

Ed Westcott's Call Sign: W4UVS

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of November 1, 2021)

The array of people I meet when giving tours of Oak Ridge never ceases to amaze me. Recently, I had the privilege to tour Major General Nichols' niece and her husband along with a historian who showed great interest in our history. Of course, we went by the house where Colonel Nichols lived when he was here during the Manhattan Project.

Earlier, I toured a young lady who knows James Spicer and his "An Oak Ridge Story" about desegregation efforts in Oak Ridge during the 1960's. She is writing a series for Historically Speaking.

A Russian travel writer to whom I gave a tour was also a good connection. He was most interested in the Friendship Bell and has since been a guest on both the *Hidden History: Stories from the Secret City* video cast Keith McDaniel and I have produced for the past year and a half. The programs can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC52Ainl_FiRCGMvtZdLEvWg

The travel writer also joined me on my Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning summer class series, *More Stories from the Secret City*. These classes are proving to be most enjoyable, and I have agreed to teach them again for the upcoming ORICL season.

Most recently, I have toured the director of the Los Alamos Japan Institute and she found the Friendship Bell most interesting. Her comments regarding her efforts between Los Alamos and Japan were enlightening. I told her of our sister city, Naka, Japan, and the Japanese Cherry tree in the parking lot of the United Church, Chapel on the Hill, donated by the Hiroshima Boys School.

She was introduced to me by Clifton Truman Daniel, the grandson of President Truman. I was pleased to meet her and to learn she is planning a trip to Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Kyoto, Japan in 2023. I signed Fanny and me up to go!

And then there are the even more unusual connections such as the one made with Jim Grant who was a part of a bus tour from Florida for whom I was a step-on-guide. When we were in the Oak Ridge History Museum, Jim came up to me and said, "I want to show you something I have found." Not knowing what artifact he might be referring to, I followed him to the Ed Westcott exhibit in the east end of the museum.

What he wanted to show me was the "QSL" (acknowledgement) card on display on the bottom shelf of the case containing many of Ed Westcott's memorabilia. You may know this already, but I just learned what "QSL" stands for by searching for the term on Google.

From Google: The term "QSL" comes from the international Q code and means "I confirm receipt of your transmission". A QSL card is therefore a written confirmation. The sending of QSL cards dates back to the 1920s when AM radio broadcasts were still a novelty and stations wanted to know how far away they were being received.

I took Jim's photo pointing to the card and posted that image on Facebook along with others from that tour. He and I agreed that his "QSL" card with call sign W4UVU was so close to Ed's W4UVS that they could well have gotten them at the same time and place.

Jim later confirmed he had indeed gotten his license at the same location and the same date as Ed in Knoxville. Jim said, "We would have taken our license test together in December 1951. I would have been 15 years old at the time and a sophomore at McMinn County High School in Athens, Tennessee. My dad drove me and another high school kid to the Post Office in Knoxville to appear before the FCC examiner to take our written and code tests. The examiner came every three or six months. The call letters were usually given out in available sequence when you received your license. My friend received W4UVR, Ed got W4UVS, W4UVT now lives in Bradenton, FL, and I received W4UVU, and so on. I received my license on January 21, 1952, and immediately went on the air."

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Ed Westcott was an avid ham radio enthusiast. I am not sure if many of us realize that. We know Ed as our famous photographer, but he was also quite engaged in ham radio.

I asked his daughter, Emily, to tell me about Ed's involvement in his ham radio. She replied, "The one you could have gotten most of the information re dad's ham radio was William. He enjoyed the hobby with dad and got his ham license."

Emily continued, "saying that, several things come to mind. Dad was a member of MARCO - Medical Amateur Radio Council. He received several awards for assisting Drs. In connecting with people in need.

She quoted from the MARCO website: "MARCO is composed of medical, dental and allied fields which constitute the healing arts. On the-air network operation is considered an integral part of MARCO activity and is conducted for the purpose of discussing and exchanging medical and technical information, and, wherever possible, to be of public service by assisting medical emergencies and other priority traffic."

I had heard about Ed's involvement through ham radio in another well-known occurrence, the Jim Jones mass murder (known now as Jonestown Massacre with over 900 people killed) in Jonestown, Guyana, on November 18, 1978. The Peoples Temple religious organization existed between 1955 and 1978. I did not know the full extent of Ed's involvement. But am not surprised to know how he helped with the FBI's investigation.

Emily said, "Dad monitored their activity for several years before Jonestown was set up. It was our summer entertainment as we visited mom & dad while he tuned in their activities. He followed it to the end and taped many conversations. He and mom were invited to visit Jonestown by Jim Jones himself. The FBI borrowed his tapes and notes when the event was under investigation."

I am sure Ed's ham radio activity was beneficial to the FBI. He would likely have been as meticulous with his notes from ham radio conversations as he was with his photography. So, details from those tapes and notes may have been key elements that helped the FBI understand what was really going on with Jim Jones.

Emily concluded with, "It was dad's hobby, he always wanted me to talk on his ham radio, but I was too shy. William sat in his lap as a youngster as dad broadcasted and developed a love for amateur radio also.

I wish I had met Jim Grant sooner and would have been able to ask William about his dad's ham radio hobby before he passed away. Thanks to Emily for sharing her memories. And thanks to Jim for mentioning his connection to Ed through ham radio. I am sure they talked and for sure exchanged QSL cards.

I sure miss Ed!

