

Presidential Medal Presentation to Harold Agnew  
Los Alamos, New Mexico  
April 8, 2003  
Bruce B. Darling  
Senior Vice President, University Affairs  
and  
Interim Vice President, Laboratory Management

This event is a special moment in history. It commemorates the creation of a truly special institution, and it recognizes the men and women who gave it life and who sustain it to this day.

I bring you the warmest regards of the Regents of the University of California, President Richard Atkinson, the Berkeley and Livermore laboratories, and the entire UC community.

The Los Alamos Laboratory has been a part of the University for sixty of the University's one hundred and thirty five years. The University and the Lab are bound by a common history and a common destiny. We are doing everything in our power to ensure that this relationship continues for another sixty years.

This gathering is historic for several reasons: first, because this date is just days before the signing of the first contract for UC to manage Los Alamos; second, because in the darkest days of World War II, the nation turned to UC and this Lab to put science and technology in service to the nation; and third, because of the four gentlemen we honor this evening: Harold Agnew, Don Kerr, Sig Hecker, and John Browne. I would like to express the University's appreciation for their dedicated service to the Laboratory, to the University and to the nation. Gentlemen, you have our admiration and gratitude.

The value of an anniversary is that it gives us an opportunity to shift our focus from creating the future to commemorating the past. This anniversary gives me the opportunity to recognize the tens of thousands of men and women at this Laboratory whose innovations changed the world. One need only pause for a moment to imagine what the world would be like today if the Nazis had been the first to develop the atomic bomb. For your achievements during the second world war and ever since, the nation, and indeed the world, owe you a deep debt of gratitude.

I also want to recognize Beverly Agnew, Alison Kerr, Nina Hecker and Marti Browne, without whom the Lab would not be what it is today. May I ask you to stand? Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in recognizing them.

Before honoring Harold, I want to thank Pete Nanos for agreeing to serve as Interim Director during this critical time. Pete's leadership has been evident from his first day on the job. He has impressed the Secretary of Energy, members of Congress, and the Regents; I receive e-mails and calls on a regular basis praising his performance. Pete and Joanne, thank you for your service to the Lab.

It gives me great pleasure this evening to make a special presentation to Harold Agnew. This anniversary is a perfect occasion to honor someone who was here at the inception of the Lab and who served the Lab, its staff and community, and the nation so well. Harold's affiliation with the Lab began sixty years and one week ago, on April 1, 1943.

For his exceptional service, Harold is the recipient of the University of California Presidential Medal. Harold is a pioneer in his field, a leader and visionary, a vital force whose contributions continue unabated through his intellect, his wisdom, and his unbridled energy. He is an inspiration to those of us here this evening as well as to legions of his colleagues and young scientists at Los Alamos and around the country.

Harold has been a scientist, elected official, scientific statesman, Laboratory Director, corporate CEO, scientific advisor and funder of science. He has distinguished himself in each of these endeavors. As a result, he has been elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences as well as the National Academy of Engineering. And he is the recipient of the Enrico Fermi Award, the E.O. Lawrence Award, the NASA Public Service Award and the Los Alamos Medal.

On a personal note, I have known Harold and Beverly for more than twenty years, beginning when Harold was the President of General Atomics and I was at UC San Diego. I have benefited from his experience and appreciated his counsel. No one has been more helpful during the past few months in sustaining the University's relationship with the Los Alamos, Livermore and Berkeley Laboratories than Harold Agnew.

Now, Harold, if you would please join me, I will present to you, on behalf of President Atkinson, the UC Presidential Medal and read its citation:

“Acclaimed physicist and internationally renowned authority on nuclear security and power, you illuminated the field of nuclear physics with your thoughtful inquiry and seminal research, enkindling the spirit of discovery in your colleagues and your students; valued counselor and dedicated public servant, you gave generously of your knowledge, scholarship, and experience in the quest for viable solutions to issues of international concern; exemplary steward of the scientific riches of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, you guided the Laboratory with extraordinary vision and a firm purpose of commitment as it expanded the frontiers of scientific discovery and achievement. For your enduring contributions to the Los Alamos National Laboratory as a place of innovation, experimentation, and creative design and for your steadfast devotion to the highest values of scientific inquiry, the University of California is proud to bestow upon you the Presidential Medal.”

Harold, I hope you have better luck getting this medal through airport security than I did on my flight to New Mexico.