

Testimony before Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Public Hearing re NOL Building 1 on 22 February 2012.

M. John Tino, President, White Oak Laboratory Alumni Association (WOLAA) Inc.

WOLAA, Inc. P. O. Box 1002, Olney, MD. 20830. (301) 439-3140; mrspat218@aol.com; www.wolaa.org

***NOL to WOLAA.**

The Naval Ordnance Laboratory was formed in 1919 and occupied the Mine Building at the Gun Factory in Washington, DC. In World War II, NOL developed mines and torpedoes. They solved the “dud” torpedo issues which existed at the beginning of the war. Toward the end of the war, B-29 bombers laid mine fields to block commerce into Japan. This action was quickly “starving” Japan when the atom bombs were dropped. After the war, a brand new Laboratory facility was built and opened in 1946 at White Oak, MD. The site was selected because it was close to headquarters, was isolated so explosive testing could be done, and was magnetically quiet so sensitive testing of magnetic sensors and degaussing systems could be done. For the next fifty years, NOL played a key R&D mission to win the Cold War. The key was to utilize the new technology being developed at NOL in the weapon systems projects. After the cold war was won, the BRAC process closed all of the laboratory except the wind-tunnels in 1997. The WOLAA was formed in 1997 to continue the fellowship and family atmosphere of NOL for “alumni;” and to preserve the proud memories and historical significance of NOL.

***Historical Preservation.**

In 1997, WOLAA developed a plan for the preservation of the history of NOL. It included: the preservation of Building 1, restoration of the lobby in Building 1; restore the NOL flag pole; the use of 4 fireplaces and unique flooring/paneling of the auditorium and “Jungle-Room;” a proud memory garden; and a room in Building 1 to display the history and memories of the laboratory. We began to work with the State and DOD historical organization. In December 2000 a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed between FDA, GSA, State of MD, LABQUEST, and WOLAA. Most of the above plan was adopted. On 17 July 2002 a revised MOA was signed. GSA would not restore the entire Building 1, only the middle 1/3; they developed a new entrance at the old “basement” level; NOL fire station was restored as part of new electric “power” plant; and the flag pole would be moved toward Building 1. After 9/11, the NOL room in Building 1 was not practical re enhanced security. Later the proud memory garden was moved adjacent to Building 1. The State Preservation representative approved the plan for restoration of the Fire Station and required “like” replacement windows be used in Building 1. Of interest is that all new brick used at the FDA facility are same type brick used in Building 1 come

from the same brick yard in Western Maryland. Later a Legacy wall was established in the FDA Conference Center.

On 30 September 2011, the Historical Preservation of the White Oak Laboratory was completed with a formal dedication of the garden and legacy wall (See program provided to Commissioners at hearing.) The Preservation consists of the restored Building 1; restored lobby; restored fire station; restored Building 130; proud memory garden (plaques and benches); legacy wall; restored flag pole; NOL fire place in FDA Commissioner's suite in Building 1; and "The Legacy of the White Oak Laboratory---a 400 plus page book published in 2000.

***Building 1 Architecture.**

I am not going to discuss the architecture historical significance as the excellent staff report produced by Sandra Youla provides that information. I will only say that when I reported for "duty" at NOL in 1957 and climbed those wonderful stone steps, looked up to read the words, "Naval Ordnance Laboratory" at the top of the building, that I knew I had found my work home. I, as most scientists and engineers, spent my entire career there-----1957 to 1993---retiring as a Senior Executive and Department Head.

Cold War History of NOL.

We believe NOL played a significant and historical role in ending the cold war. Our mines were used to block North Viet Nam harbors bringing the North Viet Nam to the peace table. If any of you read Tom Clancy's Hunt for Red October, all the weapons used by our submarines were developed at NOL---Mk 48 Torpedo, SUBROC Anti-submarine warfare missile; Mk 113 Fire Control System. The Soviets clearly new the superiority of these weapons. The CAPTOR mine was the first "smart" weapon and could be used in deep water to bottle up the Soviets submarines above the GI-UK gap; this forced the Soviets to rethink their strategic ballistic missile submarine strategy. Explosive technology and torpedo warhead developments provided the Navy with weapons that could destroy the very difficult Soviet double-hull submarines. NOL developed fuzes for projectiles and missile which provided a safe, reliable, and effective weapons for air, submarine, and surface technology. Research and technology in materials, batteries, and physics provided the weapons with the ground breaking technology. Magnetic silencing and deperming of ships and submarines were greatly enhanced allowing our ships to safely operate against bottom mines in shallow water. This was critical in the Iraq wars. The wind tunnels and hydro facilities at NOL were and are unique and played large roles in the development of ballistic missiles. We are very proud of our roles in providing the defense of the Navy during the Cold War.

Just as NASA has provided technology to the private sector, NOL has also. The Brown magnetometer was used by NASA on the moon (as was special explosives), by

screening detectors at air ports, and switching of traffic signals at road intersections. Most of us know someone who has a stent to open heart arteries. The metal the stents are made from-----NITINOL---was invented at NOL.

***Proposed Amendment.**

WOLAA strongly supports the adding of NOL's Building 1 as historical in the Master Plan for Historical Preservation and adding it to the Location Atlas & Index of Historic Sites.

Thank you,

Marshall John Tino