard or Daylight as appropriate) on the third Wednesdays of the month so members from any location can participate. The meetings typically last about 1 hour. So it is important that all LRG members vote for your Board of Directors. It is also important that we elect new members to the board so the Board remains fresh and invigorated. If you are interested in serving on the board please contact [president@lalrg.org](mailto:president@lalrg.org) and express your interest. We must maintain a critical mass of new and active board members to keep the LRG healthy.

We are interested in what topics you would like to see in the Main Gate and would like articles from you that you can contribute. Please contact [board@lalrg](mailto:board@lalrg) to provide your input.

Finally, if you know individuals that meet the criteria for membership in the LRG, please encourage them to join. An application form is available at our website [www.lalrg.org](http://www.lalrg.org).

Thank you,  
The Board of Directors

## Laboratory Retiree Benefits websites & resources:

Empyrean: 1-844-805-0002, [www.lanlbenefits.com](http://www.lanlbenefits.com)  
Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Mexico: 1-877-878-5265, [www.bcbsnm.com/lanl](http://www.bcbsnm.com/lanl)  
BCBS Behavioral Health Unit 1-888-898-0070  
Express Scripts: 1-800-838-4590, [www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com)  
Delta Dental of New Mexico: 1-877-395-9420, [www.deltadentalnm.com](http://www.deltadentalnm.com)  
Davis Vision: 1-800-999-5431, [www.davisvision.com/members](http://www.davisvision.com/members)  
ARAG Legal: 1-800-247-4184, [www.araglegal.com](http://www.araglegal.com)  
Access code: 14822lal  
Medicare: 1-800-MEDICARE or 1-800-633-4427, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)  
Laboratory Retiree Group [www.lalrg.org](http://www.lalrg.org)  
LANL Pension Center for LANS/Triad defined pension plan,  
TCP1 pensions, AonHewitt: 1-866-370-7301,  
<https://pension.hewitt.com/losalamos>  
University of California Retirement Plan, UC Retirement Administration Service Center at UCnet:  
1-866-682-7787  
<https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/contacts/rasc.html>  
California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPers):  
1-888-225-7377, <https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/retirees>  
Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program:  
1-866-888-3322, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/owcp/energy>  
<https://www.energy.gov/ehss/energy-employees-occupational-illness-compensation-program>

## LRG News

**Alan Wadlinger** — acting LRG President for January 1 to June 30, 2023!

**David Schiferl** — acting LRG Vice President as of January 1 to June 30, 2023,  
then acting President for the following 6 months!

**Leigh House:** thank you for his service handling necessary document submissions for the LRG &  
leading reviews of the LRG By-Laws!

**Treasurer Sheila Girard** explains that the address label on your Main Gate indicates your dues  
status. The date on the label indicates the date for which your dues have been paid.

**Laboratory Retiree Group Directory** As a service to current LRG members the LRG Directory,  
mailed each February, contains the names and available information for every present and past  
LRG member, whether that member is in good standing or not. Some listed in the Directory have  
passed away or experienced life changing events: marriage or change of contact information. It's  
important to update your profile with the LRG so we can better serve you. Or if you know of a life  
change of a fellow retiree in the Directory please update us. Contact information is on page 9.

**An Annual Meeting** is typically held in May of each year for all members who wish to attend, with  
lunch provided.

**LRG Board meetings are held on the  
third Wednesday of each month,  
hosted by Dave Schiferl  
on Zoom**

**We will continue to meet on Zoom  
until further notice.**

**First Tuesday Breakfasts have resumed.**  
LRG members and guests who are fully vaccinated are  
welcome. Coffee is provided by the LRG.



**Morning Glory Restaurant  
1377 Diamond Drive  
8:30—10:30**

The CDC advises that the vaccine takes full  
effect two weeks after the final dose.

## “From Laboratory Drama to Theater” by Robert F. Benjamin

When I felt myself driving near retirement, I gazed into the distance toward a post-retirement avocation. But just ahead was bumpy turmoil of the Laboratory's transition from the Cold War era into the age of Stockpile Stewardship. I wanted my cherished project to survive these jolts and contribute to the Lab's Stewardship mission.

