



MARY BETH MONROE is pictured above at Trinity Site in New Mexico during the 2004 Quadrennial Congress of Sigma Pi Sigma. Photo by Tracy Nolis-Schwab.

New Memorial Scholarship

In memory of Mary Beth Monroe, friends and colleagues have expressed interest in supporting an endowed scholarship in her name.

DESCRIPTION OF SCHOLARSHIP

The Mary Beth Monroe Memorial Scholarship recognizes the outstanding academic and leadership accomplishments of physics majors who began their studies at a regionally accredited community college and who intend to pursue a career in physics education.

This scholarship is intended to memorialize and honor Mary Beth Monroe's inspiring lifelong commitment to the support and encouragement of physics students and her dedication to service at all levels in the Society of Physics Students and the American Association of Physics Teachers. Friends and colleagues are encouraged to assist in the endowment of the scholarship by donating through either SPS or AAPT, with the designation "Mary Beth Monroe SPS Student Scholarship."

Contribute via SPS and the American Institute of Physics at <https://donate.aip.org>.

A Tribute: Mary Beth Monroe

REMEMBERING A LIFELONG CHAMPION OF SPS

by Toni Sauncy, SPS Director

The Society of Physics Students joins the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT) and many others in the physics community around the country in mourning the loss of Mary Beth Monroe on August 27, 2013. Mary Beth was a lifelong member of SPS and served as the SPS chapter advisor at Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde, TX, where she taught for over 38 years. She was dedicated to her students and consistently devoted her work to their development. Mary Beth served in many leadership positions, including several terms as the SPS zone 13 councilor and various roles in the Texas Section of the AAPT and the national AAPT. One of her many contributions was leading a study to establish the important role of physics education at two-year colleges, a study resulting in guidelines that continue to have an impact.

In 2010 she was awarded the Melba Newell Phillips Medal, AAPT's highest recognition for member leadership and lifelong service as an educator and mentor. She had been elected as the AAPT national president elect when failing health forced her to step aside. As an acknowledgment of her leadership capacity and to honor her many years of service, the membership elected her president pro-tem in July 2013.

Mary Beth served as an inspiration to many students and colleagues alike. It was Monroe, in her role as the SPS zone 13 councilor who introduced me to the Society

of Physics Students. It is possible that without her advice I might have found SPS eventually, but it was her welcome and encouragement that connected me, as a student, to this group. I was one of hundreds of students over the years whose life was enriched by knowing Mary Beth Monroe. She spent her days empowering her students and furthering their ambitions. She was a true friend of physics and a shining example of what SPS strives to accomplish. She truly embodied the ideal of enriching undergraduate students in their quest to master physics and to pursue physics-based careers. I had the pleasure of interacting with her for many years after I became a faculty member myself. I welcomed several students who transferred from her institution to mine, visited her institution to do outreach and recruitment, and worked on tasks with her for the Texas Section of AAPT. I had the great honor of having a conversation with Mary Beth last summer, during which I made sure that she knew what a powerful impact her nudge into the world of SPS had on me and many of my students, and how her influence helped to set the trajectory that brought me to this office here at the American Institute of Physics.

Mary Beth was special person, an avid scientist, a mentor to so many students and someone whose life serves as a model for what is possible when equipped with a love of physics shared with a love of family and an equal love of the divine. She made a difference in many lives, in several institutions, and to the great science of physics, in a small town, and a community college, one student at a time. //

DURING AN AAPT WORKSHOP, MARY BETH MONROE gives a presentation on the importance of SPS chapters to the health of physics departments. Photographer unknown.



A Tribute: L. Worth Seagondollar

FRIEND AND SUPPORTER WAS VITAL
TO THE FORMATION OF SPS

by SPS Staff

The Society of Physics Students joins the greater physics community in mourning Dr. L. Worth Seagondollar, a key figure in the histories of SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society. Dr. Seagondollar passed away on September 20, 2013, at the age of 92. He spent much of his career championing the importance of undergraduate physics education.

A prolific teacher and scholar, his scientific roots go back to the Manhattan Project. He was one of the youngest scientists invited to work on the project and a witness to the first atomic test, at Trinity Site. After World War II, he earned a PhD at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and then joined the faculty at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, where he helped build the first Van de Graaff accelerator. In 1965 he moved to North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where he was appointed chair of the physics department.

Dr. Seagondollar became associated with Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society, in 1950 at the University of Kansas. He served as a student advisor for more than 40 years and as the president of the Sigma Pi Sigma national organization from 1962 to 1967. It was largely Worth Seagondollar who, in April of 1968, ironed out the details of the merger between the American Institute of Physics Student Sections and Sigma Pi Sigma that formed the Society of Physics Students (SPS). He ensured that this unique arrangement would not jeopardize the standing of Sigma Pi Sigma as a member of the Association of College Honor Societies—and helped to author the SPS National Constitution.

In 1996 the SPS National Council voted unanimously to institute the L. Worth



WORTH SEAGONDOLLAR poses by a sculpture at the American Center for Physics following a 2007 invited talk and Q&A about his experiences working on the Manhattan Project. Photo by Tracy Nolis-Schwab.

Seagondollar Distinguished Service Award, awarded first to Dr. Seagondollar (much to his surprise!). The Seagondollar Award remains the most prestigious of all Sigma Pi Sigma or SPS service awards. //

For an in-depth feature detailing the contributions of Dr. Seagondollar to SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma, see the Fall 2013 issue of *Radiations* magazine, the official publication of Sigma Pi Sigma: www.sigmapisigma.org/radiations/.

In 1995 the Society of Physics Students (SPS) Executive Committee and National Council discussed a new award that would honor an extraordinary level of commitment and service to SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma. In a secret mail ballot, the SPS Council unanimously voted to create this award and to name it in honor of Dr. Worth Seagondollar. It also unanimously voted that he should be the award's first recipient. To learn more about the award and its recipients, visit www.sigmapisigma.org/awards/worth-seagondollar/.



WORTH SEAGONDOLLAR speaks at Trinity Site in New Mexico. Photo by Tracy Nolis-Schwab.

Witness to History

A drive of 2.5 hours from Albuquerque, NM, sits the valley known for centuries as Jornada del Muerto, the Journey of Death.

There, on Monday, July 16, 1945, the pre-dawn desert was suddenly lit with incredible brilliance as the world's first nuclear explosion took place at 5:29:45am. Since that moment the world has never been the same.

On October 14, 2004, Dr. Worth Seagondollar spoke to participants of the Trinity site visit during the 2004 Quadrennial Congress of Sigma Pi Sigma. His first-hand accounts of working at the Manhattan Project captivated the audience that day, and again that evening during a more detailed speech at the closing banquet of the Congress.

On July 24, 2007, Seagondollar attended the Society of Physics Students summer intern presentations at the American Center for Physics in College Park, MD. He again spoke about his experiences at the Manhattan Project, and this time his talk was recorded and transcribed.

This talk describes one of the greatest war-time experiences possible for a young graduate student, including an eye-witness account of the 1945 plutonium fission device explosion in the New Mexico desert.

To read the full transcript of Dr. Seagondollar's 2007 talk, visit www.sigmapisigma.org/seagondollar.pdf.