

Lucille Whitman is the inspiration for *Bones of Betrayal's* "Beatrice"

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on February 10, 2009)

As many of you know, for you were at the *Books, Bones and The Bomb* book launch and book signing held at the Y-12 New Hope Center on February 3, 2009, there is a new novel out that is set in Oak Ridge. It is *Bones of Betrayal* by Jefferson Bass. Close to 200 people braved a cold winter night to listen to Dr. Bass talk about cremation, scientist Arpad Vass describe his new creation, the "sniffer," and Jon Jefferson talk about the impetus for the book. The audience also experienced a special print signing and auction.

The book launch was a huge success for Oak Ridge Heritage & Preservation Association as a fund raiser. Thanks also should be given to Knox Heritage Inc. for their assistance provided to ORHPA. Special thanks goes to George and Pam Dials for their enthusiastic support by purchasing the special print auctioned off at the event.

Everyone who attended the event seemed to enjoy the evening. Getting to meet not only the authors and Arpad Vass, but also to have their books signed by Ed Westcott, our award-winning photographer (without whose photographic images we historians would be lost and the world would not have visual images of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge), and a surprise celebrity in the form of Lucille Whitman, who happened to be the person depicted in a favorite image that Jon Jefferson used in his writing.

Bones of Betrayal is available now at the Books-A-Million book store and online at Amazon.com. If you were unable to get your book signed at the New Hope Center on Tuesday, come to Books-A-Million in Oak Ridge on Sunday afternoon, 2/8/09, at 2:00 PM and the authors will be there signing their books.

I think you will agree with me that *Bones of Betrayal* is a really good story that well promotes the important history that is Oak Ridge. From the earliest pages it is obvious that the writers know Oak Ridge well and understand our unique perspective on our history. The story rings true as it describes Oak Ridgers as well as the structures and features of Oak Ridge today and historically.

Jon has worked in Oak Ridge at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, so he has personal experience with our history. Dr. Bass has had many students from Oak Ridge over the years and being the inquisitive type person that he is has sought to learn about our history. He has even investigated deaths from around our area. So he too is familiar with Oak Ridge.

They were true to the events of the times and describe our city as it is today as well as how it was during the Manhattan Project. With one major exception of including in the story what is now known as "Katy's Kitchen" and was known as "Operation Dog" when built after the war. Jon said the intrigue of the guard tower and the underground storage facility for Uranium 235 was just too good a story element to fail to use. So, he brought it into the story as if it existed during the Manhattan Project era.

As you readers may also know, I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to work with the authors as the book has moved from concept to publication. In an early announcement at the 2008 Literacy Event sponsored by Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary and Altrusa International Oak Ridge Chapter, the book was promoted as a murder mystery set in modern Oak Ridge yet with ties to the Manhattan Project era as well.

It is that and much more. You will want to read it for yourself, but I am convinced you will find the story to be well written and something in which Oak Ridger's will take pride. The story being set in our community will bring well deserved attention to Oak Ridge and our history.

There are many interesting aspects to the writing of this novel. Most of these involve Jon Jefferson and his unique methods for generating creative sequences in the books. His ability to "live the story" himself, when practical and sometimes when not so practical adds to the authenticity of the story. For example, the sequence in the book that calls for folks to enter the storm drains system in Oak Ridge could only have been accurately described by Jon actually going in the storm sewer system personally.

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This he did on a number of occasions. He liked that experience so much that he continues to periodically explore our storm drainage system trying to locate a "special room" that is said to be there. He has not yet found it, but I got a call from a couple of people just this week who say they know where that "room" is located. One person mentions some historical "artwork" there. I am passing that information on to Jon!

Another most interesting aspect of the creative process is that Jon used an unusual image for his inspiration for "Beatrice," one of the main characters in the novel. The image started out as a mistake, but soon took on a life of its own.

When Jon was asked by the publisher, HarperCollins, to gather some historical photographs from Oak Ridge for them to consider using as illustrations in the book, of course the Ed Westcott images were what he wanted. I provided Jon some of the most recognized Ed Westcott's images for them to consider. He also had some other historic images that he included.

