

"But what to do as a Fellow? As it turned out, there was a natural path forward. Livermore, under the urging of Teller, was exploring possibility of using nuclear explosives to generate directed energy beams for missile defense. One of these was a nuclear pumped laser. The reports from Livermore were glowing - much too glowing in my opinion. With Gottfried Schappert for theory and several P-Division laser experts for diagnostics, we began an exhaustive evaluation of what we could find out about the Livermore claims." -Snippet from Strattons memoir

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THOMAS STRATTON OBITUARY

Thomas Fairlamb Stratton

Thomas Fairlamb Stratton, a longtime resident of Los Alamos NM, died March 21, 2023, after a brief illness. Tom was born on December 19, 1929, in Kansas City MO, to Thomas Albert and Helen Fairlamb Stratton. Tom left high school before graduating, enrolling instead at a local junior college, and matriculated two years later at Union College in Schenectady NY. He earned a BS in Physics in 1949, then continued his studies at the Physics Department of the University of Minnesota. After successfully defending his PhD thesis in the summer of 1954, he hosted the customary celebration at the local tavern (\$42 worth of ten-cent beers...) and departed at 11:00 that same night for New Mexico, where he began a long and accomplished career at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. The primary focus of Tom's forty-year career at Los Alamos was fusion, including Project Sherwood (laboratory fusion), Project Rover (nuclear propulsion), and CO₂ Lasers (inertial fusion). The Strategic Defense Initiative of the early 1980's meant experiments at the Nevada Test Site, a posting to the Pentagon to serve in the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and, upon his return to Los Alamos, a transition to the field of accelerator technology. Efforts there included the Neutral Particle Beam Program and Project Sunnyside (tritium production and transmutation of nuclear waste). He was a Fellow of Sigma Xi (1954), a Fellow of the American Physical Society (1963), and a Senior Fellow of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (1982). After retiring from the Laboratory in 1993, Tom joined Sumner Associates, a small consulting firm in Santa Fe staffed by retired LANL scientists. He enjoyed the camaraderie as much as the science, and made many new friends. Tom left Sumner in 2011 to care for his wife, Elaine, whose health was failing. Tom and Elaine met in Los Alamos in 1957 while volunteering backstage on a local light opera production. They were married the following year in Oxford, England,

near Harwell Laboratory, where Tom was working on Project Sherwood. Though of vastly different personalities, Tom and Elaine were a great match and had a long and successful marriage. They shared a love for northern New Mexico and for Los Alamos, where they raised their family and spent 55 wonderful years together. A man of few spoken words, Tom was a gifted writer, and his memoirs reveal someone who embraced life and focused on the positive. In addition to his love for and many contributions to physics, Tom will be remembered for his integrity, his encyclopedic knowledge, and his absolute devotion to Elaine, especially in the final years of her life. Tom is survived by his daughters, Jean Stratton and Carol Chambers, and his son-in-law, Robert Chambers. Though grateful for his long life, we will miss his steady presence, his pragmatic advice, and his beautiful blue eyes.