

Fred Heddleson – artist, aeronautical engineer and friend

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 2, 2013)

Oak Ridge seems to be losing our elderly citizens at an alarmingly increasing pace. These are the individuals who lived Oak Ridge history. Some who were here from the very beginning are still with us, but they are becoming fewer and fewer in number. Others who came after the Manhattan Project years are passing away already!

We are losing our history...thank goodness for efforts such as the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History at the Oak Ridge Public Library, the American Museum of Science and Energy, the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge and the Y-12 History Center. But these efforts fall far short of adequate to preserve the unique and astounding history of Oak Ridge. We desperately need the Manhattan Project National Historical Park!

Even if it passes the Senate soon, we are still a few years away from the reality of the Park Service presence in Oak Ridge. Until then we MUST continue to do our very best to capture all the history we can from those who lived it before they are gone completely.

Fred Heddleson did not arrive in Oak Ridge until 1952, yet he became a creative part of Oak Ridge history. His World War II war experience consisted of work on the design of a machine gun turret and electrical motors for the Norton bomb sight. Upon arrival here he began working at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and eventually became an expert on Commercial Nuclear Power Plant Safety Systems. He later retired from Y-12.

Fred was an avid and excellent water skier, a pilot and organist in addition to his technical career. See the variety in his interests? I am sure Fred was accomplished at anything he undertook. His career working here in Oak Ridge was filled with important work and significant contributions to nuclear safety.

However, I knew him only during the latter period of his life well after retirement. I was in his home many times to admire and photograph his art. He loved to show me Peggy's banners. He and I collaborated on documenting the story of Peggy and her exceptional banners. She was his third wife who had passed away before I got to know Fred other than to appreciate his pencil drawings.

He wanted to tell as many people as possible about the fantastic inspiration he felt was included in Peggy's banners. With the help of Deb Schenk we told the story of Peggy and her banners.

Here are the links to the online *Historically Speaking* archives.

Series of *Historically Speaking* columns on Peggy's banners written by Deb Schenk:

<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2011/3-29-11%20Peggy--liturgical.pdf>

<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2011/4-5-11%20Peggy--artistic.pdf>

<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2011/4-26-11%20Peggy%20Heddleson%20--%20artist%20and%20more.pdf>

Secondly Fred allowed me to collaborate with Rebecca Carroll to document his story. My focus was on his art and Rebecca learned that Fred "began drawing back in 1925 before many of us were born and he was a school boy and perhaps a bit bored with school."

Fred Heddleson – artist, aeronautical engineer and friend

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 2, 2013)

Fred has been the city of Oak Ridge's official Christmas card artist for over 30 years having created a unique drawing of one of Oak Ridge's historic structures for each year. Fred also created his own Christmas cards for the last 38 years of his life. He also did six commemorative postcards for the Secret City Festival.

As I recall Fred, it is with a fondness and appreciation for his many pen and ink drawings. At his funeral a basket of his note cards and other drawings were placed for his friends to select from. I took a selection of his art in his memory. Although he had given me several drawings, I found the basket full of other drawings that I did not have. He certainly was a prolific artist!

I wonder who the City will get to replace Fred now that he is no longer providing the art based annual Christmas card for the official city Christmas card? Any ideas? Send your ideas to me and I will pass them along to the City Manager and Mayor.

Rebecca said of Fred's art, "[his] drawings are just plain pleasing to the eye. They portray the chosen building or landscape as warm, nostalgic looks into the past. He draws many buildings and landscapes that many of us are familiar with such as the Chapel on the Hill, the old Solway Bridge, and other Oak Ridge buildings, but he also draws some images that are made up completely."

Among Fred's favorite subjects were barns. He liked to draw barns because of their characteristics and what he called their "personalities." His first commissioned drawings were of barns.

Rebecca noted that, "He can even add the 'Vol' touch by tinting some drawings with orange and planting a University of Tennessee motif somewhere in the picture. He has also painted his own Christmas cards for 35 years.

"Fred drew the original Oak Ridge 'alphabet houses' A, B, C, D, F, the Guest House, a victory cottage, a dormitory, a flattop, a hutment, a trailers, the Oliver Springs and K-25 west guard gates, a horse barn off the turnpike used when the gates were still closed, the Snow White restaurant, and the old cafeteria next to the boys club."

According to Fred when Rebecca was interviewing him, his customers liked the Chapel on the Hill the most, but they also liked the flat top, the Solway Bridge, and the C house drawings.

Rebecca noted in her article on Fred, "He recently did 18 light houses that are located around the Chesapeake Bay, and his daughter Judy sold them in her shops in Norfolk and Virginia Beach."

Finally Rebecca noted that, "Heddleson draws what is commonly called pen and ink drawings. He uses repidograph pens, using different widths and points depending on what is needed. He uses India ink—non-fading, archival, and waterproof—but he sometimes sketches with a pencil first—especially if he is relying on memory for the image, so he can make changes."

