

Our International Friendship Bell – a unique Oak Ridge symbol, part 3 ***The Oak Ridge Community Foundation***

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on June 17, 2008)

After allowing another short diversion, welcome back to the history of the International Friendship Bell. In the last installment, the bell was still a dream, but it was beginning to take on a life as a project. The Committee of 50 had selected it as one of two projects to pursue out of a total of six projects that had been recommended.

The 50th birthday celebration led by Carol Smallridge and Patty Loch (Shelton now) was successfully completed. The story of this celebration is yet to come when I interview the two of them and let them tell their story in *Historically Speaking*.

The Committee of 50 had disbanded but had left in place the Oak Ridge Community Foundation. As mentioned in the last article, the foundation informed the bell committee in January, 1992 that funds for the bell would have to be raised. Although efforts to raise funds had been ongoing, that began an even more earnest effort by many to seek private funds from various sources.

We will come back to the bell and how the fund raising actually took place, including the very personal donation by Alvin Weinberg, but first let's take a close look at the Oak Ridge Community Foundation as described to me after the first article on the bell published. Thanks again to all who are contacting me with additional information!

The following information on the origin of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation is provided by Chuck Coutant. Chuck was very much involved in the Committee of 50 and the Oak Ridge Community Foundation. I really do appreciate him for taking the time to write the e-mail from which I have pulled the following details:

Chuck recalls the original intent of the foundation as being another legacy of the 50th birthday celebration. Chuck felt it didn't work out exactly as planned, yet I find this foundation may well have been a bellwether early attempt among many successful fundraising efforts using local foundations. Oak Ridge may have benefitted far more from this early attempt than Chuck realizes.

The latest and most successful such effort being the Oak Ridge Public Schools Education Foundation that has succeeded in raising over \$8,000,000 in funds supporting the renovation of the Oak Ridge High School and is currently working on an endowment of \$4,000,000. The original community foundation may well have just set the community up for some highly successful follow up efforts.

As you can see, I have a slightly different perspective on the foundation that Chuck may not be able to see because he was so very close to the Oak Ridge Community Foundation and was personally involved in the attempt to make that a central source of funding for citywide efforts. That the idea spun off several other foundations and did not become THE central fund raising entity for all Oak Ridge efforts, is not necessarily a failure for the community.

Another most important contribution the foundation made was to publish *Oak Ridge: 1942-1992, A Commemorative Portrait* by Dick Smyser. This book is a valuable reference work that accurately portrays Oak Ridge at a place in time where it had grown from its roots of the Manhattan Project into a full-fledged city proudly standing among other much older cities in Tennessee.

Already, Oak Ridge was internationally known for much of its scientific and nuclear energy related work, but also as a culturally diverse center of commerce, recreation, education and just an all around good place to live. Dick captured that well and the Oak Ridge Community Foundation is to be commended for the forethought and dedication to history to produce this most historic publication.

Primarily, the Oak Ridge Community Foundation was Joe Tittle's idea initially and was embraced by the rest of the Committee of 50 for several reasons. It was felt that a foundation could be something more lasting as the Committee of 50 was intended to be a short-lived single purpose organization. It was felt

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that an Oak Ridge needed an organization that would accept donations from generous individuals and then use those funds to support worthwhile community activities.

The members of the Committee of 50 researched the idea and found that such organizations existed across the country, called community foundations. These foundations have general operating guidelines for accepting money, investing it as long-term endowments or short term holding, and then dispersing the money.

The Committee of 50 brought in some experts who advised them in setting up the Oak Ridge Community Foundation. They stressed not only the administrative details but the value of a foundation for bolstering community pride and awareness.

The Committee of 50 formed a Board of Directors made up mostly of those administering the birthday celebration. Joe Tittle was the President for a while and then Tom Hill, and most recently Boyd Carter served in that capacity.

To be successful, the foundation needed donated funds and it needed financial expertise in its management. The people with the vision had neither the skills nor volunteer time to pull it off. Then it came to the foundation's attention that there was an existing East Tennessee Community Foundation headquartered in Knoxville.

Tom Hill led the effort to become a part of the larger organization as they would allow the Oak Ridge Community Foundation to continue to operate but would bring resources to help manage the financial details. The Oak Ridge Community Foundation would keep their own board of directors, but the East Tennessee Community Foundation would manage the money except for selecting the recipients.

