

NSF Science Ethics Series

TITLE: Keeping Secrets: Scientists' strategic management of militarization, 1945-1980

Monday, Nov 12, 2012

11:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.

232 Philip G. Hoffman Hall

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ABSTRACT: In the heart of the Cold War, scientists often found themselves wrestling with professional quandaries. The generation that had learned in the course of their formal education in the 1930s and 1940s that science was open, universalistic, internationalistic, and an endeavor focused on the welfare of mankind, found instead that their research was not open but secret, not internationalistic but nationalistic, and not conducive to the “welfare of mankind” but engaged with the sophisticated technical production of injury to human beings. They made new weapons, new surveillance methods, new information systems, even new ways to control prisoners (through psychology), bring down economies, or start epidemics. Experts from physics to sociology found their research calibrated to empower the security state, and scientists trained to see themselves as creating knowledge for the good of mankind found themselves engaged instead something that felt very different to many of them as the Cold War intensified. In this talk, I explore some of their responses to this changed world. I look at how scientists talked about “learning to lie,” burning trash, keeping secrets from each other, and handling security clearances. I seek to reconstruct the quotidian, everyday practices that were provoked by militarization during the Cold War. My goal is to shed some light on one of the most profound changes in human history: The military transformation of technical knowledge over the last century.

About Professor Susan Lindee

Susan Lindee is a historian who studies historical and contemporary questions raised by human and medical genetics and genomic medicine. She is a Professor at the Department of History and Sociology of Science and Associate Dean of the Social Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. Her books include *Suffering Made Real* (1994), *The DNA Mystique* (1995) with the late sociologist Dorothy Nelkin, and *Moments of Truth in Genetic Medicine* (2005). Lindee also has been involved in collaborations with anthropologists, including her work with Alan Goodman and Deborah Heath, on the 2003 edited volume *Genetic Nature/Culture: Anthropology and Science Beyond the Two Culture Divide*, and her April 2012 co-edited special issue of *Current Anthropology*, “The Biological Anthropology of Living Human Populations: World Histories, National Styles and International Networks.” Lindee is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Weiler Fellow, and the winner of a Burroughs Wellcome Fund 40th Anniversary Award and the Schuman Prize of the History of Science Society.