

Jack Case – Tool and die maker to plant manager

Last week we noted the role Jack Case played in bringing the uranium machining mission to Y-12. Now, let's look more closely at how he came to be at Y-12 and his overall contributions to Y-12's ability to play a lead role in the winning of the Cold War.

Jack M. Case came to Y-12 in April, 1944. Mr. Case was a native of East Alton, Illinois. He served a four-year Toolmaker apprentice program at Olin Cartridge Company in his home town. Early in his career he worked in several aircraft plants in California where he received special engineering training at the University of California at Los Angeles. He also worked in small arms tool design and fabrication with the U. S. Cartridge Company at St. Louis, Missouri. He joined the Tennessee Eastman Corporation at the Oak Ridge Y-12 Plant in April, 1944.

The way Jack came to be selected to go to Oak Ridge was a bit unusual. In 1943, both Jack and his brother-in-law, Ben Karnosky, joined the Illinois National Guard. In April 1944, they both were being drafted into the regular Army at St. Louis, Missouri. As they were going through the induction process, one of the officers processing the paperwork said to Jack, "You are going to Oak Ridge, Tennessee. You can either go as a civilian or as military, but you are sure going!

They want you because you are a 'toolmaker'." Jack did not necessarily know what to think. As far as he knew there was no such place as "Oak Ridge, Tennessee." His brother-in-law was going to fight in the war and here he was getting sent to somewhere in Tennessee that he had never heard tell of, doing what - he had no idea - and what he really wanted was to help win the war.

Little did he know just how much he would contribute to actually winning the war in just over a year and a half! He and his brother-in-law parted company there and Jack came to Oak Ridge. He spent the first three months here alone and then brought his family to live in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

His young son, Larry – the first born child in the family, was less than four months old at the time the Case family moved here. In addition to Larry, others in the Case family are: wife Hazel (deceased), daughter Linda Fellers and son Patrick. Larry and his wife Marilyn have two children – Blake and Stacey. Blake's son, born in June 2005 is named for his great grandfather – our own Jack Marion Case. Stacy has a daughter – Ella Ruth Rumpsa born July 2005.

Over the years, Jack Case worked as a Toolmaker, a Craft Foreman, General Foreman, General Foreman for Shops, Maintenance Department superintendent, Maintenance Division Head, Mechanical Operations Superintendent, Assistant Y-12 Plant Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent for the Y-12 Plant and finally Y-12 Plant Superintendent in 1967. He served in that capacity until his retirement in January 1982.

At his retirement, Clyde Hopkins, then Vice President of Union Carbide Nuclear Division, said, "He began work April 10, 1944 as a Toolmaker, and in five years he was a superintendent. In 1954, he became manager of the largest production division in the plant – the old Mechanical Operations division which involved 40 to 50 percent of the workers in the whole plant.

In the 1960's he was made assistant plant manager and a few years later plant manager. Few persons are able to influence the lives of others as Jack Case has. He is one of the major reasons Y-12 has the reputation of a can-do outfit. And there is no question but people will tell you he is a great fellow to work with."

During his tenure as Y-12 Plant Manager, Case was instrumental in preparing Y-12 to help win the Cold War. He championed the computerization of machine tools throughout Y-12. He sponsored the purchase of numerous machine tools that greatly expanded the capability of Y-12's production. This enabled the grand scale of production of nuclear weapons secondaries during the 1980's that resulted in the complete failure of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had attempted to keep up with

the pace of manufacturing that Y-12 accomplished, but doing so actually led to the complete collapse of the communist economy.

As a result of Jack Case's renown and his well-known contribution to Y-12 over the years, the name - Jack Case Center, was chosen for the new 12,000 office facility that currently houses the main administrative, engineering and support organizations of all of Y-12. This selection was a choice made by Y-12 employees that represented a 2-1 margin of over 300 voters is an indicator that several people still recall Jack Case, the manager at Y-12 with the longest tenure as leader and the person primarily responsible for equipping Y-12 to help win the Cold War.