

# The Camera Club of Oak Ridge – A History 1946 – 2016, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 7, 2016)

This Historically Speaking series in two parts reviews a recent book of research on the history of camera clubs in Oak Ridge written by Yvonne Dalschen, president of The Camera Club of Oak Ridge. Part one focused on the various camera clubs in Oak Ridge during the early years. This second part will continue the history of the camera clubs and will feature the current club now known as “The Camera Club of Oak Ridge.”

Before moving to the later years after Union Carbide Nuclear Division was replaced as managing and operating contractor by Martin Marietta Energy Systems in 1984, an additional observation about those years may help put the history of camera clubs in better perspective. The growth of the popularity of the camera clubs during the years prior to 1984 resulted in a robust club atmosphere.

In discussing the content of this story, Yvonne said, “I know that the whole contractor thing is complicated but I especially liked how the Carbide Camera Club as the third club founded, assimilated first the TEC Camera Club in the merger and then by adding X-10 to the contract also the Oak Ridge Camera Club.” The time she refers to is also during the Cold War when employment was high, especially at the Y-12 Plant and for several years the K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant was still running. I well remember the changes that occurred at the end of the Cold War with the shutdown of K-25 in the mid 1980's and reductions in force at Y-12 during the early 1990's.

Changes in the operational contracts at the government sites in Oak Ridge beginning in 1999 separated the three sites into different contracts. The Lockheed Martin Camera Club soon lost its identity as the new contractors did not continue the supportive posture of previous contractors who had even helped purchase equipment and provided meeting locations such as the building at the Portal 5 entrance to Y-12.

Another reason for the decline in interest in supporting the camera club was the lower number of employees participating in the club. Where there were recreation offices at each site supporting various activities including the camera club during the early years, they too had gone by the wayside. With the major shift taking place in the contracting arrangement, the camera club began to consider seeking participants other than contractor employees. This was necessary to survive as a viable club.

Eventually the club name settled into its present form in 2000 as “The Camera Club of Oak Ridge.” The club was soon open to members from the public but attendance did not immediately increase. In the years since this radical change the club struggled to sustain itself for a few more years. However, soon membership started to be younger and new ideas surfaced to cause the tide to turn. The club began to grow and lately has grown tremendously with young members joining and taking leadership positions.

What exists now as The Camera Club of Oak Ridge has experienced a steady increase in membership. The annual salon is well known in the region as one of the very best. In recent years, the club has taken on the role of providing photography coverage for Oak Ridge events with individuals like past president Ron Welton leading the way. The Secret City Festival each year provides a rich opportunity for the club to help the city promote visually the huge potential that exists for Heritage Tourism.

But, there were other “city, school or non-company camera clubs” that deserve mentioning as well. Now that we have covered the main contractor clubs, Yvonne also found evidence regarding several other camera clubs over the years.

The Oak Ridge Camera Club was formed in in January 1946 as evidenced by an announcement in The Oak Ridge Journal that stated, “Photo group Formed at Midtown. An amateur photography club has been organized at Midtown Community Center and meets each Wednesday at 7:30 PM...” While this club remained smaller than the company clubs, through cooperative efforts and salons it remained viable.

Over the years of changing names for the employee camera clubs and the varieties in the city and schools that have flourished, one thing has remained constant, Oak Ridger's enjoy their photography. Doug Hubbard, a long-time member said in 2008, “We enjoy creating and presenting beauty to the

# The Camera Club of Oak Ridge – A History 1946 – 2016, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 7, 2016)

observer in fellow ship with each other. In all this, a major objective is to have fun. We invite you to join us in the quest. This sharing can be enjoyable and beneficial whatever your level of photographic expertise. Remember, we all were beginners at one time."

The quality of images produced over the years by members of the various camera clubs in Oak Ridge have gained a regional reputation for Oak Ridge among other camera clubs as being consistently among the very best. Competition in regional shows such as the Tennessee Valley Fair, Dogwoods Arts Festival, Wilderness Wildlife Week and Photographic Societies has seen many winners from Oak Ridge.

This good reputation for excellent quality was only enhanced by the annual salon being moved to the Y-12 New Hope Center where the main lobby with its expansive rounded glass exterior wall provides natural light that enhances the experience of viewing some 200 prints and 100 digital images on a flat screen monitor.

Yvonne notes that "The very first art exhibit in Oak Ridge was a photographic one. Aljos Schuszler, an architect with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the urban planning team in charge of creating Oak Ridge, showed 45 of his prints, which had previously been exhibited in salons before the war and at the National Museum in Washington, DC in 1942, for the opening of the new Oak Ridge Library from May 29 to June 5, 1944."

