

Oak Ridge's Bill Vaden, a Tennessee Technological University Outstanding Alumni

Lee Shannon sent me an email recommending this story about Bill Vaden. He also provided materials to support the research including a copy of the *HERALD-CITIZEN* newspaper article reporting on the event. I am pleased to pass on the news of the recent recognition given Vaden by the Tennessee Technological University as an Outstanding Alumni.

I am also pleased to take the opportunity to cite the accomplishments of William McGill Vaden, retired from the Department of Energy's Office of Scientific and Technical Information Center. His career is worthy of this recent recognition and more.

Also worthy of recognition is the more than 60 years that Bill has lived in Oak Ridge. His career has seen local, national and international opportunities come his way and he has excelled in all areas where he chose to endeavor.

The Tennessee Tech Outstanding Alumni Awards Ceremony reception and dinner was held at the Leslie Town Centre in Cookeville, TN, on February 4, 2011. While Bill knew of the award, but that the Shannon family planned to attend was successfully kept a secret from Bill by his family and friends until the evening of the event. He was suitably surprised, according to Lee, to see the family of his old friend and coworker, Robert L. Shannon in attendance.

One example of Vaden's accomplishments is the acclaim given him for his work in 1968 when he represented the United States as a delegate to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria. Here he helped design the international Nuclear Information System which became the principal indexing and announcement medium on nuclear science and technology for the United Nations. Here again we see a local Oak Ridger who has achieved successful worldwide impact.

Bill is the author of a history book, *The Oak Ridge Technical Information Center: A Trailblazer in Federal Documentation*, published in November, 1992. The book is available through Amazon.com and at the OSTI web site, <http://www.osti.gov/promo/doeosti11673.pdf>.

This comprehensive history by Bill covers the first 30 years of the amazing history of the local, but internationally known and highly respected OSTI, now housed on the east end of Oak Ridge in one of the early warehouses that has been modernized over the years. While the first 30 years saw tremendous publication of scientific information, looking back on that "pre-internet" era causes one to realize just how much information technology has advanced.

Bill saw the beginning of it all when he arrived in September, 1947, to begin work with the newly formed Atomic Energy Commission's Division of Technical Information. As he notes in his book, at the origin of the Oak Ridge Technical Information Center the staff and work space was first located in the Atomic Energy Commission's Administrative Office Building.

His first task was the editing and publishing of the Manhattan Engineer District's National Nuclear Energy Series. This 50 volume set contains much of the definitive information about the basic research and development of the Atomic Bomb and associated research.

By 1948 the newly forming information handling group was already producing substantial results and showing promise for even more effective distribution of information. The reporting arrangement had changed to Washington, DC, as it remains today. But moving into more spacious quarters did not come as quickly, but eventually did become necessary.

Bill's book also details the competition between various sites for handling their own publication of scientific information. There was substantial effort required to demonstrate the efficiency and elimination of duplicative efforts that would result from centralizing all publications in Oak Ridge.

Bill Vaden – TTU Outstanding Alumni
(as published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on July 19, 2011)

With the present computerized information age, OSTI contributes even more significantly to fulfill the Department of Energy's information needs. The entire world looks to OSTI for a large percentage of all scientific information related to DOE's research.

Bill's association with OSTI over the years has resulted in him being recognized numerous times for achievements. He served for 17 years as the Deputy Manager of the AEC Technical Information Center having been appointed to that position in 1961. He was also the acting manager of OSTI for one year.

He received the Meritorious Service Award from the Department of Energy in 1979. This was presented to him for leadership in the development work involving the DOE's information systems. In 1984, he was presented with a Distinguished Career Service Award by DOE.

The recognition provided Bill by the Tennessee Tech Alumni Association on February 4, 2011, was one of six individuals identified as "Outstanding Alumni." Bill's area of recognition was English in the Arts and Sciences. He graduated in 1947.

William McGill Vaden is among Oak Ridge's contributors to the advancement of education and understanding of the Nuclear Age. Without the skills and abilities of all areas of scientific development including the effective communication of technological advances, it would be much more difficult to take full advantage of the scientific developments.

Thanks to Lee Shannon, whose dad, Robert L. Shannon, was Director of OSTI from 1959 to 1978 and close friends with Bill, for sending the information to create this story. Thanks also to Lee for reminding us of one of the many people who live among us who are worthy of recognition. Often they are recognized by others outside our city and we in Oak Ridge fail to appreciate the value added to the community of scientific knowledge by their careers.

It was a pleasure to bring this story of Bill Vaden to you. It is my hope that he and Maxine continue to enjoy their retirement years and know that their lives have brought meaning to all who have known them.



Bill and Maxine Vaden at the Awards Ceremony

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The Outstanding Alumni Award presented to Bill