

## Lunch 4 Literacy and Denise Kiernan new visitors coming

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 9, 2014)

The "Lunch 4 Literacy" fundraising luncheon has historically been one of the most successful and popular events in Oak Ridge. It has become an annual tradition in March that many look forward to enjoying. The event just seems to get better and better each year and it continues to raise more and more money for worthy literacy causes.

Tuesday, March 18, 2014 was the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual luncheon held again in the Oak Ridge High School Cafeteria. This year's special speaker was Denise Kiernan, author of *The Girls of Atomic City*, bestselling book on Oak Ridge's history...AND as announced by Denise as she began her talk, soon to be a TV series! I will have much more to say about this in later *Historically Speaking* columns!

Lunch 4 Literacy is a joint effort of the Oak Ridge Altrusa International of Oak Ridge and the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club. The purpose of the joint effort is to provide grants to help improve literacy in Oak Ridge and Anderson and Roane counties. Each year the grants are awarded to selected recipients. In 2013, \$23,532.99, was awarded to selected organizations. In 2014, even more was raised – the exact amount is still being calculated.

To qualify for grants potential applicants should meet award criteria which may be found on the Altrusa International Oak Ridge website <http://oakridge.altrusa.org/> or Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club website <http://www.orbrc.org/>. Hard copies are also available at the Oak Ridge Public Library. Each year, applications must be submitted by Nov. 1.

For the past several years the Lunch 4 Literacy Luncheon has been held in the Oak Ridge High School's beautiful open and spacious cafeteria. This year's event was a most enjoyable event featuring great food, good fun and excellent speakers. There were over 400 people in attendance!

There were excellent items auctioned off by our most beloved auctioneer, Bear Stephenson that included a framed and signed Ed Westcott photograph, a set of earrings from Karen's Jewelry, a dinner at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and the hit of the auction, a "Dinner Behind the Fence." This last item featured John Iacovino and his wines and Colleen Black's family working their magic to create an authentic 1940's atmosphere and experience for 10 fortunate individuals who won the auction.

Denise was the honored guest at the dinner that included a real fence (provided, installed and removed free of charge by Home Depot) and gate where identification was required before the guests were provided special badges to allow entry into the dinner. She was delighted by the water bucket required to wash the "mud off her feet" before entering the house to enjoy the dinner.

I happen to know that she dropped her purse into the bucket of water and exclaimed, "It's okay, I have my phone in my pocket!" Shows the most important thing she carries...

Here is what Denise had to say about the day and especially about the dinner, "After an uplifting day participating in the Oak Ridge Lunch 4 Literacy and One City One Book events, the Dinner Behind the Fence was truly inspired. There was an actual fence, muddy boots and even a security check at the 'gate.' We all received badges that featured characters mentioned in the book. We drank Manhattans—of course—and then sat down to a delicious meal with remarkable wines. The company and the spirit were quite moving. It was the perfect way to close out a lovely day and I am honored to have been a part of it."

The 2014 luncheon was also a special treat for the many Oak Ridge "girls" who have achieved fame both locally and nationally. Not only were they the focus of the talk by Denise when she singled out every one of them, Colleen Black, Dot Wilkinson, Celia Klemiski and Virginia Coleman, and told the most significant element of each of their stories that was included in the book. They were given a special table and were treated as special guests to the event. Denise was also able to recognize several others in the audience who had worked in Oak Ridge during the Manhattan Project.

Denise cautioned the audience regarding the fact that we are fast losing these folks as they get older. She encouraged everyone who had someone who worked during the Manhattan Project to get their story

## Lunch 4 Literacy and Denise Kiernan new visitors coming

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 9, 2014)

documented. She even encouraged folks to appreciate that even if they did not work in Oak Ridge during the Manhattan Project but have been a part of the later history of Oak Ridge that their story is important as well. She said to "get it documented."

Denise introduced her talk by stressing the importance and "Power of the story." She recalled a special book of her youth that allowed her to step into a different world of a story other than the one she was living. She likened "The Girls of Atomic City" to that book that caused her to transport herself to another place. *The Girls of Atomic City* allows readers to experience the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge through the eyes of the "Girls of Atomic City."

Denise also noted that she had been surprised by the number of times she had noticed someone saying "we need a Manhattan Project effort for"...pick whatever topic you like. If someone wants an all-out effort, they tend to use that term to describe it. Remember, we in Oak Ridge ARE part of the origin of that phrase that is coming into common use!

She also pointed out that people are asking her constantly about Oak Ridge and she predicted that the number of people coming to see Oak Ridge was on the rise. She has observed that increased interest in our city and I have personally seen it. Rare is the day that goes by without someone contacting me saying because of reading *The Girls of Atomic City* they have come to see the Y-12 History Center and want to learn more about Oak Ridge history.

The Oak Ridge Public Library auditorium was filled with people attending the One City One Book event where Denise spoke at 2:00 PM about the process of publishing and specifically answering questions about her research methods. The lively question and answer period allowed engagement with Denise and Joe and allowed the audience to get to know them on a more personal level.

A surprise guest at the library event was Mayor Tom Beehan who presented Denise with a key to the city. He had mentioned that at the luncheon when he thanked Denise for her help promoting Oak Ridge. She was obviously pleased with the honor. The mayor recognized her for being such a great ambassador for Oak Ridge.