I peered through the windshield to survey the distant options for an avocation. I knew retirees who continued their challenging technical work, others who traveled a lot and nurtured their extended family, and some who engaged the arts. The arts-bound retirees usually took up visual arts like photography, painting, sculpture. Others discovered writing. A rare few ramped up their thespian skills in theater as play director, actor, or stage crew.

None of these alone rang my bell. Instead, a combination of writing and theater appealed to me. Writing plays would actually be similar to my Lab career in experimental physics in several ways. First, it would be immensely challenging. I would have to learn new skills in order to write scripts for the stage, just as I learned immensely about science research at the Lab.

Secondly, most of my "brilliant ideas" would likely end up in the waste basket. That's how physics and writing-for-stage work. Most ideas get trashed. A precious few sparkle and make the enormous effort worthwhile. Physics taught me that "successes" are few, like playwriting. I learned to adjust my expectations.

Thirdly, I would keep both my left-brain and right-brain engaged. While playwriting may seem to be entirely creative (*i.e.*, right-brain), the truth is that there's enormous craft involved. I would have to become proficient at "play structure," (based on Aristotle's model over 2,000 years ago). Also, developing characters and concocting intricate plots would challenge both my creativity and analysis skills. While physics research may look wholly analytical (*i.e.*, left-brain), lots of creativity is involved to design experiments and cleverly deploy diagnostics.

A fourth similarity between physics and playwriting is that teamwork is essential. The Lab taught me well how to harness teamwork by engaging the talents of many people to make a project successful. I leaned heavily on these skills when I landed in the theater world. The success of a play performance is a gargantuan team effort of producer, director, cast, designers, publicist and on and on and on.

Playwriting was in the distance. Viewing my side-view mirrors to see where I was then while driving on the Lab's rocky road toward Stewardship, I realized that staff members that I helped recruit as post

-docs could carry on the project I had championed for over a decade. My task was to help them become skilled not only to perform and publish the technical work, but also to navigate the storms and swells of funding cycles, administrative frustrations and other obstacles to research imposed by Lab culture. I took delight

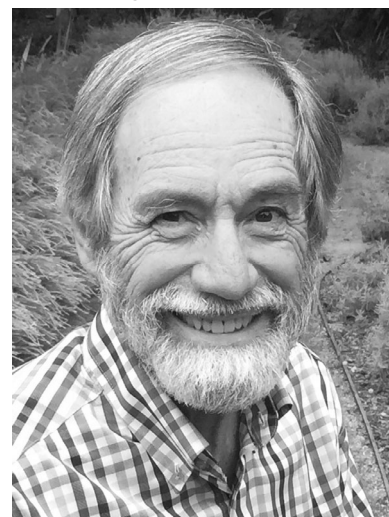
that my colleagues were not only technically qualified, but they also exuded the needed leadership and advocacy skills. When I finally retired, I took comfort knowing that the experimental research I had advocated in "code validation" would be in capable hands.

Shifting attention from the side-view mirrors back to the windshield, I could glimpse not only the challenges learning skills of a playwright, but also the challenges of entering a new community where I initially did not know the language. As I learned the new culture, I had a few early successes that kept me engaged and hopeful for more. My first full-length play production was at Albuquerque (2006), followed by commissioned play by a Phoenix theater (2009), a play in the NM Statehood Centennial (2012), an Off-Off Broadway production (2013) and several productions in Santa Fe.

Coming soon is a "national production" of my *Hunker Down* romantic comedy about Covid times, produced by PlayZoomers ([www.playzoomers.org](http://www.playzoomers.org)), a unique theater company that produces plays only on Zoom. Performances will be live-on-zoom, May 5-7, 2023.

Shifting attention from the windshield to the rear-view mirror, I see that I had a wonderful career at the Lab and contributed significantly to the Lab's mission. I also realize that my Lab career "prepared" me with skills needed for an avocation as a late-blooming playwright.

**Robert F. Benjamin** worked at the Lab 31 years, becoming a Laboratory Fellow in 1997. His community service, notably a thriving live-theater program at the local senior centers, was recognized in 2019 by the honor of becoming a Living Treasure of Los Alamos. He's had productions of six full-length plays and over twenty short plays. His plays have met audiences in ten states.



