

Historical Preservation: Building 1 Renovation Ground Breaking Ceremony.

***The following are the remarks made on behalf of WOLAA by Jim Proctor as part of the ground breaking ceremony for Building 1's restoration on 17 October 2007. This is the beginning of the "Proud Memory" preservation of the WOL. This restoration will result in the restoration of NOL's beautiful lobby.**

My role today is like that of "Father Time" at a New Year's Eve celebration. I'm going to cover a little history of this site; but my main theme is our hope that FDA preserves the legacy of technical excellence that was created on this site by the remarkable scientists, engineers, and support staff who worked here for 50 years. If you are not familiar with the WOLAA, we are a group of about 600 former employees of the WOL; most of whom, like me, spent their entire technical careers of 20 to 40 years here on this site. We have worked with GSA and FDA to preserve Building 1 as a memorial to our presence here and a testimony to the technical excellence that resided on these premises.

Now a little history. The beginning started with a handful of scientists in the Mine Building at the Washington Navy Yard in 1919. Over the years, the organization grew and spread in many buildings at the Navy Yard. In an effort to consolidate the scattered groups and provide more space for a growing organization and expanding mission----just like FDA is now, the Navy bought some 850 acres in 1944 here on New Hampshire Avenue to build the Navy's premier R&D Center. Slide 2 shows the two lane New Hampshire Avenue and the land where this building stands. Slide 3 looks out past the flag pole at a lonesome old barn where the current residential area stands. Slide 4 shows the building under construction, and Slide 5 shows the laying of the NOL cornerstone in 1946. Slide 6 shows the completed laboratory as it stood until the wrecking ball took its toll in recent years. All that remains is the main part of Building 1 and many Proud Memories.

Next, I will touch briefly on some of the technical achievements achieved here at White Oak. All Navy mines and the Mk 48 torpedo were developed here. All Navy explosives as well as the most for the Army and Air Force were formulated and developed here. The Laboratory participated in all the nuclear weapons tests and was the sole repository of all nuclear weapons blast effects data for the Department of Defense. We developed the ceramic materials used in missile nose

cones and heat shields for space craft. Our wind tunnels provided model flight data for missiles and space crafts. One material discovered and developed here, NITINOL and its subsequent derivatives, is widely used medically as stents in arteries and veins. Also a mathematical model of chaos was developed here to study and control variations in heart arrhythmia. Over 2000 patents were granted to our scientists over the 50 years which attests to the technical excellence, inventiveness, and talent of our scientists and engineers.

Many of our scientists and engineers were recognized national and international experts in their fields, and were able to attract, recruit, and retain top level talent based on our technical reputation. Examples of the level of talent employed here were John Bardeen, John Atanasoff, and Joseph Webber. John Bardeen co-invented the transistor and received two Nobel Prizes. John Atanasoff invented the digital computer, and Joseph Webber co-developed the laser. Also, the level of scientific work carried on here is evidenced by the fact that John Nash, of movie fame, "Beautiful Minds," consulted with our mathematicians and Albert Einstein, consulted with our explosive experts.

In closing, the WOLAA is grateful that FDA and GSA are going to preserve and restore this building as the center of the new campus because it becomes a monument to our memory of working at this site for the Navy. But most importantly, it represents the legacy of technical excellence created by an outstanding group of scientists, engineers, and support staff that we hope will continue to be the cornerstone of the FDA campus; so that in years to come, FDA employees can look back on their experiences and technical accomplishments here and have the same type of Proud Memories of White Oak that we have!

Thank You,
Jim Proctor