



Hands Across History

A joint newsletter for the White Sands Historical Foundation and the White Sands Pioneer Group.



Volume VIII, Letter IV

November 2012

Honoring WSMR's Best Military Personnel And The Foundation's Annual Meeting

By Sharon Reese, WSMR Foundation President

Tri-Service Awardees To Be Honored

I encourage all of you who support White Sands Missile Range to join us Nov. 8 to honor the range's Tri-Service Awardees when we unveil a special area of signature bricks devoted to each year's award winners.

For those of you unfamiliar with the annual tri-service awards, White Sands started the event years ago to honor the best enlisted person and best NCO of the Army, Navy and Air Force serving at WSMR. In 2012 the awardees were: Army NCO of the year – Sgt. Bernard Quackenbush; Army Soldier of the Year - Spec. Kennedy Cordero Corichi; Navy Sailor of the Year - FC 1st Class Roland Barber III; and Navy Junior Sailor of the Year FC2 Rennel J. Austria; Air Force NCO of the Year - Tech. Sgt. Monica Warren; Air Force Airman of the Year - Senior Airman Paula Jordan.

Every year these honorees are celebrated at a large banquet in Las Cruces so they can be properly thanked for their great service to our country.

This year the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation decided to further honor these soldiers, sailors and airmen by placing bricks with their names in the WSMR Museum's Signature Plaza. Each honoree has an individual brick with his or her name inscribed on it to be placed in an area set aside for Tri-Service winners. It is next to the Pershing II missile at the beginning of the Missile Park walkway.

We feel this is a permanent way to pay homage to our military personnel - in a place open to the public 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Each year we will add bricks for the awardees and keep on doing it.

Foundation To Hold Annual Meeting

The Foundation's annual membership meeting (open to nonmembers as well) will be held at 10 a.m., Nov. 14 in the WSMR Museum Conference Room. During the meeting we will review the state of the Museum and elect members to the board of directors.

The Foundation's board of directors is comprised of 17

elected and appointed positions. Any Foundation member may be elected or appointed at our annual meeting. If you are not a member you may still come to our meeting to get a glimpse of what we have done this past year.

Membership in the Historical Foundation is available in several categories ranging from \$25 through \$1,000. Membership is tax deductible and payment may be made in the form of a check, Visa or Master card.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the meeting. If you have any questions please contact Sharon Reese, President - Board of Directors, White Sands Historical Foundation at 575-532-9422 or nmreeses@msn.com .

Hall Of Fame Induction On Nov. 6

For those of you receiving the newsletter electronically, you will have time to reserve your tickets to the WSMR Hall of Fame induction luncheon on Nov. 6 at the range's Frontier Club. Jim says there is some possibility - not very high - that the rest of you may receive this in time to attend as well.

To reserve spots, call the Public Affairs Office at 575-678-1134. They will ask you to pay in advance by credit card or by mailing in a check. The cost is \$10 each.

Doctor Gene Dirk and Col. Dan Duggan will be inducted. Following the induction there will be an unveiling of photos in the museum with cake and coffee served.

Thank You Frances Williams

The White Sands Historical Foundation sends out a big THANK YOU to Frances Williams for the recent donation from Temple Beth-El in Las Cruces.

On May 19, the temple held a "toast and roast" tribute to Frances for her dedication and service to the temple. It served as a fund-raising event for the temple and was held in the Las Cruces Convention Center.

When Frances agreed to it, she asked if the temple would donate some of the proceeds to the White Sands Historical Foundation in support of the WSMR Museum. As a result, the Foundation has been issued a \$800 check.

Feedback From Our Readers / Members

Attention Jim Eckles:

My name is Phillip (Phil) Sharp. I worked at White Sands from Jan. 1955 to Sept. 1992 when I retired. As I understand the White Sands Pioneer Group (WSPG), since I worked at White Sands when it was White Sands Proving Ground, that I am a member of the WSPG and I am not required to pay dues. However, I enjoy being a member of the WSPG and feel obligated to make periodic donations to the group. Therefore, I am enclosing my donation of \$50 to be used as the WSPG see's fit.

