An Informal History of Women at the National Laboratories

Cheryl Rofer
New Mexico Museum of History
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Before the National Laboratories

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT
Members of the Women's Army Corps at Los Alamos in 1945
Manhattan Project

- Elizabeth Graves – Physicist, later became group leader
- Floy Agnes Naranjo Lee – Hematology technician
Operators at the Oak Ridge electromagnetic uranium enrichment facility
Their day in the sun

Ruth H. Howes & Caroline L. Herzenberg

Foreword by Ellen C. Weaver, Ph.D.
THE 1950S
The 1950s

• Russia exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949
• National laboratories built up quickly
• Race for hydrogen bomb
• Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory
• Simone de Beauvoir, “The Second Sex”
Programming Los Alamos National Laboratory's Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer for calculations in early nuclear weapons research

The 1950s
Jane and David Hall - co-group leaders on Clementine, the world's first fast plutonium reactor.

Jane was the first woman to become Assistant Director at Los Alamos, appointed to General Advisory Committee of AEC in 1966.
1952: The telephone switch board center at Base Camp Mercury, the Nevada Test Site
1955: Darleane C. Hoffman joins Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory
1959: Betty Carrell became the first female mechanical engineer among 350 peers at Sandia National Laboratories' California site.
THE 1960S
1963 - President Kennedy signs the Equal Pay Act
1964: An employee at the Kansas City Plant loads punch cards onto a disk drive.
The 1960s

- 1962 – Student aide at Argonne National Laboratory
- 1964 – Reference librarian at Shell Development Company
- 1965 – Technical writer at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory
- The labs begin to be hit with lawsuits for discrimination against women
  - Research Aide
  - Equal pay
THE 1970S
The 1970s

- Arms control talks, often fruitless
- Revolution in Iran
- AEC → ERDA → DOE
- Laser projects at Los Alamos
1972: Dr. Ruth Patrick of Savannah River Site's ecology lab studies thermal effects on stream organisms.
Darleane Hoffman becomes Division Leader at Los Alamos
THE 1980S
The 1980s

- AIDS
- Nuclear terror
- Treaties!
  - Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
  - Chemical Weapons Convention
- Destruction of hazardous wastes project
Bette Korber - AIDS researcher

Population genetics of HIV, work toward AIDS vaccine
E.O. Lawrence Award and others
THE 1990S
The 1990s

• The Soviet Union collapses
• Dealing with the consequences
• The environmental cleanup of the US weapons complex begins
The 1990s

- Jill Trewhella - Biophysicist
- First woman Laboratory Fellow
- Division Leader
- Also Lab Fellows –
  - Michelle Thomsen
  - Merri Wood-Schultz
  - Bette Korber
  - Carol Burns
  - Jane Nordholt
  - Joyce Guzik
  - Antoinette Taylor
  - Brenda Dingus
  - Cheryl Kuske
  - Jaqueline Kiplinger
  - Jennifer Hollingsworth
AND UP TO THE PRESENT
Up To The Present – Los Alamos

- 2003: Carolyn Mangeng – first woman deputy Laboratory director (acting)
- 2012: Patti Buntain – first woman manager of a Life Extension Program at Los Alamos
- 2013: Susan Seestrom – first woman leader of the Physics Division and the Weapons Physics Directorate
- 2013: Division Leader Carol Burns was named Deputy Principal Associate Director for the Science, Technology, and Engineering Directorate
- 2018: Nancy Jo Nicholas – first woman principal associate director
- 2018: Carolyn Zerkle – became the Laboratory’s executive director
What About The Cat?