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"I WORKED AT OAK RIDGE:"
An Early Narrative of Life in the Secret City

by Edna Best Hunter

The impact of the Second World War was felt in East Tennessee in many of the same ways it was felt throughout the nation. Young men and women joined the military, industries retooled and focused their output on the supplies and material of war, while civilians on the home front bought war bonds, rationed many of the items they had previously taken for granted, and waited eagerly for news from the front lines.

But by the end of the war, East Tennesseans came to realize that they had played a much larger role in the conflict than they had imagined. The detonation of an atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 9, 1945, announced to the world the true purpose of the secret city of Oak Ridge. Only then did East Tennesseans learn the truth about the mysterious little town built by the federal government in Anderson and Roane counties. Oak Ridge, they discovered, was home to the Manhattan Project, a federal effort that included revolutionary scientific research and massive construction projects. Although countless rumors had circulated throughout East Tennessee regarding the activities taking place behind the fence that surrounded Oak Ridge, few people knew the truth. Even more remarkable is the fact that so few of the workers inside the fence understood the purpose of what they were doing, despite the fact that the workforce eventually peaked at more than 80,000.

Among those who did know the truth were the staff members of the Intelligence and Security Division of the Manhattan Project. Created specifically for the task of ensuring overall security for the project, this division was headquartered at Oak Ridge and was composed of uniformed personnel as well as about 500 agents who often wore civilian clothing. In addition to providing security, agents often tracked down rumors and security leaks, a mission that took them across the country and sometimes around the world.[1] As the work force increased, the Intelligence and Security Division was forced to increase proportionately. They recruited heavily from other Security agencies across the country, and among those they persuaded to move to Oak Ridge was a young stenographer named Edna Best.

Edna Best was working in the Pentagon when she was recruited, but she was originally from Monroe County in East Tennessee. Born on a farm near Tellico Plains, she

[1] For more information on the Intelligence and Security Division and the overall problems associated with security at Oak Ridge, see Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, *City Behind a Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee 1942-1946* (Knoxville, 1981), chapter 5. For a general overview of the early years at Oak Ridge, in addition to Johnson and Jackson, see Russell B. Olwell, *At Work in the Atomic City: A Labor and Social History of Oak Ridge, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 2004); George O. Robinson, Jr., *The Oak Ridge Story: The Saga of a People Who Share in History* (Oak Ridge, 2007 [1950]); and James Overholt, ed., *These Are Our Voices: The Story of Oak Ridge, 1942-1970* (Oak Ridge, 1987).

later moved to Sweetwater and graduated from Sweetwater High School. She then enrolled at Tennessee Wesleyan College where she majored in business and education, and took additional coursework at Lincoln Memorial University. Edna Best returned to Sweetwater and taught school for three years until, acting on an impulse, she decided to take a civil service examination at her local post office. Within a short time she was contacted and offered a job with the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department and she began working at the Pentagon in June 1942.

Her decision to return to East Tennessee came in March 1944. She thinks now that she was recruited at least in part because she was from Tennessee, particularly since a friend, Elizabeth Kendrick, who was from Knoxville, was recruited at the same time. Although neither of them had heard of a town called Oak Ridge, they agreed to the transfer and were in fact quite eager to be involved in something that seemed to have the air of an adventure. They made the journey back to East Tennessee together and eventually became roommates while they were in Oak Ridge.

Given her access to classified documents, Edna Best soon surmised the historic nature of her new job. In September 1945, one month after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, she began to write down her memories of what she experienced during her time in Oak Ridge. Later transferred back to Washington DC on temporary assignment, Edna Best was in that city for the premier of the movie *The Beginning or the End.* A dramatic account of the development of the atomic bomb (featuring a young Hume Cronyn in the role of Dr. Robert Oppenheimer), this film made an impression on Edna Best and reinforced to her the significance of her work during World War II. She kept the program from that premier and it became one of the first items in a collection that eventually included snapshots, newspaper clippings, and a variety of other items from her years in Oak Ridge (but as she quickly points out, "nothing that was classified"). Then, in 1948, she returned to the narrative she had started three years earlier, adding some more detail and making slight revisions. Segments of that version, with minor editorial changes, are reproduced here. Unless otherwise noted, citations reflect her recollections of the momentous events in Oak Ridge in the mid-1940s.