## The National Atomic Testing Museum by Mary Pike

The National Atomic Testing Museum (NATM) or Atomic Museum is a national science, history, and educational institution that tells the story of the United States nuclear weapons testing program at the Nevada Test Site (now the National Nuclear Security Site) and beyond. The Museum uses lessons of the past and present to better understand the extent and effect of nuclear testing on worldwide nuclear deterrence and geo-political history.

In 2005, the vision of the founders was realized with the opening of the Museum, currently located within the Desert Research Institute's Frank H. Rogers Building, 755 E. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, Nevada. The NATM was honored as a Smithsonian Affiliate shortly before it opened, the first to be so designated in the State of Nevada. In 2012, it received another distinctive honor: Congress designated the NATM as a national museum, one of a select few in the United States.

The Museum showcases some of the rarest artifacts relating to the nation's atomic testing program including lesser-known nuclear weapons that the U.S. developed, such as the Davy Crockett XM-388 projectile, the B54 backpack bomb, and the AIR-2 Genie air-to-air rocket. Other exhibits and artifacts placed throughout the 8,000 square feet of the Museum are Pop Culture, a diagnostic rack in the Underground Testing Gallery, a Phoebus-2A nuclear reactor that was built as part of Project Rover, an exhibit showcasing the Joint Verification Experiment, and the Ground Zero Theater, an immersive simulation of an above-ground nuclear test. Visitors also have opportunities to participate in public tours, a distinguished lecture series, and panel discussions. The newest exhibits include *Trinity - The Day the World Changed*, *Equipping Our Everyday Heroes*, *Beyond the Manhattan Project*, and *The Bomb Without the Boom* (focusing on stockpile stewardship). In February, a new exhibit will open - *SPY!* This exhibit is in partnership with the National Security Agency's National Cryptologic Museum in Washington D.C. and is set against the backdrop of the Cold War; multiple undercover tools that were used will be highlighted.

In addition, the science education programs at the Museum are a core component of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in Nevada and are consistently lauded by educators and students. STEM education programs include field trips, STEM Saturdays, and STEM Camps. The Museum is also

partnering with the local school district and higher education institutions in Nevada to enhance workforce readiness at the National Nuclear Security Site by offering career fairs at the museum, while also facilitating internship and job shadowing programs.

The museum has a highly respected Board of Trustees that includes professionals with nuclear testing, national security, museum, education, and business experience. Board members with ties to Los Alamos include John Browne, former Director of LANL and Jim Holt, former Associate Director of LANL. Chuck Costa, former Test Director, was an active Board member as well as a founding member of the museum. Sadly, Chuck passed away in 2021, but *Trinity - The Day the World Changed* exhibit, which includes the only exact replica of the world's first atomic bomb, has been dedicated to Chuck Costa for his key role in creating this exhibit.

The museum is also beginning a rebranding campaign. "Atomic and Vegas are two of the most powerful words in the English language," Rob McCoy, CEO of the Atomic Museum, said in a news release. "Combining the two only enhances our appeal to broader audiences. By adding new and expanded perspectives related to nuclear history at the museum, we look forward to engendering a greater sense of excitement and curiosity for all things atomic."

The National Atomic Testing Museum (NATM) is operated and maintained by its parent organization, the Nevada Test Site Historical Foundation (NTSHF), an IRS 501(c) 3 charitable, non-profit organization chartered in Nevada. The museum is an Affiliate Partner of the Smithsonian Institution. Please be sure to visit the website <https://www.atomicmuseum.vegas/> and consider becoming a member and donating to this amazing museum!

**Mary Pike** was born and raised in Los Alamos, graduated from Los Alamos High School, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology with a Chemistry minor and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with an emphasis in Education at Northern Arizona University. She is the daughter of Walt Wolff, former J-8 Group Leader, LANL Test Director, Program Manager for Field Operations, finally serving on the US Delegation for Nuclear Testing Negotiations with the Soviet Union in Geneva.

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Walt Wolff & Mary Pike While teaching high school Biology full-time, she earned her Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Upon graduation, she and husband, Tom, moved to Las Vegas, Nevada where Mary began her 30-year career in education with the Clark County School District, fifth-largest school district in the country.

