

"Tribute to the Arts" 2016

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on March 14, 2016)

This Historically Speaking column is devoted to promoting the ***Tribute to the Arts*** and is written by Jim Dodson, a good friend and an amazing award winning teacher.

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Please mark your calendars for a "Tribute to the Arts" event that will take place at the Saint Mary's Family Life Center located in Oak Ridge on Tuesday, March 29th from 6pm-9pm. This is the second time that the Arts Council of Oak Ridge has offered this unique gala giving members of our community a chance to recognize local artists and arts supporters for their wonderful work promoting the arts in Anderson County.

Each of the arts agencies will be showcasing their talents so it's the perfect time to sample an appetizer of arts in our community. The event will be co-promoted by ACOR and the Rotary Club of Oak Ridge Sunset with proceeds from ticket sales and a silent auction benefiting both organizations and their philanthropies.

Tickets may be purchased by contacting the Arts Council of Oak office at 482-4432 or contacting any representative from the eight member organizations. Those groups are Oak Ridge Art Center, Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, Oak Ridge Civic Ballet Association, Tennessee Mountain Writers, Oak Ridge Playhouse, Oak Ridge Community Orchestra, Oak Ridge Community Band, and the Music Arts School.

If you've ever seen the Grammy's, then "Tribute to the Arts" will surely remind you of the best parts of an awards program featuring entertainment as well as recognition of some truly deserving local artists and arts advocates. Included in the highlights of the evening will be a delicious catered meal served while being entertained by artists from the aforementioned organizations.

What better way to experience all that Anderson County has to offer through the arts than an evening filled with performances and exhibitions followed by a live band as you dance the night away!

Among the awardees for the evening are:

From Music Arts, Greg Foertter, who studied trumpet at the Manhattan School of Music, the University of Miami Frost School of Music, and Music History and Literature at the Julliard School. Ilia Steinschneider, who was selected for a violin position with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra in 1998 and in the same year began teaching for Music Arts.

From the Oak Ridge Civic Ballet is Jenny Collins who is ORCBA's longest-standing active dancer and has been dancing for 23 years under the tutelage of Molly Quist, Sharon Cousins, Stacy Calvert, Jolia Moisseeva, and many others. Arts advocate and local radio personality Frank Murphy can be heard on Classic Hits 93.1 WNOX on weekday afternoons. Frank graciously provides publicity and attention for ORCBA that small non-profit organizations simply cannot afford on their own. ORCBA is thrilled and honored that Frank chooses to donate so much of his time to our organization and our dancers!

From the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association is Nancy Coutant, a pianist, who was elected to the ORCMA Board of Directors in 1977 and served through 1981. She chaired the "ORCMA Belles" (debutante ushers) for the ORCMA Guild and was President of the Guild in 1985-1987.

Also nominated is Chuck Coutant who with his wife Nancy have been subscribers and volunteers for the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association (ORCMA) since the 1970s. Though Nancy is the musician, she indoctrinated Chuck into the world of classical music and he has been a strong promoter through the years. He served two consecutive 3-year terms on the Board of Directors in the 2000s, three as President (2004-2007 seasons), and began a third term in 2015.

From the Oak Ridge Community Art Center is Bill Capshaw who earned a Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees in Ceramics and Printing Processes from East Tennessee State University. Capshaw

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worked for Bechtel Jacobs Company LLC as a Government Printing Office Specialist as well as an adjunct faculty member at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. For more than 30 years, he has served as Pottery Chair and Instructor at Oak Ridge Art Center.

Also nominated are George & Judy Kidd. George Kidd, a PhD engineer who passed away in 2012, came to Oak Ridge with his wife Judy in 1957. He was active in his church and professional societies and served on the boards of several local organizations.

He and his wife were founders of the Foothills Craft Guild 50 years ago and participated in every guild show until his death. At the Art Center, George served as board member, president for two terms, taught many silversmithing classes, and organized the printmaking group. Judy Kidd taught English at Robertsville Junior High School for 25 years after their three children reached school age. She served many positions in her church and on the boards of several organizations and chaired several Foothills Craft Guild shows.

From the Oak Ridge Community Band is Audrey Stelson who joined the band in 1966 when it was started anew under Doc Combs, for Oak Ridge's 25th anniversary celebration. This April will commemorate Stelson's 50th year playing flute and piccolo in the band.