In addition, I would like to say that I have greatly enjoyed receiving and reading the "Hands Across History" (HAH) publications. The May 2012 edition was exceptionally interesting. Since I now have my headquarters south of Roswell, I hear about the Roswell Event often. I was aware of many of the facts about Roswell, but this article confirmed the facts that I was aware of and brought out many other facts I was not aware of.

One thing that I miss is the announcements of WSPG luncheons. Since I now travel full time, I must plan ahead to attend activities such as the luncheons. I would appreciate announcements in the HAH, or an e-mail if possible, as early as possible.

Thank you again for the excellent publication of the HAH.

Phillip D. (Phil) Sharp

Editor's Note: Phil, thank you very much for the donation. With no real way to make money anymore, the WSPG is supported solely by the few dues paying members and donations from members like yourself. The money is needed to fund half of the costs associated with this newsletter and the support for the Hall of Fame induction luncheon. Also, we will try to get out luncheon notices as soon as we can, anyway we can.

Finally, Phil mentioned the newsletter covering Joe Kittinger's daring parachute jump in 1960. As most of you know Felix Baumgartner broke most of Kittinger's records on Oct. 14 when he jumped from 128,000 feet.

It was very entertaining and I was certainly glued to the TV watching. Not only did Baumgartner break the altitude mark he also reached a speed of over 800 mph without a vehicle - WoW! However he did not set a new record for the longest freefall in terms of time - opened the parachute too soon so Kittinger still holds that record.

Hi Jim:

Today I received my copy of "Hands Across History" and I especially enjoyed the article by Gen. Laidlaw --- as he was the commander during my time at WSPG --- and I never realized he had a sense of humor!!

He mentioned Sputnik which went up in 1957, catching America asleep. I remember how things picked up on the base after that shocker. Everything went into high gear.

In 1957 I thought it was odd that the USA was downsizing SAC in favor of missiles when they were so unreliable --- just like Laidlaw wrote in the article and I appreciate his candor (actually I'm surprised by it). He must have arrived on base just before I did because I got a letter of welcome from him when I got there. He was a GOOD commander.

I lived in Las Cruces until housing on base opened up --- with my first house being on Picatinny and my second house was 205 Letterkenny with a beautiful view of the Organ from my patio door, an inspiring sight at the breakfast table every morning.

Before I was discharged my CO (post Dental Surgeon) asked me to draw up plans for a proposed new dental clinic to be built close to the Dispensary which I did. However, I never got the chance to see it built and to see if they followed my blueprints.

I enjoyed being at the base and even had a horse one year. Rode him thru Soledad Canyon one time and still have a cactus thorn in my leg where that jughead tried to scape me out of the saddle for taking him away from the corral. I hired a private to feed the horse everyday and clean up after him.

I LOVE those mountains and I really enjoyed exploring them during those two years.

Oren Swearingen

Statement of Purpose and Membership

The "Hands Across History" newsletter is published by the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation and the White Sands Pioneer Group (WSPG). Both nonprofit organizations aim to preserve the accomplishments of White Sands Missile Range.

The newsletter is intended to keep members of both groups informed about current events and share information of common interest. The edi-

tor is Jim Eckles. He can be contacted by email at nebraska1950@comcast.net or at either address below.

Membership to either organization is open to anyone who shares their goals. However, details of membership (dues, etc.) differ between the two groups. For more information, please contact the appropriate organization and we will send it via the Post Office or email.

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Young Lieutenants On A Mission

By Frank Perkins

The Hudson Hornet swept through the desert night. The air coming in the windows was as hot as an oven--no air conditioning in those days. But, no matter, we were headed to White Sands to see a Corporal launch!

The time was 1952 and we were young lieutenants training soldiers for the first Army guided missile maintenance school. We were stationed at JPL in Pasadena, Calif., under the old Colorado Street bridge. We had never seen a real Corporal and wangled orders to see a launch scheduled during our break between classes.



Frank Perkins today

The Hornet was selected as the fastest car in our personal motor pool, and we exercised it well. We drove straight through; after all, there were five of us to drive. There was one stretch of desert highway which featured dips for the dry watercourses (why build a bridge for water one hour a year?), and the Hornet handled these

with aplomb. The weightless periods were worse than the high positive g's.

