

## Janice's start at Training & Technology

Janice West Christman, Vice President, Y-12 Quality Assurance, agreed to share her story the week she was retiring. Maybe I caught her at just the right moment because I had been after her to do this for some time and she just had not had the time to do so. For whatever reason, she agreed to tell first her story about her attendance at the historic training program, *Training and Technology*, or what was known locally as "The TAT School."

Janice has also agreed to provide a story that will take us on a journey from her first job at Y-12 working for Utilities at a time when she was the only female among many men doing utility engineering and operating work and let us travel with her as she advanced and rotated through numerous organizations and positions throughout her very interesting career at Y-12. She has had opportunities to lead in many ways, has experienced working in a wide range of technical and managerial positions and has always been characterized as an excellent team member and known for her ability to produce timely results.

I have known her for most of her career, and we have stayed in touch even when she worked in organizations other than the one I happened to be in at the time. She has helped with Y-12 History Center tours and other activities when we had public events and has been one of the several reliable persons on whom I call when the need arises. So, I am sure you will enjoy what Janice writes.

As you know, the TAT School was a joint venture of the Oak Ridge Associated Universities and Y-12. It flourished at Y-12's Building 9709 from 1966 to 1984 and was a model training program with a high percentage of successful job placements.

You can read more about the history of the *Training and Technology* program at:  
<http://www.y12.doe.gov/library/pdf/about/history/10-05-21.pdf>

Here is Janice's story:

"In 1978, an acquaintance working at the Knoxville Women's Center told me that grants were available to train women in "nontraditional" careers at the Y-12 Training & Technology (TAT) program in Oak Ridge; I signed up without a clue about what I was getting into. With a liberal arts bachelor's degree, I had been working in social services jobs that were low paying and not really a fit for me.

"We toured the TAT facilities at Y-12 and saw all of the programs that were being taught, including welding, pipefitting, drafting, and physical testing. I wanted to get into the drafting course since I at least knew what drafting was; however, that course was full and the physical testing course was not. So I chose physical testing. When you are young and still wet behind the ears, some of your most fateful career choices can be that simple.

"On our first day, the physical testing department head met with us for an overview of what the coming weeks would be like. He discussed the "split-shift" schedule, security and safety requirements, attendance policy, and tardiness rules. It was sounding more like the military than a training class, but I figured I could stick it out for six months.

"We settled into our physical testing training, supplemented by math and physics classes. The training was structured to produce teamwork as well as technical skills. The small group of trainees I was thrown

in with gradually became a close-knit team. The instructors who seemed so intimidating that first day became mentors who showed interest in us. They encouraged us to join the National Nondestructive Testing Society that met monthly at the Alexander Inn in Oak Ridge where we met world-class physicists and technical experts from Y-12 and ORNL. We were in over our heads, but they made us feel welcome in their world.

“Within a couple of weeks of graduating from TAT, I landed a good job as a quality inspector at a Knoxville manufacturing company. I progressed in the technical career track, went back to school to get technical degrees and eventually came back to Y-12 in 1981 for what has become my life’s work in support of our national security missions. TAT was definitely a life changer for me.”

Wow, what a testimony for TAT! Like many others who attended that phenomenal training program, Janice readily admits that it was a huge turning point in her life. We published several TAT stories from other graduates and would welcome more.

We have collected several artifacts of the work done there and have at least one certificate now; Janice gave us hers for our display at the Y-12 History Center’s exhibit hall. We also just received from Bobby Miller in Humble, Texas, a copy of the “Trainee Handbook for Training and Technology Project!” If you have artifacts from TAT School that you would share with us, it would be appreciated. Contact Ray Smith at 865-576-7781.

The TAT School is but one example of the heritage that is Y-12 history; however, it is one that profoundly affected the people who were involved, the instructors as well as the training participants. Thanks to Janice for bringing back the memories of this wonderful training program for all to recall.