Audrey has been a member of ACOR for thirty+ years where she took on the responsibility of raising funds for the outdoor pavilion in Bissell Park as part of Oak Ridge's 50th anniversary celebration as well as raising money for an orchestra pit in the ORHS renovation.

Also nominated is Jean Box who has enjoyed being in the Oak Ridge Community Band for most of the 40 years she's been an Oak Ridger. She also has played with the Symphony for 15 years. Box says she was pleasantly surprised to find so many opportunities to be involved in music here and she feels she has had a hand in helping that continue through her teaching in Music Arts.

From the Oak Ridge Community Orchestra is Cyndi Jeffers who studied at SUNY Potsdam Crane School of Music. She performed with the Finger Lakes Symphony and Eisenhower College Chamber Orchestras in upstate New York. In addition to the Oak Ridge Community Orchestra, Cyndi plays oboe and English horn in the Oak Ridge Community Band, Scruffy City Orchestra, and Secret City Winds.

She has served on several non-profit boards and is an Arts Council of Oak Ridge board member. Also nominated is Greg Foertter who recently conducted the premier of his composition for Wind Dectet with members of the Oak Ridge Community Band. He currently plays trumpet with the Marble City Opera and the Oak Ridge Community Orchestra. His consummate musicianship and dedication to music in performance, education, and composition make him ORCO's choice for musician honoree.

From the Oak Ridge Playhouse is Sheryl Lawrence Howard, originally a Jersey girl, she came to the University of Tennessee in 1982 where she received her Bachelor of Music degree in woodwind performance, fell in love with a southern boy, and stayed. Sheryl is a frequent performer and Music Director at Oak Ridge Playhouse.

Her first Music Director project at the Playhouse was Babes in Arms in 1986 and 30 years later she is still music directing. Favorite shows as Music Director include The Producers, 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, and The Wiz.

Also nominated is Gene Spejewski who was born and raised in the highly-industrial northwest corner of Indiana where he attended Catholic schools and received a B.S. in Physics magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame. He attended graduate school at Indiana University, receiving a Ph.D. in Experimental Physics. Gene received the Lifetime Achievement Award at Oak Ridge Community Playhouse in 1997 for his many years of service on stage, back stage, and on the Board of Directors. At the Playhouse, he has appeared in over 40 productions and has stage managed three.

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From the Tennessee Mountain Writers is Hayden Evans who wrote in his book, *Turning Ground*: "Learning to turn ground . . . was a rite of passage for boys raised in the hills. Like most farm boys, I aspired for the day when I could guide a team of mules across a field while holding the handles of a turning plow steady enough to cut a straight furrow."

Hayden succeeded in those aspirations and continued a successful life into college and the U.S. Army where he won a Bronze Star. After retiring from the Army, he went into banking, became a newspaper columnist, and devoted himself to community service including co-founding the Tennessee Mountain Writers. TMW has chosen to honor Hayden for his "steady hand" which "cut a straight furrow" for many to follow.

Hayden passed away in 2015 while this event was being planned, but he was aware that TMW had chosen him for this honor.

Finally our Life Time Achievement Award goes to Ed Westcott. James Edward Westcott (born January 20, 1922) is a photographer who worked for the United States government in Oak Ridge, Tennessee during the Manhattan Project and the Cold War. As one of the few people permitted to have a camera in the Oak Ridge area during the top secret project, he created the main visual record of the construction and operation of the Oak Ridge production facilities and of civilian life in the enclosed community of Oak Ridge.

The first museum exhibition devoted to Westcott's work was organized by the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge in 1981, entitled "Oak Ridge Seen 1943-1947: 20 Photographs by Edward Westcott."

In 2005, the Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville mounted an exhibition of his photos, entitled "Through the Lens of Ed Westcott: A Photographic History of World War II's Secret City". The American Museum of Science and Energy and the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge both have exhibits devoted to Westcott and his work in addition to displaying his photos as part of exhibits on the city's history. A selection of works from the Ewing Gallery exhibit is now a touring museum exhibit.

About the author: Jim Dodson is the contributing writer for the Arts Council of Oak Ridge and can be reached via his email: jdodsonart@aol.com.

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Remember, make your plans now to join in the fun on March 29, 2016, at 6PM at St. Mary's Family Life Center. I am so pleased to see my good friend Ed Westcott receive a truly well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award!

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A collage of the award recipients



Jim Dodson