We arrived at White Sands with no drama, and no speeding tickets. The endless dunes and the sharp peaks of the Organ Mountains were new geography to all of us. Our temporary quarters were in old Quonset huts--fine except for the sand that had filtered in and covered the mattresses. In one room, someone had left us a flashing beacon: a battery, resistor, capacitor (called a condenser in those days) and a neon bulb. We understood the circuit, but not why it had been left there.

We were given copies of the 60-page booklet entitled "An Introduction to White Sands Proving Ground" and a Cooks Tour of the base. A high point of the tour was the lab where V2's were being prepared for launch, and we could approach within touching distance of them.

We were proud to stand out in the desert and watch "our" Corporal lift off with flames roaring and finally disappear into the clear blue sky. In larger rockets, I have always admired the dignified liftoff of a liquid-fueled rocket, over the frantic, hurried departure of a solid-fuel vehicle.

But I have to admit that the Loki launches we also witnessed were impressive. Loki was a small unguided anti-aircraft rocket whose goal was to get to the target fast, before it could dodge. The experience was amazing. The rocket was on the launch rail, then suddenly it was gone! There was no sensation that it had moved, it had just disappeared. Some-

times there would be a condensation trail high in the sky, but it was hard to relate it to the rocket that has just disappeared.

As part of our trip we had to visit White Sands National Monument. The dramatic dunes were too much for us: we had to drive the Hornet up a dune for a photograph. The Park Service Ranger caught us and came over to chastise us for ignoring the "No Driving of Dunes" sign. Some of us had on parts of uniforms, and he told us he "didn't go over to our 'resort' and ignore the rules" We think he meant the military "reservation."

The hot weather encouraged us to take advantage of the base swimming pool. The swimming was nice, but we were shocked at how quickly you were chilled on exit by the dry air.

One evening we had been to the movie and exhausted the other recreational resources of the base, and the sun was still high. After due consideration, we decided that a milkshake was worth the 60 mile trip to Las Cruces, and besides the Hornet needed the exercise. Best milkshake I've ever had, and certainly the longest trip for one.

And the White Sands trip as a whole was one of the most memorable I've had, in a lifetime of traveling!



The group of lieutenants during their visit to White Sands National Monument and their reprimand for driving on the dunes. Perkins is standing on the right.

Do You Know Askania Towers?

Bill Godby, a WSMR archaeologist, is looking for people who know something about the old Askania towers scattered around the missile range. The range is dismantling the ones at Millers Watch and Red Butte. Before they are all gone, Bill would like to pick some brains for information about their workings and any stories associated with them.

You can contact Bill directly at White Sands. His phone number is: 575-678-6003. His email address is: william.c.godby.civ@mail.mil

The Alamo Peak Site Was Remote And Cold

By Roger Ratliff

Editor's Note: Roger Ratliff sent in several short pieces he wrote some time ago about his days at White Sands as a Signal Corps technician. It was the late 1940s and everything was new and old at the same time. In this newsletter and the next, I am stringing together several of his pieces. Roger has a nice talent for describing what it was like in those days.

Developing A New Commo Site

In 1945 White Sands Proving Ground was established as a place to develop and test military rockets. Forty miles to the east, the Alamogordo Air Force Base was coming to life as a center for Air Force rocket interest. To the south, the Ft. Bliss Army Base would become home to Wernher von Braun and his German rocket team.

Into this mix came a detachment of Signal Corps Engineering Laboratory (SCEL) troops from Ft. Monmouth, N.J. Their job was to create a communications system between White Sands, Alamogordo, and Ft. Bliss. The chosen method called for a remote relay with line-of-sight to each of the three stations.

In a land made of mountaintops this should not be a problem. The Sacramento Mountain Range was made of such places. Unfortunately, "remote" is their main feature. It was soon decided that a place called Alamo Lookout offered the least difficulties.

Alamo Lookout is the peak of a nine-thousand foot mountain that was occupied by a U.S. Forest Service fire lookout station. There was a glass-enclosed room at the top of a sixty-foot tower, a one room cabin, and a one passenger privy. The station was occupied during the fire season by a single ranger, who traveled by horseback and who carried with him all that was required for living in that remote place. Access was by way of twenty miles of gravel Forrest Service road from Alamogordo that led to an additional three miles of mule powered wagon trail.

