

# LA-UR-23-24358

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

**Title:** JRO Exhibit Article

**Author(s):** Whitacre, Madeline Helene

**Intended for:** LANL Today publication

**Issued:** 2023-04-25



Los Alamos National Laboratory, an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer, is operated by Triad National Security, LLC for the National Nuclear Security Administration of U.S. Department of Energy under contract 89233218CNA000001. By approving this article, the publisher recognizes that the U.S. Government retains nonexclusive, royalty-free license to publish or reproduce the published form of this contribution, or to allow others to do so, for U.S. Government purposes. Los Alamos National Laboratory requests that the publisher identify this article as work performed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy. Los Alamos National Laboratory strongly supports academic freedom and a researcher's right to publish; as an institution, however, the Laboratory does not endorse the viewpoint of a publication or guarantee its technical correctness.

## JRO Exhibit Article

Brief article describing an upcoming exhibit featuring artifact related to J. Robert Oppenheimer, that will be on display in the NSSB.

## See unique artifacts relating to the Lab's first director, J. Robert Oppenheimer

By Madeline Whitacre, archivist-historian, [National Security Research Center](#)



Lab staff can now see unique artifacts related to the Lab's famed first director, J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The temporary display, located in the lobby of the National Security Sciences Building (TA-03-1400) through the end of June, highlights objects and photos from Oppenheimer's life, including his time as director of Los Alamos. Items from both the Lab's National Security Research Center and the Bradbury Science Museum will be on display.

### **Who was Oppie?**

Oppenheimer was the Laboratory's first director, beginning in 1943. His tenure spanned the Lab's development of the world's first atomic bomb through October of 1945, after the end of World War II. Oppie, as he was known by friends, organized the Lab, recruited scientists, and steered the direction of research. After the war, Oppenheimer left Los Alamos to head the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission (the predecessor of the Department Of Energy).

### **What's on display?**

Many of the historical documents in the exhibit are housed in the National Security Research Center, the Lab's classified library and curator of unclassified items of historic value, and are not usually accessible for viewing. The exhibit is a unique opportunity for staff members to browse these original historical materials.



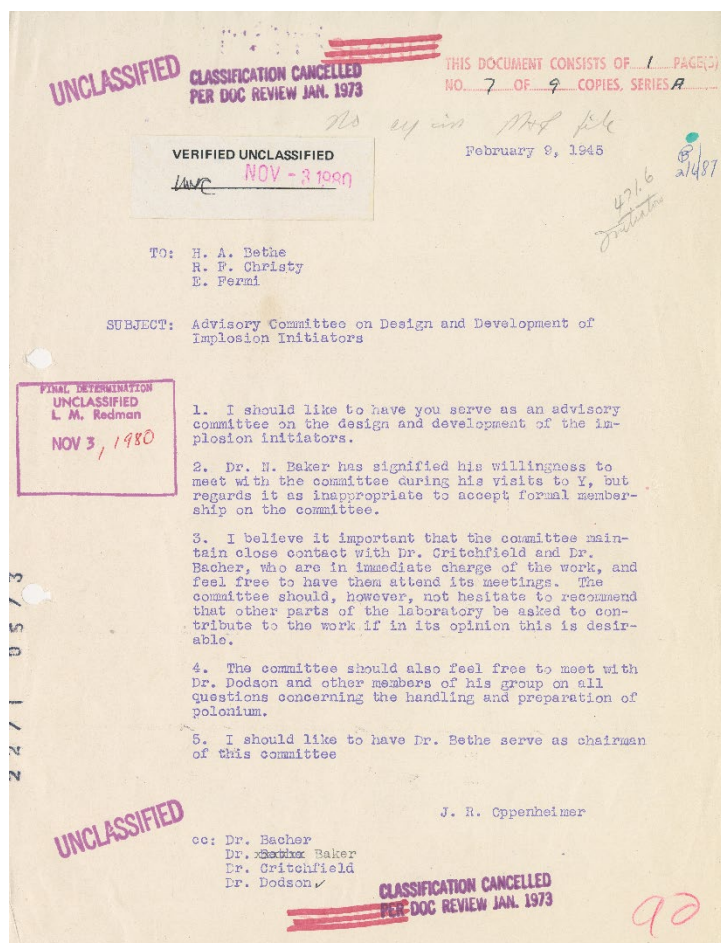
Caption: First Lab Director J. Robert Oppenheimer and General Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, at the remains of the Trinity tower just two months after the successful test of the first atomic bomb. Oppenheimer was the director of the Los Alamos lab, known as *Project Y*, which was just one of many Manhattan Project sites across the country.



