

Literary Club
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An Unintended Social Experiment

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Prologue

This is a story about growing up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee from the war years forward. Over the past few months, members of the Literary Club would ask me occasionally what I was working on. When I would tell them to a person they, would say "Oh, Bill Burleigh gave a paper about that a few years ago. It was terrific." Some would even cite some aspect of the paper they recalled. 'Now that is intimidating', thought I, 'especially for one's first paper'. Indeed, Bill Burleigh did give such a paper on January 14, 2008, entitled Secret City. And indeed it is a terrific paper which I would commend to your reading. It is a pleasant coincidence that we find ourselves here at Bill's farm for what, I hope, will be a compliment and expansion on Secret City.

Part of the motivation for choosing this topic was reading a book by Alfred Lubrano. Mr. Lubrano is a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and frequent commentator on National Public Radio. His book is entitled Limbo: Blue Collar Roots, White Collar Dreams. It is based on his personal experience and many interviews with others about the limbo existence of people raised in blue-collar families, receiving college and higher education and going on to live white-collar lives; often in very accomplished and successful ways. Lubrano calls them "straddlers", people living in two cultural zones and not being able to feel totally comfortable in either.

As I reflected on the book, I certainly identified myself as starting out with the blue-collar demographic. But I did not identify very much with the "straddler" phenomena described throughout the book. So I began to wonder what was different. The opportunity to grow up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee was clearly one factor.

This is a story about Benny and his brother Paul and the new home they found themselves in when they were six and five years old.

Chapter One

Moving to Tennessee

The mother called Benny and Paul in from the backyard where they had been playing their usual lethal game of cowboys and Indians. Benny is Gene Autry and Paul is Roy Rogers. They reluctantly come into the kitchen; each with his brace of holstered six guns, his vest, kerchief and cowboy hat. It is early October, 1943. They are still tanned by the North Carolina sun. Because they live in the country on a tobacco farm, the county school does not offer kindergarten. Benny has heard about kindergarten but is not disappointed that he doesn't get to go. Heck, in North Carolina you can play outside just about all year round.

"Boys, sit down", the mother says. "I have something to tell you. You know that since the tobacco crop is in and your dad's job at the aircraft plant has ended, he has been away looking at other jobs. Well, he found something that sounds good and it looks like we are going to move to Tennessee".

"Where is that?", they want to know. "It's west of here" she says. Their eyes light up. "West! Cowboys. Indians. Horses and cows?" "Not that far west", says the mother. "Though I think there are Indians close by. Cherokees, I think".

"What's in Tennessee?", Benny asked. Paul was still turning over 'if it's out west, why aren't there any cowboys?' "We don't know exactly", mom says. "Dad says it seems like a good opportunity, with good pay. And it seems like a lot of people are coming there from all over. Maybe he can tell us more when he gets here."

Dad came back and the family prepared to move. He told them there were more mountains and lakes and rivers than in the middle of North Carolina. And he thought they would like it once they got there. But he didn't say much about his new job.

Moving was a challenge. A moving truck was out of the question. Trucks were not available because of the war effort and not affordable, even had they been available. Dad built a trailer to attach to the 1938 Dodge. He also built a cage for the beloved Buster, their mongrel dog, to fit in the trailer. Off they went looking not unlike the Joads in the *Grapes of Wrath* or the Clampetts from *Beverly Hillsbillies*; heading west.

Chapter Two

Where Were They Going?

Where was the family going as they headed across the mountains from North Carolina into Tennessee?

Just two years earlier in September, 1942, five men from the War Department's Corps of Engineers and Stone and Webster Engineering Corporation stood at a railroad siding called Elza in Anderson County in eastern Tennessee. After driving and hiking around the adjacent territory, they agreed that this was the site they would recommend for the "Manhattan Engineering District"; which had been ordered just a month earlier by President Franklin Roosevelt. They did not know at the time the purpose of Manhattan District. They only knew they were looking for an area that was geographically fairly isolated and preferably mountainous, sparsely populated and having a large supply of available electricity and water.

What they chose was a 92 square mile tract in Anderson and Roane County, Tennessee in the Cumberland mountains; almost 60,000 acres, about twenty miles

northwest of Knoxville; a city of 110,000. The tract of land was seven miles wide and seventeen miles long. It was bounded on one side by the Clinch River and nestled in proximity to the Tennessee Valley Authority system of hydroelectric dams. The first built of the TVA dams, Norris Dam, was sixteen miles away.

