BY ALEXIS DAVID

CHIEN-SHIUNG WU

FIRST LADY OF PHYSICS

CHAPTER 1

Who Was Chien-Shiung Wu?

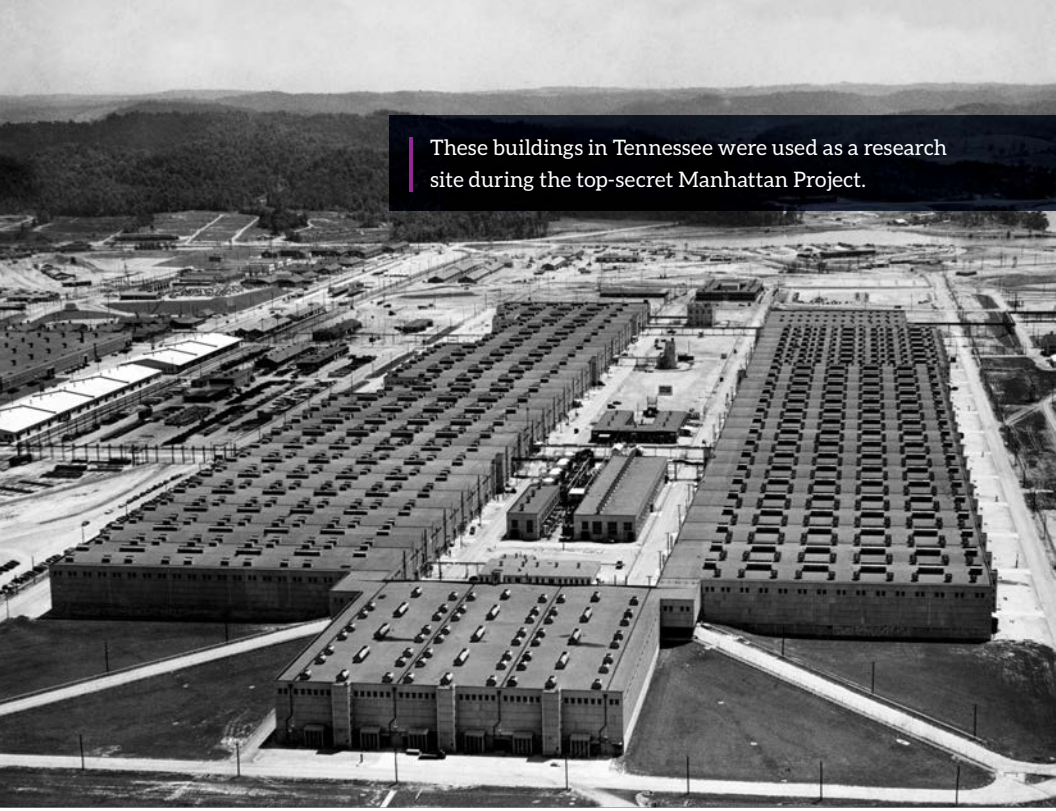
Most people have heard of Albert Einstein. Many know of Marie Curie. Both scientists won the Nobel Prize. But the First Lady of Physics is less known. Her name is Chien-Shiung Wu. Some also call her the Queen of **Nuclear** Research.

Wu was a physicist. She was born in China. As a young woman, she came to America. That was in 1936. Being a Chinese woman in science was not easy. At the time, discrimination was an issue. Some Americans treated Asian people differently because of their race. Science also favored men. It was hard for women to get jobs. But Wu didn't give up. She became a physics professor.

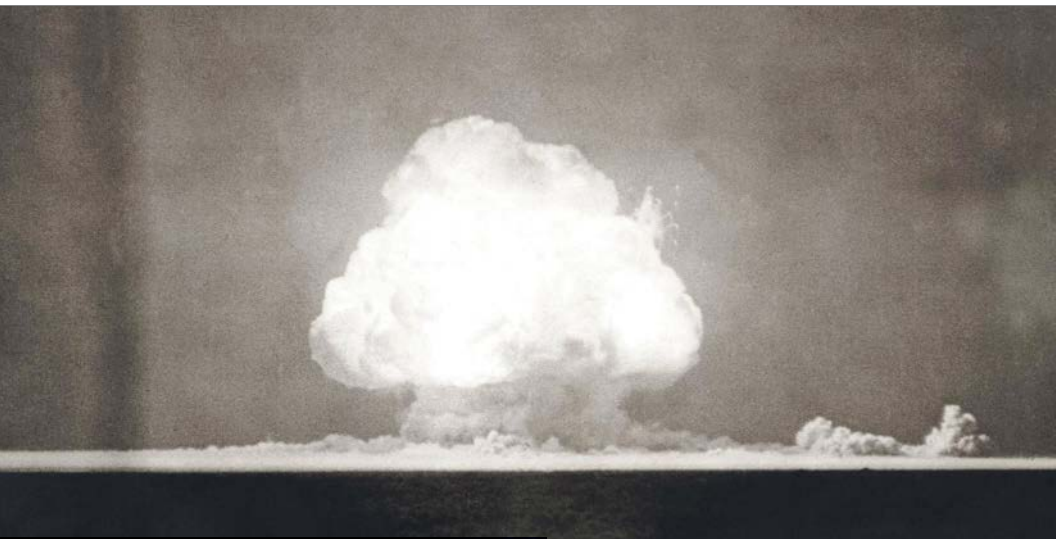
Physics is a science. It is the study of matter and energy. Physicists watch how **atoms** act. Then they write rules. These describe how forces work.

In 1941, the U.S. entered World War II. The government had a secret plan. It was called the Manhattan Project. Physicists were needed to work on the plan. Wu joined the project in 1944.

The goal was to make an **atomic** bomb. These use **uranium**. Wu found a way to **enrich** it. This made more fuel for the bomb. The new weapon worked. It helped end the war.



These buildings in Tennessee were used as a research site during the top-secret Manhattan Project.



In 1945, Manhattan Project scientists tested an atomic bomb in New Mexico.

Physicists C.N. Yang (left) and T.D. Lee worked with Chien-Shiung Wu to test the parity rule.

Wu spent most of her career working at Columbia University.

After the war, Wu changed the field of physics. For many years, scientists believed in the parity rule. Wu and two male scientists tested it. They were T.D. Lee and C.N. Yang. Their test proved that the rule was false.

Lee and Yang won the Nobel Prize for this. Wu was overlooked. Many thought it was because she was a woman. But this didn't stop her.

Human rights were important to Wu. STEM education was too. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math. Wu wanted girls to love science as much as she did. This led her to fight for gender **equality**. She hoped to make the path smoother for girls who followed her.

"There is only one thing worse than coming home from the lab to a sink full of dirty dishes," Wu once said. "And that is not going to the lab at all!"

In the late 1800s, many Chinese immigrants worked for railroad companies.