Edna Best continued working in Oak Ridge until 1953 when she married Robert D. Hunter, an employee at the Tennessee Valley Authority, another of East Tennessee's major federal projects during the mid-twentieth century. They moved to nearby Knoxville where Mrs. Hunter lives today. The editor wishes to thank Mary Houghton, a friend of Edna Best Hunter, and of course Edna Best Hunter herself for her willingness to share her memories of East Tennessee's unique role in World War II.

* * * * *

It was a dark, dismal day when I arrived in Oak Ridge in March 1944. The rain was coming down in torrents, and flashing through my mind was the sudden realization that Washington DC, from where I had just arrived, was much more glamorous than I had ever realized.

Extensive recruiting, in a hush-hush manner, had been going on in Washington for employees who were interested in going to Oak Ridge. I was told that Oak Ridge

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was a small, secluded place in the mountains somewhere near Knoxville, Tennessee, where secret war work was being conducted. Of course, my first thought was that it could be a powder plant for the manufacture of some type of ammunition, never dreaming the ammunition might be so powerful. The living quarters were described as large barracks, one group of them being Army barracks, and others where civilians lived and slept in Army cots, using Army blankets. All this sounded very adventurous.

Another Tennessee girl[2] and I arrived in Knoxville in the wee hours of the morning. A Government car was supposed to meet us. (Later, we found the car had met us, but because we were a few minutes late, it didn't wait for us.) After waiting for the car for what seemed like hours, we decided to go to Oak Ridge on the bus. Most of the buses then going from Knoxville to Oak Ridge were "Trailer Buses," trailers which had formerly been used in the West to haul cattle. The trip could be compared to riding a bucking bronco. It was an effort to stay on the seat along the wall [or to avoid] making a nose-dive into the floor to keep your baggage upright. Some Army personnel were also taking their first trip to the Ridge and each did their share of complaining.

We finally arrived at a group of small buildings which we thought was our destination, but it was only a temporary Gate House several miles from the townsite.[3] After someone there called the office to which we were to report to confirm our clearance, we went to the Main Administration Building. This large building was fenced in and newcomers could enter at only one entrance. As we were at the wrong entrance, the second obstacle was the walk around the full perimeter of the building to get to the correct gate, carrying our heavy luggage. The remainder of the day was spent in filling out Personal History Statements and other forms, hearing a security lecture, reading security pamphlets, and completing other paperwork.

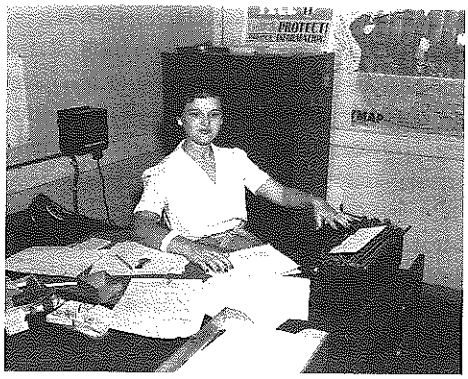
At the end of the day a motor pool car carried us to the "barracks" where we were to live. It was almost dark and still pouring rain. The dormitory to which we had been assigned was about five miles from where we worked.[4] I had never dreamed of things being so many miles apart. People who lived in the townsite and worked at the plants even traveled 15 and 25 miles to their work.[5] Our hearts were full of disappointment, and as we came near the grey dormitory buildings outlined against the dark sky, which seemed to stand in pools of water, with no vegetation in sight, we

[2] Elizabeth Kendrick from Knoxville, also a Pentagon employee, was recruited at the same time as Edna.

[3] Edna Best arrived at Elza Gate, one of four gates—the others being Solway, Edgemoor and Oliver Springs—that provided access to the townsite and administrative area. Three other gates—White Wing, Gallaher, and Blair—led directly to the plant areas. See Johnson and Jackson, 10.

[4] Edna Best was assigned to Batavia Hall, near what is now Jackson Square.

