

STB News

February 2004



Nerses Krikorian, right, chats with Laboratory Director G. Peter Nanos, left, after receiving the Los Alamos National Laboratory Medal.

Krikorian Receives Laboratory Medal

When Nerses Krikorian (“Krik,” as friends call him) stepped to the podium Feb. 19 to receive the Los Alamos Medal from Director G. Peter Nanos, it was the culmination of a career that spans more than 60 years at the Laboratory.

As Nanos pointed out, Krikorian “embodies what this country is all about.” The Director added, “There is something magic in an institution that produces people like Krik.”

Krikorian’s life has been one of remarkable achievement against great odds. It began in a time of almost overwhelming adversity.

He was born by the side of the road as his parents, Hachig and Lucia Krikorian, fled Turkey, where Armenians were being massacred. His family immigrated to the United States in 1925 after a four-year struggle through Syria, Greece, France, and Canada. In 1943, less than 20 years later, he earned a bachelor of science degree in chemistry (with honors) from Niagara

University in New York and went to work for Union Carbide.

He joined the Manhattan Project in 1943, moved to the newly formed Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory (LASL, now Los Alamos National Laboratory or LANL) in 1946, and eventually worked on polonium initiators for nuclear weapons, high-temperature materials for nuclear propulsion (the Project Rover), new superconductors, and many vital national intelligence programs. He provided the impetus and technical foundation of the U.S. export-control program, based on his understanding of nuclear-weapons technology. He was on the cutting edge of international dialogue with Russia and was one of the first Americans to visit Sarov, the Soviet counterpart to Los Alamos National Laboratory.

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STB Played Major Role in Medal Award Preparation

Months of work by employees in Science and Technology Base Programs (STB) went into creating the warm ceremony at which Nerses Krikorian received the Los Alamos National Laboratory Medal Feb. 19.

Allen Hartford, Annette Archuleta, Reynaldo Morales, Scott Smith, Gloria Sharp, Jeanette Gallegos, Cynthia Bustos, Richard Alexander, and Charmian Schaller all worked on various aspects of the program.

In a pair of related interviews on Feb. 23, Morales and Archuleta provided a behind-the-scenes look at what it took to prepare for the medal presentation.

Archuleta started work in June, sending out letters to 5,000 retired Laboratory employees and a notice to all current Laboratory workers asking for nominations. She got back approximately 20 suggestions, and a committee then reviewed the list and made the selection.

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PREPARATION (Cont'd from p.1)

Archuleta, who had helped with two previous Laboratory Medal ceremonies, noted that once the nominee is chosen, the Director “actually calls the person and tells them the good news,” clearing the way for her to start working on logistics.

This year, she had the medal made in a shop in Arizona, and arranged for preparation of the traditional certificate, the programs, and some 300 invitations.

She had to reserve Duane Smith Auditorium and the main cafeteria in the Otowi Building, where the reception was held.

There were a few problems. The first medal delivered had to be sent back and replaced, and the Main Auditorium at Technical Area 3 couldn't be used for the presentation because the Pro Force had other obligations on the specified day and couldn't provide the security that would have been essential there.

But, Archuleta said, when the day came, “I was pleased with the audience,” which she estimated at more than 200. She added, “The reception was very well attended.”

“Krik was overjoyed,” she added.

Morales, also a veteran of past Laboratory Medal presentations, began his work in December. He prepared material for the Director's remarks, prepared a statement for Public Affairs to release announcing the awards ceremony, and worked on a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the award.

He added that, “As the ceremony approached, I prepared some announcements used by the Newsbulletin.”

As always, the development of the necessary information took time. Morales recalled that Krikorian first arrived at STB with “a stack of resumes, biographies, history, and a shopping bag full of old photos and albums that his wife, Pat, had kept.”

Over many weeks, Morales and Archuleta met with Krikorian four times, and met with one of the speakers, Terry Wallace, twice. Archuleta said she met perhaps another five times with Wallace and was always available to Krikorian when he came by with more information.

