



*Many Voices Working for the Community*

## **Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board**

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Jimmy Bell's Experience Brings Valuable Input to Federal Advisory Board**

As a youngster growing up in Hazlehurst, Ga., Jimmy Bell never imagined his future would take him across the globe to places he had only read about. However, through dedication and hard work, he was involved in important projects throughout the United States and around the world.

Today, Jimmy is a member of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB), a federally appointed citizens' panel that provides independent advice and recommendations to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Management program to clean up portions of the Oak Ridge Reservation. Jimmy uses his years of experience to provide valuable insight to the federally chartered board that addresses the area's crucial environmental issues.

Jimmy graduated from Berry College in Rome, Ga, in 1960 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and mathematics. He went directly to graduate school at the University of Mississippi and was there in 1962 when James Meredith became the first black student to enroll at the university. "I distinctly remember the day he came." He also remembers all the strife that followed.

Interestingly, Jimmy says the chemistry department had been recruiting black graduate students to the program even before Meredith arrived. However, when this became known, many in the department, including himself since he was teaching at the time, were labeled as 'integrationists' and some of the professors began leaving. Jimmy said he and his wife, Luci, received a number of threatening phone calls.

In a way, the situation gave him the impetus to accelerate his study. When he learned several of the professors on his Jimmy Bell enjoys one of his favorite spots, in the shade of a chestnut tree, on his cattle farm near Kingston.



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doctoral committee were going to leave, he increased his work load, and he finished his work by the end of August 1963. "Luci was a chemistry major, and she was a good writer and editor and typist, so she helped me edit the dissertation. She typed two original copies to give to the graduate dean." Remember this was long before the advent of word processing and computer printers.

Within weeks, he had an offer from Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). "I went on one interview and they offered me a job," said Jimmy. "I couldn't believe anybody could be paid that much money."

He started in the chemical technology division doing applied research on reactor chemistry. "One of the things I knew I should do as soon as possible was publish some of my work," he said. "The first 10 years I spent a lot of time publishing the results of the research."

After two years, he was a group leader, and in one instance, he was a group leader for two different projects. One project involved light water reactors and the other on fusion reactors.

By the late 1970s, he was in responsible for all spent fuel processing in the chemical technology division. In 1988, he became the section head for chemical development. He worked in that area studying spent fission product releases after fuel had been in a reactor for a time and how the fuel components were affected after being irradiated. He retired from ORNL in 1995.

Even while he was at the lab, he had a role in the 1980s related to nuclear proliferation that took him around the world to inspect a number of re-processing plants. "That was tremendously interesting work and is probably the most effective thing I've done for this country in my career."

After leaving ORNL, Jimmy didn't completely retire. Instead, he consulted for a number of firms until recently. From 1995-2001, he was co-chair of DOE's Tank Focus Group on how to manage tank waste.

Jimmy initially applied to the ORSSAB when a friend urged him to join because of the knowledge and experience he could bring to the board. "I'm one of the few still around who helped dilute plutonium with depleted uranium to safe levels that was put in storage tanks in Melton Valley [near ORNL]," he said.

Today, he spends a lot of his time tending 42 head of beef cattle on his farm near Kingston. "I usually have about 25 cows and calves, but the growing conditions recently have been good so I have a few more than that now. I grow all my hay for them. I have all the equipment I need to do it all myself.

"People ask why I do it. Well, it's enjoyable and a great way to relieve stress."

ORSSAB meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the DOE Information Center in the Office of Science and Technical Information, 1 Science.gov Way on the east side of Oak Ridge, fronting the 100 block of Oak Ridge Turnpike. Additional information about the board is available on the internet at [www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab](http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab) or by calling (865) 241-4583 or 241-4584.

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