[5] The reservation itself was about 17 miles long and some workers may indeed have had very lengthy commutes. For workers who lived off the reservation the daily trip to work could be much further. Some were bused in from as far away as 50 miles.



Edna Best at her desk in Oak Ridge. *Courtesy of the author.*

became hysterical, first laughing and then crying.

We went into the dormitory, unpacked, and proceeded to take a shower before going out to look for food. There was no distinction between the water; it was all "boiling." We then went to the nearest cafeteria, only to be met by a guard who greeted us with the words, "Sorry, it's closed, but I'll axe 'em and see if they'll let you in," after telling them we were so hungry. We didn't get in, but went back to [the] townsite by bus to a cafeteria which was open 24 hours a day to be initiated at what was sometimes called "ptomaine tavern."[6]

The next day it was still raining and we stood out in the open with mud over our shoe tops waiting for the bus. The story goes that some of the girls even went barefooted, wading to the building where they worked. We were assigned to the Security and Intelligence Division as that was the department of the Government we were in before coming to Oak Ridge to work. I was assigned as secretary to Lt. Nicholas Del Genio, a dark fellow of Italian descent and a member of the Counter-intelligence Corps, who seemed to *bark* at anyone he spoke to. For days when trying to write his name for signature, I would have to go out in the hall to look at the name plate over the door to see how such a strange name was spelled. The office personnel was made up of civilian clerks, typists, and stenographers, some of whom were WACS.[7] Army officers were in charge of the different sections. Most of the WACS were girls with college degrees, several formerly being school teachers or office workers.

Each day I realized my boss had a bark which was louder than his bite, and the work became more fascinating. This was especially true because gradually the darkest

[6] By the time Edna Best arrived in Oak Ridge there were 11 cafeterias and they were a constant source of complaints. Operated by Roane Anderson Company, the cafeterias had improved only slightly since a 1943 exit survey among departing employees revealed that the most common reason given for their decision to quit their jobs was the poor quality of the food served in the cafeterias. See Johnson and Jackson, 90-91.

[7] The Women's Army Corps (WAC) was an outgrowth of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), a volunteer organization authorized by Congress in 1942 to fill clerical and support positions for the United States Army. Created the following year, the WAC was a branch of the Army rather than a support organization. By the end of the war the WAC had enlisted more than 150,000 women. Although some WACs served in traditional male roles such as pilots or mechanics, most were clerks, stenographers, typists, and communications specialists. Many of these, like the WACs in Oak Ridge, served in highly sensitive positions. The WACs became a permanent part of the Army in 1948 and continued as such until 1978, when women were assimilated into the regular Army ranks. See Judith A. Bellafaire, *The Women's Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service*, CMH Publication 72-15. www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.htm.

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secret the world has ever known was dawning upon me. Through Top Secret reports and correspondence, which I was almost afraid to let circulate through my mind, I had learned of atom smashing and plans to create the powerful atom bomb.[8]

In the buildings where we worked and along the roads on the area were posters which were intended to emphasize the importance of safeguarding military information. One such poster I recall was worded as follows:

What you see here,
What you do here,
What you are here,
When you leave here,
Let it stay here.

In each office at the project they had combination safes in which classified documents were kept. We had red "burn baskets" for our classified waste paper.

Very few of the people who worked at Oak Ridge had any idea what they were working on, the work was so divided up. They only knew they were working on a valuable war project. Several rumors were started, which were usually traced down by secret agents and the parties involved severely reprimanded.

Training schools were set up for new employees of the plants where they went for about two weeks. They saw movies which told how leaked information might be dangerous to the country. They saw how it might help the enemy to easily put pieces of information together. These bits of information from careless talk and correspondence and improper handling of classified documents could be dangerous.

An example of loose talk: A telephone call was made to Oak Ridge one night during the war. The caller was a woman who wanted to get in touch with her brother, who she said was employed there. The operator did not find his name in the directory and asked if the woman knew for what company her brother worked; the woman said, "No." Then the operator asked if she was sure she was calling the right place, and her reply was, "Well, that's the place where they're smashing those atoms, ain't it?" An agent from Oak Ridge was sent out to contact her and she agreed to forget all about splitting atoms; her brother, who was only passing on a rumor, not knowledge, was given a severe lecture.

