

## ***Our International Friendship Bell – a unique Oak Ridge symbol***

**(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on May 6, 2008)**

This series of articles draws heavily on the research work of Edward (Ted) Lollis. It is intended to highlight some aspects of our history that Ted has helped me to better understand. Ted is a relative newcomer to East Tennessee and has taken a particular interest in Oak Ridge.

He is well traveled having served our government as a former US Army officer and retired Foreign Service Officer. Ted is a geologist by training, a geographic analyst and a researcher extraordinaire who has studied at Yale, Princeton, MIT, the University of Wisconsin (Madison), and the University of Melbourne (Australia).

He is currently researching monuments worldwide and has presented information on Oak Ridge monuments to the Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning, the Oak Ridge Heritage & Preservation Association, the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club and others. He is scheduled to present a topic on world monuments in Japan in the near future.

Others have been helpful as well. My friend, Bill Wilcox, as is his usual response to my requests for information, has given me primary source information that documents explicit details regarding the bell that I could not get otherwise. Bill is truly THE Oak Ridge City Historian!

Shigeko Uppuluri, humble and self effacing, is THE key individual who accomplished the feat. As Pat Postma said to me, "without Shigeko there would be no bell." I am also talking to others as I can get in touch with them – several individuals and groups played key roles.

As always, I welcome input and comments on the bell's history. Oak Ridgers are a wealth of information and without you readers, *Historically Speaking* would not be nearly so effective in telling our historical story. So, let me hear from you if you have insight that I might otherwise miss. Research for *Historically Speaking* is a very rewarding experience as I get to meet such great people!

Okay, now let's get on with the story of our bell. As is the case with many Oak Ridge icons, it has a great history!

In the course of Emily Mitchell's recent trip to Hiroshima, that I was privileged to bring to you through the *Historically Speaking* column, she encountered a bell similar to our International Friendship Bell. That got me to thinking about our bell. I knew little of its history. In the 1980's and early 1990's Fanny and I were busy raising our family and our focus was on that part of our lives and not much else.

So, after the Emily Mitchell articles, with my usual inquisitiveness and naivety, I began to photograph the bell and to ask questions about it. You are now about to experience the results of my research into how Oak Ridge happened to have such a bell and what it means to us and to the world. My perspective may be different than yours, so please stay with me while I explain what I have learned about OUR bell.

The Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell, located overlooking the conflux of two streams, is a beautiful example of the combined influences of east and west cultures. As I have talked with several individuals, I have found it has multiple meanings to various people. Much as Oak Ridge itself with its Manhattan Project beginnings is perceived differently by many of our citizens and visitors.

Even our greatest attempts at defining Oak Ridge's history fall far short of creating a consistent understanding. Each citizen and each visitor insists on forming their own conclusions regarding Oak Ridge's contributions to the world. Frustrating as that is to us who live here, it is a fact we must accept.

Even those people of the world who have never visited Oak Ridge and who likely will never visit Oak Ridge have a perception of our city and what has happened here. Their view of Oak Ridge comes not just from our historic beginning during the Manhattan Project but in what has happened here during the ensuing years.

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We must understand that we do not control their perception, it is the result of the far reaching impact of things that are done at Oak Ridge. Much of the basic science research and application of those results are felt the world over.

Nowhere else is there such worldwide impact from so small a community as Oak Ridge and that contribution continues to grow exponentially. The Spallation Neutron Source is but the latest in a long line of special world changing initiatives originating in Oak Ridge.

Oak Ridge is a city of the world, located in East Tennessee for sure, but far from being limited to a locale, Oak Ridge is a unique phenomenon that was created out of war and continues to contribute outstanding science benefiting the world at large.

Yes, our legacy and origin comes from war, yet, Oak Ridge is far more than that. Oak Ridge is growing in scientific research and development that has worldwide significance. Oak Ridge is truly, in many ways, an international city.

Our International Friendship Bell belongs in the midst of our city. Its presence contributes to Oak Ridge's special place on the world scene. Oak Ridge is an unusual, unique and highly respected place where science continues to make history.