(Krikorian became a familiar face in Room 123 in old Canyon School, where Archuleta and Morales both worked. One day, he emerged from a meeting to find that STB colleagues in Room 123 had gathered to sing “Happy Birthday” to Archuleta. Krikorian, whose background includes membership in Los Alamos Choral Society and the Los Alamos Light Opera Association—joined in enthusiastically.)

Morales went through many, many photos, and Gloria Sharp, an IM-1 employee assigned to LA Science, finally scanned in “perhaps a dozen” for him. From that list, Morales said, “I narrowed it down to about eight that were used.”

Schaller, another IM-1 employee assigned in STB, helped with some of the editing, and Smith made sure the PowerPoint presentation was ready to roll when he began clicking through it during the awards. (Smith

tested it the presentation in Duane Smith Auditorium in advance.)

Morales noted that on the very day of the presentation, Smith put together a slide “on the spot” featuring the formal portrait of Krikorian and a photo of the medal. It was this slide that people saw as they walked into the auditorium.

Meanwhile, Bustos was handing out programs, and Gallegos was in the foyer inviting people to sign a special guest book.

Hartford, leader of STB, and William Press, deputy Laboratory director for science and technology, reviewed and approved every document that was written, and Hartford stepped in when Maurice Katz, one of the designated speakers, had an illness in his family and had to bow out of the ceremony.

Schaller took photos at the ceremony, and Alexander processed the shots for her and provided the copies for Krikorian. (Please see the photo layout on page 3.)

KRIKORIAN (Cont'd from p.1)

He “retired” in 1991, but he is a Laboratory Fellow and continues to work on important projects. In 1996, he was invited to the Dubna Conference in Russia on the “History of the Soviet Atomic Programs,” and he has written invited talks for the “History of Atomic Programs” in Vienna, sponsored by the U.S.

Department of Energy and the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy. He gave an invited talk on nuclear nonproliferation at the second Sakharov Memorial Conference in 1996, which was sponsored by the Physics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

But on Feb. 19, he was, first and foremost, a very happy man accepting a great honor in front of a crowd that included his wife, Katherine Patterson Krikorian (Pat), their daughter, Dr. Debra Krikorian (a physician and retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Services Corps), and about 200 good friends, former colleagues, and Laboratory officials.

He told the crowd that he had never anticipated receiving such an honor. He spoke of the Laboratory as “the premier laboratory with a strong national defense mission,” and he said that “the realization that I was working with top-notch people” kept him at Los Alamos for six decades.

He spoke of wonderful mentors who “taught me patience and how to cope with both success and failure,” and he complimented a “very supportive wife” of 56 years.

Krikorian, who said he is honored to have met all seven directors of the Laboratory, believes that the last five years have been the most difficult for the Laboratory because of the struggle with “challenge and change.” He noted that 2004 marks the centennial year of the birth of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific founder of the Laboratory. It is a good time, he said, “to renew our committed outlook.” He added, “This award illuminates what can be done in a country where opportunity exists.”

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Nerses Krikorian Honored with LANL Medal



STB Employees Were in the Background, Helping with All Arrangements



Above left, Nerses Krikorian (center) looks at the award ceremony brochure with Houston T. Hawkins (left). STB Leader Allen Hartford (right) stands ready to help. Above right, Krikorian chats with his daughter, Debra. At left, Krikorian tells the audience it was the quality of his colleagues that kept him in Los Alamos. At right, Pat Krikorian smiles with delight as her husband receives the medal. Below left, Jeanette Gallegos of STB assists people with the guest book. And below right, well-wishers wait to sign the book.



Photos by Charmian Schaller



KRIKORIAN (Cont'd from p.2)

Nanos introduced Terry Wallace, a retired colleague of Krikorian, who said he was very pleased to reflect on the life of Krikorian because, "He truly is an amazing scientist" who has lived a life that is "rich and complex."

Wallace noted that the Krikorian family arrived in Canada with only two suitcases. "Struggle and hardship, love, and a strong family" led him to Los Alamos and great achievement, Wallace said.

Wallace commented that Krikorian's wife, Pat, has had an interesting life too. She served in the Women's Army Corps and was stationed in Los Alamos when they first met. Their wedding had to be delayed so that she could complete an assignment at the U.S. Consulate in Palermo, Sicily.