All personnel were investigated to determine their loyalty to our Government and whether or not they were citizens. All employees made security and secrecy agreements before being employed. Information about the work that each person got was

[8] Edna Best was reasonably certain that her friend, Elizabeth Kendrick, had also figured out the true purpose of the Manhattan Project. Even so, neither of them mentioned their suspicions to the other due to the absolute requirement for secrecy. All doubts as to the purpose of the Manhattan Project were erased for Edna Best when her supervisor, Lt. Del Genio, dictated a particularly detailed letter shortly before his departure from Oak Ridge in the summer of 1945. Del Genio, she learned, had been assigned to escort a shipment of enriched uranium to Los Alamos and then on to the Pacific island of Tinian, where an atomic bomb was to be assembled and dropped on Japan.

Edna Best and some fellow workers in the Intelligence and Security Division. From left, Edna Best, Lt. W. W. Huisking, Adele Dietz, and Lt. S. James Vaughn. *Courtesy of the author.*

only what he needed to perform his own job. Well-trained military police patrolled the plants and the area in which they were located. Major General Leslie R. Groves[9] was in charge of the Atomic Bomb Project. He was formerly with the United States Engineering Division. General Groves helped to draw up plans for the famous Pentagon Building in Arlington, Virginia, which is the largest office building in the world.

Colonel William Budd Parsons,[10] who had formerly been a paper executive in Seattle, Washington, was Chief of the Intelligence and Security Division. It was this organization that played the greatest part in seeing that the secret was kept. His men were members of the Counter-intelligence Corps who often dressed in civilian clothes. They traced down small bits of information about the Manhattan Project which had leaked out. The secret of the Manhattan Project was the closest guarded secret during the war. Captain Bernard W. Menke,[11] who was then Colonel Parsons's executive officer and who was called the company security officer, is at present in charge of the Security Division of Oak Ridge in a civilian capacity.

Three young lieutenants—Nick Del Genio, ex-captain and coach of the Yale boxing team; S. J. Vaughan,[12] a Texas attorney; and W. W. Huisking,[13] New York drug merchant—organized and administered an educational program utilizing every pos-

[9] Major General Leslie R. Groves was originally from Albany New York. A graduate of West Point, Groves was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Engineers in 1931. After attending the Command and General Staff School, and the Army War College, he was again assigned to the Office of the Chief of Engineers where his responsibilities included supervision of the construction of the Pentagon. Assigned to command the Manhattan Project in 1942, Groves had complete control of all aspects of the project, including science, production, security, and planning for how the bomb was to be used. Groves retired from the army in 1948 and worked for Sperry Rand Corporation until 1961. See William Lawren, *The General and the Bomb: A Biography of General Leslie R. Groves, Director of the Manhattan Project* (New York, 1988).

[10] Colonel William Budd Parsons of Seattle, Washington, was head of the Intelligence and Security Division at Oak Ridge. See Robinson, 68.

[11] Captain Bernard W. Menke, a lawyer, was among the earliest intelligence officers to be assigned to the Manhattan Project. He worked in a number of capacities for the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) after the war. See *The Oak Ridger*, March 6, 1998.

[12] S. James Vaughan was an attorney from Texas.

[13] W. W. Huisking was from New York. Rather than relocate his family to Oak Ridge, he went to New York each weekend.

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sible means: posters, move trailers, payroll inserts, etc. Lt. Del Genio later was a member of the party which took the first atomic bomb overseas which was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. He is now with the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington, D.C., as a civilian employee.

Several stories have been told illustrating the security state of mind of the people. One of the best examples occurred at a laboratory at one of the universities connected with the Project. When a fire broke out in one wing of the lab, someone turned in the fire alarm, but when the fire department arrived, they were denied entry. "Fire or no fire," said the civilian guard, "you can't come in without a clearance from Security."

