

# Los Alamos and Arzamas-16: the “Sister Cities” Relationship

The two cities of Arzamas-16 and Los Alamos are situated on opposite sides of the globe, separated by ten time zones, and once separated by Cold War secrecy and politics. Each is a nuclear weapons research city and the birthplace of its country's atomic bomb. Moreover, each began its existence as a secret city. As the people of Arzamas-16 and Los Alamos came to know each other over the last several years, the recognition of similar histories, national security missions, and educational, family, and patriotic values led the two communities to reach out to each other and begin to share a “sisterhood.”

Interactions between Los Alamos and Arzamas-16 began with the lab-to-lab scientific collaborations between their respective nuclear institutes. Los Alamos scientist Irv Lindemuth, who participated in the lab-to-lab collaborations in pulsed power and high magnetic fields, has played a key role in the interactions as messenger between the two communities.

The sister cities story begins with Lena Panevkina, Alexander Pavlovskii's personal interpreter, who thought that the scientific interactions between Arzamas-16 and Los Alamos could be extended to include a cultural exchange. During a November 1992 visit to Los Alamos, Panevkina raised the issue with Lindemuth, and that discussion led to a series of letters exchanged between government officials

of the two cities. In December of 1993, Lindemuth made a presentation to the Los Alamos City Council that told the history of Arzamas-16. He explained the similarities between the two

1993, some two-hundred Los Alamos students contributed artwork to a Bradbury-Science-Museum-sponsored “Friendship Book” on the theme of peaceful relations between the two nations, a book that in January 1994 was presented to Arzamas-16 Director Vladimir Belugin.

The pen-pals relationship spread to Gallup, NM when scientists from Arzamas-16 came to New Mexico in November 1993 for a joint experimental campaign in Los Alamos' Ancho Canyon. During a side trip to the Grand Canyon, Jim Goforth, a member of the pulsed-power group, and his sister, Marge Spurlin, a high school teacher from Gallup, arranged for the visitors to be welcomed

into the homes of Gallup residents. That visit combined with Spurlin's enthusiasm led students in Gallup to join the letter-writing campaign.

Ultimately, the letter writing spread throughout the Los Alamos school system and to several schools in Arzamas-16. Several hundred students from both sides of the Atlantic have participated.

Earlier that year, when the Los Alamos pulsed-power group was in Arzamas-16 for the first joint scientific experiment, they were taken to visit the local hospital. There, they learned from Dr. Valentina Ponomaryova, the director of the childhood and maternity center, that essential medical supplies



**In February 1995, the administration of Arzamas-16 presented the Los Alamos City Council with a traditional Russian-cast brass bell. Left to right: Bob Reinovsky, County Council Chairman Lawry Mann, and Irv Lindemuth admire its workmanship.**

cities to the Council and noted that the community of Arzamas-16 sometimes jokingly refers to itself as “Los Arzamas.” The council voted unanimously to invite Arzamas-16 to become a “sister city” to Los Alamos (see “Sister Cities International”).

Also in 1992, Lena Gerdova, an interpreter for Vladimir Chernyshev, started a pen-pal exchange between high school students in Arzamas-16 and Los Alamos. Through Lindemuth, Gerdova arranged to visit Ann Eilert's tenth grade class at Los Alamos High School. A number of the students wrote pen-pal letters, and Gerdova returned to Russia with the letters in her suitcase. Lindemuth came back from Arzamas-16 in March 1993 with the first replies. Additionally, in December

*We would like to thank the Los Alamos Monitor for allowing us to use information from articles written by Steve Shankland and Chairman Schaller.*

*“The idea of sister-city relationships is one of “people-to-people,” of citizen diplomacy “from heart-to-heart.” Only in this way will the ice left from the cold war be melted.... We would like to believe that if all Americans are like the “citizens” that visited Arzamas-16, then you and I will not perish on this fragile planet.”*

*From a report in the Arzamas-16 Courier covering the May 1995 visit of the Los Alamos civic delegation.*

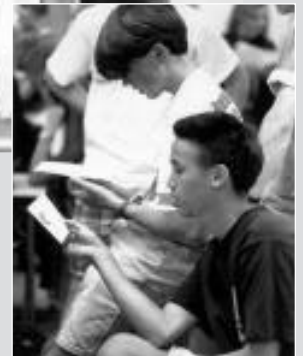
were available in Russia but were priced beyond the reach of the citizens of Arzamas-16, who were regularly going unpaid as the Russian government struggled financially.