The Alamo site was chosen on the basis of a scouting trip by one of the troops who rented an airplane at a local airport and explored the western edge of the Sacramento Mountains. After the site was selected and negotiated with the Forrest Service, a borrowed Air Force bulldozer widened the wagon trail to accommodate the six-wheel drive GI trucks needed to transport the station.

The peak was crowded. The only area that could reasonably be called flat was about fifty feet in diameter and was occupied by the fire lookout facility. The western edge dropped off at a very steep slope. The northern and southern slopes were much less steep, but they could not be negotiated on foot without holding on to the small trees and brush that grew from thin, rock strewn soil.

Mountain building geological processes had done us a great favor by layering the top of Alamo Lookout with

almost perfectly horizontal layers of stone that could be easily separated. Starting about ten feet from the privy, using hammers, chisels, pry bars, dynamite, and bulldozer, a shelf of 20-by-50 feet was chipped from the south edge of the mountaintop. It was there that the Signal Corps would locate its remote radio relay station.

To occupy this newly created piece of real estate the Air Force donated a small building that could be taken apart, hauled to Alamo, and reassembled. The building, which was assigned by number, turned out to be a one-room tarpaper shack without interior walls or insulation.

Keeping in mind the prospect of having to spend the winter in this house at an altitude of 9,000 feet where temperatures of minus 20 degrees were not uncommon, the SCEL exercised its resourcefulness. A scouting expedition around the area turned up a nicely constructed plywood building that had been designed for gas mask training. It was double-walled, insulated, had a ceiling and was nearly airtight - certainly a far distant relative of the building that was assigned. It soon assumed a new identification and was on its way to Alamo Lookout.

The new house sat on the horizontal layer of rock, snuggled against the newly created, ten-foot high vertical wall that would protect the occupants from the sub zero winds of winter. To the west, the antenna arrays had their precious unobstructed view of our three stations. The front had barely enough room for the three ten- kilowatt generators and parking for our four-wheel drive vehicle.

Given the grueling road to the site we were amazed that someone had managed to get a private automobile there, where it apparently died, never to be revived. It sat in front of the cabin on flat tires, giving the place its only hint of native ambience.

Home Sweet Home

The culture and environment of the Signal Corps Engineering Laboratory at Alamogordo was about as far as it was possible to get from those of Ft. Monmouth with its straight lines of bright and shining regimental parades, shined brass, shined shoes and class A uniforms. But, by inventing the need for a remote relay station on Alamo Lookout, the Signal Corps added a one thousand square foot briar patch to what was already their back forty.

I was not there at its beginning, and I can scarcely imagine the amount of grunt work that must have gone into creating the space and hauling the building and its contents to the top of Alamo. What is not hard to imagine is the reluctance of many to make it their home. It fit the classic definition of low-rent country living; bad roads, weird neighbors, bad plumbing, tainted water, and cracks around the windows - except, we had no neighbors.

The building itself was one room about 16-by-30 feet,

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with space shared equally between living area and communications equipment. Fortunately it was situated on the lea side of the peak, protected from the wind by the ten-foot high wall created by the excavation of the site. There was no refrigeration, except in winter, water came from a spring about three miles from the station or was hauled from Holloman in five-gallon jerry cans.

Any cooking was done on a GI field stove; a gasoline powered incendiary device that produced fumes, smoke, minor explosions, and enough heat to cook for a small army. The only hint of modern plumbing was a four-foot length of pipe that drained the kitchen sink over the downhill side of the mountain.

The early days apparently went fairly well. Two of the older men, who helped create the place, managed to keep it going for the first two years of operation. Living under such conditions can be a trial for even the most favorably deranged and by that criterion this pair had every possible advantage. They fit the mold and were the perfect odd couple.

Tudgay, the older of the two was a tough old pipe smoking tech sergeant who had been through the European part of WWII. I never knew what part he played, he never said and in those days with those people it was not a good idea to ask. His campaign ribbons suggested that he had put in a lot of miles.

Whether dealing with people, the weather, the mountain, or recalcitrant machinery, Tudgay seemed the possessor of a sixth sense that would find him the right answer. No rain soaked or frozen generator ever failed to do his bidding.

He carried a German Walther P-38 pistol in a musette bag. His only comment about its origin was, "I took it off a guy who didn't need it anymore." Tudgay would become my mentor.

