

## Dedication Sept. 20 for Friendship Bell's Peace Pavilion

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of September 10, 2018)

Recent construction activity in the middle of A.K. Bissell Park over the past several months has now produced a new and more central location for our Oak Ridge icon, the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell. It has been good to see the bell, one of Oak Ridge's most identifying features, find a new home!

The new Peace Pavilion for the bell will be dedicated in a ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 20, at the bell's new site in Bissell Park. The bell's sound will resonate for the first time from its new location that evening, from a pavilion designed to project harmony, stability, innovation and peace. Join us for the celebration!

I have had the pleasure of working on the advisory committee led by Alan Tatum and Pat Postma and to be in close association with Shigeko Uppuluri, a dear friend and someone I admire greatly, as well as others who have served on the committee. Shigeko remains dedicated to Oak Ridge and the important relationship she has helped create between Japan and Oak Ridge. I have enjoyed working with her when she welcomed Japanese exchange students or Japanese groups on tour who stopped by the bell. Shigeko is one of Oak Ridge's most effective ambassadors!

Shigeko is herself an Oak Ridge treasure. She is dedicated to her hometown and her devotion to our people and the goals of our city is without a doubt as strong as anyone I have ever met. She quietly goes about doing the real work of friendship and relationship building. She is a recognized leader and respected by all who know her. And she is my friend. I count that a true blessing.

It has also been good to be able to help Ziad Demian, of Demian/Wilber/Architects, learn the history of Oak Ridge and how the bell fits into the amazing overall story of our city. To have had the privilege of introducing him to the Alexander Guest House, the Secret City Commemorative Walk, the American Museum of Science and Energy as well as the Y-12 History Center and the K-25 site was an adventure.

Just to see him absorb the importance of our history so quickly was a real treat. But what he may have enjoyed most was the muscadine grapes he bought at the Oak Ridge Farmer's Market at Jackson Square. He purchased them to take to a friend in Nashville, but I am convinced he ate them on the drive to Nashville and his friend never got a taste!

You see, Ziad immersed himself into all aspects of the Oak Ridge culture to better appreciate the importance of the project of creating a Peace Pavilion and gardens to become the new home for the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell, our unique iconic symbol of the value of friendship! Ziad got it! He said, "What began as a simple consultation about a deteriorating bell house evolved into a journey full of wonderful discoveries."

He spoke of the amazement of the project for him at the groundbreaking when he said, "This journey led to a vision culminating in this unique monument that is an expression of its core principles: 'Born of war, living for peace, growing through science' – an expression, in form and materials deliberately chosen to project permanence, stability, strength, as well as innovation, resilience, harmony and peace."

Well said, indeed! Ziad became immersed in Oak Ridge history and understands the broad implications of the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell!

Also important to the project and to a full understanding and appreciation for the significance of the bell was the leadership of this transition. Alan Tatum, Co-Chair of the bell's Citizens Advisory Committee, said the following, "We would not be where we are today without the passion of Shigeko Uppuluri and her son, Ram Uppuluri, who initiated the project by connecting us with a visionary architect, Ziad Demian, who embraced not only the challenge of an innovative design but an entire city." Alan's leadership resulted in the right people being used to good advantage toward the project's completion.

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Pat Postma, the other Co-Chair of the committee, said, "The decision to move the bell to a new location will make it more visible and accessible to the community, with added benefits of gardens and gathering spaces on benches around the bell." The new location will invite visitors to experience the bell because of its prominent location and placement in the midst of our beloved Bissell Park. Pat also expressed her desire to "hear the sound again." It is hard to realize the bell has been silent for over three years!

Pat had the lead on the committee for the fundraising. She did an outstanding job of that with the help of many others she invited to join her in the effort. Of that fundraising she said, "This accomplishment and the fundraising it required was not just ambitious. It was probably audacious, but Oak Ridge has a way of stepping up. Oak Ridgers are willing to support exceptional projects that speak for who we are as a city."

She is correct and this project exemplifies the best in us and our willingness to support projects in which we see as good for our city.

The first contributions came from Oak Ridge's sister city of Naka, Japan, and from the Girl Scouts Oak Ridge Service Unit, which has established friendships with Girl Scouts in Naka. This speaks volumes about the important aspect of international friendship. We in Oak Ridge are fortunate in that we are truly an international city and are proud to join Naka, Japan, in jointly promoting friendship among our citizens.

The new more centralized location will help the bell have even more symbolism for peace. The garden will add to the atmosphere of serenity and peace. The sound of the bell will again speak volumes about Oak Ridge's role in the world and its influential symbol of the bell ringing for friendship and peace.

The bell was created for Oak Ridge's 50th birthday at the recommendation of Shigeko and her late husband Ram Uppuluri. It is being installed in its new Peace Pavilion during Oak Ridge's 75th anniversary. It will bring its message of international peace and friendship to the thousands of visitors of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge.

Alan said, "My fervent hope is that this Peace Pavilion will be a fitting home for the International Friendship Bell; that it will be a source of inspiration and reflection; and that its message of peace and melodious sound will resonate throughout the world for many generations."

Alan is correct, this is truly a project about international friendships and peace.

My mentor and good friend, Bill Wilcox, whom I still miss, wrote the purpose statement for the bell and words for a bronze plaque with the following comments, still relevant today:

### **Friendship Bell**

This bronze bell was designed in Oak Ridge and cast in Japan in 1993 to serve as a symbol of the bonds of friendship and mutual regard that have developed between Oak Ridge and Japan over the past 50 years...Friendship made so much more meaningful because of the terrible conflict of World War II which Oak Ridge played such a significant role in ending. This bell further serves as a symbol of our mutual longing and pledge to work for freedom, well-being, justice, and peace for all the people of the world in the years to come. Given to the people of Oak Ridge on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday by the Oak Ridge Community Foundation and friends in the United States, Japan, and other nations.

1996

Oak Ridge, Tennessee

***Born of War, Living for Peace, Growing through Science***

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These words still ring true and even more so as we recognize the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It is fitting that the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell takes an even more centralized location both physically and in all other ways continues to be a symbol of Oak Ridge to the world.

The Purpose that Bill Wilcox wrote remains accurate today:

First – to celebrate the past 50 (now 75) years of growing friendship and peace with Japan, and Second – to express for the future, the profound longing and commitment to work for the freedom, well-being, justice, and peace for all the peoples of the world. The Purpose also included, ...The Friendship Bell will serve as a continual reminder of our dedication to put our science, technology, and humanity to work in the future together with friends everywhere to building the perpetual peace we all long for – striving for understanding, good health, good environmental stewardship, well-being, and for justice for all people of the world.

These words serve to remind us of the primary essence of the greatness and significance of our bell. It is not an ordinary symbol, it holds true and lasting meaning. We take pride in its presence in our city. We ring it with joy and meaning in every stroke of the striker log.

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The Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell is hanging on the cantilever design bell support structure. The first step in a series of additional elements to be added to complete the Peace Pavilion.