Almost anywhere one travels throughout the world, Oak Ridge is a known place. We are not our own. We are not able to isolate ourselves from the world. We are the world's city! All peoples of the earth had their lives changed on August 6, 1945. When the uranium 235 separated at Y-12 in Oak Ridge exploded in the air over Hiroshima, Japan, the world changed forever. At that moment, Oak Ridge became a part of the history of every place in the world.

The Trinity test explosion began the atomic age. The Hiroshima explosion was the first use of the atomic age's multifaceted potential to take lives, albeit done with the aim and determination to ultimately save even more lives, which it ultimately did.

This tremendously important series of events that ushered in the atomic age is truly a case of the genie being out of the bottle forever. There is no going back to a time when atomic energy was not available. People have reacted to this fact in many ways.

Dr. Alvin Weinberg stated in a 1995 interview in his home, "I wrote about what I call the sanctification of Hiroshima. People ask, 'Was the Hiroshima bomb justified?' Well, it was justified on two accounts. I believe that Hiroshima really did end World War II, that it saved many lives. I was a signer of several petitions urging that the bomb not be dropped on Japan, just demonstrated by blowing up a tower in the desert. I've come to decide that dropping the bomb actually saved lives."

In that same interview, he continued by saying, "The other justification is that we will have to live with bombs for the rest of time. Is there some way we can invest in the bomb some 'aura of forbiddenness' so people won't use it again? We should look upon an event such as Hiroshima as one to be remembered 1,000 years from now because it killed a lot of people like the Holocaust in Germany, which is passing into the Jewish tradition as a religious tradition."

Dr. Weinberg continued, "This bronze bell ... will last 1000 years. Years from now, people seeing the Oak Ridge bell will have forgotten the controversy and remember the lesson of Hiroshima--we have to live with the bomb, but we must avoid using it. Through sanctification of Hiroshima, we will establish a tradition of non-use."

The Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell held a special meaning for Dr. Alvin Weinberg. It has held special meaning for many Oak Ridgers – some who are no longer with us. Some who still are here now remember the struggle required to get to where we are with regard to the heritage of the bell. For them the bell still holds very special and personal meaning.

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The idea of a friendship bell began as many other such ideas. It sprang from something else. Originally the idea Ram and Shigeo Uppuluri had wanted to promote was to build a Japanese style park somewhere in Oak Ridge.

Venkata Ramamohana (Ram) Uppuluri, originally from India, and Shigeo Yoshino Uppuluri, originally from Japan, came to Oak Ridge in 1963. They quickly adopted Oak Ridge as their home but recalled fondly memories of their homelands and the symbols they saw there as youths.

They continued to travel extensively and considered various international symbols that might add to Oak Ridge's worldwide connections. There were many international visitors to Oak Ridge and many who had adopted Oak Ridge as home. Even then Oak Ridge was known worldwide and was, without realizing it - I believe, an international city.

One suggestion Ram made to Shigeo while they were on a trip to Japan was to bring a huge bell from Japan to Oak Ridge. He included this thought in his "Proposal to Enhance Tourism in Tennessee" in 1987. From this proposal and their enthusiasm in promoting it grew an expanded idea of a huge walled park with the bell at its center surrounded by stone lanterns and even tame animals included in the design.

Prior to this idea and maybe even something that encouraged Ram in his thinking regarding tourism was a "Growth and Development Conference" held in Oak Ridge on April 16, 1983. United States Representative Marilyn Lloyd, concerned that Oak Ridge had lost population in the previous decade, held this conference in hopes of stimulating growth.

A "Committee of 50" was formed and charged to create programs to bring growth and development to Oak Ridge and to celebrate the city's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1992-1993. This committee is still fondly recalled by many as having been a key moving force in generating interest in the growth and development of Oak Ridge.

Members still pride themselves in the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm for our city created by this group. Ultimately, the Friendship Bell was one of the results of this committee's efforts.

One program created by the committee was Leadership Oak Ridge, a program that continues to be a premiere program of its kind in Tennessee and is celebrating its 25th year of successful existence in 2008. Carol Smallridge has been the excellent executive director of this program for most of its history.

