

# Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and Ed Westcott

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on August 17, 2010)

This Historically Speaking article will feature my friend Ed Westcott and the collection of his work on display at the Children's Museum. But first let me add a bit to last week's Sunday Punch article.

The model of the B-25J bomber was built by Dale Davis and donated by the Knoxville Scale Modelers Association. Bob Miles, who brought the model to the museum, has donated his collection of the National Aeronautical and Space Administration and other space related artifacts to the museum. There are plans to create a display of his artifacts and will produce a newspaper article describing his full contribution to the museum. I hope they allow me to publish that as a Historically Speaking column.

I received two phone calls when the Sunday Punch article was published. One was from John Clark who informed me he had some artifacts from the effort to purchase the Sunday Punch. He was one of the workers who donated their Saturday and Sunday pay for the purchase.

John was also closely associated with other aspects of the Sunday Punch story and is anxious to help me work on the follow up story about the other Sunday Punch replica that is a full blown B-25J aircraft. So, with John's help, I hope to bring you more of the Sunday Punch story.

Getting a phone call from John was not surprising as that often happens when he is aware of more details than I include in one of the Historically Speaking columns and I truly appreciate his help. However, the real surprise was the next phone call I received from Dot Smith.

Dot was also a worker at K-25 who donated her pay for those two weekend days to help purchase the Sunday Punch. She is 89 years old and recalls that event like it was yesterday. I wonder, are there any more of the K-25 workers who were there on that weekend? If you were a part of the original effort to purchase the Sunday Punch, please contact me and let me know.

What was so interesting about Dot's call was her multiple connections to the Sunday Punch. Not only did she help purchase the original Sunday Punch, she worked at the Boeing plant in Wichita Falls, Kansas, where the B-25J's were manufactured. She remembers the very first B-25J bomber that was built there and how large it was compared to the building in which it was built. She worked at Boeing before coming to K-25. More on the Sunday Punch later as I complete the necessary research.

Now to the Ed Westcott exhibit. This exhibit started as a reworking of a much older exhibit, according to Margaret Allard. She said, "The core of this exhibit was and still is the amazing photography of Ed Westcott who documented the daily life of Oak Ridgers during and after World War II."

Margaret continued, "Our most prized object in this exhibit is Ed's original Graflex Speed Graphic camera which he donated to the museum many years ago. A whole wall is dedicated to the life of Ed from an early childhood photo to the present."

"We tell the story of Oak Ridge through Ed's photographs along with fascinating and sometimes rare artifacts from the Manhattan Project years." As you know the history of Oak Ridge is primarily known through Ed's photographs and the Children's Museum has many excellent examples of his exceptional photographic skill.

Ed Westcott, the official photographer of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, is a personal friend and one of my much admired local heroes. I am pleased to see his artistic photographic work exhibited in numerous places in Oak Ridge. We certainly owe Ed a great debt...without his photographs, we would

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not know nearly as much about our history! I believe his work is worthy of a New York City artistic exhibit and am working to see if that is possible. I also believe a documentary film of Ed's work is something we need to create. Stay tuned for progress in both these areas.

In addition to the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge's exhibit, Ed's photos are the primary artwork display at the Oak Ridge Methodist Medical Center's Secret City Café, the primary artwork at the Richard Chinn R&R Properties main offices in the Victory Centre, a key feature of the American Museum of Science and Energy's main lobby, featured in the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association's Midtown Community Center and finally the main artwork displayed at both the Y-12 New Hope Center and the Jack Case Center.

I am pleased to have helped Ryan Chinn document the captions for the artwork displayed in the R&R Properties main office lobby and also been involved in the decision to use Ed's art to decorate the new Y-12 buildings. We have designated the main lobby on the second floor of the Jack Case Center as the "Ed Westcott Gallery" because of the numerous Ed Westcott images hung on the walls there.

As the Y-12 Historian, I am presently creating a traveling exhibit of Ed's photographs to be displayed at the UT Howard Baker Center and the East Tennessee History Center. This exhibit will be kept moving around the Knoxville area to promote better understanding of the history of Oak Ridge through the excellent photography of Ed Westcott.

The Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association's August 12, 2010, highly successful program to commemorate the experiences of those who recall their reaction to the Victory in Japan celebration of August 14, 1945, was made more meaningful because of the excellent photographs of the "War Ends" by Ed Westcott. What a great event where those who actually lived during the celebration that was VJ Day. Some 25 plus individuals shared their personal experiences to a crowd that must have numbered close to 200.

Ed's photographs are more than a documentary of our history. They are an artistic statement by a rare and sensitive artist who has created an excellent body of work that can be more and more meaningful to future generations. Without Ed's photographs we would be hard pressed to comprehend the magnitude of the Manhattan Project, much less tell the stories of the workers who lived through the project.

You have to know that Ed has "arrived" when his "War Ends" photo is featured online in Wikipedia with this caption: "In a photo by Ed Westcott, residents of Oak Ridge, TN, fill Jackson Square to celebrate the surrender of Japan. Oak Ridge was one of the three main sites of the Manhattan Project, and was responsible (though those working there did not know it) for refining uranium to be shipped to Los Alamos to be fashioned into atomic bombs."

As you might guess, I am pleased to see Ed get recognition for his work regardless of the method used. I believe we take his work for granted way too often.

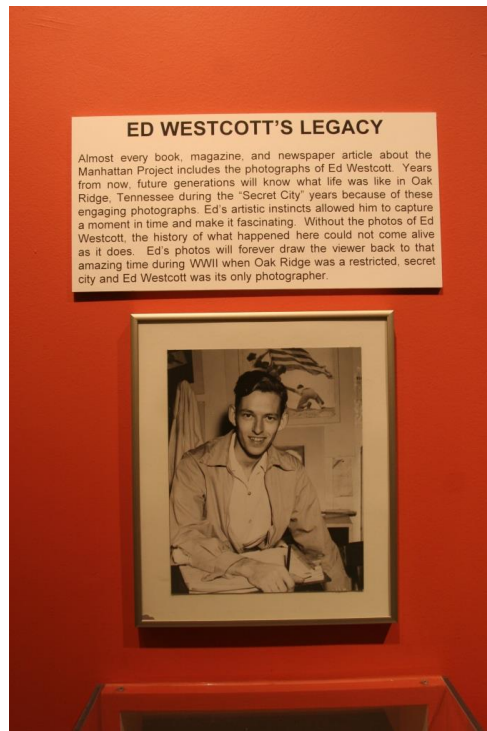
So, this wonderful exhibit of Ed Westcott images at the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge is a welcome and much deserved tribute to our very own hero, Ed Westcott. It is a beautiful exhibit, come see it!

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A wall of honor in the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge for our local hero Ed Westcott



A young photographer gets the chance of a lifetime and becomes THE official Manhattan Project photographer in Oak Ridge