

Abstract Submitted
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Scientists in Gray Flannel Suits: Ernest Lawrence and the Development of Color Television JOSHUA ROEBKE, Research Associate, Institute for Historical Studies, UT Austin — Physicists and historians typically remember Ernest Lawrence for one of two activities, his development of the cyclotron or his advocacy for atomic weapons. The two labs that he established in support of such endeavors are still named after him in California: Lawrence Berkeley and Lawrence Livermore. But there was a third accomplishment for which Lawrence believed he would always be remembered: the development of color television. In 1950, he sold a half stake of his company, Chromatic Television Laboratories, to Paramount Pictures for \$1 million. That decade, Lawrence and his employees, especially Luis Alvarez and Edwin McMillan, designed cathode-ray tubes for color televisions while they championed hydrogen bombs. Although their commitment to the second was attributed to patriotism and their interest in the first was dismissed as a hobby, it is not so easy to disentangle their motives. Color screens were needed for more than variety shows and sitcoms; they displayed incoming missiles in vivid color. No company has ever been led by three future Nobel Laureates, yet Chromatic Television Laboratories was a failure. Even so, Lawrence had a profound influence on the development of color television, and I will tell this story for the first time.

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