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Awards recognize postdoc achievements

by Kathryn Ostic

Collaboration between Laboratory technical staff and postdoctoral appointees is a highly valued Los Alamos tradition — one that has resulted in significant contributions to the nation's scientific and technical capabilities. And helping to ensure that this tradition continues is the Laboratory's Postdoctoral Program, through which some of science's most promising researchers are brought to the Lab.

The Laboratory's Postdoctoral Program is essential to the vitality of basic and applied research, said

Mary Anne With of Science and Technology Base Programs, which coordinates the program. With said approximately 285 postdocs were at the Lab in 2001, and she noted that 81 of these postdocs have become full-time technical staff members.

To acknowledge the importance of postdocs and some of the outstanding work they perform, three prestigious awards have been established: the Postdoctoral Publication Prize in Theoretical Physics, Postdoctoral Publication Prize in Experimental Sciences and Postdoctoral Distinguished Performance Award.

The Postdoctoral Publication Prize In Theoretical Physics is a biennial award established in 1976 by Leon Heller, a retired staff member, and the Laboratory. Ten individuals have won this award since its inception. Gerardo Ortiz, a technical staff member in Condensed Matter and Statistical Physics (T-11), won the 2000 award for his paper "Exchange Correlation Hole in Polarized Insulators: Implications for the Microscopic Functional Theory of Dielectrics," published in the Jan. 12, 1998, issue of Physical Review Letters. Ortiz's

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Reaping the rewards from a job well done

by Kathryn Ostic



Kathy Prestridge of Hydrodynamic Applications (DX-3) is the first-place winner of the Postdoctoral Publication Prize in Experimental Sciences for 2001. Photo by Presley Salaz, Imaging Services (IM-4)

Kathy Prestridge of Hydrodynamic Applications (DX-3) knows the thrill and the rewards that come from a job well done. Prestridge was the 2001 first-place winner of the Postdoctoral Publication Prize in Experimental Sciences. "This award has been very beneficial," said Prestridge. "It has provided me with an opportunity to talk about my experimental work to a wide audience of people. I am grateful to Damon Giovanielli for sponsoring the award and to the committee who chose my publication. I'm also grateful to May Anne With, who does an excellent job organizing the postdoc program at the Lab."

Prestridge won the award for a paper on "Validation of an Instability Growth Model Using Particle Image Velocimetry Measurements." She currently is conducting experiments to study ejecta transport. She uses high explosives to drive metal particles such as aluminum or tin, and then she measures the velocity fields of the particles as they travel through different gases or vacuum. Prestridge also is continuing her work on fluid instabilities. She received her bachelor's degree from Princeton University in aeronautical engineering and her doctorate in engineering sciences from the University of California at San Diego.

Student programs vital to the Laboratory, the state, the nation

Below is an excerpt from the fall 2001 Actinide Research Quarterly interview conducted by Meredith Coonley, Communication Arts and Services (IM-1). For the complete interview, contact Coonley at 5-3982 for a copy of the publication or go to <http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/nmt/nmtdo/AQarchive/01fall/contents.html> online.



Allen Hartford

Allen Hartford, director of the Science and Technology Base (STB) Programs office, which oversees student programs at Los Alamos, leads off with some thoughts on students, mentors and the importance of students to the Laboratory as a whole.

Los Alamos has a long history of hosting students who engage in our scientific and engineering research and development activities as well as the work that keeps the Laboratory functioning — our business and operational efforts.

Students at all levels work here and virtually every organization uses students in some capacity. During the past summer, we employed 66 high school students, 930 undergraduate students and 391 graduate research

assistants — almost 1,400 students. Los Alamos also employs about 275 postdoctoral fellows and research associates.

... Students make important contributions in meeting the Laboratory's programmatic goals. Clearly, they contribute to maintaining an invigorating environment here. ...

We want to bring students to the Laboratory to encourage more young people to choose careers in science and engineering. We hope that by exposing students to the challenges and excitement of research and development early in their studies, more of them will choose this path.

