

Introduction of Darleane Hoffman

Dr. Seaborg

Our next speaker is Darleane Hoffman of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. She is much too young for me to have known her as long as I have known the previous speakers. Darleane received her Ph.D. degree from Iowa State College; I guess it is Iowa State University now. Her first position was actually with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory where she worked on the ill-fated aircraft nuclear propulsion project. As a matter of fact, that was one of the first things that I went to President Kennedy about when I became Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. I said that I didn't think that this project was a good way to spend money. Very soon after that the project was terminated.

Darleane went from Oak Ridge, I believe, directly to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, where she worked in the radiochemistry group, became the associate group leader very soon, and turned her attention to heavy isotopes, actinide isotopes, and in particular to an elucidation of the fission reaction. I would rate her as one of the world's leading authorities in the investigation of nuclear fission. She has discovered this interesting phenomenon of symmetric fission in the heavy fermium isotopes, fermium-258, fermium-259, and so forth. She and her co-workers made the interesting discovery of plutonium-244 in nature. Due to Darleane, we can now no longer speak of the 92 natural elements; we have to say the 92 plus plutonium natural elements. Recently, and I do not know whether this was for the good of science, or even for the good of Darleane, she assumed the position as Director