The selected tract of land was home to about 1000 families who lived on barely self-sustaining farms. It was so hilly and the soil so poor that it had never been good for cash crops. Benny's father said you could tell an east Tennessee farmer, often called a "ridge runner", because he always had to be plowing on a hillside and he and his

mule had one leg shorter than the other. He never said which leg. They were mostly of Scots-Irish descent and had lived in those mountains and valleys for generations. Between September, when the site selection was made, and November, all property owners received notices under the authority of the War Powers Act that their property had been condemned and they were to vacate not later than January 1, 1943. No explanation was offered. No opportunity for appeal or postponement was made available. There was some negotiating about the price offered, which ended up being about \$45 an acre; \$650 in today's dollars.

There was an enormous sense of urgency. In 1943, everyone knew we were at war with Germany and Japan. But what few people knew was that there was great concern that the Germans were on the verge of developing some sort of enormously powerful and destructive weaponry that would give them great, perhaps decisive, advantage over the Allies. What still fewer people knew, or could even conceptualize, was that the weaponry might somehow involve atomic energy.

For the previous thirty or so years, physicists in European universities had been gradually and steadily discovering the structure and inner workings of the atom. The most weapons-relevant discovery was that when the dense nucleus of the atom was bombarded with neutrons more energy was released than could be accounted for by the neutron itself...nuclear fission.

Uranium, the heaviest and most dense of all naturally occurring elements, was found to have more than one isotope. One of those isotopes, uranium 235, when bombarded by neutrons, had a propensity to this splitting and releasing of great amounts of energy. Some of the giants of nuclear physics, whose names we recognize today were involved in those discoveries: Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr and Enrico Fermi; to name a few. With the rise of Nazi Germany, many Jews or those with Jewish family members, as was the case for Enrico Fermi, fled Germany and other European countries; coming mostly to America, Canada and Great Britain. They brought with them their knowledge and brilliance as well as their motivation to defeat the Nazis and perhaps spare lives of those left behind. Germany's loss was our gain.

General Leslie Groves was appointed to head up the Manhattan Project. He was 45 years old, the son of an Army chaplain, fourth in his class at West Point and commissioned in the US Army Corps of Engineers. He had just finished an assignment in which he was responsible for the planning and construction of the office complex that was to become the Pentagon. As Manhattan Project director, he oversaw the planning and construction, starting from absolute scratch, of a city that in less than three years was to accommodate more than 70,000 people. In addition he made critical decisions regarding the various methods of isotope separation and the placement and design of the three Oak Ridge plants which would carry out these methods of isotope separation.

The three plants were designated Y-12, K-25 and X-10. These designations apparently had no meaning other than to make the enemy think that they had meaning. Y-12 did electromagnetic isotope separation in a method pretty similar to what we know today as cyclotrons. K-25 was responsible for gaseous diffusion separation. And later, in 1944, a third method, thermal separation, was begun at the X-10 plant. It was later understood that the site choices for the plants, each several miles apart from the others and in separate valleys surrounded by fairly significant mountains, was in the hope that if there were an accident resulting in a nuclear explosion in one plant, it would not

destroy the others. That was almost as naive as the 'duck and cover' drills that most of us can remember from our Cold War school days.

Who were these 75,000 people and where did they come from? They were scientists; mostly physicists and chemists, recruited from universities all around the country. Engineers came mostly from the Army Corps of Engineers. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill did the city planning. There were contractors and their crews from everywhere. People from all over the country loaded families and possessions into cars headed for East Tennessee, not knowing what awaited them except the promise of employment and an opportunity to be a part of the war effort.

What they found when they got there was a lot of red dust when it was dry and red mud when it rained. Building was going on everywhere.

K-25, the gaseous diffusion plant, was the world's largest building under one roof. Fifty-five miles of railroad track were laid to move in building materials and, secretly, uranium ore. Houses were being completed at the rate, at some points, of one every thirty minutes. Many were prefabricated, a genre called flat tops. Benny and his family lived initially in a flat top on the outermost housing road of the city, with a magnificent view of mountains and valleys as much as twenty five miles away. Rent was \$25 a month. Free electricity, water, trash pickup and coal for heating. Other houses were made of a siding material called cemesto; a mix of asbestos and cement. Almost two hundred miles of wooden sidewalks around the city; a quick way to keep people out of the mud. The seventh largest bus system in the country.

