

Book Review: Life of a Secret City Kid

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on September 21, 2015)

Occasionally I review books in *Historically Speaking* such as was done last week with the book *Behind the Blue Line*, written by Steve Gibbs. In the past I have reviewed books by Bobby Copeland, Jamie Cotton, Rebecca Carroll, Tollie Moore De Graw and others.

I am proud to help promote local authors. I well remember the opportunity that came my way when I first met Grace Raby Crawford who had written a manuscript titled, "***Before Oak Ridge***." She had written the story of her grandfather, John Hendrix. I edited the manuscript and helped her publish it. She even attended an author's book signing at the American Museum of Science and Energy and signed copies for many people. She was so proud!

She gave permission for me to include her manuscript in my book, "***The John Hendrix Story***" which is one of my most popular books.

I would like to add to this list of books reviewed in *Historically Speaking* by including reviews of three additional books. One by Don Bell, another by Richard Cook and one more by Edward "Ted" Lollis.

First I want to tell you about a small paperback book self-published in 2012 by Don A. Bell, ***Life of a Secret City Kid***. Much of the book is based on articles Don has written for *The Oak Ridger* and *The Oak Ridge Observer*. Copies of the book are available by contacting Don at 865-482-6951.

In one of his stories, Don stated that he had worked 20 years as a custodian at Glenwood School in Oak Ridge. I am sure he said this with a lot of pride as he expressed the joy of hearing teachers tell their students, "Just ask the custodian...he'll know." And Don said, that was likely true. He went on in that story to cite the dedication he saw in teachers.

Don was born in 1955, here in Oak Ridge. He says that was the same year that Jackson Square Pharmacy was established. He lived on Tucker Road until age six and then his family moved to Malvern Road.

Don shares many memories of his years growing up in Oak Ridge and riding his "green Schwinn Sting-Ray bike" given to him as a Christmas gift. Years later, Don would purchase another bike just like the one he had as a child, except it is a red one. He said, "I bought it and still have it in my house so I can look at it and think how happy it made me that Christmas of long ago."

Don recalls his experiences as a manager for the Oak Ridge Wildcats football team when Emory Hale was the coach. You can tell that was an exciting time in Don's life...just to be close to the action in that era of Oak Ridge football was something else for a small young teenager. Yet, Don tells of earlier times when he spoke with Ben Martin and Jack Armstrong, both legendary early coaches at Oak Ridge High School.

Even more exciting for Don was a conversation with Doug Stewart, a great tailback, in Don's words, that he recalled in a story where the two of them spent a solid hour talking about old times. He also recalls a fellow manager, John Taylor and riding in his jeep.

Don also speaks of Ciderville and David West, a local country music store and show on Clinton Highway. He obviously enjoyed his time with David and participating in the shows originating there. While not in Oak Ridge, Ciderville is a fixture in our community and has been so for many years. It is part of our community.

Such are the stories Don relates in his book, *Life of a Secret City Kid*. I hope you enjoyed the review and I know you will enjoy Don's stories of his life growing up in Oak Ridge, his "Secret City."

One of the attractive aspects of Don's book is the cover. It has a unique collection of hand drawn images that will remind you of things and places many will be familiar with from Oak Ridge's history. Front and

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center is Don as a young boy on his Sting Ray bike. There is reference to "Snow White" a often mentioned early restaurant. And there is the "Blue Circle" another favorite restaurant of the early Oak Ridgers. The Skyway Drive In is there. And "Elvis" – I don't know why, but Don surely does. And remember the biscuits at the "Oak Terrace?"

You might want to consider doing what Don has done. I am sure he would tell you of the blessings he has received from writing down his early memories. If you attempt to document your memories, I can assure you there is substantial reward personally from just doing it. Regardless of who reads it or if only your family get copies, they will appreciate having your thoughts and memories documented.

Of course, another way to document your memories is through oral history at the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History located at the Oak Ridge Public Library and found online at:

<http://cdm16107.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15388coll1>

I am proud to report that the Department of Energy has extended the contract with the city for the Oak Ridge Public Library to continue conducting these oral history interviews. I was asked by the Morgan County Genealogical and Historical Society to come to their monthly meeting and speak on Oak Ridge History. I did so and also suggested they contact the Oak Ridge Public Library for assistance with their desire to capture the oral history of residents of Morgan County.

