

# The Willow Run Rosies take in the Oak Ridge Secret City Festival

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on July 5, 2016)

Thanks to Alison Beatty for writing about the visit to Oak Ridge that she planned and executed to Oak Ridge earlier this month. I was pleased to help her with the details and online registration for tours. Alison is no stranger to our city, having been here for several years at each Secret City Festival.

Alison has become a welcome part of the Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association's display in the A/B room of the Civic Center each year at the Secret City Festival. She is also close friends with one of Lloyd and Betty Stokes' daughters. So, she is essentially family for many of us.

Here is what Alison had to say about the recent trip to Oak Ridge.

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The Willow Run Rosies of Detroit, Michigan had a spectacular time at the Secret City Festival! We took photos of dozens of places and people throughout our trip. Were you one of them? Visit our photo gallery at <http://www.savethebomberplant.org/> to find out!

Normally the Rosies are singularly focused on raising funds and awareness for our project to restore the factory where the original Rosie the Riveter worked in metro Detroit during World War II. (That project is ongoing, and we need your help!) But we have so much fun together that we decided we wanted to take our gig on the road for the first time ever. Out of all possible destinations, what could possibly have made us pick Oak Ridge?

Three reasons: 1. The History, 2. The History, and 3. The History!

The story of how Oak Ridge came to be is so profound that we could not resist the chance to see it in person during a Festival that is geared toward celebrating that incredible heritage. Thanks to the help of many friendly residents of Oak Ridge, I was able to craft a weekend package for my group of 20 travelers (one of whom had never been to Tennessee!) that gave us a great history experience and left everyone hungry for more.

Would you like to know what your 20 Rosies and friends found to do around town during the Oak Ridge Adventure? If so, read on!

On Friday morning we visited the Y-12 National Security Complex and took their 1-hour tour of the Calutrons and the overlook on Chestnut Ridge. (Special shout-out to the organizers of the tours, who were incredibly helpful accommodating a group that seemed to just keep growing as more members joined the road trip.) I was nervous because this was my party's very first impression of Oak Ridge and I wanted to convey the sheer audacity and scope of The Project.

## THE Y-12 TOUR DELIVERED!

Citizens of Oak Ridge, you could hardly do better to impress out-of-towners about your history than to take them on the Y-12 tour. Our guide was able to take complex science and break it down so we could easily understand what had happened.

Then we got to visit four examples of the very Calutrons we had read so much about. Spectacular! (They were inside Building 9731 where the world's only remaining Alpha Calutron magnets are on display as well as examples of the Beta Calutrons as well – Ray)

Finally, the stop along Chestnut Ridge to look down into the valley and see just how massive the whole complex is gave the Rosies an awed appreciation for everything that had been accomplished during the Project.

And the best part is, Y-12 is still a thriving facility! I see great potential here for future tours and activities that celebrate how Oak Ridge continues to be a global headquarters for nuclear security and research.

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We were humbled to get the chance to see it in person. (Aww, Alison, you nailed it! Y-12 is certainly special! Where else can the public see a major part of the very heart of our nation's nuclear security, the location of the nation's supply of highly enriched uranium that is held in reserve AND one of the historical facilities that is part of the origin of the nuclear era? I am pleased to see you recognized the opportunity is a most unusual one that provided you such insight and inspiration – Ray)

For lunch on Friday we dined at Jefferson Fountain. What a treat! There were so many delicious things on the menu that I don't think we'll get through them all even if we come back next year. The staff made us feel right at home in the back room and patrons kept coming in to find out "what was up with those Rosie the Riveters." We even got to say hello to the manager. We felt right at home in this cozy joint that has been in business since the 1940s.

Then it was time to head to the Festival! The Rosies were absolutely delighted to learn more about Oak Ridge (and cool down a bit) in the Historical Exhibit area. The incredible artifacts that you can see up close and in person (ID badges! Autographed TIME magazines! And much more!) come to life in the hands of the curators who can explain how each artifact was used in the war.

The past is kept alive. We had so much fun! We also enjoyed walking the vendor fair outside. Everyone seemed to want to take a picture with us.

Highlights included holding the rescued owl at the Tennessee State Park booth and talking to a woman whose family's property had been confiscated by the government to make way for the Project. She had some phenomenal stories to tell.

One of our Rosies was even recruited to pose as Wendy the Welder at one of the booths the next day - maybe you saw her! (Thanks to Richard Cook! – Ray)

Tired and happy, we made our way to Aubrey's for dinner. It was just the type of cool, spacious, relaxing dining atmosphere we were looking for after an exciting day in the sun. Everyone left raving about the food - I remember people were particularly happy about the salmon tacos and the kale salad.

We had just enough time to get back to the festival grounds to enjoy the Charlie Daniels Band that evening. (I am glad that Fanny and I were able to attend this concert as well. It was sure filled with a most appreciative crowd. Hearing Charlie Daniels' version of "How Great Thou Art" was the highlight of the evening for us both. Of course, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" was a fun show, but the strength of Charlie's voice was amazing in the gospel favorite. – Ray)

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There you have just the first day of the Rosies' visit to the 2016 Oak Ridge Secret City Festival! Next we will see what Alison recalls about her time with Calutron Girls, Peggy Stuart and Ruth Huddleson on their second day in Oak Ridge.

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Rosies at Y-12's Building 9731 Beta Calutrons (Photograph by Y-12 Photographer, Brett Pate)



Martin Skinner, who worked in Building 9731 and who helps us with Y-12 public tours each year at the Secret City Festival interacts with one of the Rosies (Photograph by Y-12 Photographer, Brett Pate)



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The Rosie the Riveter group poses in front of Aubreys Restaurant (Photograph provided by Rosies)