People worked hard and long hours. There was a spirit of mission that persisted; even though only a handful of people in the whole city, or the whole country for that matter, knew what the mission was. It was a classic blind men and the elephant arrangement.

And the arrangement worked. Secrecy was a prominent concern. Oak Ridge was not even on maps until after the war. It did not exist. Since almost no one knew what it was

that was being kept secret, the general attitude was everything about Oak Ridge was secret, so keep your mouth shut.

It was a very young population; the adults were mostly between twenty and forty. There was no unemployment. You could not live there unless you were employed there or were a family member. There was little class distinction. Most people took the next available housing that could accommodate their family. No waiting for a better neighborhood. Many were single and lived in dormitories; taking their meals in cafeterias. Churches mostly held services in schools. Very quickly arts organizations formed: a symphony, community theater, dance groups. Literally hundreds of interest organizations sprang up. These were young, energetic, many well-educated, adventuresome people; most of whom did not have established friendships or extended family in the community when they came. And they almost all arrived within a two year time frame. One person described wartime Oak Ridge as having the energy and vibrance of a huge college campus; only with red mud instead of green lawns.

Chapter 3

Schools

General Groves wanted to do everything possible to make Oak Ridge attractive to people from all backgrounds whose skills and services were needed for the Manhattan Project. But he especially wanted it to be attractive to the highly educated scientists and their families. There were limits to what he could do to provide comfortable housing and other amenities; though, truly, a herculean effort was made. But he realized that an outstanding school system could be a deal maker for these scientists who prized education so highly; many of whom were educators themselves. "Dogpatch" as it was derisively called by many, especially those coming from places other than East Tennessee, might not seem so isolated and primitive if an outstanding school system could be provided. And, goodness knows, there was plenty of money for it.

General Groves handpicked a Columbia graduate and former college football player, Dr. Alden Blankenship, as the first superintendent. The high school football field is still named Blankenship Field in his honor. Dr. Blankenship hired a staff on which all teachers were required to have a master's degree at minimum. He was one of the pioneers in the concept of schools as community centers; a concept that is gaining momentum in some communities, now seventy years later. In accepting the position he wrote "In such a situation it might be possible to make schools real community centers. The program could surely be planned to meet the actual needs of children. There would be no sacred customs or traditions barring ones way. In spite of the existing shortage of teachers, a system of merit would be established with no political strings attached. Recruiting personnel from all parts of the nation to fit into a community of as cosmopolitan a make-up as this promised to be quite an adventure in itself."

Chapter 4

Camelot

There was a war going on and for the adults that was serious and worrisome business. But if you were a kid, Oak Ridge was Camelot. As Dr. Blankenship had said, the school was to be a community center. When school was out, the library stayed open all summer. There was an organized summer recreation program at each school with crafts, ball teams, swimming lessons and competitions, drama and dance classes. A kid could leave home in the morning, take his lunch and come home at 5:00. All day with no parental interference.

Some days Benny and Paul and their friends wandered in the woods; fishing, swinging on grapevines, catching crawdads and salamanders. The limitation of their wandering was the fence. The fence was the chain link twelve foot high fence that surrounded the entire perimeter of Oak Ridge; all 92,000 acres of it. Ingress and egress was allowed only through designated portals or "gates". Anyone older than 11 years old had to have a badge indicating that he or she worked and lived in Oak Ridge or was a family

member. Sometimes in their wanderings the boys found an abandoned farm building left by those who had lived there pre-Oak Ridge. The buildings made good club houses and forts. On one occasion they came upon a sight they had never seen before, one that clearly was not abandoned; large copper pots, copper tubing, sacks of grain, big jugs. The boys figured they had discovered some secret government operation. Only this one wasn't at the plant where their dad worked. Those clever government guys had put it in the woods, with no roads leading to it. And it was right next to a creek so there was a good water supply for whatever they were doing. Ha! Wouldn't the Germans like to know about that. They thought of the billboards they saw all around town saying "Loose lips sink ships" and "Keep it under your hat". So they decided to tell no one, not even their parents, about their discovery in the woods. And especially not the Germans.

