

## Ed Westcott at Y-12 and the Westcott Center in Oak Ridge

Almost anywhere you look on the walls of the Jack Case and the New Hope Centers at Y-12, you will see a large framed black and white photograph of early Oak Ridge during the Manhattan Project. Many of them give insights into Y-12's history, but some are more than just history, they tell a human interest story.

Ed Westcott, famous Manhattan Project photographer who was given exclusive access to much of the secret work being done at Oak Ridge during World War II and who went on to become one of the most prolific photographers ever in the Department of Energy, made the photographic images that resulted in those magnificent and historical art photographs.

A group of 48 Ed Westcott images are on loan to the East Tennessee Economic Council and are on display at their meeting room for the regular Friday morning meetings held at 1201 Oak Ridge Turnpike. This meeting is recognized as one of the most unique routines and is the envy of other cities that have Department of Energy presence.

Over 100 of the major business interests in the area are represented, with many companies in Knoxville sending representatives. Thus, this makes a great place to showcase Ed Westcott's historical and artistic images where many who appreciate our history can reflect on that by viewing these images weekly.

The East Tennessee Historical Society contracted for the 48 historical images to be displayed in a main gallery just off the main entrance for three months recently. Strata-G's president and founder, Dan Hurst, saw the exhibit and was so taken with the significance of the images that he chose to sponsor the exhibit and hold a reception for his employees at the exhibit.

I was pleased to do a "gallery walk" tour for them. It was a huge success. Ed Westcott was in attendance and was featured throughout the evening. He confirmed the stories behind each image and gave credibility to the talk that would have been much less effective without his nods of approval.

This same exhibit of historical photographs spent the last nine months in Atlanta at the National Archives at Atlanta where it was featured as part of the symposium *Secret City in the Tennessee Hills: From Dogpatch to Nuclear Power* on Sept. 15, 2012. The exhibit was returned just prior to being placed in the East Tennessee History Center.

The Knoxville Museum of Art is being considered as a potential next stop for this exhibit. Ultimately I would like to see it exhibited in New York City. Denise Kiernan, author of *The Girls of Atomic City*, is helping arrange for this through her publishing contacts there. Keep your fingers crossed...wouldn't it be just grand to see Ed's work featured in an art gallery in New York City!

In the Jack Case Center at Y-12, there is a tall hallway leading from both wings to the center of the u-shaped building where the cafeteria is located. This window-filled hallway has been formally named the *Ed Westcott Gallery*. On the walls hang many of Ed's most recognizable and famous images. Recently Ed was invited to tour that gallery.

When the Jack Case Center was opened in July 2007, the huge 20' X 50' mural of the *Y-12 Shift Change*, showing several women in a line leaving work, is displayed on one wall and was a main element of the celebration. Five of the ladies pictured in the mural were found to be still living and attended the ribbon cutting. One of them was "Miss Atomic Bomb" in 1945! Ed was there as well and he and the ladies autographed a smaller photograph of the mural that hangs beside it now.

The New Hope Center's Y-12 History Center has a small theater just large enough to accommodate a tour bus load of visitors to view videos on the history of Y-12. It has been formally dedicated to Ed and is named the *Ed Westcott Theater*.

Most recently, Ed was honored by having the newest large retail center in Oak Ridge named *The Westcott Center*. Kroger is building a superstore at the corner of Illinois Avenue and the Oak Ridge Turnpike, the busiest intersection in Oak Ridge. So, Ed will be featured prominently by having his name attached to that large shopping center.

A note on the history of Kroger in Oak Ridge, they have had four stores here. The first store was located in the new Downtown Shopping Center in 1955 near Loveman's (which was approximately where Belk is located today). The second Kroger store was located where Staples is located today. The third one was located where Oak Ridge Bowling Lanes is located today and finally, where the store is today, just south of K-Mart, is the fourth Kroger store. The superstore in The Westcott Center will be Oak Ridge's fifth Kroger location.

Without Ed Westcott's photographs, we in Oak Ridge would be hard pressed to adequately tell our historic stories. With the pending legislation in the Senate likely to pass the Manhattan Project National Historical Park bill very shortly, Ed's images will take on yet another level of importance. The National Park Service will delight in using them to tell our Oak Ridge history story. Neither Los Alamos nor Hanford have nearly as many high quality images. We are right to be proud of OUR FAVORITE PHOTOGRAPHER: James Edward "Ed" Westcott, age 91!