



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

NEWS RELEASE

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Strong Leader Needed to Assure Continued Funding for Oak Ridge Environmental Cleanup *By Ted Lundy, member, Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board*

“Why was Tennessee chosen as one of the major sites for the Manhattan Project?” I have heard over the years that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had asked Sen. Kenneth McKellar to the White House for a private meeting in about 1940 saying that he needed large amounts of money for the project. The question asked of the senator was: “Can you keep the project secret from all the members of Congress?” And the response was: “Yes, Mr. President and where in Tennessee will the project be?”

Now, after my web search on Sen. McKellar, I am quite convinced that the above mentioned quotes were close to what actually happened at the meeting. McKellar had been in the U.S. Senate representing Tennessee since 1916 and held a key position on the Appropriations Committee. Earlier, he most certainly had pushed Roosevelt for the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

One of the references disclosed by the search indicated that shortly before Roosevelt’s death in April 1945, the president had contacted Memphis political leader Edward Crump requesting that he withdraw his support from McKellar’s upcoming reelection in 1946. Crump refused! Perhaps McKellar had been demanding too much from the president and was pestering him for more. We probably will never know more about those demands; but later in 1952 McKellar did not win his political party’s nomination for his seventh term as a U.S. senator from Tennessee. The nomination went to Albert Gore of Carthage, who was elected to his first term in the Senate.

As a native Tennessean, I grew up near Nashville in the town of Goodlettsville. Both sets of my grandparents had lived in the DuPont Village at Old Hickory where my parents had met as teenagers and married. My father was educated by DuPont to be an electrician and was employed by that company for much of his life. Within a month of Pearl Harbor, we were moved to Alabama with Dad’s job at a “powder plant” in Childersburg.

Many years later after I had completed grade school and high school at Goodlettsville and college at the University of Tennessee with a few years into employment at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, I asked my father if he might have known about the heavy water plant in Childersburg. He looked at me in surprise and said “I’ve never said a word about that!” After the surprise was over, I told him he could talk about it now because it was in the history books. He went on to describe the extra security at the heavy water plant where he had worked in during World War II.

As one of the 20 volunteer members of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board, I have been very pleased with the progress I have observed and perhaps somehow influenced in the cleanup of hazardous wastes left behind from operations at the Oak Ridge National Lab, Y-12, and K-25 areas. A high degree of professionalism exists among all Department of Energy employees and their contractors as I have observed. I applaud their detailed work and my sincere hope is that adequate future funding will be forthcoming.

My suggestion is that we need to spur at least one outstanding individual within a key political and/or appointed federal government position to have the drive and determination shown by Kenneth McKellar to assure outstanding future budgets for Environmental Management. "Who will that be?"