Of course, eventually the Germans, along with the rest of the world did find out what the real secret was. On the morning of Monday, August 6, 1945, Little Boy was dropped from the Enola Gay B-29 Superfortress, exploding over Hiroshima, Japan; leaving an estimated 45-85,000 persons dead immediately and an equal number who would die in the next four months. Sixteen hours later came President Truman's dramatic announcement of the bombing and the use of the term "atomic bomb". In Oak Ridge the news arrived in the middle of the day. People seemed to hold their breath for a while, not knowing what to say or do. 'Was there some security leak?', 'Was this true?', 'Is this what we have been working on all along?', 'Is it OK to talk about it?'. Gradually the reserve gave way to exuberance and relief. There was celebration; dancing in the streets. People just left what they were doing and gathered in whatever public places there were other people.

Three days later, August 9, 1945, a second bomb, "Fat Man", was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, resulting in 30-40,000 immediate deaths and an equal number within the next four months. On August 14 Japan announced its acceptance of the conditions of surrender.

Chapter 5 "Colored People"

In the center of this grand effort, the Manhattan Project, with its seemingly noble and courageous mission of ending world war; this 'Camelot' for children, there was an ugly and, probably unnecessary, wound. That was how the Project dealt with African Americans. About 7,000 African Americans were recruited for Oak Ridge. Most were poor and uneducated; most were from Tennessee and nearby states. They were hired primarily as laborers and were attracted by wages which were nearly twice what they could earn elsewhere.

For much of their growing up years, Benny and Paul knew virtually nothing of African Americans; "Colored People" they were called in those days. There were no African American children in the school system. The children were left outside with grandparents and other relatives.

There was a government rationale for this policy, of course: the need for secrecy and to avoid attracting attention to Oak Ridge. It was determined that the Manhattan Project would follow the cultural policies of the states in which it was located: Tennessee, New Mexico and Washington state. The policy statement read: "The responsibility of the Office of the District Engineer and Roane-Anderson Company is not to promote social changes, whether desirable or undesirable, but to see that the community is decently run and that everybody has a chance to live decently in it."

Except everybody did not live decently in it.

African Americans were assigned to Scarboro Village, an isolated area two miles from any housing for whites. Their housing was hutments; 16'x16' plywood boxes with one door and shutter windows; basically a wooden tent. No running water, no electrical appliances. Central bath houses and communal toilets. Men and women were separated, even if married. Enoch Waters, a reporter for the Chicago Defender writing

a series of articles on African American living conditions in the 1946 South wrote "Oak Ridge is the first community I have ever seen with slums that were deliberately planned".

When African American families were allowed to live together after the war, schools were not racially integrated. "Separate but equal" was Tennessee policy. An elementary school was arranged for the children in an unused research building. Unlike the glorious educational opportunity the white children were having, this school offered no art, music or physical education classes. High school kids were bussed to an all Black high school, Austin High, in Knoxville, 25 miles away.

In the spring of 1950, a 16 year old high school sophomore at Oak Ridge High School, wrote a letter to the local newspaper, *The Oak Ridger*. In the letter he admonished the school board for its treatment of African American students and called for desegregation of Oak Ridge schools. That was 1950! The letter writer's name was Bruce Barto. At that time Benny was 11 years old. He had been an *Oak Ridger* delivery boy for about a year. Benny sort of knew Bruce Barto from playing in pick up baseball games. What courage he had to call out the adults and to say the schools should be integrated.

Bruce's classmates were supportive and the letter got the attention of some influential people in town, including Don MacKay, the publisher of the newspaper, who wrote some exciting and prescient editorials. The following fall, instead of having the twenty five mile commute to Knoxville, classes were set up for the African American high school students in an unused elementary school, with full time teachers and a large number of white community volunteers.

Three years later, 1954, *Brown vs. The Board of Education* mandated the end of school segregation across the country. Oak Ridge became the first non-private high school in the south to integrate when school started that fall. Integration went smoothly in Oak Ridge, in the sense that it seemed matter of fact. No armed guards, no incidents of

violence or significant efforts to sabotage desegregation. This despite the fact that the town's population was mostly southern, probably mostly pro-segregation.

