

One Team – A Historical Perspective

“One Team” is a concept that we have used since July 2014, as Consolidated Nuclear Security has completed the transition into the management and operating contractor for both Pantex in Amarillo, Texas, and the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn. We continue to see the value of teamwork and are finding ways where teaming improves operations.

Although the sites are separated physically, the management team is working together on many common aspects of managing these two large nuclear facilities for the National Nuclear Security Administration of the Department of Energy. It is not uncommon for ideas generated at one location to be included in plans and actions at the other.

Often when new concepts are brought into the workplace, some of the people who have been in place for several years can see something in the past that reflects on what is being attempted as change is introduced. New leadership training concepts often have elements of previous courses repackaged. I well recall one such course that I taught in the 1980s that has seen the basic concepts of “three key principles” included in slightly different words in more recent training courses.

And there are also times when new leadership takes over that the ideas they bring are fresh and new with a perspective that has not been the case previously. Both of these types of new change can be exciting when the change brings about improvements in communication and performance.

There is another type of reflection on the past and changes that can be compared. It is not so positive in reflection but does bring a strong message about the value of teamwork.

Larry Robinson, who has many years of experience at Y-12, reflects on an aspect of our past that many may not even recognize but will surely appreciate.

Larry writes, “Looking at Building 9706-2 (old medical), have you ever wondered about the small entry stoop halfway between the Plant Shift Superintendent’s office and the main entrance? As Y-12 modernized and progressed, many changes have been observed over the decades.”

Larry refers to physical changes in the structures at Y-12. At one time there were segregated restroom facilities with signs such as “Colored” to distinguish the segregation. There were many other clear indicators of that segregated culture that since have gone by the wayside. You may have at least seen pictures of some of them.

Larry continues, “By now, we are all familiar with the ‘One Team’ concept. Under our new management contract, CNS combines Y-12 and Pantex into a new partnership. But the ‘One Team’ concept is not new. When Y-12 was built in the 1940s, our country operated under laws and restrictions that instituted racial segregation in businesses, public places, and government.”

“But beginning in the mid-1950s, the federal government adopted new policies to start a new age where all federal workers could become members of the same team. Federal facilities, including Y-12, began eliminating separate facilities for white and non-white workers.

“Today, all federal facilities are fully integrated and shared by any race, denomination, and gender. But small signs of past times can be seen or recognized by investigating our physical structures.”

Larry concludes, “As for that old stoop, it was once the clinic entrance for Black employees. Yes, times have changed.”

Thank you, Larry, for that lesson in the history of “One Team!” As we preserve the history of Y-12, the drawings that show the segregated facilities are part of the artifacts we are retaining — segregation is not.