

Y-12's Training and Technology — Mayme Crowell

The people who experienced the TAT (Training and Technology) program continue to contact me with really great stories of their personal involvement and what TAT has meant to their careers. Many of them still work at the jobs they obtained when they graduated. Others have moved to other opportunities. All credit the TAT program with giving them a great start on a successful career.

I was delighted to get a phone call from Mayme Crowell. Her story follows:

“In the mid-60’s upon completion of my M.S. from the University of Tennessee, I was employed by Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) at the TAT Project, which was an experimental job skills training program located at Y-12 and funded jointly by the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), one predecessor of the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE). My sequential job titles were guidance counselor, interviewer, and research associate. I chose to work part-time as I had small children at home.

“As a guidance counselor to the physical testing, electronics, and drafting jobs skills areas, I tutored students in math (especially fractions), taught job interviewing skills, and assisted in personal problems.

“One young man kept receiving musical records which he had never ordered in the mail and knew not what to do when the bills came. An older man had a gambling addiction. Another man had a wife who was unfaithful to him and was deciding whether or not to divorce her.

“Few females were in the program—approximately 5%, but they often had relationship concerns both at the training site and elsewhere. There was a GED (General Equivalency Diploma) instructor and many students earned their GED’s while attending TAT. I helped to locate job openings first in East Tennessee and later in the South. Preparing TAT students for relocation became one of my responsibilities.

“As an intake interviewer, I remember that the TAT entrance criteria changed over time from the original M.D.T.A. (Manpower Development and Training Act) to the J.P.T.A. (Joint Partnership Training Act) to the C.E.T.A. (Comprehensive Education and Training Act).

“Initially TAT students were required to lack education and job skills, to be economically below the regional poverty level, and to evidence abilities for the job training to which they had applied. Later the criteria became so specific as to make us interviewers think that we were looking for one-footed, short-trunked pink elephants!

“These seemingly unreasonable student requirements plus the mandate to find individuals in specific, numerous counties all across the U.S. when travel was both expensive and difficult led to the demise of TAT. Also, some of the job skills areas TAT taught were no longer needed; for example, glassblowing.

“In addition, the ORAU promoter of TAT, Wendell Russell died on the streets of Washington, D.C. Few TAT champions came forward afterward.

“As a research associate, I was able to help in proving that TAT was successful economically. We interviewed TAT graduates and were able to obtain their income tax records. We found that generally within a five-year period the TAT graduates were paying back to the U. S. Treasury the cost of their training.

“Those graduates who had left Oak Ridge to take a job elsewhere often had returned to Oak Ridge when job openings in their field became available. The graduates were appreciative of their TAT experiences and stated that they would recommend TAT to others.

“My TAT employment experiences also were good—both eye-opening and humbling. Thank you ORAU for a rewarding experience.” —Mayme Roberson Crowell

Now, how about that! Mayme exemplifies the attitude of most everyone I have talked to about TAT. The program obviously had a tremendous impact on all involved, trainees, trainers and administrators.

Look for more stories from TAT as I continue to get calls and e-mails. I can be reached at 482-4224 or draysmith@comcast.net.