Mary then became a high school administrator and was promoted to the Director of Science, Health, Physical Education, and World Languages; Mary retired in 2015. With her educational background and her family connection she was a perfect choice to serve on the Board of Trustees for the National Atomic



Testing Museum - a position she has held since 2008. She lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## Supercomputing Challenge challenges students in STEM competition by David Kratzer

The Supercomputing Challenge [<https://supercomputingchallenge.org>] is always looking for volunteers. We need team mentors, report reviewers, judges, and speakers.

The Supercomputing Challenge is a program for primarily high school and middle school students to create a computational science project and work on it all year long. It encompasses the school year in which teams of students complete science projects using computers. Each team of up to five students and a sponsoring teacher defines and works on a single computational project of its own choosing. Throughout the program, help and support are given to the teams by their project advisers, the Supercomputing Challenge organizers and sponsors, and from knowledgeable community members, including working experts and retirees.

The Supercomputing Challenge began in 1990 with the Los Alamos National Laboratory as a major sponsor along with universities around the state, businesses, and Sandia Labs.

[[supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/about.php](https://supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/about.php)]

Volunteer opportunities abound:

1. There is a Kickoff [[supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/kickoff/](https://supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/kickoff/)] in October which is held at New Mexico Tech in Socorro. Instructors provide the participants with instruction in programming, modeling, research, teamwork,

writing, etc. There is a “Meet the Scientist” time where teams share their project proposals with scientists who give them



guidance on what they should be striving for during the next six months. [[supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/kickoff/ko-class-materials.php#scientist](https://supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/kickoff/ko-class-materials.php#scientist)]

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## Supercomputing Challenge

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2. Through the course of the year, mentors are needed to help keep the teams motivated and on track to complete the Challenge.
3. Project proposals are due at the time of the Kickoff and Interim reports are due in early January. Volunteers review the teams' submissions and provide feedback to them at those times.
4. There are preliminary Project Evaluations on Saturdays in February where teams come to one of the sponsoring universities around the state and present their projects to teams of three or four judges who give them advice on their work and make suggestions as to what they should concentrate on during the last two months of the competition. This also gives the team practice with oral/public presentation of their current work.
5. Final written reports are due the first Wednesday in April and a panel of Finalist Judges review the submissions and select about half dozen teams as first-round finalists. All teams submitting final reports are invited to present at the Expo [[supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/expo/](https://supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/expo/)] which is held in Los Alamos or Albuquerque in alternate years. The 2023 Expo will be held at the Los Alamos National Laboratory on Monday April 24th. The first-round finalists present to the panel of Finalist Judges and all other teams present to

three or four Expo Judges in 30-minute time slots that Monday morning. The Expo Judges caucus at lunch and select a few more teams to advance as second-round finalists who will present their projects to the Finalist Judges that Monday afternoon. The public is invited to view the poster displays on Monday afternoon (the 24<sup>th</sup> of April) between 1:00 and 5:00 pm in the LANL Study Center.

6. After teams have presented their projects, they form groups of 25 and are given tours of the Laboratory. They hear talks and see demonstrations of current research being done. A highlight of the tours is a visit to the Lab's supercomputing facilities. Speakers, escorts, and other logistical support are needed for these activities.
7. There is an Awards Ceremony in Los Alamos the Tuesday after the Expo, where achievements of the students are celebrated. Cash prizes, trophies, and mementos are provided.



2021-2022 pictures



There is always a need for financial support for the Supercomputing Challenge. Current sponsors can be viewed at <https://supercomputingchallenge.org/22-23/sponsors.php>.

If you would like to get involved with the Supercomputing Challenge, please email [consult@supercomputingchallenge.org](mailto:consult@supercomputingchallenge.org) or give David Kratzer a call at 505-412-2558. More information about the Challenge can be found on the website.



## 50 years of LAMPF/LANSCE — Design & Commissioning of the Accelerator James M. Potter

I am very proud that I was part of the team that invented the resonantly coupled accelerator. It has made possible the proliferation of cancer therapy and industrial x-ray machines, and a recognized important advancement of accelerator technology.

I was lucky. I just stumbled into this great group of people who would recognize good ideas and give you credit for them even if you didn't have an advanced degree. They would also tell you if you had a dumb idea and explain without holding it against you. It took me a long time to realize that not all working environments are like that!