Student programs also are a key element of the employment pipeline at Los Alamos. Competition for the best science and engineering graduates is intense. Organizations that are the most successful in attracting recent graduates frequently establish relationships with students early in their education, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Our Postdoctoral Program is a prime example of this pattern. Over the past five and one-half years, 32 percent of the Laboratory's total technical staff-member hires has come through the Postdoctoral Program. ...

Our student programs also need to be measured by their impact on the

communities surrounding the Laboratory and New Mexico in general. We must be a good neighbor and corporate citizen. As one of the largest employers in the state, the Laboratory needs to provide career opportunities to the state's residents. We need to be part of the effort to retain local talent in the state. ...

Science and Technology Base Programs, working with technical organizations as well as the Human Resources (HR) Division, the Diversity Office (DVO) and the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), is committed to enhancing the quality of student programs, both from the perspective of the Laboratory and the students.

If we are to remain a premier research institution, the Laboratory must be aggressive in identifying the best talent available and succeed in bringing that talent to the Laboratory. Our student programs are important vehicles for cultivating that talent.

Awards recognize postdoc ...

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current research includes high-temperature superconductivity and the effects of strong magnetic fields on the properties of matter. "Winning the award has positively affected my career at the Lab," said Ortiz. "It also made me feel good that other people appreciated my work.

"Professionally, it improved my scientific standing among my peers, which increases my opportunities to address even more challenging scientific problems."

The Postdoctoral Publication Prize In Experimental Sciences, also a biennial award, was established in 1998 by Damon Giovanielli, former Physics (P) Division leader, and the Laboratory. Three individuals have won this award to date.

The most recent winners are Kathy Prestridge and Chunlei Guo. Prestridge of Hydrodynamic Applications (DX-3) was the 2001 first-place winner for her paper "Validation of an Instability Growth Model Using Particle Image Velocimetry Measurements," published in the May 8, 2000, issue of Physical Review Letters (see Page 1 for more on Prestridge).

Guo, who is no longer at the Laboratory, received the second-place award while in Condensed Matter and Thermal Physics (MST-10) for his paper "Ultrafast Dynamics of Electron Thermalization in Gold," published in the Feb. 19, 2001, issue of Physical Review Letters.

The Postdoctoral Distinguished Performance Award, which is the most recently established award, recognizes individual postdoctoral researchers or teams who forge a positive and significant impact on the Laboratory's programmatic or organizational efforts or status in the scientific community. Nominations are in and the review committee soon will be making their recommendations on the winners to the Director's Office. Up to three awards will be made.

For more information about these awards, contact With at with@lanl.gov or 5-5306. The postdoctoral Web site also is available at <http://www.hr.lanl.gov/Postdoc/>.



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Los Alamos enhances global security by ensuring safety and confidence in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, developing technologies to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and improving the environmental and nuclear materials legacy of the cold war. Los Alamos' capabilities assist the nation in addressing energy, environment, infrastructure and biological security problems.



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Lab assists with workers compensation claims

by Fran Talley

Los Alamos National Laboratory is assisting current and former Laboratory employees who believe they may be eligible for compensation under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act of 2000.

The Laboratory has made resources available to respond to requests from the Department of Labor or Department of Energy for employment, medical, dosimetry and other data for people who file claims under the Act.

Congress passed the Act to provide compensation of \$150,000 and payment of necessary medical treatment for certain illnesses resulting from work at DOE facilities to eligible current

employees and former employees of the department, its contractors and subcontractors and to some survivors of those workers. The Department of Labor administers that part of the Act. The Act also authorizes DOE to help current and former workers with qualifying illnesses obtain assistance from their state's workers' compensation administration.

"The Department of Labor has responsibility for the part of the Act that compensates workers, former workers or eligible survivors for radiation-related cancers, chronic beryllium disease and chronic silicosis," explained John Fox, chief of staff for the Environment, Safety and Health (ESH) Division. "Anyone who believes they may qualify is required to file a claim with the Labor Department.

