

ORUD remembers the veterans

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 18, 2016)

Oak Ridge Utility District recently held its annual Veterans Day Appreciation Lunch.

Ben Andrews, ORUD general manager, personally welcomed all the veterans and their companions as they arrived at this year's Veterans Appreciation Lunch held at the ORUD offices at 120 South Jefferson Circle. This year was different the past years in that ORUD customers were included.

For a number of years now, ORUD has held a Veterans Appreciation Lunch for employees who are veterans. While that has been successful and provided encouragement and appreciation to employees, Ben and his team decided to expand their appreciation to their customers who are veterans.

Susan Lloyd and her team took charge of the logistics to make this year's event even larger and more personal for customers. As a part of that expansion, I was asked if I would attend and if I would recommend others who might be recognized as special veterans. I suggested the Manhattan Project veterans who recently were participants in the HonorAir.

Peggy Stuart was able to attend and was the hit of the event. No surprise there for me. She has responded to my requests to showcase "Calutron Girls" along with Ruth Heddleston on a number of occasions.

One such occasion Peggy keeps reminding me of is the visit made by General Klotz, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration. When he first met Peggy, he reached out his hand to shake her hand. She smiled and said, "I am a hugger!" and he melted right away. She had him right where she wanted him.

Ben was pleased with the attendance this first year of inviting customers and plans are already underway for an even larger event next year. I look forward to that.

One special feature of this event was a table for a veteran who was "Gone but not Forgotten." This table was for Henry Taylor, who was an Army Veteran. He was employed by ORUD from October 19, 1990 thru December 14, 2015 which was the time of his death. He was a Construction Crewman and the people at ORUD just thought the world of him!

This feature will continue in coming years, I am sure. It added an element of thoughtfulness as we are losing so many of our veterans. Remember, many of the remaining World War II veterans are in their nineties!

I want to personally thank the folks at ORUD for inviting me to the lunch and creating an encouraging atmosphere where "Thank you for your service!" was a theme which was much appreciated by all veterans present. As a Vietnam Veteran, such appreciation is even more meaningful to me because of the lack of such recognition for so many years. Do you realize it has been 50 years!

Thank you ORUD!

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Peggy Stuart telling the large crowd of veterans about her recent opportunity to participate in the HonorAir program that takes veterans to Washington DC



Left to right – Peggy Stuart, from left, Ben Andrews and Ray Smith talk at the appreciation luncheon. Stuart was encouraged to speak to the veterans to encourage them to take advantage of the HonorAir program, which takes veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit the war memorials.

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"Gone but not Forgotten" Comrades table set up at the Oak Ridge Utility District Veterans Appreciation luncheon. It was placed there in memorial and remembrance of Henry Taylor, a veteran and construction crewman for ORUD. He died last December.



A large crowd of veterans, friends and family enjoyed lunch together at the Oak Ridge Utility District offices