Allen Hartford, leader of Science and Technology Base Programs, also spoke at the awards ceremony, filling in for Maurice Katz, who was called away because of an illness in his family. Drawing on Katz' prepared notes for the ceremony, Hartford said that Krikorian's dedication and willingness to mentor others made him greatly liked and respected. Katz spoke of Krikorian's willingness to join the "fledgling LASL intelligence effort." Katz said (through Hartford), "Without you, Krik, the project would never have gotten off the ground."

Houston T. Hawkins, another long-time colleague, called Krikorian "the human equivalent of the energizer Bunny. He said Krikorian "still finds fulfillment in making the world a safer place." He spoke of Krikorian's "great personal integrity and dedication to fairness," and he said he was outstanding at "chessboard intelligence analysis," always thinking five moves ahead. He mentioned his fluency in Armenian, his "total commitment to mentoring others," his close personal relationships with scientists around the world, and his work in safeguarding nuclear materials."

"You are our friend," he said, "and we who follow in your footsteps salute you."

LDRD Received More Than 500 Proposals in February

It's always busy in Science and Technology Base Programs-Laboratory Directed Research and Development (LDRD)—but this is probably one of the busiest times of the year.

LDRD received more than 500 proposal documents in February.

Three Kinds of LDRD

LDRD Program Manager David Watkins explained in an interview on Feb. 25 that there are three components to the LDRD program: directed research (DR), exploratory research (ER), and postdoctoral research and development.

The deadline for DR preproposals was Feb. 2. LDRD received 111 of them, all endorsed (as required) by divisions.

In the next part of the DR process, 25 to 30 applicants will be selected to advance in the competition. These scientists will be asked to provide more extensive proposals. Watkins said that eventually, LDRD probably will fund 12 or 14 of them. "We are in the middle of evaluation of preproposals" right now, he said.

Watkins added that the process has been about the same since 1999, and each year the strategy team says the proposals "have gotten better, that it's a harder decision." He commented, "My personal sense is that there's going to be much more in this collection of 111 preproposals that would result in good science than we will be able to fund."

Last year, he said, there were 30 full proposals, but the amount of money available dictated that only 14 could be funded. He said, "My impression was that we could have funded any of those (30) and gotten good science out of it." Even a few that didn't make the list of 30 were "awfully good," he said. He anticipates that the selection and funding process will be equally difficult this year. While making the final cut, he said, those making the selection must balance good science and the strategic priorities that are essential to the future of the Laboratory.

The ER annual proposal deadline was Feb. 23. Watkins said almost 400 proposals poured in. The maximum length of the proposal documents was six pages. "We have review teams that read these and assess them for us," Watkins said. "In the end we'll probably fund on the order of 40 of those." Typically, projects are funded for three years. At any given time, about 80 projects are ongoing, and 40 are new.

LDRD issued the call for DR and ER proposals in December. "It's a relatively open competition," Watkins said. Information is available on the web at LDRD.lanl.gov. "We held four question-and-answer sessions where people could ask anything they wanted about ER and DR," Watkins said. It was, he added, "an open attempt to communicate what one needs to do to submit such a proposal."

The competition for two-year postdoctoral awards is quarterly. Watkins said that each fiscal year, there are approximately 84 people in the postdoctoral LDRD program. Of those, 56 (in round numbers) have ongoing projects, and about 28 are new.

In summary, there are approximately 120 projects funded under the ER program, 50 projects funded under DR, and 80 funded under the postdoctoral LDRD program each year. Those numbers add up to 250—but there are usually about 300 in the LDRD program. The total number of people involved in LDRD projects in any given year is about 1,500.

Watkins said, "We also do reserve allocations." He said, "Each year, we hold (back) a fraction of the (available) funds. At the beginning of the year, the plan is to appropriate about 60% to DR, 30% to ER, and 6% to postdoctoral LDRD projects. As a result, 4% of the funding remains, and it is reserved for special activities during the year. For example, last year, LDRD decided to fund a few more ER projects

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that were outstanding and useful to the Laboratory in key areas. At any time, LDRD needs to be able to “invest in a particularly exciting project—out of the cycle,” Watkins said.

