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Los Alamos at 30: Remarks by Harold Agnew

Roger A. Meade, ed.

On June 21, 1975, Harold Agnew, then Director of the Laboratory, gave the concluding remarks at the 30th anniversary reunion of Los Alamos. His talk followed that of his former wartime colleague, Raemer Schreiber (see LA-UR-24-30425). Whereas Schreiber's talk focused on the very early postwar years, Agnew's focused on (then) more recent Laboratory achievements. His talk has been edited for readability.

I want to welcome all of you who have returned to Los Alamos. It was a real pleasure to see many of you this afternoon. Cy Betts, you might remember, described at our last reunion how he and Norris ran this place. Half the time Cy worked for Norris. The other half Norris worked for Cy, and that way they could put the budget together and get what they wanted extremely well.¹

It is also nice to see Willy Higinbotham, who has brought his children with him. You know, Willy instructed Lawrence Welk on how to play the accordion and could have done great things from there, but instead he went to Brookhaven. But that is the way it happens, I'm afraid.

Los Alamos has changed a lot in the last few years. You may remember that back in 1945 no one really knew what the budget was. We had about 3000 people, 1400 of them were civilians, 1600 were SEDs, in the military. Ten years later the budget was 37 million. We still had 3000 employees, but they were all civilians. Ten years later we were up to 84 million. We had 3900 employees. And now, this year, we're at 162 million and we have 5300 employees. Since that time, we have had 650 people who have retired, but we still have a little over fifty individuals who have thirty years under their belt with the Laboratory, and we are very proud of having them.

In the housing units, we have about 2500 units remaining from the originals built by the government. We now have Pajarito Areas, Barranca Mesa, and another 3500 units. So, the community is growing. You have probably noticed the apartment houses along Trinity. We need more apartments, we need more housing because, as you are aware, January 19th of this year the AEC folded and a new organization, called the Energy Research and Development Administration, came into being. The country faces a similar crisis, in some respects, to that which we faced in the early 1940s. It could affect our lives just as drastically as that could have affected it if we hadn't had the outcome the way it was. Not only is it going to affect our lives, but it's going to affect even greater what we used to call underdeveloped countries if we don't prudently attack the energy problems which face the world today.

This year, for the first time, the Laboratory has more work in non-defense effort than in defense efforts. It's about 55/45. We have a tremendous amount of work going on in the energy field, which we expect to grow. In geothermal energy, I think you are aware, we are trying to tap the hot dry rock in the caldera, which is right behind you. We have an active program in fusion, magnetic confinement, and laser fusion. And something that's been a payoff, I think, even

¹ Betts, a Colonel assigned to the Manhattan Engineer District, was the District's representative at Los Alamos.

sooner, in magnetic, cryogenic transmission lines, and energy storage. We have a very big program in biology and medicine. I think many of you were fortunate and had had a trip to the Clinton P. Anderson Meson Physics Facility, which is a real boon to Los Alamos. It's a national facility where people, based entirely on the merits of their proposals anywhere in the world, can come and use that facility.

We are leading the field in lasers here, both for military and peaceful purposes. We are building up again our mathematics and chemistry divisions. We have some negotiations to perhaps take over Sacramento Peak, the observatory south of us. If we do that, then we expect to really expand our work in astrophysics. We have one of the largest computational centers in the world. And we are getting very much involved in reactor safety because we believe, very strongly, that the nucleus is a friend and we want to make sure it stays that way.

Just today we broke ground within the Laboratory area on a new building known as the National Security Resources Study Center. This was made possible through the efforts of Senator Montoya and Congressman Lujan. We will, for the first time, have an adequate library structure, and we'll have a meeting place where we can house up to 50 resident scholars, and various study programs having to do with defense or peaceful energy, or scientific works. It will be a real asset to the community and to the nation. It will be the only such facility, and we are very proud that we are going to have that. It will be a year from this September when we will dedicate that facility, and we hope that when you come back you will be able to visit it.

Now there is one facility that we are lacking, and in a sense, I am sort of going to put the bite on you. One thing we don't have for our visiting scientists and scholars, who are in residence here, is a place where they can meet and discuss things in the evening. As it is now, they are sort of, let me say, bottled up in a motel room. What we would like to have is what in some university campuses is known as a faculty lounge, a faculty club. We are not going to compete with private enterprises as far as housing, or feeding of these guests is concerned, but we do want to have a place where they can meet and have some meeting rooms. And we will start a fund drive, around August, and we will probably be contacting some of you to help us, especially to get institutional help in support to raise money for this. The University of California is going to conduct this drive and they put in \$200,000, which we are going to match and approach one million to build such a facility for visiting guests.

Some of you may remember some of the antics in the old days, such as those of Jay Wechsler. You may recall that Jay chose to challenge a horse, a mare, to a footrace to Bandelier. Jay lost. I like to think that when Jay lost this was when Women's liberation started in Los Alamos.²

² This race is briefly described in LA-UR-26288.