When the Los Alamos scientists returned home and reported what they had seen, the Los Alamos community expressed a desire to help. Upon the advice from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow that cash donations to the Arzamas-16 hospital would be the most expedient and effective way to help, Lindemuth and John Eilert of the Laboratory’s Environmental Safety and Health Group opened a bank account in December 1993 to launch the Arzamas-16 Children’s Medical fund. Donations from Los Alamos, the surrounding communities, and even from Colorado and Pennsylvania began to arrive. When Arzamas-16 Director Vladimir Belugin visited Los Alamos in January 1994, he was given more than six hundred dollars to take to Dr. Ponomaryova. Later, Cari Zocco took over as Chairwoman of the Medical Fund, and over the years, additional cash donations have been forwarded to Dr. Ponomaryova.

Soon thereafter, Ken Bower, a member of the Laboratory’s Community Involvement and Outreach Office, and then Treasurer of the American Chemical Society Central New Mexico Chapter, told Lindemuth that his Chapter had accumulated a cash surplus and would like to distribute the money in Russia. Lindemuth and Bower first located a charitable medical organization (MAP International) that had access to surplus medical supplies and then a U.S.-State-Department-supported shipping organization that would ship to Russia at no cost to the donor. Bower leveraged ten thousand dollars in Medical Funds and American Chemical Society fund donations into a twenty-foot shipping container full of medical supplies that ar-



**Above:** Russian students and teachers from Arzamas-16 at the athletic field of Los Alamos high school in October 1995. **Right:** Los Alamos students Tony Maggiore and Chih-Cheng Peng open pen-pal letters from fellow students in Arzamas-16. **Bottom:** Bob Reinovsky (left) greets Russian high school teacher during visit to Arzamas-16.



rived in Arzamas-16 in early 1995. The medical supplies had a U.S. wholesale value of five-hundred thousand dollars.

The sister cities relationship was consummated in May 1994 with the visit to Los Alamos by eight students and two teachers from Arzamas-16 and their participation in the first New Mexico High School Critical Issues Forum, a series sponsored by the Laboratory’s Science Education and Outreach Group. The

topic of the first forum was to be nuclear dismantlement; the format would involve teams of students from New Mexico high schools researching dismantlement and then developing proposed policies for U.S. assistance to Russia. When Lindemuth heard about the forum he called Judith Kaye, leader of the Outreach group, who agreed that Russian students could participate. Frantic phone calls to Arzamas-16 and

### Sister Cities International

Sister Cities International is a national, non-profit, volunteer-membership organization joining United States and foreign communities. Sister city affiliations lead the national movement for volunteer participation and community development in the international arena.

The Sister City Program began shortly after World War II and developed into a national initiative when President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed the people-to-people program at a White House Conference in 1956. He hoped that involving citizens internationally might lessen the chance of future world conflicts. Initially grouped with the National League of Cities, Sister Cities International became a separate, not-for-profit organization in 1967. The procedure for establishing an official Sister City affiliation requires that an agreement be signed by the respective mayor of each city and ratified by each city council, or its equivalent.

Membership in Sister Cities International is designed to improve the cultural understanding of people of different nations as well as provide new prospects for trade and business. Student and professional exchanges and other learning experiences in schools may be initiated through direct inter-school contracts. Membership in Sister Cities International provides eligibility for various grant programs.

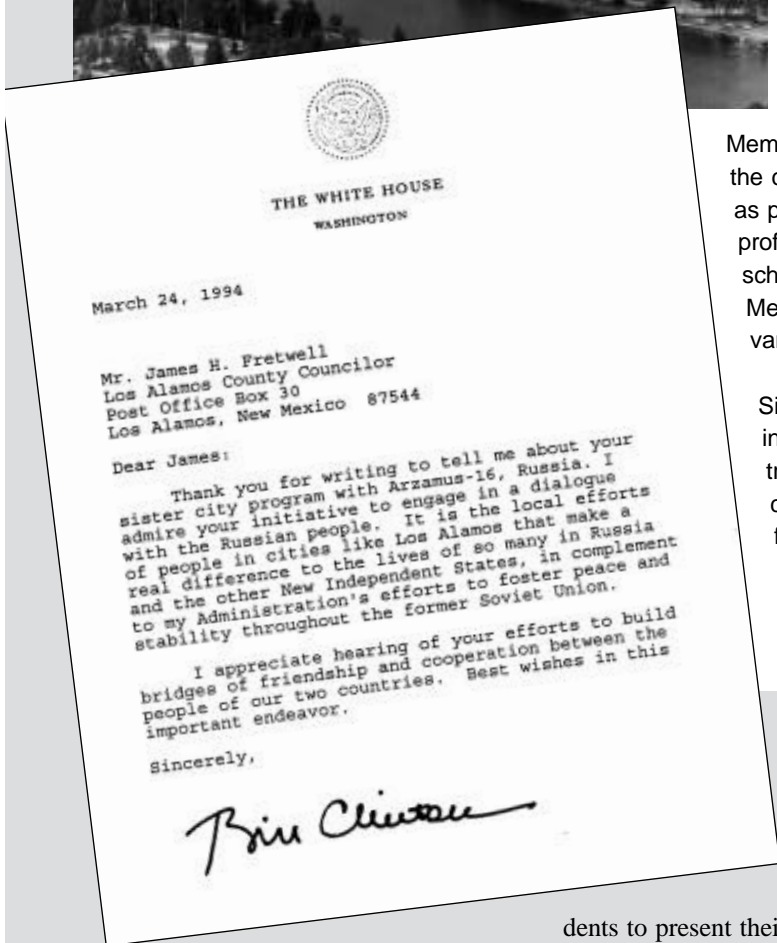
Sister Cities International represents 125 million Americans in 1,200 U.S. cities and their 1,900 partners in 120 countries worldwide. Since 1986, partnerships between U.S. cities and those in the Former Soviet Union have grown from six to one hundred and fifty-two. Today, partnerships with Japanese and German cities represent the largest number of sister-city affiliations by country.

