

## Y-12 and the Jack Case Center

On Friday, February 21, 2014, Patrick Case, Jack Case's youngest son, called me. He was at the New Hope Center and wanted to visit the Jack Case Center. I explained that it would have to wait until Monday. He agreed.

On Monday, I took Pat and his wife to tour the Jack Case Center. They enjoyed seeing the many Ed Westcott photographs that are on the walls there. Many of them brought back memories. The theaters and the Calutron Girls, as well as other images of early Y-12, were intriguing to Pat.

He shared several stories of times when he worked at Paducah and Oak Ridge and how his relationship as the son of the Y-12 Plant Manager led to some interesting situations. He noted that his father was dedicated to Y-12 and that he often saw him spending long hours on the job.

Those of you fortunate enough to have known Jack Case would not doubt that he would have been seen by his family as being dedicated to Y-12. After all, this was during the buildup of the Cold War, and Jack Case played a huge role as Y-12 Plant Manager in leading Y-12 to its key role that helped win the Cold War at the end of the 1980s.

Pat recalled as a very young boy answering the phone in the early 1970s when the call came to tell his father that there had been a hijacking of an airplane and that the hijackers had threatened to fly the airplane into Y-12. Needless to say, that is one time when Jack Case immediately left home to return to work.

Pat also recalled some of the advice his father gave him, such as, "Son, you should try and be a big duck in a small pond, not a big pond like Y-12 and nuclear weapons." He was referring to his job at Y-12 and suggesting it might be easier for Pat to work in a smaller situation than Jack had chosen to do.

The photograph of the Calutron Girls allowed me to tell them of Denise Kiernan, author of *The Girls of Atomic City*, which has gone as high as seventh place on the New York Times Best Seller List. Denise got her idea for the book from seeing that photograph online. She also read one of these Y-12 History articles and contacted me.

That began a really great relationship that allowed me to introduce her and her husband Joe D'Agnese to several Oak Ridge residents who were actual "girls" who worked at Y-12 operating the calutrons. Some of the ladies could recall the details of what they did at Y-12, and some of them even told her how they were able to learn to adjust the calutrons themselves.

Denise and Joe visited Y-12 several times during the research, which lasted over three years. They attended the Secret City Festival each year of the past three and have gone on the Y-12 tours through Building 9731 each time they were available. Denise even found three more calutron girls while on one of the tours.

One of the ladies she met was Jane Greer Puckett, who had been the first woman to graduate from the University of Tennessee with a degree in Statistics. She had wanted to get a degree in Engineering, but the university did not accept women in that degree program at the time. Jane went on to become a statistician at Y-12 working in Building 9731.

She was one of the retired people volunteering as a Y-12 public tour hostess at Building 9731 during the Secret City Festival when Denise found her and scheduled an interview with her. Denise also scheduled interviews with the other Calutron Girls she met during those tours.

Denise is scheduled to be the featured speaker at the Lunch-4-Literacy sponsored by Altrusa International and the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club on Tuesday, March 18, 2014, at the Oak Ridge High School Cafeteria. She will speak on *The Girls of Atomic City* and will also be sharing the venue with

some of the celebrity “girls” who are featured in her book. Tickets are available from either of the clubs sponsoring the event.

Denise announced last week that *The Girls of Atomic City* is now available in paperback. She is beginning another national book signing tour to promote the paperback in the next few weeks. She has done more to promote awareness of Oak Ridge’s history over the past months than anything else we could have done.

We can take pride in Oak Ridge’s ladies who worked here during the Manhattan Project and who are now, late in their lives, getting recognition for the tremendous accomplishment that was done here in Oak Ridge to help win that awful war that, according to John Hendrix, was the “greatest war there will ever be.” They deserve the acclaim Denise is bringing them.

And, just maybe the nuclear weapons that started with that massive Manhattan Project effort have been the primary reason there has not been another world war since. While it is the goal of all of us that nuclear weapons never be used in warfare again, until the world is free of terrorism, powerful nuclear weapons may be necessary as one of the means to maintain the peace and safety for present and future generations.

As Pat Case, left he promised to look for items from his father that might be added to the Jack Case Center lobby in addition to the photograph collage showing Jack Case with the Y-12 Plant in the background. He would like people who come into the building to be able to view something more to remind them of his father and the work he did at Y-12. I told him we would appreciate that.