Ram and Shigeo Uppuluri presented their idea for a "friendship bell" to the committee. Dr. Joe Tittle, (a pleasant gentleman I met as a result of this research and who gave me a lapel pin from the Committee of 50), recommended that the Committee of 50 sponsor a contest for an appropriate 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial. Dr. Tittle later chaired the birthday committee that, among other things regarding the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, continued to pursue an appropriate memorial.

Formal proposals were invited by Dr. Tittle and his birthday committee on January 26, 1990. What was requested was a "monument to become a visible, continuing symbol of the celebration theme: 'Born of War, Living for Peace, Growing through Science.'" Wow, don't you like that theme!!! Sounds like something we might want to revive as it still rings true to me.

Next week we will continue to learn about the origins of our Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell.

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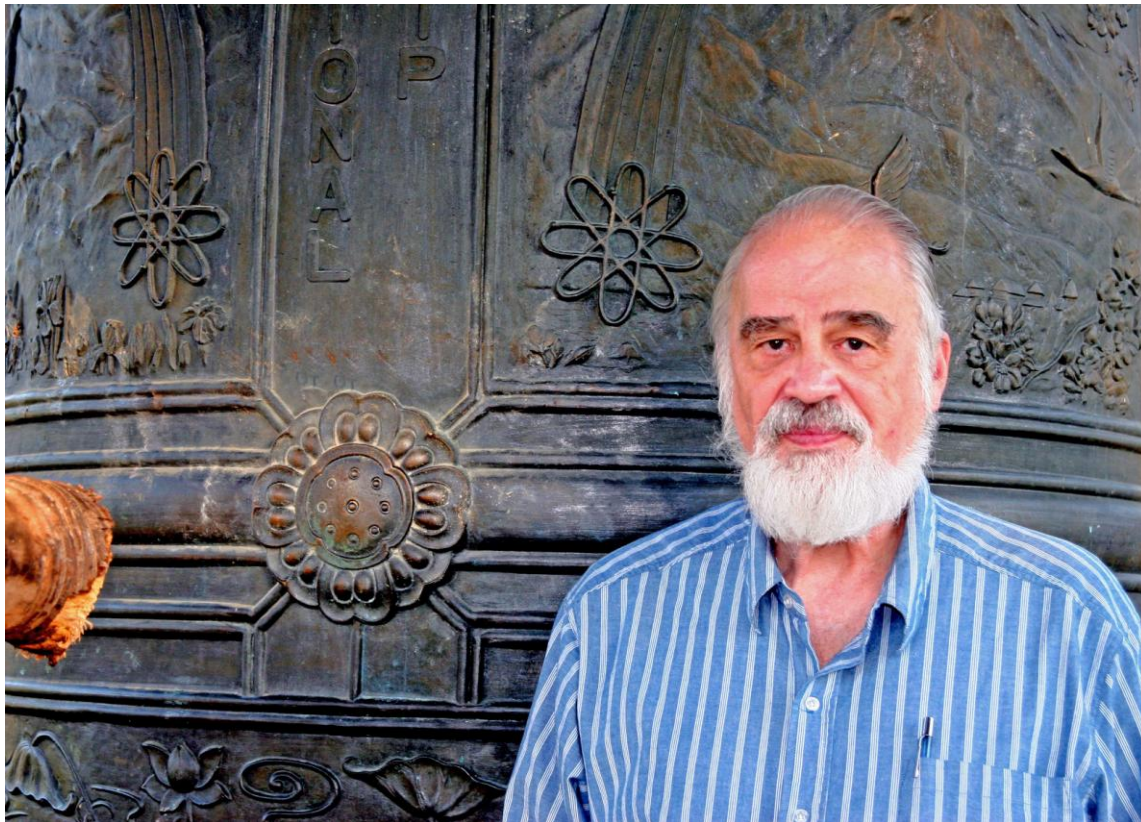


Shigeko Uppuluri

Standing with the bell that is so important to her, said that her late husband Ram would enjoy the children ringing the bell



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Ted Lollis has done extensive research on the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell's history