"The DOL will then request Laboratory medical records, exposure records and employment history. Survivors also will need employment and medical records of the deceased worker to qualify for compensation. That's where the Laboratory can help," Fox said.

"We will retrieve the Laboratory records DOL needs," Fox said.

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Compensation FAQs

The following are frequently asked questions about compensation for radiation-related cancers, chronic beryllium disease and silicosis from the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act, United States Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration and Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

Who can file for benefits?

Workers or former workers may be eligible if they

- have an illness caused by radiation, beryllium or silica (or have recovered from the illness) and
- were exposed to radiation, beryllium or silica while they were working in the nuclear weapons industry for the Energy Department, including its contractors and subcontractors.
- were uranium miners; millers and ore transporters may be eligible for benefits if they have been awarded benefits under Section Five of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act.
- are certain survivors of these two groups of employees, they also may be eligible for benefits.

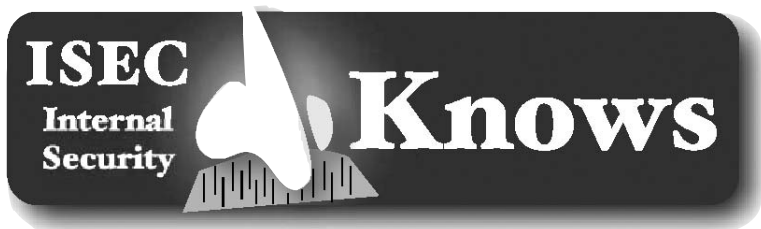
What diseases are covered?

The law covers cancer caused by radiation, beryllium sensitivity, chronic beryllium disease and chronic silicosis.

What are the benefits?

If you have cancer caused by radiation, chronic silicosis or chronic beryllium disease, you may receive

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The OPSEC process

Application of countermeasures

by Kevin Roark

With the first four steps in the Operational Security process, you have determined what your critical information is; you have analyzed both your potential threat and your vulnerabilities; and used that information to do a risk assessment that includes potential countermeasures.

OPSEC countermeasures are any actions that deny or reduce the availability of critical information to an adversary. The most effective countermeasures are simple, straightforward, procedural adjustments that effectively eliminate or minimize the generation of indicators. Following a cost-benefit analysis, countermeasures are implemented in priority order to protect vulnerabilities that have the most significant impact on your plan or project.

Generic Countermeasures include

- changing procedures
- implementing better control of critical information
- increasing traditional security
- deceiving
- staying one or more steps ahead of your adversary
- disrupting the adversary's ability to collect, process and analyze your critical information
- shredding all sensitive hardcopy information

For more information on OPSEC, call the OPSEC Program Office at 5-3372.

Focus on students

The following is excerpted from the fall 2001 Actinide Research Quarterly article written by Meredith Coonley, Communication Arts and Services (IM-1). For a copy of the publication, contact Coonley at 5-3982 or go to <http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/nmt/nmtdol/AQarchive/01fall/contents.html> online.

Nuclear engineer Steven Alferink Improving on existing plutonium isotopic analysis codes



Steven Alferink

Steven Alferink first heard about Los Alamos at a career fair at the University of Missouri-Rolla. "It sounded like a good opportunity for me, so I jumped at it," said Alferink.

Since then, he has spent four summers at the Lab, two as an undergraduate student in Space and Remote Sensing Sciences (NIS-2) and two as a graduate research assistant in 238Pu Science and Engineering (NMT-9).

His initial work in NIS-2 focused on satellite software programming, something completely new

to him at the time. The algorithm he worked on his first summer is running aboard the Multispectral Thermal Imager satellite, which launched in 1999.

His work in NMT-9 has included writing an instruction manual for the "Solution In-Line Alpha Counter," or SILAC, which provides alpha activity measurements of aqueous solutions in glove boxes at the Plutonium Facility (TA-55).

