

K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant Site Reunion: April 27, 2024, 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of April 1, 2024)

Many of you readers of Historically Speaking will have worked at K-25 or have family or friends who have worked there over the years. The work done there accomplished much more than just providing feed material to the Y-12 Plant's electromagnetic separation process to help provide the uranium 235 for Little Boy, the first atomic bomb ever used in warfare which did help win World War II.

After December 26, 1946, K-25 produced the highly enriched uranium for all the nation's nuclear weapons until 1964 when the K-25 Building was shut down. The increased capacity resulting from adding Building K-27 in December 1945 enabled in the gaseous diffusion process to become able to produce weapons grade uranium 235 by December 1946.

At that time the Y-12 Plant's electromagnetic separation process of Alpha and Beta Calutrons was shut down except for Building 9731 and Building 9204-3 (Beta 3). These two building began to separate other isotopes which greatly expanded the newly forming Nuclear Age by contributing to the Graphite Reactor's creation of radioactive isotopes for medical purposes and industrial uses.

K-25 became the world's only production facility for highly enriched uranium until Russia duplicated the Y-12 electromagnetic separation process. Their units were stacked vertically rather than in a horizontal racetrack configuration. SU-20 is an example of their electromagnetic separation process.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0168900299006397>

K-25 expanded by adding additional enrichment stages in buildings K-27 (December 1945), K-29 (January 1951), K-31 (December 1951), and K-33 (November 1954). Over time there developed a market for enriched uranium at much lower percentage than for nuclear weapons. Nuclear reactors were being constructed for research purposes and for electrical power production.

President Carter visited Oak Ridge in May 1978. Do you recall the preparations required for that? It is said he only spent 23 minutes in a display area that was air conditioned just for his visit to a gaseous diffusion display cell. That cell was used for years as a demonstration cell and many people benefited from the unique air-conditioned space in the gaseous diffusion process building K-33.

Speaking of that do you recall the "Roosevelt Cell" and why it got that name? Also when was it created?

The "toll enrichment" program which supplied low enriched uranium to nuclear reactors across the nation and to other countries resulted in such improvement actions at K-25 as the CIP (Cascade Improvement Program), and CUP (Cascade Upgrading Program). These programs were often pronounced together as "Sip/Cup" and consisted of a \$1.5 Billion program to increase productivity through efficiency improvements in all aspects of the gaseous diffusion process.

If you worked at K-25 during any of these eras, you know the story from personal experience. It would be good to have as many previous workers as can be available to enjoy talking with one another about the work there and share your personal experiences. Such an opportunity is forthcoming.

I am proud to announce the upcoming reunion of the K-25 site past employees to be held on Saturday, April 27, 2024, from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

The following is provided by Brad Parrish:

Past Employees to hold first ever K-25 Reunion! (Saturday, April 27 at K-25 from 12 noon to 3 pm)

Oak Ridge, TN: If you worked at K-25 in the past, then you are cordially invited to the K-25 Reunion! The reunion is open to retirees, past and present employees, and contractors. If you worked at K-25/ETTP,

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BNFL, USEC/Centrus, or the Security Force, please come and invite your co-workers and work friends. Spread the word!

The reunion will occur outside the K-25 History Center (old K-25 Fire Hall at 652 Enrichment St). We plan to have a covered tent in the parking lot with tables and chairs but feel free to bring your own lounge chairs if you'd like to sit around and visit. The K-25 History Center will be open for you to visit at a discounted rate of \$3 per person and will have many reminders of K-25's early days and our times together.

Most of the K-25 Site past Plant Managers dating back to the mid-70s have confirmed their attendance, including Waldo Golliher, Gordon Fee, Bob Merriman, Bob Eby, and hopefully Harold Conner.

Current sponsors include CROET, Nuclear Care Partners, Munsey Pharmacy, Coalition of Oak Ridge Retired Employees, and the K-25 History Center—plus, music by the Matthew Hickey Band, sponsored by Marvin Yarber.

A banner will be at the front of the site shortly to notify passers-by about the reunion, and it will serve to welcome our attendees when they arrive on April 27. Please keep praying for good weather.

It will be great to be onsite again with all of you!

Pam Toon and Brad Parish, Organizers

Date: April 27, 2024

Time: 12 PM to 3 PM

Location: K-25 Site, just outside of the K-25 History Center, 652 Enrichment St, Oak Ridge, TN

More Info: 865-804-2723 (Brad) or 865-368-0996 (Pam)

Make your plans now to join other past and present employees who have worked at the K-25 Site over the years, including those who have worked there after the gaseous diffusion process was shut down August 27, 1985, and the site closed down in 1987. This reunion will be a good opportunity to see people you worked with and get updated on what they have been doing since K-25 as well as share mutual experiences from your time working there.

See you on Saturday, April 27, 2024, from 12:00 PM until 3:00 PM!

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K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant including K-25, K-27, K-29, K-31, and K-33 gaseous diffusion process buildings (Photo courtesy of DOE)

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President Jimmy Carter, Paul Vanstrum, and Bill Wilcox as Vanstrum introduces the President to Bill Wilcox who would lead the tour (Photo courtesy of DOE)

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K-25 History Center (Photo by Ray Smith)