

Steve Stow's Interest in History Led to Formation of Oral History Program

Board member Steve Stow's interest in history led him to suggest studying the possibility of establishing an oral history program for Oak Ridge.

That suggestion resulted in a workshop, the formation of a steering committee, and eventual establishment of the Center for Oak Ridge Oral History (COROH).

While director of the American Museum of Science and Energy, Steve had already conducted a number of oral histories of Oak Ridge National Laboratory pioneers and began cataloging other oral histories that had been recorded over the years. "That's when we realized we had about 300 oral histories. After I retired and joined the board I suggested that we look into consolidating all those recordings in one place," he said.

With a recommendation from ORSSAB, DOE contributed seed money to the City of Oak Ridge to establish COROH, which is now being managed by the Oak Ridge Public Library. Steve is the board's representative on COROH's steering

committee. "The purpose of the center is three-fold: to get our arms around all the histories that have been recorded, continue to record additional histories, and get all of them digitized and available to the public as soon as we can."

Steve also provides his own bit of oral history on the Manhattan Project and the history of Oak Ridge as a tour guide for visitors who go on summer bus tours of the reservation.



Steve Stow in his 'office' at the Y-12 guard blockhouse on Scarboro Road during a break at the first Oral History Subcommittee meeting.

Born in Oklahoma, Steve grew up in Nashville. He earned a degree in geology from Vanderbilt and later attended Rice University in Houston, earning master's and doctoral degrees in geochemistry.

He worked for Continental Oil for three years and was a professor of geology at the University of Alabama for 11 years before arriving in Oak Ridge in 1980.

At Oak Ridge National Lab he managed high-level nuclear waste disposal programs and was a section head for earth sciences in the Environmental Sciences Division. He also held positions as an ethics officer and ombudsman. He became director of the museum in 2003.

Shortly after retiring in 2006, he was appointed to ORSSAB. "Being part of the board exposes one to a variety of ideas and opinions. We definitely have an influence on DOE in its decision-making process. It's a beneficial use of one's time."

Steve's time has been beneficial to ORSSAB as well. As a member of the Public Outreach Committee, he has made a number of presentations to local civic organizations about the board and DOE's cleanup program.

In addition to his interest in history, Steve serves on the museum's foundation board. In his spare time he refinishes antique furniture, spends time in his garden, and has an extensive collection of nuclear science-themed stamps, a portion of which is on display at the library.

Steve and wife Jeanie live in Knoxville and have two adult daughters.

Snap Shots in Oak Ridge Cleanup

10 years ago...

More than 100 people gathered in Oak Ridge to participate in a national stewardship workshop to discuss stewardship at DOE sites and the related actions and activities that were most important for DOE to pursue.

Participants developed "Ten Next Steps for Stewardship" and agreed that DOE, in cooperation with its stakeholders, must provide direction, funding, and technical support for their implementation.

5 years ago...

DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management James Rispoli and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Charlie Anderson visited with ORSSAB chair Kerry Trammell and Steve Dixon, chair of the Board Finance Committee.

Trammell told Rispoli the board was particularly interested in making sure a permit was received to allow shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste from Oak Ridge to New Mexico.