His partner, Willie, is less easy to define. In fact my memory fails to register any image of him except of a man of small stature and quiet manner. He showed up every other week for his turn off the hill. He had a dog that I do remember. Prince was an adrenaline-powered mutt whose ancestry leaned toward cocker spaniel. He liked to stand on the seat of the open vehicle with his front paws on the windshield barking at anything in sight. Willie was involved in some minor traffic infraction on the highway between Alamogordo and White Sands and was identified to our commanding officer as, "the one with that yapping dog."

Each weekend, accompanied by his dog, one of them would come down from the mountain for a weekend of "Rest and Recuperation." This included such luxuries as hot water for a bath, the use of indoor plumbing, a few decent meals at the local mess hall, and the opportunity to catch up on two weeks' worth of beer drinking. Then, come Monday morning, fill the water jugs, buy groceries, take on five hundred gallons of gasoline for the generators, and head back to the mountain.

In the fall of 1947, for reasons I never knew or have

forgotten, Willie came down from the mountain, never to return. And, for some equally obscure reason, I was chosen as his replacement. It was welcome change. The routine was straightforward. The requirements were modest and specific; keep that relay station functioning and transparent twenty-four hours of each and every day; be able to drive an open vehicle on mountain roads at any time, in any weather; have a tolerance for, nay, an affinity for isolation, ill prepared food, and the absence close supervision; and possess the mentality and constitution of a mule.

In the next Hands Across History Roger will recount the sometimes beautiful, sometimes hair-raising drive up to Alamo Peak and watching his first V-2 launch.

Another Pioneer Writes

I received the "Hands Across History" for August 2012. I found it interesting that Aniceto Bagley and Bob Williams are still around.

I was working on the B-17 at Boeing Aircraft at plant 2 in Seattle when the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor. The next July I volunteered for the Navy, spent my first year in training on airborne radar, spent my second year servicing radars at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii and Johnston Island about 600 miles to the west.

The third year I was with a Martin Mariner flying boat squadron covering the liberations of the Philippines and Borneo. I then went back to school at Denver University and started working at WSMR during July 1952.

Presently I am contesting with plant scientists on how water flows in trees. I have a 10-page report on this subject.

We WW2 types can't be around much longer. I am 93 but still going strong.

Chuck Redman

Another Trinity Question Answered

By Jim Eckles, Editor

Over the years I have read in many books about Trinity Site that it rained a lot the night before the test at 5:30 a.m. on July 9, 1945. On the other hand, I have talked to many scientists and support staff who were there and they have all said they didn't sit or lay down in mud as the explosion countdown ran to its conclusion.

So, which was it? Recently I was sent a copy of the recollections of W. Stanley Hall who was at Trinity Site that night. He wrote, "Hollywood movies portraying the event usually show a heavy downpour the night of the test, but all I remember is an occasional drizzle. Base Camp was really on the old McDonald Ranch where there was a ranch "tank" (that's what it is called) made by a bulldozer. We spent all night on the slope or side of the tank and certainly would not have done that in a heavy rain."

Looks like it may have been a little of both - some rain over there, some drizzle here and dry across the road.

Wrapping Up MG Laidlaw's Oral History

Editor's Note: This concludes our excerpts from an oral history made by Maj. Gen. W.E. Laidlaw, the 5th commander of White Sands. He served from 1956 to 1960. The version we have was prepared by Col. Robert H. Mackintosh (retired), the general's son-in-law. Part 1 was in the previous issue.

We had an excellent safety man by the name of Nat Wagner in whom I had every confidence. He could destroy missiles from the control center if they had self destruct equipment. He couldn't make them go anywhere, but he could blow them up at the right time when they went astray.

Believe me, that was important to me. We had one very interesting 15 minutes. When we were on the Dave Garroway Show on television, (Dave Garroway was a television emcee who put on a weekly variety show called Wide Wide World.) We fired five missiles in real time on live television viewed by millions.

No one had ever tried to fire five successive missiles at very short intervals. I think I got some of my gray hair during that afternoon. But the five missiles did fire and were presented beautifully on television. At the end of the show I got a call from Dave Garraway thanking me for the firings.