He also created a document-control database that tracks more than 200 documents used in NMT-9, including safety procedures, hazard control plans, training plans, drawings, equipment manual and lab notebooks.

Alferink currently is working on a method to improve on existing plutonium isotopic analysis computer codes for plutonium-238 samples.

Alferink's project will extend the use of the nondestructive analysis technique to analytical applications to provide rapid (a few hours or less) and accurate isotopic composition data for plutonium-238.

There is very little data on plutonium-238 because of the lack of a strong gamma-ray signature of plutonium-240 in plutonium-238 materials. Alferink is using historic data from the heat sources manufactured at Los Alamos for the Cassini probe to Saturn as a basis for his algorithm.



Andrew Koehler

Social scientist Andrew Koehler Creating an integrated facility-program model for the modern pit facility

Andrew Koehler isn't in a scientific discipline you'd expect for a student in the Nuclear Materials Technology (NMT) Division — he's a social scientist.

But while his research is unusual for NMT Division, what he's proposing will help the Laboratory's nuclear weapons program better plan for the future.

As a postdoc in Pit Disassembly and Nuclear Fuels Technologies (NMT-15), Koehler is looking at institutional issues, Laboratory organization, the Department of Energy regulatory environment and program execution to create an integrated facility-program model for TA-55's Modern Pit Facility.

His goal is to come up with something the Laboratory can use to make long-range strategic plans to ensure performance, analyze regulatory compliance issues and train personnel. His simulation model will take into account possible shifting regulatory and social mandates, as well as changing government support and shifting priorities.

Koehler's integrated facility-program model would bring together several established simulation techniques to create an interactive, realistic simulation.

Process modeling would be used to analyze fabrication activities to describe the flow of materials through the operations steps performed at the Modern Pit Facility.

Visualization and sound modeling, like that used in commercial entertainment software, would capture the experience of working in the facility.

Agent modeling, used in military simulations, would describe how information is managed inside the facility, and how regulators and other sources of requirements actually behave.

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Koehler has worked at Los Alamos for four years. He spent several summers as a graduate research assistant, 18 months as a GRA in NMT Division's Office of Planning and Scheduling and began his postdoctoral appointment in April.

He attended the University of California, Berkeley where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in economics and a doctorate in public policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy. His dissertation, based on research performed at Los Alamos, was titled "Design For a Hostile Environment: Technical Policymaking and System Creation."

On a scale of one to 10, Koehler rates his Lab experience as eight and one-half. "The Lab has opened up research opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise," said Koehler. "Social scientists don't often get to work at national laboratories."

Koehler summed up his Los Alamos experience this way: "I see my research project as a way to pay the Lab back — to help it do what it does and do it more robustly. It's a win-win situation."

Chemist Susan Oldham

Conducting research in the fundamental chemistry of actinide elements

As a postdoctoral chemist in Weapons Component Technology (NMT-5), Susan Oldham spent two years doing basic research in the fundamental chemistry of actinide elements.

Her research into organometallic complexes of uranium, neptunium and plutonium will increase the understanding of these elements and how their chemical behavior compares to other, more extensively studied, elements in the periodic table.

"Making these new complexes may spark interest in other scientists to take the research to another level, which could result in new uses for these complexes or new ideas for making other new complexes," said Oldham.

One of the projects she was involved with was investigating actinide



Susan Oldham

amido complexes to explore the electrophilic chemistry of the actinide elements. These types of complexes are interesting to researchers partly because of their rich reaction chemistry, including potential activation of molecular nitrogen.

The work, in collaboration with researchers in Nuclear Materials Technology (NMT) and Chemistry (C) divisions, shows promising results and has extended the library of actinide complexes. (For more on the research, see "The Actinide Research Quarterly," 4th Quarter, 2000.)

Oldham also has participated in a project to synthesize extremely novel uranyl carbene complexes. These complexes represent the first examples of actinyl-to-carbon bonds and suggest an unexpectedly rich diversity in actinide structure and bonding.

This project also was in collaboration with researchers from NMT and C divisions.

