

LOOKING BACK ON 15 YEARS AT THE LAB

Reflections by Tom Hassler, Accelerator Division

I look back on my 15 years at the Lab with fondness for the many friends with whom I have shared this incredible experience, with pride in all that the Lab has accomplished to date, and with satisfaction about the contributions that I was privileged to make. I changed my employee status from full time to casual on October 1, 2002, and took retirement. Picking the time to retire is personal, but picking the best time is an uncertain process. Sometimes people retire too soon, Michael Jordan, for example, or too late, my Navy boss, Admiral Rickover, being a good example. When I joined CEBAF in May 1987, my wife, Ellen, and I decided that if I enjoyed the work, and if the Lab found me sufficiently productive, a good time to retire would be at the 15-year mark, which would be soon after I turned 65. That far-off time has come and gone, and I feel quite privileged to have reached this goal. In the weeks leading up to my retirement date, I could not help but think of Nathan Isgur, Dieter Cords, and Karel Capek, (deceased) who did not have this opportunity. I am likewise privileged to remain as a casual employee; so you will see me on site, but not as often.

As a casual employee, I will represent Jefferson Lab as an officer of the Virginia Emergency Management Association and the Peninsula Local Emergency Planning Committee. I will also be available to help with special projects in emergency management and time accounting. Casual employees are limited to 1000 hours per year; so I will have more time to do personal things. For nearly two years, I have been leader of a team with the mission of building a new church facility on the property next to the Williamsburg-James City County courthouse, and we are still in the design phase. This project will fill up a lot of my time for several years. In addition, my wife has a long list of activities that have been on hold waiting for "retirement". You won't see me sitting on the front porch any time soon, but I do have many memories of my days at the Lab to ponder from time to time. What follows are some of them from the early days.

The small band of SURA employees, who had worked for several years to convince Congress and the DOE that CEBAF was a worthy endeavor, immediately began to hire the staff needed to build the machine and the experimental equipment as soon as the US Department of Energy provided the first construction money for CEBAF. That was in February 1987. I was among the group first hired. At that time, the facility consisted of VARC, Forestry, a tractor shed, a single trailer, the Test Lab and the Test Lab Annex (B52 now). Jefferson Avenue was a road with only two lanes in each direction and no turning lanes. Patrick Henry Mall was only a concept, and dairy cows could be seen every day in the pasture now paved over for parking for Barnes and Noble, Office Max, Target, etc.

When I joined CEBAF, the Test Lab was off limits for several months while a licensed subcontractor removed asbestos-laded insulation and floor tiles. As I recall, about 3000 garbage bags were needed to contain everything removed. My job title at that time was Quality Assurance and Safety Officer, and I was the only full-time safety person on staff. The radiological control group consisted of Geoffrey Stapleton, and I was his backup

when he was on travel. There were some unusual safety problems to be solved right away. When NASA closed the Test Lab for good, a lot of stuff was left behind, including oils, greases, paints, solvents, and caustics. Our staff moved the chemicals into a single room to get them out of the way, but a visiting DOE environmental engineer introduced me rather bluntly to the concept of not storing dissimilar chemicals together. Making the chemicals go away, was my job, and I decided to call NASA and ask them to come get the chemicals they abandoned 10-years previous. They agreed to do that, amazingly, and the action officer for this task was our own Carter Ficklen, who worked for a NASA subcontractor then.

Soon after the Test Lab opened up for business, the SRF group started ordering the chemicals needed to treat niobium cavities. The problem was, we had no appropriate place to store the chemicals. Our technicians manufactured some poly tubs in a couple of days, and they kept the wolves from the door, so to speak, until the Chemical Storage Building (B33) could be built. I found the specifications for that building in a chemical trade magazine, and one of our construction engineers, George Stevenson, designed it and managed its construction.

Our biggest safety problem in the late 80s was driving on Jefferson Avenue while it was being widened to three lanes in each direction. In one period of not much over a year, 10 staff members were involved in traffic accidents within a mile of the Lab. At that time, Onnes Road ran straight as an arrow from the Test Lab to Jefferson Avenue and did not share the traffic light with Muller. We finally posted signs not allowing left turns from Onnes onto Jefferson to prevent yet another accident. Rearranging Onnes so that it meets up with the traffic light was a safety success story.

One of the fun things I was involved in during my first year was naming our roads. I felt they should have names so that first responders could be given directions when responding to a 911 call. We had a contest where staff could nominate names, and we got many interesting suggestions. Our Director and Scientific Director collaborated on selecting the winning names, and I do not think any changes have been made to the original set.

The first few years were touch and go on whether the project would survive, and I recall one senior staff member saying at one meeting, we better bring our resumes up to date. But CEBAF survived, added the FEL, matured into Jefferson Lab, and has the brightest of futures. I envy the young folks joining the Lab now because the Lab's best years lie ahead. I am confident that the Lab will be the source of marvelous scientific breakthroughs.

My hope is that all who work here appreciate the extraordinary opportunity they have to make a contribution to scientific knowledge, and I hope everyone has as much fun as I have had. I can think of no better place to work than Jefferson Lab.