I recently published an article on the history of LAMPF/LANSCE that is my personal perspective on how we came to invent the concept of resonant coupling. My view is from the trenches. This paper was presented at NAPAC22 in Albuquerque in August of 2022. A second, unpublished paper covers the tuning of LAMPF/LANSCE as it was being built. The following summarizes aspects and highlights of the activities covered in those papers.

I came to Los Alamos in April 1964 with a brand-new BS in Physics from the University of Illinois to be the 19<sup>th</sup> member of Group P11, which was in the beginning stages of designing a proton accelerator for meson physics research. I participated in the development of the resonant coupling principle and went on to develop tuning procedures for the 805-MHz coupled cavity linac structures and the post-stabilized drift tube linac.

My initial job was measuring the mode spectrum of a sheet metal model of an 805 MHz Cloverleaf accelerator. We realized, after some exploration, that accelerators with resonant coupling were much easier to build with a good field distribution. The stability of the field distribution is attested to by the fact that the LAMPF/LANSCE accelerator reached its 50th year of operation in 2022.

We studied several variations of biperiodic accelerator structures and settled on what we called the side coupled structure. We built a somewhat crude cold model with cylindrical coupling cells welded onto the sides nicknamed "Mickey Mouse" and we were astounded by the performance. The development of the resonantly coupled structure for LAMPF/LANSCE was aided by the increase development time available due to budget problems. There was a long period without funding to build the accelerator, but Louis Rosen managed to get enough funding to keep the team together.

One of the developments during the R&D period was the concept of a bridge coupler to carry rf power past the required focusing quadrupoles.

This allowed us to make structures with two or four sections (tanks) powered by one klystron rf amplifier.

In 1970, after two years in graduate school, I came back to LASL to participate in the tuning of the LAMPF

accelerator. Each accelerating cell and coupling cell were tuned individually. We originally planned to start with all the accelerating cells slightly low in frequency and ding them with a blunt wedge tool between the cooling channels to raise the frequency. We soon found that some of the accelerating cells were already tuned too high in frequency. This led to the invention of a special tool. This tool required a great deal of manual dexterity and patience to operate without damaging the noses. There was only one person on the team who was allowed to use this tool, Ollie Rivera. During the entire tuning process there was no damage to the accelerator.

The period 1964-1972, culminating in the first operation of the LAMPF/LANSCE accelerator, was an exciting period of development of new ideas in rf linear accelerator technology. I remember, when attending the MURA Accelerator Conference in 1964, there was an undercurrent of, "Who are these guys from Los Alamos who think they can build an accelerator? They've never built an accelerator before". From my perspective the development of resonant coupling shows that a bunch of smart guys who don't know what can't be done can sometimes make an improvement over existing technology.

1970-1972, until the completion of the tuning, was a period of hard, repetitive work mixed with almost weekly problem solving. A celebratory photo was taken of the tuning crew including Dave Jones, Don Liska, Jim Potter, Cecil Starke, Paul Beauchamp, Dennis West, Charlie Manger, Bob Harrison, and Ollie Rivera on April 27, 1972, at the end of about two years of tuning the 4,000+ cells. With prudent design we managed not to paint ourselves into a corner. All the solutions we developed have stood the test of time.



Dennis West & Bob Harrison  
tuning accelerator components

## The Merry Widows by the Merry Widows

A few times a year we Merry Widows gather for lunch to celebrate life. We talk and laugh for hours. Several restaurants in town don't mind our occupying a table for extended lengths of time. We have an imperative to meet as often as we can, for life is fleeting and unpredictable. We feel a need to honor our long enduring friendship that began decades ago when we were a company of eight. Our ages make our time together more precious and meaningful each time we are together.

We chose to call ourselves the Merry Widows because, although some may feel that irreverent, we know that our husbands, gentle caring men, wanted us to carry on with the same love for life and joy in our hearts that we enjoyed when they were with us. Friends, and sometimes strangers, smile when we explain our reasoning, validating our choice of words.

