

Mysteries at the Museum comes to the American Museum of Science and Energy

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 19, 2012)

Several weeks ago, television producer Laura Marini, who was in Oak Ridge a couple of years ago filming another history related television program, returned to film a segment of *Mysteries at the Museum*. She again focused on Y-12's historic Calutrons, but this time she used the Calutron exhibit at the American Museum of Science and Energy's Oak Ridge room.

She also keyed on the famous legend of John Hendrix, the Prophet of Oak Ridge. I was pleased to be selected to assist on this program as well as her earlier episode of *History Detective*. The *Mysteries of the Museum* episode will be aired on the Travel Channel at 9:00 PM on Thursday, November 29, 2012.

This is not the first television producer to focus on our local legend. Channel 10 recently filmed a segment of their *Tennessee Truth or Tall Tails* here that featured the John Hendrix story, The Travel Channel (another crew featuring travel destinations) filmed a segment on Oak Ridge that included an interview segment at John Hendrix's gravesite, *Tennessee Postcards* out of Nashville filmed an interview some years ago, also at the John Hendrix grave site.

The value of these television programs seeking us out is that the programs reach a large national audience. Several years ago, Atlantic Productions filmed a one-hour program, *Secret Cities of the A-bomb*, here for The History Channel. To this day, I still get people asking me about that program regularly.

Most recently the Y-12 history mini-series, *A Nuclear Family*, was produced here for East Tennessee Public Broadcasting System. And, of course, there is the *Secret City: The War Years and Secret City: 1946 – 2006* documentary films produced by Keith McDaniel of Secret City Films.

It is this type of quality video production that helps get the word out about our "Secret City" to audiences outside our immediate community. That is good for Heritage Tourism. That is good for the Manhattan Project National Park initiative. That is good for Oak Ridge. We should look for every opportunity to feature our history and heritage to wider and wider audiences, using any method that presents itself, especially when it is a visual medium.

With the potential for a Manhattan Project National Historical Park to be authorized by Congress, we should see even more interest in our heritage and historical stories by both local and national television media. The important mission of telling our history will be better handled by the National Park Service, but that official park status may well still be years away.

Meanwhile, these opportunities that come our way are good to see. I am also proud to see interest in our history growing among our younger generations. Both Bill Wilcox, official Oak Ridge City Historian, and I are often asked to be interviewed for video documentary films featuring the history of Oak Ridge.

Recently a documentary producer from Sweden and a writer from Japan arranged for tours of the Y-12 History Center and interviews regarding Oak Ridge history. Both individuals were sent to the American Museum of Science and Energy, interviewed with Bill and I and were generally given what they asked for regarding Oak Ridge heritage and history.

Recently Chris Barrett called me to indicate he was doing a special feature of the Metro Pulse on Ed Westcott, our famous photographer. His article was published in the latest issue. Ed

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Westcott is my friend and his excellent photographs of the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge form the basis of ALL video productions with which I have been involved.

A selection of Ed Westcott images are hung on the walls of the New Hope Center and Jack Case Center at the Y-12 National Security Complex. They are also featured in the meeting room of the East Tennessee Economic Council at 1201 Oak Ridge Turnpike.

Most recently a selection of Ed Westcott images were the highlight of the *Secret City in the Tennessee Hills: From Dogpatch to Nuclear Power* symposium at the National Archives at Atlanta. Without Ed Westcott's images, we would be hard pressed to effectively tell our story! Thanks Ed!!!

All the above contributes to our efforts toward Heritage Tourism. The important heritage we in Oak Ridge have is one that can be a huge element in our overall strategy to move Oak Ridge forward and to capitalize on our heritage while at the same time creating an environment of exciting change and expansion such as what is planned for Jackson Square and The Guest House/Alexander Inn Senior Living Center.

These are exciting times to be in Oak Ridge, but then, that has been the case ever since November, 1942!

“Oak Ridge is more than a city in Tennessee, even more than a city in the United States. It is a world renown name that stands for American determination, love of freedom and scientific genius.” - Howard Baker Sr., U.S. Representative (as used by Jim Campbell, President of the East Tennessee Economic Council, in a recent presentation where he promoted Oak Ridge history at the *Secret City in the Tennessee Hills: From Dogpatch to Nuclear Power* symposium at the National Archives at Atlanta).



Filming of *Mysteries at the Museum* Travel Channel segment in the American Museum of Science and Energy – to be aired on November 29, 2012 - an example of the interest in the history of Oak Ridge by a major TV channel