

From the Director

Beauty and Utility

The poet Robert Frost once remarked that Iowa's dark soil looks good enough to eat as it is, without going to the bother of putting it through vegetables; and if you look at some of the photographs in this issue of *Inquiry*, you will see that the Iowa skies can be stunningly beautiful, too. Robert Frost notwithstanding, the beautiful Iowa soil is really at its best when it is used to grow vegetables like corn and beans and that sky, while beautiful to look at, produces a wonderful crop of wind energy.

Like the soil and the Iowa sky at sunrise, great science often has a dual nature. It can be, and possibly even needs to be, beautiful in its own right, as noted by Marie Curie, Paul Dirac, and many others. Especially for the science that we do in Iowa at the Ames Laboratory, though, there is an aspect of usefulness that goes with the beauty. The Ames Laboratory has a consistently outstanding record of discovering new science and finding ways to apply it for the economic and ecological benefit of humankind.

In this issue, we highlight some Ames Laboratory projects that focus on applying world-class science to the problems of providing clean, plentiful and inexpensive energy to the world. The needs are great in every area of energy generation, storage, transmission and conversion. Read on to see a few of the things that are being done to address those issues here in the middle of Iowa.



Alex King, Director

