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Cold War Life at the Savannah River Plant Displayed at SRS Museum

Aiken, S.C., June 4, 2021 – Recently, a special exhibit was created featuring life during the Cold War at the Savannah River Plant (SRP). Created by Georgia Southern University post-graduate student Jessica Forsee for the SRS Museum in Aiken, South Carolina, it was visually alive with artifacts from that era.

A range of artifacts were selected and provided, on loan from the Savannah River Site (SRS, formerly known as Savannah River Plant) Curation Facility.

“Learning how to tell the story of SRS through objects is incredibly important when it comes to exhibit curation,” said Jessica Forsee, GSU post-graduate student. “Getting to bring to life the experiences of the everyday worker at SRS during the Cold War made our ‘Nuclear Culture’ exhibit such an exciting project from the beginning.

“Right from the start, my internship at the SRS Museum taught me how to take the technical and scientific accomplishments of SRS employees and add in humanities interpretation to bring to life the larger history of SRS during the Cold War,” she said.

Melissa Hanson, the Curator at the SRS Curation Facility, expressed her admiration for the work accomplished by Forsee, stating that the insight into the day-to-day life of the average SRS worker during those high stress years at home and at work, in an isolated environment, was interesting and revealing.

“It was a much different world then, especially during the height of the



Lauren Miller, Director, Savannah River (SRS) Site Museum, and Melissa Hanson, Curator, SRS Curation Facility, admire a new display at the SRS Museum depicting life for early SRS employees created by recent intern Jessica Forsee. Hanson holds an antique catcher's mask used during employee recreation association softball games.

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Cold War in the 1950s and early 60s,” said Hanson. “We carefully selected about 20 artifacts that we thought would best help Jessica depict the ‘nuclear culture’ of the times as she defines it.”

Artifacts loaned to the SRS Museum included a United Way cup, du Pont Security patch, 1950s film about the Savannah River Plant (SRP), catcher’s mask, bowling scorecards, security badges and a wooden bat with D-Shift engraved on it.

Hanson noted that a part of the exhibit demonstrated how SRP officials at the time often reached out to residents of local communities to ensure the general public felt at ease with the nearby nuclear facilities, stressing an emphasis on safety and the importance of the Plant’s missions.

“Public outreach is a valued and significant part of what we do at the SRS Curation Facility, and the COVID-19 pandemic has limited our normal interface with employees and those living in surrounding counties. Partnering with the SRS Museum, primarily through the loaning of artifacts, has been a successful method toward staying in touch and available to those outside the fence. The museum is a wonderful asset for everyone to enjoy.

According to Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Program Manager Andy Albenesius, SRNS and the Curation Facility strongly supports the SRS Museum. Public Outreach is a fundamental part of the program, and the Museum is the primary vehicle for sharing the site history.

“It’s a convenient location for visitors to experience the diverse and important role SRS employees played all through the Cold War in defense of our nation,” said Albenesius. “Jessica’s highly valued exhibit shows an important side of life at SRS only the employees of that time were able to experience.”

The SRS Museum was established in 2015 for the interpretation and preservation of Savannah River Site history, in particular its role in the Cold War. The museum was developed by the SRS Heritage Foundation, which was chartered in 2005.

For more information about the SRS Museum or to join the SRS Heritage Foundation, [visit https://www.srsheritagemuseum.org](https://www.srsheritagemuseum.org).

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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