

Former Lab Director McMillan Leaves artifacts to Museum

February 1, 2018



In

December 2017, Lab Director Charlie McMillan retired. He had served as director from 2011 to the end of 2017 and, before he left, he gifted a number of items to the Museum for our collection and preservation.

While we can't list them all here, we've highlighted a couple of them.

First, this attractive decanter with a plaque from sister facility Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory denotes the Lab's 60th anniversary, which at the time spanned from 1943 to 2003, and was originally presented to a previous director.

The second item, a small Lucite commemorative, was presented to a number of Lab employees (including the director) to celebrate the first computer in the world to operate at a speed of one petaflop per second. To give an idea of the scale, a petaflop is a unit of computing speed equal to one quadrillion (10^{15}) floating-point operations per second. Such computing power is intimately related to our ability to ensure the safety and reliability of the stockpile in the absence of nuclear testing, which ceased in 1992.

Our supercomputers are now used in conjunction with decades of nuclear test data to fulfill this aspect of our nuclear weapons mission.

The commemorative, presented by IBM, includes an engraved label that gives the date of the breakthrough (May 25, 2008) and the time of day (3 a.m.) that our Roadrunner supercomputer broke the speed record.

While it was a landmark achievement at the time, computing speed advances rapidly. Since that date computers at sister facilities broke records later that year in 2008 and again in 2012.

China is currently recognized as having the fastest two supercomputers in the world by the www.top500.org, with those at the Department of Energy's facilities holding slots fifth through eighth place and Los Alamos's Trinity computer is rated the seventh fastest in the world as of November 2017. It computes at more than 43.9 petaflops per second.

Something to donate to us?

If you think you have something important from the Manhattan Project era or another major, significant item, contact our Collections Specialist, Wendy Strohmeyer, at wstrohmeyer@lanl.gov, with a description of the item(s) and a photo.



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