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# MEET A READER

Habitat Humanitarian

## Sandia Labs retiree honored for his work with international nonprofit

**By Debra Dominguez-Lund For the Journal**

Irving Hall, 74, sometimes tells a story of the day he retired as a statistician and data analyst in the mid-nineties from Sandia National Laboratories.

He says his director, Dennis Miyoshi, stopped by his retirement coffee party and asked him, "What are you going to do now, Irv, when you are retired? Are you going to do something to make a difference?"

Hall, who worked for Sandia for 27 years and authored and co-authored several technical papers while there, says he doesn't remember any other conversations that day but he thinks about Miyoshi's question every day.

Since, he has found a way to make that difference through Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that has built more than 250,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1 million people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent and affordable shelter.

"Habitat for Humanity has given (my wife Lois Hall and I) an opportunity to show our gratitude to God for all our blessings and hopefully to make a difference in the lives of the recipients of the houses we help build," Hall says.

### **Breaking the cycle**

Habitat for Humanity International recently named him one of 2007's volunteers of the year. He was one of two in the U.S. to receive the award in October 2007 at the Habitat for Humanity International Conference in New Orleans.

That doesn't surprise Hall's friends and colleagues as most have seen his loyalty, generosity and commitment to helping others.

"He's awesome — I wish the world was filled with Irving Halls," says Kevin Cronk, executive director of the Greater Albuquerque Habitat for Humanity, which has some 1,000 local volunteers.

"I think his greatest accomplishment in Albuquerque is that he helps keep us focused," Cronk says. "His legacy is to those families he helps build homes for because every house we build does break the cycle of poverty for those families."

Cronk calls Hall the "ultimate volunteer" — a man who stepped forward to help Habitat raise money on a regular basis by donating the seed money to help the organization open the Albuquerque ReStore, at

204 San Mateo SE, that sells reusable construction materials.

“Today, the ReStore generates about half a million dollars a year in resales for Habitat,” Cronk says. “You see, Irv lives and breathes Habitat, and I would venture to say he’s had a bigger impact on the world since he retired from Sandia — not just with Habitat locally but with Habitat in Guatemala.”

Hall says he and his wife, Lois, have been to Guatemala twice — in December 2005 and December 2007. He added they are sponsoring the construction of 100 houses in Guatemala and their goal is to help build 250 by 2009. Funds are being collected from friends and others through a matching fund project.

“Guatemala is a place that is taken by a great depth of poverty,” Cronk says. “And Irv is doing what he can to help. He is the most caring, giving, generous individual I’ve ever met. He’s got a big heart for the people he builds homes for, and he works well with all he’s in contact with. Plus, he’s very modest about his accomplishments, which are significant.”

Hall, who along with his wife has worked on some 40 Habitat homes in Albuquerque, was selected to represent the volunteer community of New Mexico and meet President Bush during one of the president’s recent visits to Albuquerque.

### **Around the world**

The couple also often participates in the Jimmy Carter Work Projects, which are intense, internationally recognized Habitat for Humanity Blitz Builds in which the former president works as a volunteer. The recently renamed Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project was created to raise awareness about affordable housing and help construct homes.

The Halls have participated in Jimmy Carter Work Projects in South Africa, South Korea, Philippines, Mexico, Los Angeles and a couple of times in Georgia.

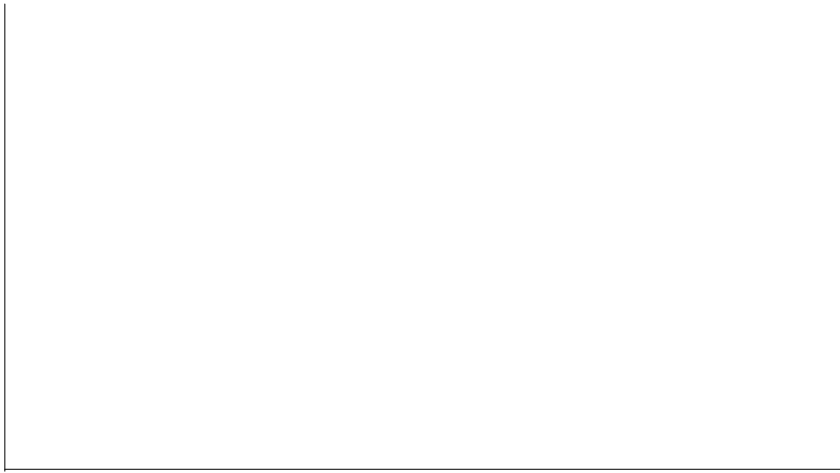
Hall says a person who thinks about others and does something to improve their lives makes a good volunteer.

“We are all selfish by human nature — you don’t have to teach a child to be selfish — but getting outside ourselves helps us and others,” he says. “The statement, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive,’ really is true.”

Dan Sheldon, a former Sandia colleague of Hall’s, says his friend is just that: unselfish.

“He works so hard and has money for himself but won’t spend it on himself,” he says. “He wears farm clothes and drives old cars until they stop running. He has no problem, however, spending it on others. He’s just an extremely generous guy.”





**COURTESY IRVING HALL** Irving Hall, left, volunteered in November with former President Jimmy Carter and former first lady Rosalynn Carter at the 2007 Jimmy Carter Work Project in Los Angeles. These housebuilding events also are designed to raise awareness about affordable housing.