One of the images he wanted to send them was the image of the lone "Calutron Girl" reaching her arm to adjust the Calutron control panel. It is one of Ed's images we have included in the Ed Westcott Gallery in the Jack Case Center at Y-12. It is a strong visual image of a young lady sitting proudly on a wooden stool with a wonderful expression, an exceptional complexion, a slim and shapely figure in a one-piece outfit with several buttons on the side of her waist.

Something Jon did while setting up the digital images to send HarperCollins caused this one image to turn into a negative of the original. That image immediately jumped out at Jon and the more he looked at it the more intriguing it became. He has since told me that he felt the negative image had an eerie appearance that was most unusual. It held for him a haunting quality and kept coming back to him as he framed the main character in the book, Beatrice.

Just as Jon had found the image to be a central creative image for the story, HarperCollins felt it complimented the idea they wanted to convey as well. It became the theme image and it is printed as the very first image in the book becoming the "Part One" introductory image.

After the manuscript was completed and my historical review finished, Jon asked if I knew who that beautiful young lady was who was in the photograph. I did not. I believe this is the time when the publisher was choosing the images to include in the book.

It was not until we were discussing the book launch with Keith McDaniel and Nicky Reynolds that we began to have hope of identifying the lady in that haunting image. Keith said he thought he had interviewed the husband of the lady when completing the oral history interviews for the Secret City: The Oak Ridge Story – The War Years documentary film. He just could not remember the name.

Nicky went back to the office at the Oak Ridge Convention and Visitors Bureau and was telling the staff there the details of the book launch. She happened to mention the photograph of the young lady sitting at the Calutron. Susan Welch exclaimed "I know who that is...it is Lucille Whitman!"

Susan sent me an e-mail with all kinds of exclamation points included. She knew the identity of the lady in the picture and she was still alive! You can imagine my excitement. Remember I am the one who found five of the ladies still alive who are featured in the famous "Y-12 Shift Change" photograph that is a 20' by 50' mural at the Jack Case Center. When we celebrated the grand opening of that new building at Y-12 we invited them to be our honored guests. Ed Westcott and those five ladies autographed a print for us that is framed and on display beside that mural today.

Right away I called Jon to tell him the good news. He was excited to learn who the young lady was and even more excited to learn that she was still alive. Immediately he wondered if she would come to the book launch.

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Susan said she would be sure that Lucille was there. Lucille insisted that she was not really a Calutron Girl, rather she was an Eastman Kodak model at the time. Lucille did work at Y-12 later and is recalled by some who remember her as having a perfectly glowing complexion and someone who would turn heads when she walked by. She is still quite the attractive lady and really won over the audience at the book launch. She joined Dr. Bass, Jon and Arpad when they signed the books as did Ed Westcott. The folks who got their books autographed there got an extra three signatures to what others will get at book signings by the authors.

Jon liked that image so much that he had a 16" by 20" print made for his home and then had a brainstorm of asking Lucille and Ed to sign the print at the book launch and then auctioning it off with the proceeds going to support historic preservation in Oak Ridge. Both Ed and Lucille readily agreed and the most photographed event of the evening was the two of them signing that print. While we missed having Bear Stephenson to sell the print, we did manage to get it auctioned off for a good price.

So, *Bones of Betrayal*, the fourth *Body Farm* novel is set in Oak Ridge and is now being promoted by the authors going on radio and television, doing book signings all over and generally talking about Oak Ridge. Today, I took a copy of *Bones of Betrayal* to R.C. Goodman who writes for 27 newspapers across the nation and who will write a review.

What a great boost of recognition to an audience who might not even know about Oak Ridge and our unique history. Thanks to Jefferson Bass, Oak Ridge is now famous for its connection to the Body Farm!

Maybe Patricia Cornwell will want to write more about us than just the Electron Scanning Microscope at Y-12 that was included in her "Book of the Dead." We are included in the "best sellers" of mystery novels now! Who knows what will be next?



The haunting image that inspired the Beatrice character, Jon Jefferson, Lucille Whitman and Ed Westcott

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Ed Westcott and Lucille Whitman autograph the print of Lucille as a young Eastman Kodak model at the calutron controls as Jon Jefferson admires the historic occasion



Lucille Whitman and Susan Welch as Lucille autographs Susan's book