

Some GREAT things that happened in Oak Ridge in 2011! Part 3

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on January 31, 2012)

As I am sure you know, this series of *Historically Speaking* featuring some of the positive accomplishments in Oak Ridge during 2011 resulted from Gordon Fee's remark on our propensity for negative stories and a perceived lack of focus on the positive. His emphasis was on the accomplishments of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Y-12 National Security Complex, Oak Ridge Associated Universities and other major entities in our midst.

And those accomplishments are certainly noteworthy and I intend to cover them. Yet, there are many other things that have been a part of the positive accomplishments in 2011 that I want to recognize as well. Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this series by sending me input.

When I first sent out an email asking for input on accomplishments, I included a "seed list" to get folks thinking. Here are some of them in a bit more detail.

As a part of the Preserve America Program of the National Park Service, new historical doorway markers were added to eight of the historic structures in our city. They are:

1. Highland View Elementary School – now the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge
2. Midtown Community Center
3. Jefferson Shopping Center
4. Guest House – now Alexander Inn
5. Chapel on the Hill
6. Outer Drive Shopping Center – now Outer Drive Church
7. Oak Ridge Post Office – law offices
8. Tennessee Eastman Employment Office – Tunnell Building

Also included in the Preserve America grant was funding for four "Birth of the City" monuments located at the front entrance of the municipal building. The individual monuments cite the actions taken to transform the Citizenry, the Housing, the Education and Health and the Municipal Services.

The recommendation by the National Park Service that Oak Ridge be included as one of three sites in a Manhattan Project National Historical Park along with Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford, Washington was a notable achievement. While there is still a lot of work to do here, just being included was a tremendous accomplishment that required all elements of the city to pull together.

I will never forget the overwhelming support from every single organization I asked to write in support of including Oak Ridge in the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. All of you came through in spades!

When Oak Ridge pulls together, we are strong...beyond belief! Today, I was fortunate enough to be at the Oak Ridge Rotary Club meeting when Stan Mitchell spoke on "A 2011 review: A 2012 Preview." If you know Stan, you know that if he is anything, he is passionate about Oak Ridge.

It was delightful to hear him brag unashamedly about our City Manager, Mark Watson. It was good to hear him break the news that the Oak Ridge Mall is for sale! WOW, what a potential accomplishment for 2012 if that place can be sold to a developer who will make positive change there.

While Stan spoke in positive terms about our city, he also shamed us on some key items, such as allowing the Alexander Inn to deteriorate to the point of being an eyesore. He is right. We should be ashamed.

His overall message was that he is high on Oak Ridge and that is why he is staying here and keeping his business here. Good for him!

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He credited Tom Hill with helping him when he was working for The Oak Ridger and mentoring him as he started his new business. Tom was in the audience.

He quoted Tom Tuck, also in the audience, on Leadership. First a leader must communicate the vision. Second a leader must lead in planning action (of course Stan had to point out that Oak Ridgers are GREAT at this step...so great at it that often that is ALLWE DO, plan, plan and plan again) and finally, he said that Tom had told him that a leader had to take action.

Tom had used the analogy, in talking to Stan, of being on an island in the river. Tom said, "If you are going to get off the island and reach the far shore, you MUST get in the water." Stan said it is time for Oak Ridge to "get into the water" and not plan forever.

I am proud we have Stan in our midst. We need to attract more young businesspersons to Oak Ridge. We MUST listen to the younger folks...they ARE our future!

Now, let's move on to other significant accomplishments in 2011. First the Oak Ridge Convention and Visitors Bureau accomplishments as provided by Nicky Reynolds.

"The Oak Ridge Convention and Visitors Bureau partnered with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and regional destinations to create a new driving tour called the Top Secret Trail. The trail will officially launch this spring.

"In 2011, the Oak Ridge Convention & Visitors Bureau won the Gold V-Award from the Volunteer Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America for their efforts in promoting the Secret City Festival.

"The Secret City Festival won the Silver Kaleidoscope Award for Best Festival of the Year by the Southeast Festivals & Events Association. In addition, the festival committee nominated the Oak Ridge Chapter of Credit Unions for best sponsor, and they brought home the silver.