Oldham graduated from Bowdoin College, a small liberal arts college in Maine, in 1994 with a major in chemistry and a minor in math. She received a master's in chemistry from the University of Washington in 1996 and a doctorate in inorganic chemistry in 1999 from the University of Rochester.

With her postdoctoral appointment over, Oldham has accepted a staff member position with NMT-5's plutonium casting team. Her priority and focus has shifted to providing technical support and guidance to the casting team. She will be involved in the casting of plutonium into shapes and ensuring that the products meet specifications and the instruments used are correctly calibrated.

A highlight of her postdoctoral appointment was the opportunity to attend technical symposia, especially those given by Nobel laureates. "It's a great experience for young scientists, and older scientists, too," said Oldham.

"Being a postdoc in NMT was an interesting balance of basic research and working toward NMT's mission and goal," said Oldham.



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Students needed for summer research fellowships

"The Seaborg Institute is once again looking for students for its summer research fellowships," said Web Keogh of the Chemistry (C) Division. The institute, founded by Nobel Laureate Glenn T. Seaborg, promotes transactinide science and serves as a center to aid in the education and training of young scientists. Application deadline is March 1.

This search will be national. The Seaborg Institute is encouraging highly motivated graduate and undergraduate (junior or senior) students with backgrounds in chemistry, f-element chemistry, nuclear and radiochemistry,

spectroscopy, surface science and high explosives to apply for the summer research fellowships. The goal of the program is to give young scientists a greater appreciation of the diverse role of actinide materials in nuclear energy, national defense and legacy waste. The fellowships and activities were put together in hopes that students will become more interested in careers in nuclear science.

To apply or for more information, contact Web Keogh at 5-4622 or visit <http://pearl1.lanl.gov/seaborg/default.htm> online.

Worker compensation claims ...

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"We're also coordinating efforts closely with Johnson Controls Northern New Mexico as well as the Española Resource Center."

The Resource Center, located at 412 Paseo De Oñate, Suite "D" in Española, is one of several centers set up around the country to provide information to workers or survivors and assist them in filing and processing claims. Workers, former workers or their survivors who believe they may be eligible for compensation under the program are encouraged to contact the Resource Center at (505) 747-6766, toll free at 1-866-272-3622 or by fax at (505) 747-6765.

Claim forms also are available on the Department of Labor Web site at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/esa/public/regs/compliance/owcp/eeoicp/main.htm> online.

As part of DOE's responsibility under the Act, a separate Office of Worker Advocacy has been established by DOE to help workers and former workers obtain benefits from their state's workers' compensation program for illnesses that resulted from exposure to toxic substances while working at DOE or contractor facilities.

The Office of Worker Advocacy may be contacted by writing to the Office of Environment, Safety and Health, Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.,

Washington, D.C. 20585, or by telephone at 1-877-447-9756. More information about the DOE program may be found at <http://tis.eh.doe.gov/advocacy/index.html> online.

DOE's program is not yet fully implemented. Workers or former workers who may have claims regarding an occupational illness resulting from their work in a DOE or contractor facility are encouraged to contact directly the Ombuds Office of the New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration for information about filing claims and related matters.

The New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration is located at 2410 Central Ave. S.E., P.O. Box 27198, Albuquerque, N.M. 87125-7198. The WCA also can be contacted at (505) 841-6000 or 1-866-WORKOMP (1-866-967-5667), toll free in New Mexico, and at <http://www.state.nm.us/wca/> online.

FAQs ...

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- a lump-sum payment of \$150,000 and
- medical benefits for the job-related illness from the date you filed your claim but no earlier than July 31, 2001.

If you have beryllium sensitivity only, you may receive medical monitoring of that condition, but you will not receive the lump-sum payment or ongoing medical benefits.

If qualified for benefits under RECA, what are the benefits under this law?

If you are a uranium employee who is eligible for benefits under Section Five of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), you may receive

- a lump-sum payment of up to \$50,000 and
- medical benefits for the job-related illness, from the date you file your claim but no earlier than July 31, 2001.

