

= Priscilla Duffield =

Priscilla Duffield (April 8 , 1918 ? July 21 , 2009) worked on the Manhattan Project during World War II . She was secretary to Ernest O. Lawrence at the Radiation Laboratory , and to J. Robert Oppenheimer at the Los Alamos Laboratory . After the war she was executive assistant to directors of Scripps Institute of Oceanography and the National Accelerator Laboratory .

A graduate of the University of California , from which she obtained a degree in political science , Priscilla Greene started working for Lawrence in February 1942 , and then for Oppenheimer later that year . She arrived in Santa Fe , New Mexico , on March 1943 , and established the Los Alamos Laboratory 's office . She became the office manager at Los Alamos , greeting visitors , answering the telephone , making travel arrangements , arranging security passes and accommodation , and taking notes of telephone calls . In September 1943 , she married Robert Duffield , a chemist working at the Los Alamos laboratory , and changed her surname from Greene to Duffield .

In the post @-@ war years , Duffield was secretary and executive assistant to Roger Revelle , the director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography . In November 1967 , she became secretary and executive assistant to Robert R. Wilson , the founding director of the National Accelerator Laboratory , and once again she helped establish a new scientific laboratory on a new site . In later life she moved to Colorado , where she served on the board of the Uncompahgre Medical Clinic .

= = Early life = =

Priscilla Greene was born in Berkeley , California , on April 8 , 1918 , and grew up in Corning , California . She entered the University of California , from which she obtained a degree in political science . After graduation , she studied and travelled in New York and Europe before returning to Berkeley , where she got a job as secretary to Ernest O. Lawrence , the director of the Radiation Laboratory at the University of California , in February 1942 , replacing Helen Griggs , who had left to marry Glenn Seaborg .

= = Manhattan Project = =

When J. Robert Oppenheimer began working on the nuclear weapon design for the Manhattan Project during World War II , Lawrence loaned Greene part @-@ time to take dictation and do general secretarial work for Oppenheimer , while still working full @-@ time for himself . " When Robert returned from travel and told me that he had just been to a beautiful place , all I could say is , ' take me too ! ' " she later recalled . Lawrence reluctantly let her go . She immediately started working for Oppenheimer full @-@ time , taking over the disused office of a physics professor who was absent on leave in November 1942 .

Greene arrived in Santa Fe , New Mexico , on March 18 , 1943 with Oppenheimer 's son Peter and his nurse . She found Los Alamos , New Mexico , " a pretty appalling place . It was windy , dusty , cold , snowy ... and nothing was finished . " " Everything was put together amazingly fast ... (but) it was nothing spectacular . There were unfinished buildings , mud and trucks everywhere . " Since there was no telephone line to Los Alamos , the office was initially established at 109 East Palace in Santa Fe . There was no purchasing system in place either , so she bought a typewriter in Santa Fe with her own money . She would spend the rest of the war trying to get reimbursed for it .

When the office moved to Los Alamos , Greene became the office manager , greeting visitors and answering the telephone . She would listen in on all of Oppenheimer 's calls and take notes , except when the director of the Manhattan Project , Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves , Jr . , told her to get off the line . She typed Oppenheimer 's correspondence . Numerous typed documents would end with " JRO : pg " . She handled travel arrangements , security passes and accommodation . Alex Wellersten noted that :

While Oppenheimer gets much credit for keeping the entire bomb project in his head , it was actually Greene who managed the director 's office and kept it organized ; it was Greene who took notes on phone conversations and managed the correspondence with far @-@ flung sites ; it was

Greene who helped Oppenheimer , a man who had never managed anything in his life , stay on top of the innumerable tasks assigned to him .

Greene married Robert Duffield , a chemist working on the project , in a ceremony at Dorothy McKibbin 's house on September 5 , 1943 . McKibbin had a local judge conduct the ceremony , but due to the project 's security , he was not allowed to know the surnames of the couple . Nor was any family allowed to attend , although Greene 's brother DeMotte , whom she had recruited to work on the project as a technician , was on hand to give the bride away , and guests included Robert Serber , Robert R. Wilson , Harold Agnew and Katherine Oppenheimer . Three weeks later everyone assembled there again for the wedding of her bridesmaid , Marjorie Hall , to Hugh Bradner .

When Duffield became pregnant , she wanted to quit working , but the demands of the project were so great that Oppenheimer kept refusing her requests . He eventually recruited Anne Wilson from Groves 's office as her replacement .

= = Later life = =

After the war , Duffield became secretary and executive assistant to Roger Revelle , the director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography . On November 6 , 1967 , she became secretary and executive assistant to Robert R. Wilson , the founding director of the National Accelerator Laboratory , and served in that capacity until December 31 , 1972 . Duffield likened this job to working for Oppenheimer at Los Alamos :

" There was the same close feeling of a group of people in a strange land , ... a group of people who were isolated from the rest of the world and trying to do something special . " Duffield said that moving to the Weston site evoked memories of the esprit de corps at Los Alamos , and " that did really make it a frontier . " She also recalled The feeling of independence and adventure in those early days on the Weston site . " We had a flagpole and a big fancy colorful tent was put alongside the house " As she explained , " It was a place to sit and have a meeting : but it also " was a symbol . " And at both labs , " everyone did sort of everything ? there was a crisis every day . " Duffield emphasized : " Bob managed to give people the feeling of tremendous urgency , of getting the thing done and getting it done fast and getting it done cheap . " Later , secretary Barb (Rozic) Kristen recalled that many new employees considered it hard to know just what to do in those early days , but Duffield , unlike everyone else , knew exactly what was needed and how to get things done .

Duffield moved to Norwood , Colorado , where she served on the board of the Uncompahgre Medical Clinic . She died of natural causes at her home there on July 21 , 2009 . She was survived by her daughters Deborah and Libby . Her husband Robert died in 2000 .