Jim Grant concluded his communication with me as follows: "I worked with IBM in Oak Ridge from 1966 to 1969 at which time I transferred to Jacksonville, FL where I live now. I worked at all three plants. I assisted with the installation of the 360 model 95 at X-10 in 1969. I spent much of my time at the K-25 computer center. We saw the apparently abandon building on our tour. I worked my way through college by working on photofinishing equipment. Our physics class made a tour of the X-10 Graphite Reactor and the O.R.A.C.L.E. computer at the ORNL. On weekends I drove a 250-mile trip that picked up film from drugstores and always came through Oak Ridge to stop at the film stores there. Thanks for the tour. The town has certainly changed from 70 years ago!!!

Small world, huh.

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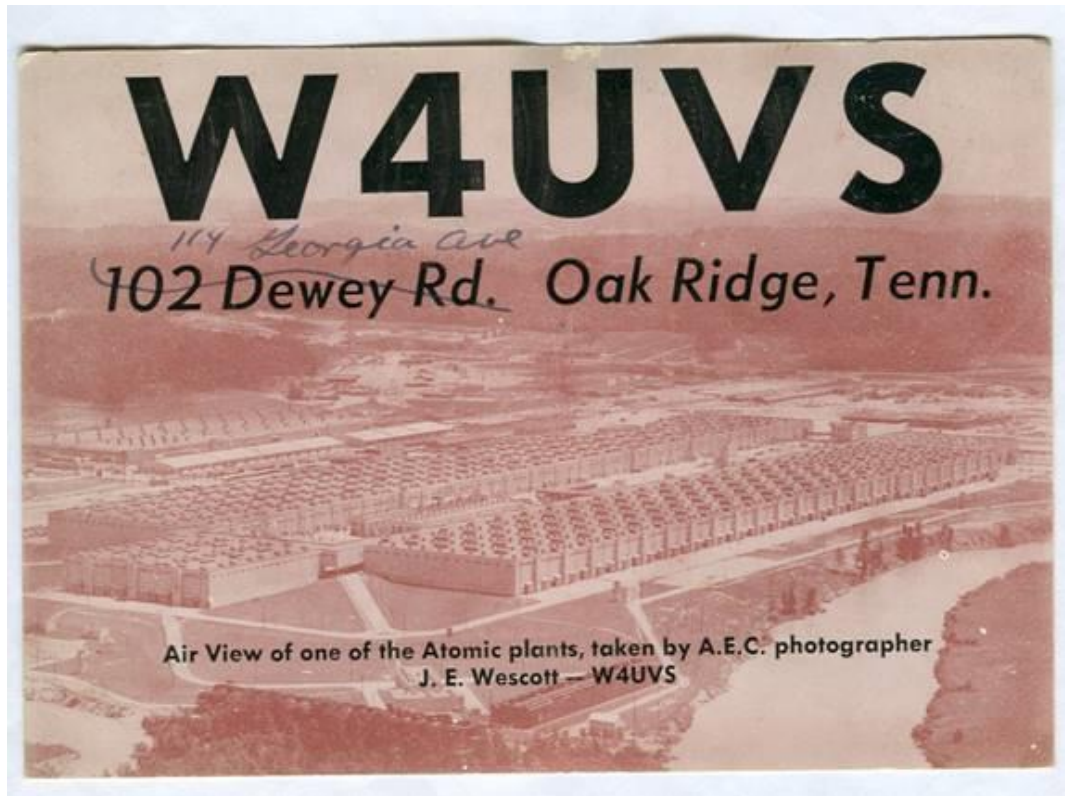
Jim Grant pointing to Ed Westcott's QSL card on display in the Oak Ridge History Museum



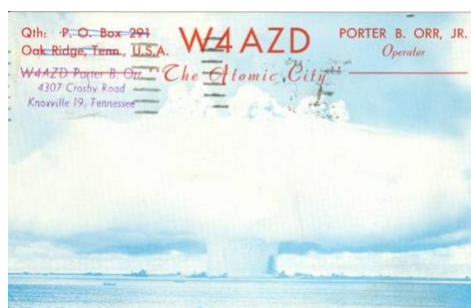
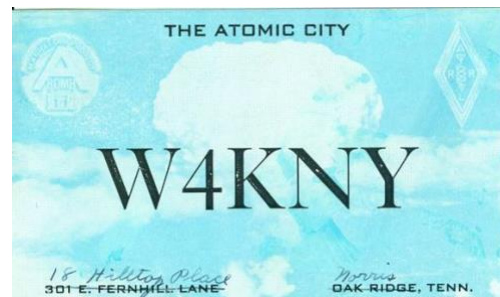
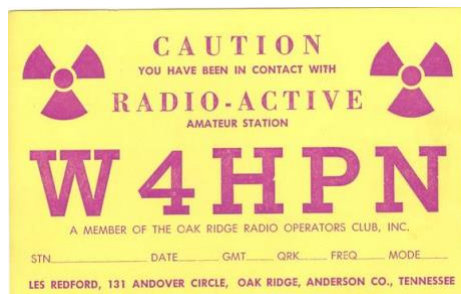
Jim Grant, age 18 on his back porch in Athens in 1954 with his homemade 75 watt transmitter, Heathkit VFO, and Hallicrafters S-77A receiver

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Here's another style of QSL (acknowledgement) card that Ed Wescott used. The back of the card was blank, so it was either mailed with a letter, or Jim may have met Ed at the ham-fest held each year at Crossville State Park.



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Here are three more QSL's from Jim's collection from the 1950's for people living in Oak Ridge at the time

W4UVU		Athens, Tennessee
	Radio..... RST..... S. T. on.....mc. ^{CW} PHONE 19.....	
RCC.....CPA.....		Receiver..... Transmitter..... Remarks.....
520 - 1st Street	Psc QSL Tnx W2HAZ PRINT	Jimmy W. Grant

Caption: This was Jim Grant's first QSL card when he lived in Athens, TN