Two years later the high school in Clinton, just six miles away from Oak Ridge, became the first public high school in Tennessee to admit African American students. Things there did not go as smoothly and certainly not as under-the-radar as in Oak Ridge. White supremacists organized street mobs; teachers were threatened; a clergyman who publicly supported school integration was beaten. Governor Frank Clements called in National Guard troops and the highway patrol.

Against his parents advice, Benny and some friends went to Clinton to experience what they sensed to be an historic moment. What they saw was National Guardsmen in full combat gear lining the streets, tanks on every corner, the whole scene giving the clear message that they meant business. It was chilling to see. How could America have come to this? At the same time it was thrilling to Benny to realize that, if it had come to this, his governor had responded as he did; saying 'this is the law of the land and it will be enforced'. The white supremacists slunk away and order was restored.

Two years later, October 5, 1958; early on a Sunday morning, three dynamite explosions destroyed Clinton High School. The City of Oak Ridge invited the Clinton students to use an empty elementary school. Three days after the explosion Clinton high school was back in session. Citizens had worked day and night to clean, paint and equip the school. Hundreds turned out to welcome the students. The Oak Ridge High School band played the Clinton High School alma mater as the students filed off the bus. That arrangement continued for two years while a new school was being built.

Chapter 6

Chamber Music and Kosher Hot Dogs

Beginning in the fourth grade, Benny and Paul took clarinet lessons from Miss Alice Lyman. Miss Lyman was a Juilliard trained violinist. She had come to Oak Ridge to do

her part for the war effort. Her official job was junior high school music teacher and band director. But she liked getting younger kids started with musical instruments so that when they arrived in junior high, they were ready to play in a band. Sort of a music student farm system.

When Benny was in sixth grade, a new boy came into his class. Jonathan Levine was a tall, lanky, awkward kid with his horn rimmed glasses and his love of chess. But he was a pretty good clarinet player and that was where he and Benny connected. Benny told his parents about the new kid and how he wasn't fitting in; probably, Benny speculated, because he was a yankee and didn't know anything about football. Benny's mom suggested inviting Jonathan over for lunch on Saturday and maybe they could talk about football. Jonathan accepted the lunch invitation. That evening he called to ask what they would be having for lunch on Saturday. Benny's mom thought maybe Jonathan had some kind of food allergies. She said she was thinking of hot dogs. "OK", said Jonathan. "I will bring my own." Now that is weird, thought Benny. Maybe some yankee thing. Benny's mom said nothing but it was clear that she was affronted. 'Her hot dogs weren't good enough?' Later, she called Jonathan's mom to ask about the hot dog situation. Jonathan's mom explained that the Levines were Jewish and kept kosher; also explaining what that meant. So Jonathan would be bringing a kosher hot dog for lunch. She went on to say that the family was having trouble finding kosher foods in east Tennessee. So they were having their family back in New York ship foods to them.

The hot dog lunch went fine. Though to Benny's astonishment, Jonathan did not even know that Tennessee's colors were orange and white and Kentucky's were blue and white. Jonathan was polite in receiving that information but Benny could tell that he probably would not get a Tennessee pennant to hang in his room.

Jonathan's father, Dr. Levine, was a chemist who loved classical music and had a wonderful collection of records. That was all new to Benny. At home they had no record collection. Jonathan's father suggested that Jonathan, Benny and two others in

the band form a clarinet quartet. He gave them some music to learn. Thus started a tradition of going to the Levine home on Sunday afternoons to play "chamber music". Usually, Dr. Levine was their only audience. The music did not have to be concert ready. The idea was to just play an instrument with others for the fun of it.

Chapter 7

Dr. Pollard and Post Bomb Spinoffs

After the war many assumed Oak Ridge and the Manhattan Project would shut down: Mission accomplished. The assumption from the beginning was that Oak Ridge was temporary. Temporary was a central concept in everything that was put in place to make Oak Ridge happen. All buildings were temporary. All people were there temporarily. Oak Ridge had been designed to do something very drastic to win the war and then let everyone get out and get on with their lives.

Except, of course, as the war ended people began to wonder 'Now that we have this new source of energy, what else can we do with it besides blow up things'. And 'now that we have created this radioactive mess, how can we clean it up?' 'What can we do with radioactive waste?' 'What are the longer term effects on living things that have been exposed to radiation?' 'Are there beneficial uses for radioactive isotopes in the medical world?'