We had another very interesting day. We had 300 leading industrialist and senior military personnel come to view some firings. They arrived by all sorts of means of transportation – by car, bus, and helicopter. We had to arrange for their arrival and for a lunch out in the field, in addition to the firings.

Two examples of the type of personnel we had were the Chief of Staff of the Army and the President of U.S. Steel. Fortunately, everything went off well and we had one



This photo, lifted from an old Wind and Sand newspaper, shows Maj. Gen. Laidlaw on the right along with the incoming Secretary of Defense, Neil McElroy. They are waiting for the launch of an Honest John missile at the Small Missile Range. McElroy came into office from Proctor and Gamble, where he was president, in 1957 right in the middle of the Soviet satellite launches.

very spectacular firing.

We had a radio controlled pilotless F-80 brought in directly towards the grandstand at 500 feet off the deck. At the appropriate time we fired a Hawk missile directly in front of us at the F-80. Well, that Hawk missile apparently went in the intake of the motor of that F-80 and blew it into a thousand pieces. A movie of that firing was used many, many times. In my farewell speech to this large group, I said that we were very glad to have had them come, and we were also very glad to see them go! This remark of mine was repeated by others several times later on.

At another time we had the Crown Prince of Greece, Konstantine. In addition to showing him White Sands, since he said he hadn't seen anything of the United States except at 30,000 feet from an airplane, we arranged to have him go back to Fort Bliss through Las Cruces so he could see some of the countryside. We had the mayor of Las Cruces meet him at the entrance of the town and escort him through the town. He was so highly pleased that he sent me a pair of solid gold cuff links with a K on them for Konstantine and also an autographed picture which I still have.

On another occasion, we had a visit from the Secretary of Defense of Italy and, since the wife of my Protocol Officer was a native Italian, I had her sit next to me at the luncheon to interpret for me. It had been some time since she was in Italy so she wasn't too well up on her Italian. Several times she started to say something and then turned to me and asked me how to say it. Of course, I had no idea. But the three of us had fun over it. When the Secretary got back to Italy he sent me a beautiful engraved picture of the Plaza Novona which I still have in my study.

We had a group of Swedish officers who were not too impressed by the United States, but we treated them so well that they gave me an attractive crystal ash tray from the Swedish Air Force. Their Escort Officer told me that they had been several places in the United States and had not given anybody anything except me. Of course, I was highly complimented.

When the Redstone missile was developed, it had to be fired to a range of at least 150 miles, and our range was just 100 miles long. So we had to negotiate with the ranchers to the north of the range and ask them to evacuate their property during the period of firing the Redstone missile. After the firing they could return to their property.

This, however, took some doing, because they had seen the government gobble up the rest of the range and not return it. The Army agreed to pay their lodgings while they were off the range and to repair any damage that was done by the firing and replace things the way they were. We had a meeting of all the ranchers and discussed the whole thing with them. We were finally successful in getting the agreement signed. We did fire several Redstone missiles to the 150-mile range.

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Brits Visit For Training

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A British Battalion came to the range for training in firing the Redstone missile. We saw to it that they were well taken care of and provided transportation to different amusements, as it was a long way from where our civilian type facilities were located. When they left they presented me with a beautiful wooden plaque showing the 47th Guided Missile Regiment on it with the British Coat of Arms.

At one time, Mr. Brucker, the Secretary of the Army, paid me a visit. I picked him up with my Beechcraft airplane at the airport in El Paso and flew him out over White Sands. He wanted particularly to see the housing around the Headquarters area. I looked down on all the construction there and I said to him, "Mr. Secretary, do you think I'm building a future ghost city out here in the desert?" He answered, "Oh, there will always be a use for this place." Well, this is some years later and it is still operating, although on a reduced scale.

A museum was erected in the memory of Dr. Goddard, the father of all missiles, at Roswell, New Mexico. Mrs. Goddard, Werner Von Braun and I went to this dedication. Several other celebrities attended also. I represented the Chief of Ordnance. It was a very interesting dedication. There were Indians in the show and later a barbecued buffalo was served.

It was reputed that we had the largest construction program for one year for the Army. I know we built 800 sets of quarters, a commissary, a noncoms' club, an officers' club, and a chapel.