Caption: Norris Bradbury, the Lab's second director, and first Lab Director J. Robert Oppenheimer in 1964 as Oppenheimer prepares to give a lecture.

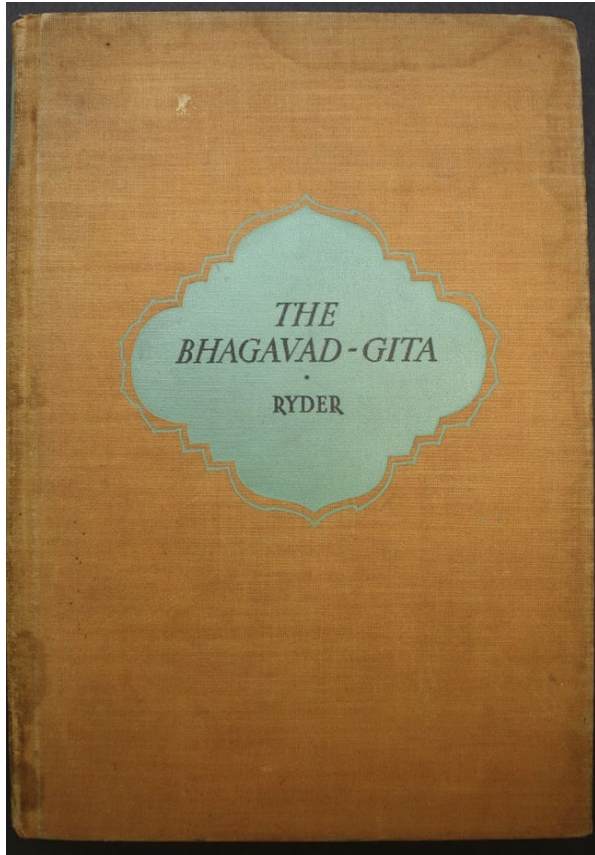
### Highlights from the display

**Documents from the Manhattan Project Era:** As Director, Oppenheimer wrote many documents and memos relating to the organization of the wartime Laboratory and its technical work. Come see some of Oppenheimer's original planning notes, a wartime patent, a memorandum, and more.



**Caption:** In this February 9, 1945 memo, Lab Director J. Robert Oppenheimer selected physicists Hans Bethe, Robert Christy, and Enrico Fermi to head an advisory committee for the design and development of initiators, which initiates the chain reaction in a supercritical mass at the correct time.

**Oppenheimer's belongings:** J. Robert Oppenheimer's wartime office chair and his copy of the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*, will be featured in the display.



Caption: This copy of *Bhagavad-Gita* belonged to J. Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer's famous remarks regarding the Trinity test, "I am become death, destroyer of worlds," is a reference to this scripture. (Donation to the Bradbury Science Museum courtesy of Ben and Sara Beck Svetitsky.)





Caption: J. Robert Oppenheimer in 1964 on a return visit to Los Alamos, where he got reacquainted with his wartime office chair. The office chair belongs to the Bradbury Science Museum and is on display in the NSSB lobby.

To access the NSSB lobby, you must be Q cleared or escorted by a Q-cleared employee.

**Want more Oppenheimer?** Be on the lookout this summer for a documentary on J. Robert Oppenheimer, created by the Lab's National Security Research Center and based on its collections from the Manhattan Project era as well as interviews with today's Lab staff and Oppenheimer experts. Watch the two-minute trailer.