

Training and Technology – Janice Smith’s story

As we wind down the “TAT Treasures,” as Don McMurray has dubbed these stories from TAT alumni, here is one from Janice Smith, a Y-12 employee in the Technology Development organization. She tells of her one odyssey from East Tennessee and how she quickly returned home to never again leave these parts where she finds comfort. Many of you will identify with a young Janice and her desire to return to her roots.

Janice says, “I graduated from the Training and Technology Physical Testing Program sponsored by Union Carbide in February, 1981. I was very fortunate to land a job as a welding inspector for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) at Bellefonte Nuclear Plant in Hollywood, Alabama.

“Wow, what an experience that was. I had never seen anything like that in my life and to have been a part of something that huge for any amount of time was phenomenal. The job was enough to keep me busy—from issuing welding rods, to climbing scaffolds, to working in underground tunnels, to being suspended on a platform in the spent fuel tank and figuring just how far I was from the bottom!”

Author’s note: Imagine this young lady from East Tennessee being placed in the middle of a huge construction project to build a nuclear reactor...don’t you know she wondered how in the world she got into this...

Janice continues, “At age 23 and single, believe me it was hard. Not the work or the National Regulatory Commission training TVA required me to take, but just being so far away from home! That is what kept haunting me.

“Oak Ridge was my home; I was born and raised there, and I wanted to be there with my family. So after six months there, I packed up and drove home as fast I could. Right then I promised myself to never leave East Tennessee again!

“But, that’s not the end. My training opened the door to 14 years of work in quality control at local companies. As a Quality Control (QC) inspector, I was responsible for dimensional and visual inspection.

“This proved to be a fun and enjoyable career, and I was back at home! But then all things must end, and when my employer closed down, it was time for me to change careers. Remaining in QC would only allow me to find positions that required me to work less than desirable shifts, and because my husband worked an irregular shift, that just wasn’t going to cut it with two children. I was determined to find work that did not unduly interfere with my family life.

“I had learned by having to document everything I did daily in QC—recording dimensions, quantities, inventories and histories on vendors or operators—had allowed me to encroach on and develop secretarial skills. So, I began to consider other alternatives.

“It only made sense to me that I should apply for work with Martin Marietta Energy Systems. My mother had worked there for 42 years, my sister was at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and my dad had been an electrician at Union Carbide before going to TVA’s Kingston Steam Plant.

“When I began work in the Development Division in 1995, I soon found out that one of my former Training and Technology instructors, Ralph Grandey, worked in Development, too. And through him I

discovered that my other two instructors, Terry Barnes and Hugh Longmire, were still at Y-12. I had come full circle, back where it all started, Y-12.

“Today, I’m not just home in East Tennessee, but I have found a ‘work home’ here in Y-12’s Technology Development.

”And, by the way I am not the same Janice that was mentioned in a previous article!”

So, there were at least two “Janice’s” at TAT. I am glad we have them both here at Y-12 and they have both enjoyed a good career thanks to the start gotten at TAT!

As we move on from the “TAT Treasures” to other aspects of Y-12’s history, some of the many items created on the machines at TAT have been provided as artifacts for the Y-12 History Center. It is our intent to create a special exhibit featuring the TAT story. If you have artifacts that you would share with us, please let us know.

There is one particularly interesting item made there that was mentioned by Don McMurray – a cannon. That would be a nice addition. I have been offered a Pencil Holder. We have a most interesting shape of copper tubing that has been brazed into intricate curves.

Please consider helping us show the artistry and talent of the TAT School by bringing your TAT artifacts to the New Hope Center for display in the Y-12 History Center.