Where can I get a claim form?

The forms will be available from three sources:

- downloaded from the Internet at www.dol.gov.
- picked up at the closest Resource Center or one of the district offices.
- requested from the toll-free call center at 1-866-888-3322.

In Memoriam

Kristine Ann Horpedahl

Kristine Ann Horpedahl, a Laboratory employee since 1998, died Jan. 4. She worked in Experiment and Diagnostic Design (DX-5). Horpedahl received the Lab's Distinguished Performance Award as part of the Mechanical Safe and Arm Device production team in 1999. She attended Moorhead State University in Minnesota, the University of New Mexico and Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute.



Larry Witt has been named the new deputy division leader for Program Integration in the Engineering Sciences and Applications (ESA) Division and **Dan Varley** named the new deputy



Larry Witt

division leader for Technical Execution. Witt received his bachelor's degree from Valparaiso University in Indiana and master's degree from Stevens Institute of Technology New Jersey. He has 13 years experience in weapon program management and 13 years before that as a weapon system engineer. Most recently he served as program director for the Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Systems Program. Witt has been an employee of the Lab since 1975.

Varley received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering from University of New Mexico. He has 25 years of experience in a wide variety of weapons engineering, 22 years in ESA. Most recently he served



Dan Varley

as deputy program director for Nuclear Weapons Stockpile Systems Program. Varley has been at the Lab since 1976.



Chuck Montaño

Chuck Montaño of Accounting (BUS-1) was elected as chairperson of the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico. The HRT comprises 40 organizations that represent more than 35,000 individuals. Montaño has an undergraduate degree from Highlands University and a graduate degree from University of New Mexico. Both degrees are in business management and information systems. He also has internationally recognized professional certifications as a Certified Management Accountant, Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Information Systems Auditor and Certified Fraud Examiner. He is the founding president of the Citizens for LANL Employee Rights. Montaño has been an employee at the Lab since 1978 and has served two years as a member of the Citizens Advisory Board to the Department of Energy.

'Champion' for Hispanic issues and initiatives announced



Richard Mah

Laboratory Director John Browne recently named **Richard Mah**, associate director for weapons engineering and manufacturing, as Senior Executive

Team champion for Hispanic issues and initiatives.

In announcing the appointment, the director noted that Mah has been a successful line and program manager throughout his career and has demonstrated teamwork and a commitment to employees through his efforts to strengthen diversity and mentoring for several Lab groups. One of Mah's goals as the newly appointed Hispanic champion will be to help qualified internal Hispanic employees move to higher-level positions within the Lab.

Diversity champions serve as role models and advocates for diversity issues. They work with the Diversity Office (DVO), the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), diversity working groups and other appropriate resources and may recommend strategic diversity goals to the full SET.

Other SET members currently serving as diversity champions are Tom Meyer, associate director for strategic research, for Asian/Pacific Islander employees and Don Cobb, associate director for threat reduction, for African American employees. All Diversity working groups will have a SET champion appointed in the future, according to Dwight Herrera, project leader for DVO.

Olympic spirit includes Lab employee, retiree

Heading for Salt Lake City and the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, the Olympic torch relay recently ran, jogged, rode and walked through New Mexico. In Santa Fe Jan. 12, participants, including Laboratory retiree Robert Kirby, pictured, of the former Field Testing

(J) Division and Lab employee Ted Williams of Defense (BUS-2), in turn lit their torches and ran the specified course. Runners were selected for the honor of being a torchbearer based on nominations from friends, family and colleagues who had to write an essay explaining how the nominee embodied the Olympic spirit, according to sponsors Coca-Cola, Chevrolet and the Salt Lake City Organizing Committee. More than 11,500 runners nationwide, chosen from 210,000 nominees, traverse a two-tenths of a mile portion of the torch relay route. The run across the nation covers more than 13,500 miles, passes through 46 of the United States of America and takes 65 days. For more information about the 2002 winter games torch relay and a complete list of the New Mexico participants, go to http://www.saltlake2002.com/x/f/frame.htm?u=/news/slocotr_front.asp online. Photo by Denise