About half of the population of Oak Ridge did leave, either because they wanted to get back to where they came from or because they were no longer needed in the positions they had held during the war. The Oak Ridge National Laboratory, converted from its wartime status and has continued to this day as a key center for research in the peacetime uses and management of nuclear energy.

Dr. William G. Pollard headed the formation of the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies; a collaboration between the facilities in Oak Ridge and a consortium of fourteen southern universities. In 1966 the name was changed to Oak Ridge Associated Universities. It now is a consortium of over one hundred universities, including the University of Cincinnati.

When Benny was a freshman in high school, he met and became friends with Dr. Pollard's second oldest son, Jamie, along with two other freshmen, Harry and Phil. The four of them often hung out at Jamie's house and felt welcome there. Dr. Pollard was around and would sometimes talk with them, asking questions about school or discussing some accomplishment of theirs he had heard about. Usually he seemed busy; sitting at his desk reading and smoking his pipe. Jamie told the other boys that his dad was going to school again and had to study a lot. They were stunned. Knowing he was a physicist and a very important man in Oak Ridge, why on earth was he still going to school? And, voluntarily at that!

One day they got up the courage to ask him about his going to school. Dr. Pollard said that though he had attended church regularly with his wife and sons, he had never considered himself especially religious. However, nine years earlier, in 1945, after the bomb-drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki he experienced "a feeling of terror". On the day of the Nagasaki bombing, he felt compelled to go to a church service; alone. He came away "feeling it wasn't just empty rigamarole" and he felt calmer. He became more and more interested in theology. He saw a need for clergy leadership in his church, St. Stephen's Episcopal. So he decided to go to seminary; that was why he was studying.

The Reverend Dr. Pollard went on to serve as priest associate at St. Stephen's until his death in 1989. Through the years he wrote numerous books and articles about his views on the relationship between science and faith. Despite his stature and fame, he remained available to Benny and his friends and, doubtless, many other young people.

As a testament to the influence on the boys of this pipe smoking nuclear physicist, Episcopal priest and reflector on the interface of science and religious faith: one chose Rice University, Dr. Pollard's alma mater, and went on to become commander of a nuclear submarine. One became an Episcopal bishop. One became a physician who smoked a pipe for thirty years and has maintained an abiding interest in the relationship between science and faith. Benny and Jamie Pollard had gone off to college together at Duke University. Sadly, Jamie was killed in an auto accident during the summer after his sophomore year.

Epilogue

The authorization for the Manhattan Project came in August 1942. Almost exactly three years later, in August 1945, a nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

What happened in those three intervening years has been seen by many historians as a near miraculous synergy of will, motivation, leadership, logistics, money, commitment, American ingenuity, timing and fear. The intelligence available said that Germany was well on its way to developing a weapon that could blow us all to smithereens. Samuel Johnson is famously quoted as saying "...when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." Many years later in one of his novels George MacDonald Fraser says "...but I'm here to tell you that the chance to work for a reprieve concentrates the mind a whole heap more." I think it was more the latter, the chance to survive and prevail that made the Manhattan Project work.

Talcott Parsons, a famous twentieth century sociologist delineated two classifications of social roles: 1) Instrumental - getting things done and 2) Expressive - seeing to the emotional needs of people. General Leslie Groves certainly filled the instrumental role to a T. He - got - things - done. But he also understood that the thousands of people he was bringing to Oak Ridge would have other needs and requirements in addition to work. Along with being housed and fed, they and their families would need education,

recreation and socialization and creative outlets. And he understood that the higher the quality and the more available those opportunities were, the more likely that his Project would be successful.

Growing up in a community virtually free of socio-economic class distinction, with no unemployment, almost no violent crime, excellent schools, a highly educated and highly community-involved populous was a privilege. Benny's father was a pipefitter and union officer. Yet Benny grew up in a neighborhood where his friends' fathers were physicists, engineers, military officers, physicians and construction workers. He was welcome in those homes and enriched by those relationships.

Thousands of kids who grew up in Oak Ridge had an opportunity for a very special experience they might not have otherwise had. Everyone has grown up in their own Oak Ridge that helps to explain why they are who they are and where they are today. I am sure if Benny's family had stayed on the tobacco farm in North Carolina, he would have turned out alright but definitely much more in Limbo; more one of Alfred Lubrano's "straddlers" between the blue and white collar worlds.

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