Other shows of local photographer's work, such as a slide show of Arthur Stupka's Smoky Mountain images was featured on the community calendar as being held on May 4, 1944. The Oak Ridge High School had a camera club as early as January 1945.

Other evidence of the interest in photography and local shows being held was found by Yvonne "In November 1944 the library hosted the wildlife photos of local photographer Lt. William Harmon." She even turned up the fact that Alfred Dean Slack (later determined to be a spy for Russia) was a photographer.

As you can see, Yvonne has done an excellent job of capturing the history of one of the most interesting and long running aspects of Oak Ridge, its photography. From our famous Ed Westcott roots to the many individuals, couples, women and students who have participated over the years in their passion for photography by being members of various forms of the Camera Club of Oak Ridge, she has documented for future generations the history of camera clubs in Oak Ridge!

You may want to join the excitement of all things related to photography by attending a monthly club meeting. There you will enjoy the fellowship and encouragement while learning more about many aspects of photography. **Meetings are held every second Tuesday at 7:30 PM in the City Room of the Roane State Community College, Oak Ridge Campus. More information can be found at [www.cameraclubofoakridge.org](http://www.cameraclubofoakridge.org)**

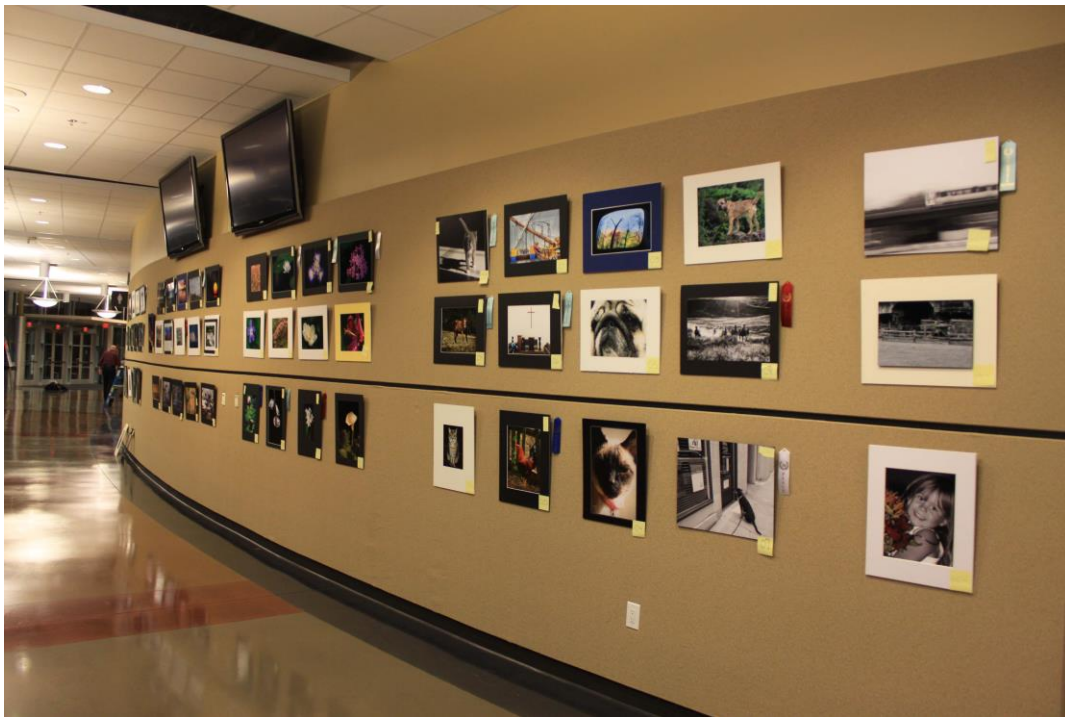
And the annual salon, held from October 31 to November 10, 2016, is open to the public from 7AM – 4:30 PM Monday through Thursday at the Y-12 New Hope Center. Just speak into the intercom for entry. No badges are required and everyone is welcome.

## The Camera Club of Oak Ridge – A History 1946 – 2016, part 2

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 7, 2016)



Larry Perry, respected professional photographer who helped judge the entries explains to the large crowd what criteria he used to make decisions on many of the winning photographs



The large curved wall of the Y-12 New Hope Center make an excellent display surface and the large expanse of wall space has enabled the annual salon to grow to over 200 mounted photographs