Finally, as I look back on the events of March 18, 2014, I can't help but dream about what is about to happen in Oak Ridge regarding Heritage Tourism. Thanks to Denise and the "Girls" of Atomic City who are now in their 90's we have an opportunity to advance Oak Ridge's reputation, not just nationally but internationally (Denise said the book was being translated and published in several foreign languages).

The national TV series will bring even more attention to Oak Ridge. Are we ready to take full advantage of that publicity? What do we need to do to get ready? What do we need to do to anticipate the questions that will come our way? How can we best assure the increased number of visiting tourists leave feeling they have gotten what they expected when they chose to drive long distances to learn more about the Oak Ridge that was introduced to them through reading *The Girls of Atomic City*?

Denise sent this message to me today, "And here's something else for your column: I got the call last night from the publisher and *The Girls of Atomic City* has made the New York Times paperback Best Seller list its first week in publication. Number 10. I am attaching a .pdf of the list here. It will be in next weekend's paper."

So, Oak Ridge, what are we to do? Likely this kind of opportunity may only come our way once. Denise is doing her part. What is our response? Do you want to get on board and help? Will you do all you can to help us prepare for the future NOW?

We can be proud of our heritage and promote it to all. We can be a part of the story. After all, Oak Ridge is making history daily!

# Lunch 4 Literacy and Denise Kiernan new visitors coming

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 9, 2014)

Just see the press releases from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. See the new Uranium detection training programs and the new replacement low enriched uranium for highly enriched uranium for research reactors being pursued by the Y-12 National Security Complex. See the transition being made at the East Tennessee Technology Park and the historic preservation of the K-25 history there. Remember the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is coming!

See what is soon to be done with the American Museum of Science and Energy. See what is happening with new commercial development in our city. See the Westcott Center (named by the employees of Kroger! – now that is what I mean!!) AND soon we will see action at the mall.

We need to start with the Manhattan Project and showcase the tremendous technological advances by Oak Ridgers. Nuclear medicine had its start here, nuclear power reactors were first designed here, the nation's nuclear navy is fueled by Oak Ridge's Y-12 National Security Complex, the world's most powerful pulsed neutron source is the Spallation Neutron Source at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the world's most powerful computer is soon to again be the supercomputer at ORNL.

We need to promote our brand and our city. Remember, anywhere in the world when "Oak Ridge" is mentioned, no one has to say "Tennessee," they know that our city is what is meant. Won't you join the efforts of our Chamber of Commerce, East Tennessee Economic Council, City Council, City Staff, Convention and Visitor's Bureau and many other organizations and individuals as we create the future of Oak Ridge!

Copyright © 2014  
by The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

March 30, 2014

## Print Paperback Best Sellers

THIS WEEK	Nonfiction	WEEKS ON LIST
1	<b>LONE SURVIVOR</b> , by Marcus Luttrell with Patrick Robinson. (Back Bay/Little, Brown) A harrowing Navy SEALs operation.	100
2	<b>HEAVEN IS FOR REAL</b> , by Todd Burpo with Lynn Vincent. (Thomas Nelson) A boy's encounter with Jesus and the angels.	174
3	<b>THE MONUMENTS MEN</b> , by Robert M. Edsel with Bret Witter. (Little, Brown) Following an Allied group who recovered stolen artworks from the Nazis.	13
4	<b>PROOF OF HEAVEN</b> , by Eben Alexander. (Simon & Schuster) A neurosurgeon recounts his near death experience during a coma.	7
5	<b>THE POWER OF HABIT</b> , by Charles Duhigg. (Random House) The science behind how we form, and how we can change, our habits.	1
6	<b>OUTLIERS</b> , by Malcolm Gladwell. (Vintage) Why some people succeed and others fail.	10
7	<b>WILD</b> , by Che Chace. (Pacific Crest) A true story of a man who lived in the wild for 10 years.	1
8	<b>THE WOLF OF WALL STREET</b> , by Jordan Belfrage. (Bantam) The rise and fall of a stock trader who became a financial titan.	14
9	<b>QUIET</b> , by Susan Cain. (Broadway) Introverts are undervalued in American society.	59
10	<b>THE GIRLS OF ATOMIC CITY</b> , by Denise Kiernan. (Touchstone) Thousands of women took well-paid jobs in Oak Ridge, Tenn., during World War II, not knowing that the government project where they worked was enriching uranium for the first atomic bomb.	1
11	<b>HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED</b> , by Paul Tough. (Mariner/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) An argument that character matters more than IQ.	37

**THE GIRLS OF ATOMIC CITY**, by Denise Kiernan. (Touchstone)  
Thousands of women took well-paid jobs in Oak Ridge, Tenn., during World War II, not knowing that the government project where they worked was enriching uranium for the first atomic bomb.

*The Girls of Atomic City* is No. 10 on the New York Times Best Seller list the first week after being published!

## Lunch 4 Literacy and Denise Kiernan new visitors coming

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 9, 2014)



Denise Kiernan speaks to the 400 plus luncheon attendees – photo by Rob Welton, President of the Camera Club of Oak Ridge



Denise Kiernan, author of Best Seller, *The Girls of Atomic City* – photo by Rob Welton, President of the Camera Club of Oak Ridge

## **Lunch 4 Literacy and Denise Kiernan new visitors coming**

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on April 9, 2014)



Former Mayor Roy Pruitt, Denise Kiernan and Mayor Tom Beehan as she is presented with the key to the City of Oak Ridge