



REFLECTIONS ~ FAREWELL TO TOM D'AGOSTINO

As I look back at Tom D'Agostino's leadership of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)—and his unique relationship with Los Alamos—there is certainly no shortage of contributions.

His career has spanned most of the history of the Stockpile Stewardship Program. He led the NNSA during a period of transition for the nuclear weapons complex—guiding us with a steady hand through challenges and changes at Los Alamos and Livermore national laboratories. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted, “Nothing endures but change.” But change needs good leadership if it is going to become positive change.

The laboratories are thankful that Tom has been at NNSA to help guide us through these years of change.

It was on his watch that Los Alamos achieved success testing with the second axis of our Dual Axis Radiographic Hydrodynamic Testing (DARHT) facility. DARHT is a flagship facility at Los Alamos for doing research for the Stockpile Stewardship Program.

I could talk about his unique ability to make budget work—and his effectiveness working with Congress. He provided deep budget insights during his time as NNSA's administrator.

I know these things from working with Tom for the past decade and a half.

I'd like to share a story our readers might not have heard about—one that dramatically illustrates Tom's integrity, his deep sense of service to the nation, and his straightforward way of “taking care of business.”

On June 26, 2011—only 26 days after I became director of Los Alamos National Laboratory—a wildfire started burning in the remote areas west of Los Alamos. That evening and night, this fire grew into a monster: from a few thousand acres to more than 46,000 acres! It eventually grew to more than 156,000 acres. The Los Conchas wildfire became, at that moment, the largest wildfire in New Mexico history.

The Laboratory and surrounding communities faced a grave danger. That's when I picked up the phone and I called Tom. I will remember that phone call forever. Within minutes of that phone call, the Los Conchas wildfire moved to the top of the national priority list.

Federal assets quickly descended on Los Alamos, including two of the most elite firefighting units in the nation. Thanks in no small measure to that quick response, a disaster was averted and a 70-year-old national treasure was spared. The men and women of Los Alamos owe Tom a deep debt of gratitude.

And so does the nation. He is a patriot, with a profound sense of duty to country and mission—and a deep faith.

On behalf of the Laboratory, I presented Tom a plaque displaying a completely used-up target wheel from the second axis of DARHT. This target wheel is one of the unique technologies that allows us to get *four* radiographic images: a stunning achievement, one that's needed to continue to improve our program in Stockpile Stewardship. We are now “addicted” to getting four images from the second axis.

We will miss Tom, and we wish him well. Congratulations, Tom. Fair winds and following seas!

~ Charlie McMillan, Laboratory Director