"The Secret City Festival was also awarded the Silver Kaleidoscope Award for Best Green Component, the silver for the best T-Shirt, and the bronze for best volunteer, Jane Miller. The festival took gold for Best Other Merchandise for their reusable shopping bag and silver for best event within an event for the Tours of the Y-12 Pilot Plant.

"In addition, the Secret City Festival also won a prestigious Silver Pinnacle Award from the International Festivals & Events Association for Best Event (within an existing event) for the Tours of the Y-12 Pilot Plant.

"The Oak Ridge Rowing Association conducted several successful regattas in 2011.

"The Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Guest House was completed in 2011, opening up 60 rooms on the reservation for researchers to use when conducting experiments at the SNS.

"Other great news on the tourism front includes new board members being named to the CVB Board of Directors; ground being broken for the new Holiday Inn Express; and renovations and upgrades beginning on two of our existing hotels. In addition, the ORCVB now has a new contract with the City of Oak Ridge, which gives us a broader vision and better-defined goals and objectives.

Now we move to the larger organizations. First the Oak Ridge Associated Universities as submitted by Wendy West.

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"As the people of Japan were stunned by an unprecedented earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis, ORAU prepared to connect more than 60 years of expertise with their urgent need halfway around the world. From radiation emergency management to public and environmental health services, ORAU's capabilities provided comprehensive and seamless support to the U.S. response effort for the citizens and government of Japan.

"ORAU experts supported senior Department of Energy officials on the ground in Japan and provided 24 hour seven day assistance back home with DOE's Nuclear Incident Team. Our physicians and staff advised on hundreds of requests for information regarding potential health hazards; consulted with federal officials to plan for the possibility of radiation emergency medical treatment in Japan; and provided pocket guides on *The Medical Aspects of Radiation Incidents* to medical personnel there and in the United States.

"At the same time, ORAU assisted the Centers for Disease Control in hosting a national conference focused on public health and radiation emergency preparedness and also disseminated information to the U.S. public to allay fears of atmospheric exposures. In the months following the crisis, ORAU experts also responded quickly to characterize possible contamination of maritime assets off the coast of Japan that likely traveled through the radioactive plume emanating from the Daiichi nuclear power plant.

"Expanding the nation's pool of talent to ensure global competitiveness in science and technology is a significant priority for the U.S. Supporting more than 22 state and federal agencies in this endeavor, ORAU has 65 years of experience in science education. We administer internship, scholarship, and fellowship programs for students, faculty and postdoctoral researchers, such as University of Tennessee undergraduate Tyler Pannell, a participant in the U.S. Department of Energy- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy research program. Tyler explored ways to use food waste to develop microbial fuel cells aimed at helping industry re-use its wastewater. In 2011, 96% of these research participants held program appointments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields.

"ORAU also promotes the STEM education of K-12 students and teachers, through programs such as ORAU's Extreme Classroom Makeover, DOE's Tennessee and National Science Bowls, summer science academies with the ARC, and the Siemens Teachers as Researchers program to name a few. In 2011, participation in ORAU-administered programs totaled 7,700 with participants representing every state in the nation. Expenditures for these programs and other educational initiatives managed by ORAU totaled \$200 million.

"For the 2011 Extreme Classroom Makeover, ORAU named Herman Sutton, Jr., a fifth grade math teacher at Green Magnet Math and Science Academy in Knoxville, Tenn., the grand prize winner. Sutton's winning video highlighted one child's transformation from a mediocre math student to a 'math hero.' As grand-prize winner, Sutton received a \$25,000 grant to use toward the purchase of technology enhancements for his classroom/math laboratory, which is used by estimated 300 students. His grant purchases included Apple iPads, laptops and a desktop, interactive clickers and a new television.

"Stacy Honabach, a 5th grade math teacher at Northview Middle School in Sevier County, Tenn., was named first runner-up and received a \$20,000 grant created with \$12,500 in funds from ORAU and additional contributions from three local businesses contributing \$7,500 each. Fifth-grade North Middle School Science Teacher Kayla Canario received a \$5,000 grant to outfit her Loudon County, Tenn., classroom with technology, and Karla Fultz, a fifth grade teacher at A. L. Lotts Elementary School in Knoxville, received a \$1,000 grant after she became the first-ever winner of the Viewers' Choice award. This was ORAU's third consecutive year to sponsor the Extreme Classroom Makeover.