Two Kinds of Reports

In addition to selecting new scientific research projects, LDRD must deal with two kinds of reports.

As part of the University of California contract to manage the Laboratory, LDRD must file “a brief report on every project we funded last fiscal year as well as a summary report on the overall program.” Since there were about 300 projects last fiscal year, that’s a tall order. LDRD works with a team of IM-1 editor/writers to get the job done on time—and this year’s deadline is imminent.

The other kind of report springs from the Energy Act of 1977, which created the Department of Energy. The Energy Act requires that LDRD produce a final report on each LDRD project at the Laboratory and send it to a database in Washington each year.

LDRD also reviews LDRD projects through the division-review process, and it arranges for independent reviewers from outside the Laboratory who spend a half-day reviewing DR projects in their second year.

What this all means is that right now, LDRD is deeply involved in proposal evaluations and project reviews—all at the same time.

“Life will be very difficult for us over the next six months,” Watkins said. It’s bound to feel like “24 hours in a day is not enough.”

Postdoctoral Program Changes Location, Administrative Lead

Allen Hartford, leader of Science and Technology Base Programs (STB), said in an interview Feb. 23 that the Postdoctoral Program Office is now reporting directly to him.

In the past, the Postdoctoral Program Office has been part of STB-University of California Coordination (STB-UC).

Hartford said he made the change because the responsibilities that Jim Porter, leader of STB-UC, handles for coordinating UC programs and meeting requirements in Appendix F of the Department of Energy-University of California management contract for the Laboratory are “increasing dramatically.”

The most visible effect of the change is that Mary Anne With, leader of the Postdoctoral Program Office, and Barbara Roybal, program administrator, have moved out of their old offices, located in Room 156, and moved into Room 123 (the former location of STB-Planning).

In a brief interview on Feb. 25, Mary Anne With said that the program has more than 400 postdoctoral participants. The change in management should not create an additional burden on Hartford’s already crowded schedule because the program is run very independently. She said Hartford was already involved in the Postdoctoral Program and is well informed.

Mary Anne With herself has been with the program 12 years. During that time, the program has been located in a variety of administrative settings—including Human Resources and the STB-Education Program Office (STB-EPO) as well as STB-UC. The bottom line for her, she said, is that, “I have a passion for the program.”

Roybal is a relatively new employee in STB. (Please see the profile of her below.)

Hartford said that Angela Martinez, an STB employee for almost five years, is also assigned part-time now in the Postdoctoral Program Office. Martinez remains in her old assignment in STB-EPO half time.

Barbara Roybal: She’s New to STB But She’s Been with Lab 12 Years

Barbara Roybal, Postdoctoral Programs administrator, is relatively new to Science and Technology Base Programs, but she has been with the Laboratory since March 1992.

Before joining Postdoctoral Programs on Jan. 5, she had worked in the Travel Office for nine years and in Payroll for three years. She said she became interested in Postdoctoral Programs because she had worked extensively with Postdoctoral Program Coordinator Mary Anne With in making travel arrangement for postdocs. In addition, she said, “I just needed a career change.”

Commenting on STB, she said, “I’m thrilled to be here.”

Roybal has an interesting background. She is a certified travel agent (having completed the two-year CTA educational program) and spent approximately 20 years as a travel agent in Albuquerque before joining the Laboratory. She still maintains her certification with a travel agency in Santa Fe.

She and her husband, Larry Roybal, live in Pojoaque. They have three grown children. The oldest, Patricia, is married and lives in Denver. She has one child and another on the way. The Roybals’ second child, Michael, recently returned from four years in the Marine Corps and now lives in Durango, Colo., and attends San Juan College in Farmington, N.M. Their youngest child, Karen, also lives in Durango, where she attends Fort Lewis College.

The Research Library Holds a Potluck

It isn't just the Canyon people in STB who hold good holiday potlucks. This potluck was at the Research Library. It drew both an abundance of great food and a good turnout. Shown at left, above, is Jackie Stack; at left, below is Javier Martinez; at right are Cheyenne Casados (left) and Shantelle Ulibarri (right); and below are two photos of the food lines.



Photos by
Carl Stone