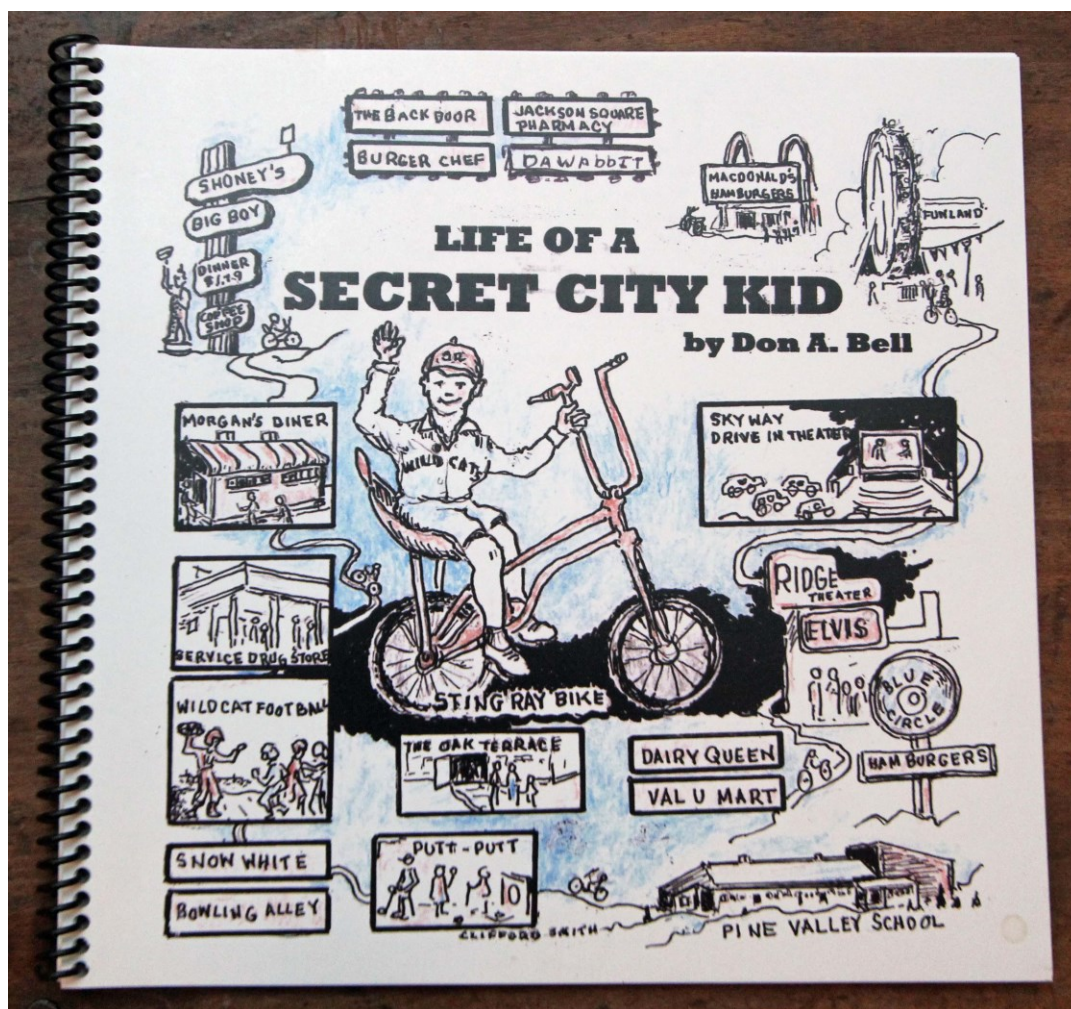
Sharon Kries, who arranged for me to speak to them, gave me a tour of Wartburg. Their meeting was in the old Jail. The Presbyterian Church is a treasure that has been maintained well and is a showplace of history.

So, Don Bell has captured his history in a self-published book. How are you going to capture yours? If writing a book is not to your liking or if you don't think you have the time and energy to do that, please consider contributing your oral history to the tremendous archive of over 400 oral histories at the Oak Ridge Public Library!

Next I will review Richard Cook's ebook, ***Ignored Heroes of World War II: The Manhattan Project workers of Oak Ridge, Tennessee.***

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