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Reorganizations R Us

Shawn Larsen

Herb York, the first Director, established a matrix organization for the Laboratory, a distinguishing feature of Livermore still in use today. Larsen perhaps knows this better than anyone.

I celebrated my 10th anniversary at the Laboratory in August of 2001. Despite working in the same place doing the same work during these ten years. . . .

I've been a member of the Computer Applications Sciences Engineering Division, the Scientific Computer Applications Division, the Computer Systems and Applications Division, the Environmental Computer Applications Division, the NAI/NT Division, the NT/NAI Division, Division II, and the Scientific Software Division. I've been a member of the Earth Sciences and Nuclear Test Section. I've been matrixed from the Treaty Verification Group, the Nuclear Waste Management Group, the Treaty Verification and Containment Group, and the Earth Sciences Group. I was going to be matrixed from the Geological Sciences Group, but I put my foot down and said no. I've been in the Applications Development Department and the Computer Applications Organization. I've been in the Computations Organization and the Computation Directorate. On the programmatic side, I've been in the Earth Sciences Department, the Earth Sciences Division, the Geophysics and Global Security Division, and the Geological and Environmental Technologies Division. I've been in the Energy Directorate, the Physics Directorate, the Environmental Programs Directorate, the Environmental Sciences Directorate, Earth and Environmental Sciences Directorate, and the Energy and Environment Directorate. I've worked with the Treaty Verification Program, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Program, and the Ground-Based Nuclear Explosion Monitoring Program.

Administratively, I've reported to 9 supervisors, 7 division leaders, 5 department heads, and 5 associate directors. Programmatically, I've reported to 5 department or division leaders and 6 associate directors.

Needless to say, the above list is now far out of date. New reorganizations, which were unknown when this list was compiled in August 2001, have put me in the Computer Applications and Research Department and tentatively in the EEBI Division. I report to a new department head and likely will report to a new supervisor and division leader. Unsurprisingly, the rumor is that another reorganization is pending on the programmatic side.

I'm told that the new organizational structure is so perfect that there will be no need for future changes. Please say it isn't so. Each reorganization has brought with it a new set of faces. Perhaps the ability of the Laboratory and its personnel to successfully operate in a rapidly changing world is one reason for our success over the last 50 years.

Before entering some secure areas, employees are required to step through a "CAIN booth" and slide their badge through a reader. Employees who decide to make efficient use of their time in the booths are sometimes surprised.

We work at the Central Alarm Station, where all the incoming calls come for the Protective Force Division. We answer those phones and dispatch the officers to certain areas for emergencies, and we also do all the visual checking of the Lab.

In the 80s and 90s, the CAIN booths were set up not only with a badge reader, but also with a camera mounted at the top of each booth. You not only had to slide your badge, but you had to look up at the camera for face identification. That's how we would verify that your face matched your badge and that you were going into the right area. After a while, though, the use of the cameras for identifying people was discontinued, so all you had to do was slide your badge. But the cameras stayed in the booth.

There are some unique stories relating to those cameras, because people forget that we can see into the booth. I guess they think they are Superman, and it's a telephone booth.

Sometimes while they're in the booth, we would use the intercom and call them and say, "Excuse me, did you know you're on camera?" They'd usually scream, "Well, turn it off!" Sorry—we can't.



One of the many uses for a CAIN booth.

The Pipeline

Chris Haynam, John Harri, Ed Moses, Mary Spaeth,
and Bruce Warner

The AVLIS program had its share of unusual moments.

The first time we considered doing plutonium isotope separation in the early 1980s, the lasers were at one end of the Lab in Building 177, and the Plutonium Building was at the other end in Building 332. Obviously, we couldn't move either building, but we needed to connect the two somehow. At that time, the laser was producing what we thought was phenomenal power—something like 30 watts of orange light.

Carl Haussmann, who was the associate director-at-large at that time, asked us, “So what are you going to do?”

So we did what, in retrospect, was ridiculously simple. We found an aerial photo of the Lab and drew a straight line—as the crow flies, basically—from the Laser Building to the Plutonium Building, although we did have to make one turn. We went back to Carl that very same afternoon and said, “If you'll just give us this right of way, we'll dig a ditch and put a tunnel in from point A to point B. Then we'll just send the laser light down through the tunnel.” And he said okay.

A week later we were digging. Eight months later we had installed the pipeline and its vacuum system, the opto-mechanical hardware and control systems. We were ready to send light through the tunnel to the Plutonium Building.

But the first time we tried to do a run with the lasers producing light in B-177 and the separator in B-332, we ran into a snag. There was this big valve on the Plutonium Building wall that we had to open. There we were, with the light on one side and the separator running on the other side and a number of interlocks that had to be cleared. The computer wouldn't let us open the valve. It took an entire day just to get the damn valve open. But that's just the way life is when you're turning things on.



A 1984 site map shows the location of two pipelines constructed in the 1980s. The pipeline in the lower portion of the photo is the first one completed and the one discussed in this story. The pipeline in the upper portion of the map was constructed during Demo '85 (see story on page 64).

“At the beginning of my career at the Lab, one of the things that I found astonishing was that people could fight at the top of their lungs about a technical issue—and then go out and have a beer together.”

George Miller