He consented at last only to call the local branch for a clearance, which was quickly given by Captain Robert Kirkman,[14] chief of security at that location. The firemen poured in. "Wait a minute!" cried the guard. "Even with a clearance, you got to sign the book!" And sign the book the firemen did before they went any further.

The story was told after the release that Agent Larry Brock,[15] former New York attorney, seeking to improve his own understanding of what was going on, went to a library near one of the plant sites to look up the "dope" on uranium. He took from the shelf a standard text on the elements and noted, before opening the book, that there was a dark gray streak running all around the edges, evidence that the pages in one section were the most read in the book. Opening the book at the streak, he found that this was the section covering uranium, and that it was all but unreadable with underlining, comments along the margin, grime, and wear from much handling. A survey was made immediately by Agent Hank Lowenhaupt[16] which revealed that though the essential end secrets were not betrayed, it would have been possible to obtain a tremendous amount of information of processes and methods simply by reading those parts of the books in the library which showed signs of greatest use. The library was given periodic checks from then on.

The Security Office and the Office of Censorship instituted a remarkable press and radio censorship during the war. A directive was issued requesting that nothing be published whatever regarding atom smashing. This meant also that articles on the same [subject] published before the war could not be republished. The newspapers gave wonderful cooperation—this willing cooperation was made on blind faith alone. With only one really serious exception, the cooperation was complete. That exception was a transcribed broadcast by a widely known commentator who in about August 1944 spilled the beans, despite the censorship. One of the Cleveland, Ohio, papers also violated the censorship code with a story about the Santa Fe site, which,

[14] Captain Robert Kirkman was originally attached to the Intelligence and Security Division's Chicago office.

[15] In *City Behind a Fence*, the authors maintain that versions of this story were told and retold in Oak Ridge for many years to come. See Johnson and Jackson, 153-154, and Robinson, 69.

[16] Agent Henry S. Lowenhaupt, a chemist from Yale, worked after the war with the Central Intelligence Agency. See, for example, Henry S. Lowenhaupt, "On the Soviet Nuclear Scent," *Studies in Intelligence* (Fall 2000 [Fall 1967]):13-29.

though based on rumors, connected the site with work on a secret weapon and connected Dr. Oppenheimer, a nuclear physicist of great fame, with it.[17] Several members of Congress made revealing statements on the floor or in committee meetings, but only a very few newspapers published such statements. The Manhattan Project was under such strict regulations that the Federal Bureau of Investigation representatives had to have special passes to enter the installations throughout the country.

No secret was ever kept better. This is thought to be especially remarkable because it was accomplished almost entirely without a show of authority. This was accomplished by simple faith of employees and all concerned and by persuasion, not threats or prosecution. It was kept because the people were persuaded that it was essential to join their own interests to those of the nation as a whole. It can be seen now that the people who had faith have been repaid in full.

In the office where I worked, it was thought that the news would be released sometime in July or August 1945. Another girl and I were spending our vacation at Daytona Beach, Florida (the other girl also worked in Security). Every day we would hurry to purchase a newspaper and listen to the radio every chance we had to see if anything had been released. On the last day of our vacation, I was sitting on the porch when I glanced at the paper my mother was reading and saw the big, brazen headlines stating that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. I then wished I could have been back at work, sharing the excitement with the people who had looked forward to this day.

On August 6, 1945, President Harry S. Truman, then enroute back to the United States from Potsdam Conference, electrified the world with the announcement that 16 hours earlier an atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T. N. T. Its power is the harnessing power of the universe.[18]

There was a great race to be won and the United States had won. It is said that Germany and Russia both had worked on developing a bomb. Today there are many rumors of how near the Russians are to achieving this goal.[19]

How near are Stalin's Russians to an Atomic Bomb of their own? Everyone is guessing, but no one knows, perhaps not even the Russians themselves—possibly not even the tweedy, pipe-puffing brilliant Prof. Peter Kapitza, Stalin's Number One Atomist. The

[17] J. Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist, is sometimes called the "father of the atomic bomb" for his work as director of the Manhattan Project. The radio commentator mentioned by Edna Best cannot be positively identified. Similar incidents are given in Robinson, 71-73.