At our last lunch we discussed the possibility of sharing our grieving experiences, hoping it may help others not feel lost or alone. We discussed the grieving process in the loss of a beloved spouse. Our husbands died under different circumstances, but no matter, the bottom-line is a devastating loss and the seeming unfairness of it, but none of us asked, "Why me?"

We are all lifelong volunteers. Carmen has been the face of the White Rock Senior Center on Monday mornings for many years. Joyce Nickols volunteers at the Los Alamos Nature Center (PEEC) and arranges memorial receptions for her church in the hope that a thoughtfully planned event with compassionate church members is comforting to those faced with the passing of a loved one. Ev was a docent at the Albuquerque Zoo for 17 years. Joyce Wolff also greets at the White Rock Senior Center and recently resigned as Editor of this newsletter. Returning to social activities provides an opportunity to share thoughts with supportive friends. Staying interested and interactive offers some degree of normalcy, preparing you for what now will become a new normal. Taking one day at a time gives time to be clear about your choices and stay open to trying new things and establishing new habits. We agreed that patience is most important. There is no timetable for grief. Grieve in your own way. Be patient with yourself and those who would press you.

What happened to we?  
One half of the whole is gone  
I go on as one.



We are, Joyce Nickols, 87, widowed eighteen years, Joyce Wolff, 86, widowed six years, Ev Bartram, 84, widowed ten years, and Carmen Geoffrion, 96, widowed ten years.

We don't consider ourselves wise, but we have experienced the loss of a life partner. Many have as well and are willing to share insights. Don't be afraid to share thoughts. One morning you will wake up and realize that your first waking thought is not of your loss.



When we were eight— 1985.  
Top to bottom: Don Bartram, Norris Nickols, Ev Bartram, Joyce Nickols, Joyce Wolff, Carmen Geoffrion, Bob Geoffrion and Walt Wolff.

Remember Anthony's at the Delta?

## “Oppenheimer” movie release is a few months away, and interest continues to develop

From an announcement published in the LA Daily Post on February 13, 2023:

Registration is opening for public tours March 29 & 30 of Manhattan Project National Historic Park, with a second set of tours scheduled for October 18 & 19

Admission is free, but spots are limited.

### Register Now for Behind-the-Fence Tours | Manhattan Project National Historical Park

<https://about.lanl.gov/history-innovation/mapr/behind-the-fence-tours/>

These “behind-the-fence” tours are hosted by the Laboratory in collaboration with the Los Alamos Field Office of the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration and the National Park Service.

As an active national security laboratory, LANL has specific entry requirements for visitors. Details will be provided to registrants; compliance is necessary to avoid being turned away from the tour.

On Los Alamos National Laboratory property, participants will see and learn about the original Pond Cabin, which served as an office for physicist Emilio Segrè’s Radioactivity Group; a battleship bunker that protected staff during explosives testing; and the site of Louis Slotin’s deadly criticality accident.

**Information, history, & personal reminisces:** If the Main Gate newsletter generates thoughts and/or a writeup that is of interest, please send it to us at [maingate@lalrg.org](mailto:maingate@lalrg.org)

**Historic photographs note:** if you have photograph collections, please consider donating them to the Los Alamos History Archives [www.losalamoshistory.org](http://www.losalamoshistory.org) & [archives@losalamoshistory.org](mailto:archives@losalamoshistory.org)

### Stay Informed

A list of resources on page 13 can keep you informed of happenings in Los Alamos, in the LANL Community, and more broadly.

Additional websites that are full of information include

LANL Bradbury Museum website, [lanl.gov/museum](http://lanl.gov/museum)

National Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, NV [nationalatomictestingmuseum.org](http://nationalatomictestingmuseum.org)

Manhattan Project National Historic Park [www.nps.gov/mapr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mapr/index.htm)

### LRG Officers and Board Members

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Vice President (acting)	David Schiferl	<a href="mailto:president@lalrg.org">president@lalrg.org</a>
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# LANL In Memoriam