This seemed like it would work until a major Oak Ridge donor decided to donate a sizable amount to the East Tennessee Community Foundation directly instead of to the Oak Ridge Community Foundation. That was major disappointment for those individuals who were working hard to raise funds for Oak Ridge.

The foundation awarded an Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell Award for a number of years until the foundation ceased the practice in 2002. The award recipients have been:

1998 Kenneth Luckman

1999 Doan Phung

2000 Wanda Craven

2001 Shigeko Uppuluri

Boyd Carter, who served as the last President of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation told me of his pride in the work of the foundation to raise the funds for the International Friendship Bell. He spoke highly of the work of many people in support of the effort, but particularly he highlighted Herman Postma as the key individual who brought the project to completion in fine fashion.

He humbly recalled the dedication ceremony where he was chosen to dedicate the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell. That was obviously an important event for him as both a member of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation and as a minister at the United Church, Chapel on the Hill.

He is retired now, but has served our community for many years. I believe he must count the efforts to bring the International Friendship Bell to our community among the more memorable opportunities he has experienced over the years. I appreciate him taking the time to share his perspective with me on the history of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation and especially the details of its final chapter.

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When asked about the conclusion of the history of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation, Boyd said that he and John Haffey closed out the books and donated the remaining funds of \$10,000 to the Oak Ridge Public Schools Education Foundation in honor of Herman Postma. What a fitting way to conclude the life of a most worthy organization in Oak Ridge's history.

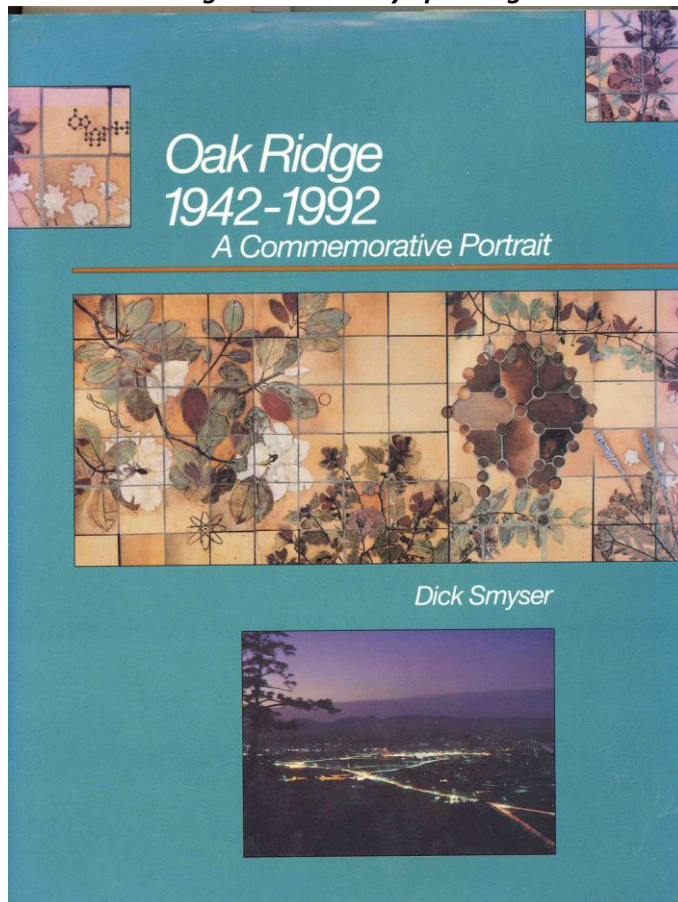
Still to come in this series we will look at the story of the fund raising efforts, the casting of the bell, the resulting controversy surrounding the bell, the gift to U. S. Senator Howard Baker Jr., the design and construction of the pavilion and finally the place the bell has come to hold in Oak Ridge's heritage. I hope you are enjoying the series as much as I am the research!



A collage of memorabilia from the Oak Ridge Community Foundation donated by Dr. Joe Tittle –
Official Seal and lapel pin

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Oak Ridge 1942 – 1992, A Commemorative Portrait -
by Dick Smyser -
another product of the Oak Ridge Community Foundation