[18] "Atomic Energy," *Encyclopedia Americana,* 14th Edition, II, 510.

[19] The German effort to create an atomic bomb was never able to make much progress, but the Soviet Union did in fact detonate a nuclear device in September 1949.

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o make much progress, but the Soviet Union

Russians have been trying to evolve the deadly toy ever since they first heard of the dark goings on at the University of Chicago and Oak Ridge. They have been researching not only in Canada but on their own steps, too.[20]

Oak Ridge is a city which grew up almost overnight. It has grown from a place of mud into a beautiful, modern city. It covers 59,000 acres and is 9 miles wide and about 17 miles long. The area is about 18 miles from Knoxville and only 8 miles from Clinton [the county seat of Anderson County]. It is on the Clinch River, which gives it easy access to water power, and it is 28 miles from Norris Dam, which furnishes it with electricity.[21]

The date that work started on the area was November 1942. The first building was the Administration Building, which started on November 25, 1942. It is a two-story office building with seven wings. The entrance of this building has a small gate house where military guards see that each person entering the building has a badge, and a visitor who wants to visit someone in the building must state whom he wishes to see, and then one of the guards or a receptionist calls that office to see if it is all right for you to go to that office, checks your pass, and has you sign your name and the time you enter. Upon leaving you sign out. . . . To get into the area, you must have a pass. Even though you have a pass, you must have some identification before entering the area. They make spot checks of cars, searching them by removing seats and checking the baggage compartments to see if anything in the way of weapons or anything illegal is being carried into the area.

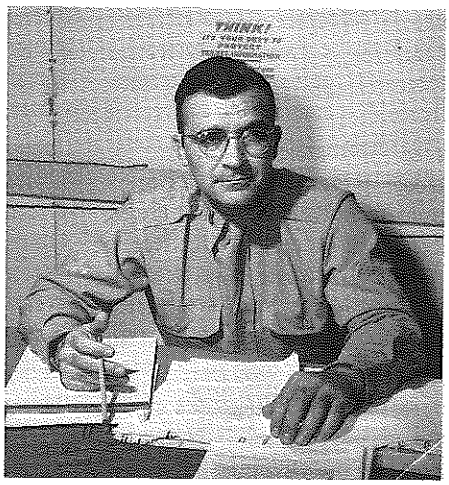
During the war there were military guards, but now they are civilians, most of them having been veterans. Oak Ridge is made up of people from every walk of life, from top scientists to the poorest educated people. They have a job and everyone cooperates. There are people of every denomination. There is the Chapel on the Hill for all denominations.[22] The Baptists use the high school for their services, and the Methodists use the largest theater.

A great deal has happened since I first came to Oak Ridge, but still there is much

[20] A. Parry, "Russia's Three Oak Ridges," *Science Digest* 24 (December 1948): 25-29

[21] Norris Dam, completed in 1936, was the first hydroelectric dam constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). By the time Edna Best arrived in Oak Ridge in 1944, TVA operated six additional dams in East Tennessee. The availability of a cheap and dependable source of power was an important consideration in favor of locating the Manhattan Project in East Tennessee. See Johnson and Jackson, 6.

[22] Aware that no single congregation had enough members to support its own church in the early years, workers of all denominations in Oak Ridge met as a united congregation in July 1943 and formed the United Church. The congregation met in a cafeteria while the "Chapel-on-the-Hill" was under construction. The building was dedicated in September of that same year and remains in use today as non-denominational place of worship. Ibid., 128-129, 197-198.



Lt. Nicholas Del Genio, Edna Best's supervisor in the Inelligence and Security Division of the Manhattan Project at Oak Ridge. *Courtesy of the author.*

that cannot be told. . . . It is contemplated that the gates around the area will open March 19, 1949.[23] It is hoped that this will invite new, modern stores, invite more recreation facilities, and make people feel that they can have a more normal life. However, security is still going to be observed by all, and a new, stricter guard will be maintained at the plants.

For those who have been there since the beginning and have seen the city grow, it is amazing. This is something for which we are thankful and look forward to even better days to come.