You can read more about Fred's story as written by Rebecca Carroll such as the time he picked up a hitching couple and rather than put them out in the rain, he drove them all the way to Louisville, KY. That was the way Fred was, he was a kind soul with a deep sense of humility and willingness to help out.

Series of *Historically Speaking* columns on Fred written by Rebecca Carroll:

<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2010/12-14-10%20A%20tribute%20to%20Fred%20Heddleson.pdf>

<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2010/12-21-10%20A%20tribute%20to%20Fred%20Heddleson%20-%20part%202.pdf>

Fred Heddleson – artist, aeronautical engineer and friend
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 2, 2013)

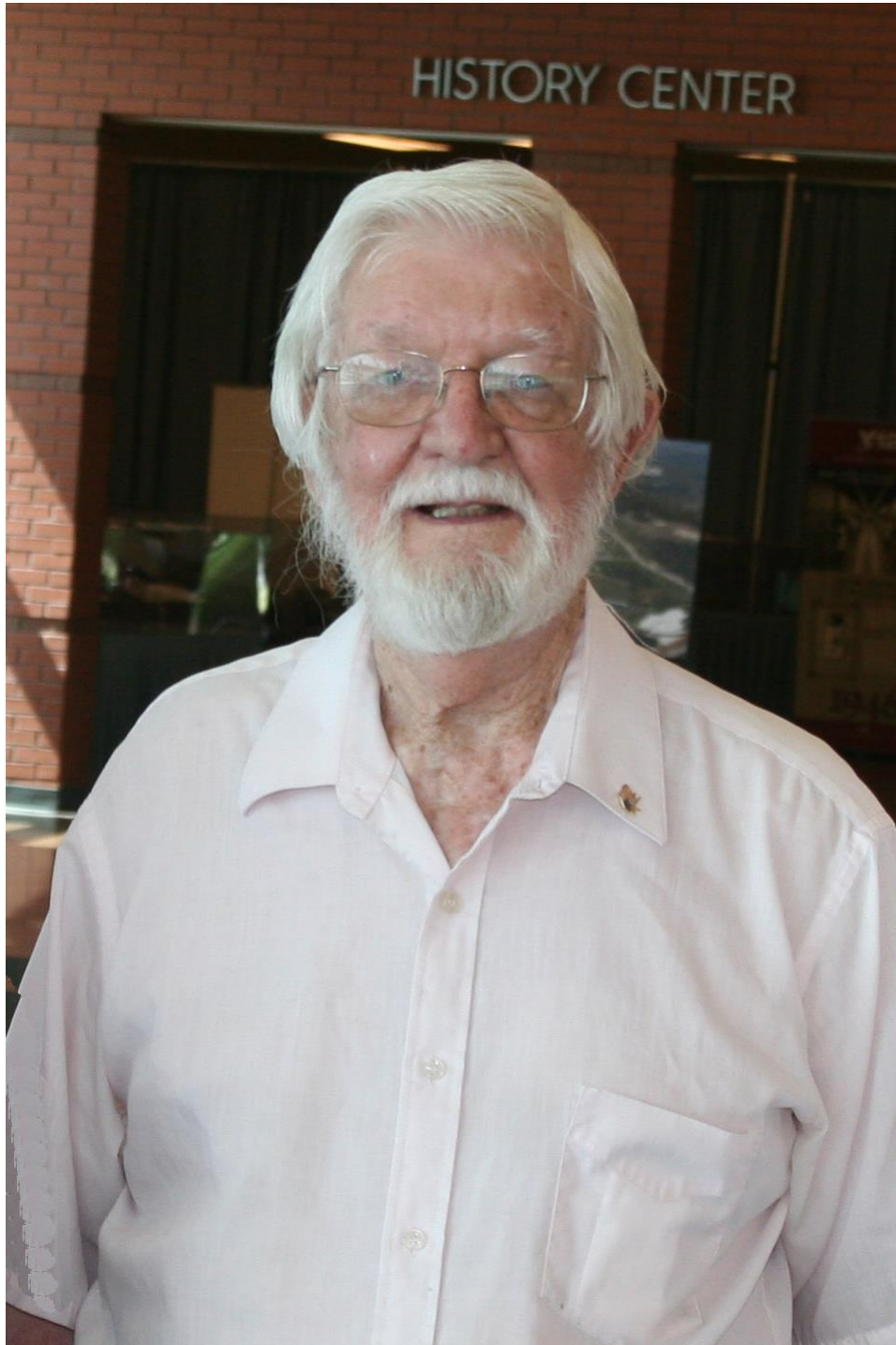
<http://smithdray1.net/historicallyspeaking/2010/12-28-10%20A%20tribute%20to%20Fred%20Heddleson%20-%20part%203.pdf>

I hope you have enjoyed a look back at Fred Heddleson, a good friend, an exceptional artist and one of Oak Ridge's true treasures. We will all miss Fred and his exceptional pen and ink drawings.



Fred is shown with his collection of thirty official City of Oak Ridge Christmas Cards

Fred Heddleson – artist, aeronautical engineer and friend
(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 2, 2013)



Fred Heddleson