



March is Women's History Month

March 1, 2017

On February 9, the Laboratory was recognized as [one of the best workplaces for Hispanic women in the United States](#) at the Latina Style 50 Awards Ceremony and Diversity Leaders Conference in Washington, D.C.

Although we are proud of this accolade, as we continue to diversify and strengthen our workforce, it's equally important to remember the individuals who paved the way for our current—and future—employees.

March, being [Women's History Month](#), is a particularly good time to reflect on the women who have made significant contributions to the Laboratory. As commemorated in a recent mural in the National Security Science Building, here are nine women who have left—or continue to leave—a mark on our community:

Dorothy McKibbin, secretary

McKibbin was a 45-year-old single mother and bookkeeper when J. Robert Oppenheimer hired her in 1943 to be the first point of contact for Manhattan Project scientists before they headed “up the hill” from Santa Fe to Los Alamos. Known as the “first lady of Los Alamos,” the relentless gatekeeper was stationed in a nondescript adobe at 109 E. Palace Avenue in Santa Fe, a position she held until the office closed in 1963.

Dorothy McKibbin (left) with Robert Oppenheimer and Victor Weisskopf.

Jane Hamilton Hall, physicist

After working for the Manhattan Project at Hanford, Hall joined the Laboratory in 1945 and quickly rose through the ranks of the physics and weapons divisions. In 1955, she became the Lab's first female assistant director, and in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson appointed her to the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Julia Hardin, biochemist

Hardin joined the Laboratory in 1964 to research and study mutations—genetic changes—that occur in DNA when it is exposed to radiation. Hardin later became the director

of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Education Program, and recruited many African American science and engineering students for summer internships at the Laboratory.

Darleane Hoffman, chemist

Hoffman came to Los Alamos with her husband, a physicist, in 1953. During her 31 years at the Laboratory, Hoffman's numerous contributions provided a basis for scientific methods used today in the national security community. In 1979, she became the first woman to lead a scientific division—the Chemistry and Nuclear Chemistry Division—and in 1993, she helped confirm the existence of element 106, seaborgium.

Darleane Hoffman accepts the Los Alamos Medal in 2014.

Carolyn Mangeng, program manager

Mangeng studied energy and environmental assessments, military systems, and nuclear weapons before serving as Deputy Associate Director (AD) of the Nuclear Weapons Directorate from 2002–2003, during which time she had specific oversight of stockpile management activities. She became Los Alamos's first female Deputy Laboratory Director (acting) in 2003 and worked as the Deputy AD for Environmental Programs before her retirement in 2006.

Susan Seestrom, physicist

Seestrom joined the Lab in 1986 as a nuclear physicist and eventually became the first woman leader of the Physics Division and the Weapons Physics Directorate. In 2013, Seestrom was the first woman to become a Senior Fellow at the Laboratory. Seestrom is also the first (and only) woman to chair the Nuclear Science Advisory Committee for both the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation.

Bette Korber, microbiologist

Fourteen years after joining the Lab's Theoretical Biology Group in 1990, Korber became Los Alamos' first female E. O. Lawrence Award winner for her studies delineating the genetic characteristics of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Several of her HIV vaccines are currently in human phase-one trials. Korber was named to the Thomson Reuters list of "The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds" in 2014.

Bette Korber.

Tinitia Oliver, manager

Oliver started at Los Alamos in 1987 as a radiation control technician and has since worked as a maintenance coordinator, team leader, and currently as a work execution manager. Oliver oversees seven craft superintendents, and together they manage the craft teams—carpenters, painters, electricians, pipefitters, mechanics, laborers, insulators, and sheet metal workers—who maintain Lab facilities.

Karissa Sanbonmatsu, biophysicist

Sanbonmatsu, who has a PhD in astrophysics, currently researches how DNA is reprogrammed during life, how genes are switched on and off, and how gigantic RNA molecules affect the switches (in 2012, Sanbonmatsu and her team published the first structure of such a molecule). In 2005, Sanbonmatsu became the first woman at the Laboratory to receive the Presidential Early Career Award in Science and Engineering.

Karissa Sanbonmatsu.

—Kathy Keith

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