* * * * *

Among the mementoes and souvenirs in Edna Best Hunter's collection is a letter from her supervisor, Lt. Nicholas Del Genio. Like Edna, Lt. Del Genio was not in Oak Ridge when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, but was in fact on the island of Tinian, where he had gone to accompany the enriched uranium that went into the atomic bomb. He was among those who were allowed to write a "message" on the bomb, and so he wrote "From us in Oak Ridge to Tojo."

* * * * *

August 19, 1945
1st Tech. Serv. Detachment
A.P.O. 336, c/o/ P.M. San Francisco, Calif

Dear Edna, et al,

This story is dragging out longer than I want it to. It appears now that I may be here another 6-to-8 weeks, much to my regret. I wanted to be in Oak Ridge when the story broke, but I was in on the end of it which was thrilling enough.

I saw the first egg loaded, patted it, initialed it and watched it go off. I saw the 2nd one too and in both instances I heard the first hand accounts of the results from the

[23] A ceremony at Elza Gate on Mach 19, 1949 officially opened the gates to Oak Ridge with a small atomic impulse that burned a ribbon. All other gates were opened at the same time and visitors to the city were at last able to enter without being stopped. See *BWX Tymes* 3 (February 2003): 8. See Robinson, 128-130.

crews that delivered a
brass – General Spaat
Purnell,[29] among a lot

This outfit had bee
members sort of pooh
for autographs.

Yet, I'd love to have
of the headlines & no

I should appreciate
cut off from any news

I'll be writing to C
all fine & will write s

P.S. The mess serg
Oak Ridge with the

[24] Carl A. Spaatz was from
to command the Strategic

[25] Nathan F. Twinning wa
Air Force when the atomi

[26] Lieutenant General Bar
Air Force in the Pacific are

[27] Probably Brigadier Gen
mand of the 313th Bomb

[28] General Thomas Franci
and Chief of Field Opera
Leslie Groves.

[29] Admiral William R. Pu
Project. The Military Poli
bomb.

[30] Shields and Creed were

[31] Lake City, Tennessee, a

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crews that delivered and witnessed it. At the first crew interrogation we had lots of brass – General Spaatz,[24] Lt. Gen Twining,[25] Genls Giles,[26] Davies,[27] Farrell,[28] adm. Purnell,[29] among a lot of lesser luminaries.

This outfit had been razzed for a long time – every thing was so secret – the other members sort of pooh-poohed them. Now its all different. Others are almost yelling for autographs.

Yet, I'd love to have seen the newspapers. I hope Shields and Creed are saving some of the headlines & notices, I'm curious to see them.[30]

I should appreciate all news of the office & the organization as I've been completely cut off from any news, especially since I thought I'd be here only about 10 days.

I'll be writing to Ollie & the others direct very shortly; meanwhile I hope you're all fine & will write soon.

Regards,
Nick Del Genio

P.S. The mess sergeant here is from Lake City,[31] imagine! And he didn't connect Oak Ridge with the A.B. until some time after the announcement.

[24] Carl A. Spaatz was from Boyertown, Pennsylvania. Following the German surrender, Spaatz was appointed to command the Strategic Air Forces on the Pacific.

[25] Nathan F. Twinning was from Monroe, Wisconsin. Twinning was in command of B-29s in the Twentieth Air Force when the atomic strikes took place.

[26] Lieutenant General Barney M. Giles, from Mineola, Texas, was named commanding general of the Army Air Force in the Pacific areas in April 1945.

[27] Probably Brigadier General James H. Davies from Piedmont, California. In January 1945 he was in command of the 313th Bomb Wing in the Southwest Pacific.

[28] General Thomas Francis Farrell was born in Troy, New York and was the Deputy Commanding General and Chief of Field Operations of the Manhattan Engineer District, acting as executive officer to General Leslie Groves.

[29] Admiral William R. Purnell, the naval representative to the Military Policy Committee of the Manhattan Project. The Military Policy Committee was charged with directing the development and use of the atomic bomb.

[30] Shields and Creed were two of the WACs working with Edna Best.

[31] Lake City, Tennessee, about 15 miles northeast of Oak Ridge, had been called Coal Creek until 1936.