

“Celebrate Our Heroes” at the Secret City Festival 2017 on Saturday, June 3, 2017

(As published in The Oak Ridger’s Historically Speaking column on May 26, 2017)

The Secret City Festival 2017 is expanded and will run from Friday, June 2, 2017, through Saturday, June 10, 2017. There are special events planned throughout the festival and at various locations. The “Celebrate Our Heroes” main event will be in the A. K. Bissell Park. You can’t miss it, it will be HUGE!

See <http://www.celebrateoakridge.org/secretcityfestival> or <https://www.facebook.com/SecretCityFestival/>

The “Celebrate Our Heroes” is a major event and is our way of saying thank you to the thousands of men and women who have volunteered to be placed in harm’s way to defend the United States and our allies. Our way of doing this is to produce an event that exposes the public to some of the experiences and sacrifices of these veterans.

You will see up close and personal what our military does and how they prepare for the jobs they do so well. Several different situations will be on display from camps to re-enactments. Don’t miss this!

This year, similar to past events, we will portray two battles based on those fought in the European Theater of World War II just after the June 6th D-Day invasion of France. You won’t believe the realism associated with these events!

The first battle will begin at 10AM and the second battle will begin at 4PM.

Between those times spectators and veterans can walk through the separate allied and axis encampments. You can visit the living history stations. Each one will be representing a different aspect of the life of an American paratrooper, World War II radio communications including a Native American code talker, uniforms of women soldiers, mounted cavalry, etc. There will even be a group representing a Japanese anti-aircraft unit.

A special feature this year will include **four SPECIAL speakers!** There will also be a group of entertainers who will be providing their experiences and sounds during the time of World War II.

Mrs. Eileen Neiler was one of the first females to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. After the war, Mrs. Neiler and her husband relocated to Oak Ridge where their impacts on our community will be felt for generations.

Mr. Edgar Harrell served in the Marine Corps aboard the USS Indianapolis when it delivered the components enriched in Oak Ridge to Tinian Island. Those components would later be used in the first atomic bomb used in combat. The day after the delivery was complete, the USS Indianapolis was sunk by a Japanese submarine.

Mr. Harrell and the other survivors of the sinking had to endure nearly 4 days afloat in the Pacific Ocean with no food or drinking water all while fighting off sharks. Many did not survive.

Mr. Clinton Riddle is an East Tennessee native who answered his country’s call and joined the US Army. He then fought in numerous campaigns in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany.

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Dr. Henry Fribourg was a Jewish citizen of France during the German occupation. Being Jewish, Dr. Fribourg was expelled from school and he and his family ultimately fled and eventually ended up in the United States.

The Freedom Belles will give you a taste of music from the 1940’s by singing covers of songs by the likes of the Andrews Sisters and will honor veterans of each military branch.

Other displays include the Oak Ridge Historic Preservation Association's local Manhattan Project memorabilia, the wonderful Faith and Courage military chaplain display, the rich history of Oak Ridge's Scarboro community, all in the Midtown Community Center at 102 Robertsville Road.

If you missed them last year, the **Rosie the Riveters** are back with their salute to the women who worked in the factories during World War II. These displays will be at the **Wildcat Den**.

A special display, the **Commemorative Air Force's Red Tail's Rise Above** trailer is back for the week prior to the **Celebrate Our Heroes**. This presentation chronicles the struggles and successes of America's first black pilots of the US Army Air Corps, known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

Beginning on May 30th, the trailer will be located on A. K Bissell Park side of the Civic Center. Come visit them before the event!

After the last battle concludes, get your dance shoes on and head to the amphitheater for swing dance instruction and a USO style show by the group **Megan and Her Goody-Goodies!**

You sure don’t want to miss this special military exhibition of two major battles and the other experiences associated with military action. Make your plans to be in A. K. Bissell Park on Saturday, June 3, 2017! You will enjoy the events AND will learn things about how the military does its job so effectively.

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Realistic battles include artillery fire!

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Action packed is putting it mildly – battles are scheduled for 10AM and 4PM

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Rosie the Riveter, Alison Beatty will be returning and bringing more “Rosies” with her