

Scientists are People, Too!

by Marsha Freeman

Fun in Fusion Research
John Sheffield
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Fusion energy research is serious business. Generally, it is a life-long commitment, involving long hours and weekends, along with optimism and dogged determination. Recently, fusion research has been increasingly in the news, as construction moves forward on the International Tokamak Experimental Reactor (ITER) in France, which is being designed and built by nations which together encompass most of the world's population. As an inexhaustible source of power, using seawater-derived fuel which is universally available, fusion energy is recognized as an urgent requirement for the future.

John Sheffield, who has been involved in fusion energy research for more than 50 years, has seen it all, including the foibles, missteps, failed experiments, and innovations that

a global scientific research effort create. He has participated in and made contributions to both the theoretical and experimental aspects of plasma science and fusion research. But most important for this book, he has clearly had a keen eye, and an acute memory, for the very human and "fun" side of such serious work.

There is enough detail explaining fusion, and describing the history and variety of experiments over the last half century, to inform the new reader. But the enjoyment of Sheffield's book is immediately obvious from the cover photograph. Here, we have a fusion tokamak-shaped cake, created to celebrate the Department of Energy's approval of a fusion experiment at the University of Texas. The 24 sponge cakes, covered in burnt-orange frosting, represent the torus containing the fusion plasma, which is surrounded by a cardboard set of toroidal magnets. What happened to this artistic creation in the hot Sun, is one of the entertaining tales of this book.



After more than 50 years of research in fusion, Dr. Sheffield remains optimistic that although there are still challenges ahead, he states, "I remain convinced that fusion energy will be realized for the benefit of the world."



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