Bjarke

Called to duty

Lab reservist reports to the Pentagon after Sept. 11 attacks

by Kevin Roark

Sitting at his desk in the Otowi Building, John McDermon of the Computing, Communications and Networking (CCN) Division is surrounded by the tools of his trade: four workstations and a powerbook. Scores of software packages fill his bookshelves. McDermon is the Desktop (CCN-2) team leader for outfitting the new Strategic Computing Center with all of its desktop computing needs. So you would expect him to be surrounded by computers.

What you might not expect is that McDermon is a major in the United States Air Force Reserves, and that his Air Force job, given what he does at the Lab, is a bit surprising: architecture and planning.

McDermon became an active duty officer following graduation from Arizona State University with a degree in architecture. "My dad was military, a typical military-type guy, so it was natural for me to explore Reserve Officers' Training Corps as a way to pay for college," said McDermon. "I was on active duty until 1992, switching to the Reserves before coming to work at Los Alamos."

His reserve duty has been no less successful. "Working with the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence, Community Planning Program, I've worked with teams of professionals, going to bases and solving problems," said McDermon. "We work on physical planning; solving problems like housing shortages, realignment of gates and physical security; developing area plans for anything you might find on a base, from the officers' club to the location of a new headquarters."

But it has been his calls to active duty in times of crisis and war that have mattered most. "In '96 I went to Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Kohbar Towers bombing to work on a plan to move our soldiers to a more easily defensible location near Riyadh," said McDermon. "And in '99 I went to Ramstein Air Base in Germany to work on the various issues of physical planning related to our mission in Kosovo; solving problems like housing multi-state Air National Guard units at Trapani, Sicily; winterizing a tent city built on a soccer field in Albania; and revitalizing facilities associated with an American school in Ankara, Turkey."

And this past September the call came again. "I got the call on Sept. 17 and ended up working 12-18 hour days across the freeway from the Pentagon for about six weeks," said McDermon. "Our job was finding potential sites for Air Force deployment using geospatial satellite images from the National Imaging and Mapping Agency and connecting that with tabulated data on base logistics, like aircraft parking space, security, and storage of fuel, weapons and material."

While in Washington, McDermon stayed away from the



John McDermon

damaged area of the Pentagon. "I figured that if I had a job assignment that took me over there, then I'd go ahead and look," he said. "But that didn't happen, and since I didn't have any business over there, it just didn't seem right to go over and gawk."

Strangely, McDermon explained, the part of the building destroyed in the terrorist attack housed the very offices where many of McDermon's colleagues had worked in the recent past. "Many of the people I work with in the Air Force were moved out of that area recently so that renovations could get under way. That's the sort of thing that really hits home with you."

The day McDermon knew he was at the epicenter of our war on terrorism came when it was his turn to brief the generals on his team's efforts. "It was when the first night bombing began in Afghanistan," he said. "And there I was at the briefing, hearing all the information on weather, intelligence, numbers of sorties and their locations, early bomb assessments, and then it was my turn to brief."

The hardest part of the duty for McDermon, like every other American in uniform, is time away from family. "I got five days off out of 40," he said, "but I did get to come home for my daughter's 12th birthday, and my wife and I managed to keep it a total surprise from her. So she wakes up that Saturday morning, comes out and there I am just sitting there on the couch. Well, she just freaked, all the great daddy stuff. It was really hard telling her I wasn't home for good just yet, but at least I didn't miss her day."

Talk of retiring from the military is just talk for now. Although McDermon will have completed 20 years of service in 2002, he is under consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel and says that unless the duty becomes too much of a burden on his family, he'll likely continue to answer the call.

"My wife has been so supportive of my military service all these years," he said. "It's been hard, but she supports me, and that makes all the difference."

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