We had been using an old World War II chapel that had been brought in from a former air base. The plans for the chapel that were sent to me were completely inadequate, as far as I was concerned. It so happened that the Chief of Chaplains, Patrick Ryan, was visiting me at the time it was under discussion, and I told him how I felt about the chapel. He said I could build whatever I wanted.

So we built a very lovely chapel. We particularly saw to it that it was sited to face the grandeur of the mountains. On a later visit Ruth (second wife) and I went to see the chapel. I particularly wanted to show it to her. The people who were working there said they wondered how that beautiful chapel had been built at White Sands. They didn't know who I was, so I explained who I was and how we had gotten approval.

The engineers working on the missiles wanted a linear accelerator put in so they could test components of the missiles under a nuclear environment. I found out that it would cost at least a million dollars to do this. We had a conference of leading nuclear men and missile men technicians to see whether it was feasible and desirable. The group decided it would be desirable and one of the last things that I did was to approve the million dollars to put in this nuclear environment.

When Ruth and I visited there I wondered if I had made the right decision to put it in. I found out that it was

working overtime and for agencies all over the country, and was considered the finest facility for that type of work. They had also brought down the solar furnace that had been built for the Air Force at Alamogordo and installed that there too. This gave them a place to test the missiles and their components in both a nuclear and sun environment. *(Editor's Note: the solar furnace was originally built at the Army's Natick, Mass. research facility in 1958 to simulate nuclear weapon thermal effects. It was moved to WSMR, reassembled and ready to operate in 1974)*

I was continually called upon to tell people about White Sands. I made one talk in Kansas City and one at the Coconut Grove in Los Angeles and many others.

Unfortunately, we had one of our black days on a day in which the Senior Class at West Point visited White Sands. Lois and Bob knew some of the cadets. It seemed that nothing would fire on that day. One of the cadets told Lois that when everything failed to go, I got up and gave a little talk. We finally had a Corporal missile fire, but it went off at a time that we were in busses down the range. I stopped the buses, got the cadets to look out and they did see the contrail of the Corporal missile.

Steve worked at the range one summer for a contractor and Lois worked for the Navy contractor on the Talos missile.

While I was in Command at White Sands, Lois finished college and met and married my Aide, Bob Mackintosh, who's father was a West Point cadet in the Class of '29. It was a lovely wedding.

A comic part about it that I remember was that some of the guests knew Lois' car and they soaped it all up and put signs on it and stones in the hubcaps. We had arranged for Lois and Bob to take my car and my mother-in-law, Ma Breuer, and I left the wedding reception in Lois' car. We laughed as we drove off with signs "Just Married" etc. on it.

After 4 years at White Sands I decided my time had run out, and I put in for retirement. I told the Chief of Ordnance that I didn't want any ceremony; I wanted to be like MacArthur's Old Soldier and simply fade away. I took a month's leave and everybody thought I was just going on leave but, of course, I had to have the doctor give me a physical exam and I had to tell my Executive that he would take over as Commander the day I left. I did have my immediate staff in for a little ceremony the afternoon before I left.

Wilma, Ma Breuer, Suzy the cat, and I started out in the morning to drive to Cincinnati. I expected no ceremony of any kind because none had been arranged, but as I drove out the gate, there lined up at about 5 pace intervals was the total Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps military personnel. The line extended for quite a long ways. At the end they had the American flag, my flag and my staff there to salute me as I went out. This was all done without my knowledge or my wishes. But it certainly was a heart warming send off.

Hands Across History
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White Sands, NM 88002

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On Oct. 20 and 21, the White Sands Historical Foundation manned a table at the Las Cruces Sunrise Lions Club Gun Show in the city's Convention Center. The purpose was to gain exposure for the White Sands Museum and the Foundation. Also, volunteers sold souvenirs that were WSMR oriented in an attempt to raise money for the Museum.

As part of that effort, the Foundation raffled off a piece of the original V-2. Shown here is Allen Geiger, CEO of Akamai Physics, Inc, with the piece of V-2 skin he won.

The V-2 pieces are from the debris that was left after the rocket's restoration. They are cut up and mounted on blocks of wood and sold in the Museum's gift shop. A letter of authenticity is provided with each piece. All funds are kept by the Foundation to be used in support of the Museum.

If you are interested in a piece of V-2 skin or a section of oxygen piping, contact Jim Eckles - the editor.