

Honoring a mother's promise - Weinberg papers to be digitized for the public at Museum

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OAK RIDGE, Tenn. - A promise made decades ago will soon enable an entire community to delve into the personal papers of one of the world's true visionaries.

That's the intention of Ronnie Bogard, who leads a team of experts working to make public the papers of Alvin Weinberg, the internationally recognized scientist who was director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory from 1955 to 1973, authored eight books and made contributions to science, energy policy and our understanding of how human activity impacts climate.

"His papers are important, historically and scientifically," Bogard said.

She is a past member of the Board of Trustees and a current member of the Advisory Board for the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, where the Weinberg papers are housed. The papers, all 210 boxes, remain organized as Weinberg filed them, right down to the original folder and drawer labels. Today they are tucked away in a locked storage room that is visited occasionally by other scientists seeking information about Weinberg, his theories and his methods.

The papers will soon be prepared for long-term storage, digitized and made searchable via a computer kiosk that will be located at the Children's Museum. Bogard is working with experts from Oak Ridge Associated Universities, ORNL, Friends of ORNL, Y-12 National Security Complex, Strata-G and the University of Tennessee to make Weinberg's papers accessible to the public. She and the project team need to raise about \$25,000 to make the Alvin Weinberg Papers Archive Project a reality. Initial donations to get the project started have been received from Friends of ORNL, Strata-G, Information International Associates, and URS CH2M Oak Ridge LLC (UCOR).

Why does this project matter so much to Bogard?

"I'm fulfilling a promise my mother made a long time ago to Alvin Weinberg to preserve and protect his papers," she said.

When Beth Shea, executive director of the Museum, approached her about leading this effort, there was no hesitation.

Bogard's mother was Selma Shapiro, a community leader who managed the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge as its director for 31 years. She and Weinberg became friends while involved with Awareness House, housed in what is now the home of Oak Ridge Heritage and Preservation Association. Awareness House was an attempt in the 1970s to offer a safe alternative hangout for young people in order to discourage drug use. When it failed, the remaining monies were used to help start up the Children's Museum.

"I saw them both as visionaries in their respective fields," Bogard said of Weinberg and Shapiro. "He saw that nuclear energy could be used for the greater good; she envisioned a place where families could learn together, especially emphasizing learning about Oak Ridge history." Some of the early exhibits, such as the Appalachian Exhibit and Difficult Decisions (decisions that led to dropping the atomic bombs on Japan during World War II) covered topics that were not often taught in Oak Ridge classrooms. The more Weinberg learned about Shapiro's work, the more supportive he became of her efforts.

"Alvin was really taken with the Children's Museum," Bogard said. So much so that Shapiro was the person he entrusted to care for his personal papers so they would not be lost or destroyed.

Weinberg was director of ORAU's Institute for Energy Analysis in 1986, the year he agreed to entrust his papers to the Children's Museum "because the Weinberg records have historical value and provide valuable insights into important decisions and developments which involved early Oak Ridge history and are likely to impact future science and technology developments throughout the world," reads a memorandum of understanding signed by Weinberg, Shapiro and then-ORAU Executive Director William Felling.

"Now we have the opportunity to digitize his papers and make them available to children and young people who might do research papers about Alvin's work, and to scientists who want to study his methods and thought processes," Bogard said.

Eventually, Weinberg's papers will be searchable online, and an exhibit about the man and his many contributions to science will be created for the museum.

All of this activity would be good news to Bogard's mother, who died in 2011.

"I can at times feel her presence and I think she would be so excited about this project team, that we have the people with the right expertise working together to make this happen," Bogard said. "It feels like I have a great responsibility on my shoulders, but I don't have to carry it alone."

To make a donation to the Alvin Weinberg Papers Archive Project, send checks to the Children's Museum, 461 West Outer Drive, Oak Ridge, TN 37830. Please write Weinberg Project in the memo line. Visit the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge website at <http://childrensmuseumofOakRidge.org>.

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Caption:

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The late Selma Shapiro is seen in the center of a sea of children. The Children's Museum of Oak Ridger director wanted her daughter Ronnie Bogard to assure her that Oak Ridge National Laboratory Director Alvin **Weinberg**'s documents would be preserved and protected.

ABOVE: Alvin **Weinberg**, far left, is seen with Logan Emlet, from left, Oak Ridge National Laboratory's director of lab operations and ORNL Director Clarence Larson. AT RIGHT: **Weinberg**, then ORNL director himself, in 1950.

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