By Jack Clifford



Diane Albert	William R. Daniels	Robin S. McDowell
Benjamin C. Anaya	Jerry J. Dick	Bruce McReynolds
Leo William Beckstead	Consuelo Dominguez	Terrence Mitchell
Edward R. Birnbaum	Kenneth Duerre	John Barada Ramsay
Allen Lee Bowman	Troy L Eddleman	Darrell W. Sinclair
Dennis Brewster *	John Carroll Elder	Peter Smith
Kent Grimmett Budge	Harry Ettinger	Gloria S. Starner
Johnny Bujnosek	Ramon (Ray) N Garcia	Carl A Thornton
Franklin Joseph Bunker **	John Gilpatrick	Donald L Upham
Michael W. Burkett	Ronald Harrison	Terrance Michael Vergamini
Bruce Emerson Burkheimer	George Francis Hurley	Ray Robert Waller
David Cartwright	Merrill Elery Kenyon	Nancy L. Warnes
David Cash	Herald Kruse	Robert F. Wells
Edwin Phillip Chamberlin	Jack Markham	Roy White, Jr.
Elbert W. Colston	Robert Joseph Martinez	Nell Reed Will
Theodore Anthony Cordova	Arthur Mayne	

\* SNL & LANL consultant \*\* EG&G

The preceding names have not been listed in LANL Memorium before.  
An obituary can frequently be found in Google by entering the individual's name,  
followed by Los Alamos.

The LRG and the community are grateful to Carol Clark, Publisher of the *LA Daily Post*,  
for printing obituaries at no cost.



## Stay Informed

Los Alamos news on line with the *Los Alamos Daily Post* and the *Los Alamos Reporter*  
LANL news and more at: [discover.lanl.gov](http://discover.lanl.gov)  
Bradbury Science Museum news with their monthly online newsletter: [@theBradbury](mailto:@theBradbury)  
LANL Foundation Scholarship news monthly email newsletter at: [lanlfoundation.org](http://lanlfoundation.org)  
Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) at: [www.lalrg.org](http://www.lalrg.org)  
Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce at: [losalamoschamber.com](http://losalamoschamber.com)  
Plan a trip with UC Retirees: [ucretireestravel@gmail.com](mailto:ucretireestravel@gmail.com)  
LLNL retiree website: [www.livermorelabretirees.org](http://www.livermorelabretirees.org)  
LBNL retiree website: [retirement.berkeley.edu/ex-ls](http://retirement.berkeley.edu/ex-ls)

## LABORATORY RETIREE GROUP (LRG) Working to Protect Retiree Benefits & Information Sharing

**Membership** in the Los Alamos Laboratory Retiree Group, Inc. (LRG) is open to any person age 50 or older who currently receives or expects to receive an ongoing financial benefit (health or other insurance, retirement income, or other forms of remuneration) from having worked or having an association with someone who worked for the prime contractor of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

**Active Members**, as described above, pay annual dues of \$20 per household, have voting privileges at Annual Meetings, and may serve as LRG Officers and/or Board Members. Active members receive the annual LRG Directory of members and The Main Gate newsletter 3 times a year. Spouses of deceased Active Members remain members as long as yearly dues are paid.

**Friends** are persons who support LRG. Friends pay dues of \$20 per year to cover the cost of printing and mailing The Main Gate. Friends may not vote, hold office, or receive the LRG Directory.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION or RENEWAL FORM

### THE LABORATORY RETIREE GROUP, INC. (LRG)

New Membership    Renewal    Friend    Change of Address

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Check here if you DO NOT want to be listed in the DIRECTORY

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Last Name First Name Middle

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Spouse and/or  
Active Member \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name Middle

LANL Retiree? Yes No Year \_\_\_\_ System: UCRS PERS LANS TRIAD OTHER (circle as needed)

Friend \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name Middle

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail? No Yes: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment: Please mail this completed form plus \$20 per year dues payment by check to:  
LRG, PO Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Check No: \_\_\_\_\_ Dues Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

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**The Workforce Retirees' Scholarship Fund is an endowed component of the Los Alamos Employees' Scholarship Fund (LAESF) funded by contributions from Laboratory retirees, including Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) members.**

The LAESF Advisory Committee awards a \$1,000 Workforce Retirees' scholarship to a deserving student each year based on both scholarship and financial need.

**To donate go to the LANL Foundation website:**

*lanlfoundation.org*

**Mike Ammerman is the scholarship program manager  
& can be contacted directly at**

**mike@lanlfoundation.org or 505-795-3778**

**Making differences in a young lives, one at a time.**