hours of paperwork on the part of the Russians produced two teams of Arzamas-16 stu-

to meet face-to-face during this visit.

In February 1995, two gifts were presented to Bob Reinovsky and Lindemuth by Gennadi Karatayev, the Arzamas-16 City Administrator. A cast bronze bell and an invitation for a Los Alamos civic delegation to visit Arzamas-16 to participate in the May 9 Victory Day celebration commemorating the end of World War II in Europe. A seven-member delegation accepted the invitation and became the first U.S. civic visitors permitted into Arzamas-16 by the Russian government. Among the delegation was Steve Shankland of

dents to present their ideas on the dismantlement issue. The combined plan of the participating teams produced the clever acronym “TRUST,” The Russian-United States Transition. After the forum, the plan was presented to U.S. Department of State personnel Joe De-Thomas and Ann Harrington in Washington, D.C. Some pen-pals were able



Like Los Alamos, modern Arzamas-16 (upper photo) is situated in a region of great natural beauty. The Sarovka and Satis Rivers flow into the Volga River separating the city into distinct sections.

the Los Alamos Monitor, the first non-Russian media representative ever permitted into the city.

The May 1995 visit to Arzamas-16 set the stage for an October visit to Los Alamos by a 15-member Arzamas-16 delegation. In January of this year, Los Alamos Middle School teacher Jeanne Allen was notified that she had been awarded a twenty-nine thousand dollar thematic exchange grant from Sister Cities International. Through this grant, five students and a teacher from Los Alamos and San Ildefonso Pueblo will visit Arzamas-16, and five Arzamas-16 students and a teacher will come to Los Alamos. The students will research water-quality issues, using New Mexico’s Rio Grande and tributaries of Russia’s Moksha River. The Laboratory will participate in this project by providing tours, lectures, and analytical assistance.

From the beginning of their modern existence, the people of Los Alamos and Arzamas-16 have been committed to the security of their respective nations. When the changing global political climate made it possible to work together to reduce the nuclear danger, the two cities embraced the opportunity. ■

**The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church visits the monastery of St. Serafim. Academician Yuli Khariton, the “Soviet Oppenheimer,” is on the right.**



### Arzamas-16 Changes Name

A formal request by the people of Arzamas-16 in August 1995 led Boris Yeltsin to officially change the name of the city back to its historic name of Sarov.

Originally a provincial center, the town was the site of the Sarova monastery next to the Sarovka River. Before the Communist revolution, thousands of Russians, including the czar, made pilgrimages to the site to benefit from the pure water of the Sarovka River. The water is said to have healing powers and is a marketable commodity of the city today. In 1923, the monastery was closed by the communists and many priests were executed. Many of the buildings, including a spectacular cathedral, were destroyed, and the remaining buildings were converted to secular use. The high bell tower visible from much of the city stands as a monument to the earlier times.



The city disappeared from unclassified maps in 1946, the same year the All-Russian Scientific Research Institute of Experimental Physics, the weapons design facility, was built. The village was then given status as a city and, over the years, labeled with a series of classified code names. In 1990, the Soviet government first acknowledged the city’s existence openly. Most in Sarov support the name change, but others feel that Arzamas-16 more correctly reflects the city’s greatest achievements—nuclear weapons.

The city of Sarov remains a “closed” city with entrances and exits carefully monitored by armed guards at the periphery. Mr. Gennadi Karatayev, the City Administrator, recognizes that considerable time and money will be required to separate the necessarily classified technical areas from the remainder of the Institute and from the community. Nevertheless, Karatayev has expressed the hope that within ten years his city and much of the Institute will be “open,” not unlike Los Alamos. Once again, members of the Russian Orthodox Church may now make pilgrimages to the sacred shrines of St. Serafim, the monastery’s most famous resident.