"In its 10th consecutive year, the 2011 ORAU Education Grants program provided \$36,000 in cash awards to 23 teachers from 13 area schools for educational projects, materials and other needs not

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funded by the local school systems. Since 2002, ORAU has provided more than \$275,000 to schools in our community for projects that complement ORAU's mission of enriching science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs.

"Throughout FY11, ORAU applied both specialized techniques and extensive knowledge of industry tools and technologies to address various environmental project challenges. For DOE, ORAU characterized the nature, extent and specific locations of radiological and chemical contamination within its 2.8-million-square-foot legacy facility, K-33 in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where uranium enrichment had once taken place.

"For a portion of this work, the project team developed software that enabled off-the-shelf land survey technology to communicate with a standard radiation rate meter to map the contamination in 3D. Team members also used a technique called waste lot profiling on more than 164,000 tons of hazardous material from K-33 to characterize the content and help determine proper disposition, which helped save project costs and schedule.

"Additionally, ORAU incorporated x-ray fluorescence technology, in the form of a handheld device, to analyze more than 900 individual soil or other measurements detailing the nature and extent of mercury contamination at the former lithium enrichment facility, 81-10, at the Y-12 National Security Complex.

"In addition, DOE is undergoing a multi-year effort to substantially reduce its 33,700-acre National Priorities List footprint within the Oak Ridge Reservation. The ultimate goal is to reduce it to less than half its current size and give DOE the ability to repurpose the land for industrial and other uses in the community.

"DOE sought ORAU's expertise in environmental characterization to collect soil, sediment, groundwater and surface water samples and analyze them for metals, semi-volatile and volatile organic compounds, pesticides, PCBs and radionuclides. In 2011, ORAU completed assessment of all 22,000 acres and report development and submittal is in process. This work will continue into 2012

"Leveraging more than 30 years of technical expertise in epidemiology, industrial hygiene, health physics, record and data management, and system design, ORAU has established a proven track record as a comprehensive source for addressing worker health needs.

"In FY 11, work expanded in two key areas: growing its databases to support worker health records, which tripled in number to approximately 26.5 million this year, and developing epidemiologic training courses, a new service requested by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The worker health records now cover more than 3.5 million de-identified, active and former workers from hundreds of DOE sites and NRC-licensed facilities around the country.

"Information in the databases has been used in academia for teaching, by other epidemiologists and researchers as reference material, and to validate other studies.

"For nearly a decade, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has contracted with ORAU to reconstruct the dose exposure histories of more than 30,000 DOE workers and contractors. This effort has helped to ensure that energy employees who may have radiation-related cancers are compensated. In 2011, ORAU and partners MJW Technical Services, Inc., and Dade Moeller successfully addressed nearly 5,000 complicated radiation dose reconstructions that previously had been unable to be resolved due to intricate technical issues associated with the historical operation of 300+ sites in the nation's nuclear weapons complex. The result was the ability to address the concerns of claimants who had been waiting to learn whether they would be compensated.

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"In FY11, ORAU was awarded an additional contract from NIOSH for industrial hygiene work including dose reconstruction for radiation, chemical and other exposures. Potential work from this contract could include data gathering and management, statistical analysis, and other investigative work related to occupational exposures.

Wow! What a magnificent list of accomplishments from ORAU. Thanks to Wendy and Pam Bonee for providing such detailed and precise descriptions of ORAU's accomplishments. We will look at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Y-12 National Security Complex accomplishments in the next installment in this series of *Historically Speaking*. Are you beginning to get the picture? The list of accomplishments for Oak Ridge is overwhelming.

Yet, it is to our advantage to figure out a way to convey the substance of what happens here routinely to the general public. I certainly do appreciate all of you who are attempting to help me do that through this newspaper column. Please keep your input coming!



In its third consecutive year, the ORAU Extreme Classroom Makeover was awarded to Mr. Herman Sutton, Jr., a fifth-grade math teacher at Green Magnet Math and Science Academy in Knoxville, Tenn. Pictured here with his students, Sutton was the grand prize winner, receiving \$25,000 to make over his classroom with the latest technology

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As part of the effort to support Japan after a devastating earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant crisis in March 2011, ORAU radiation experts provided radiation emergency management and public and environmental health services to the U.S. and Japan governments