



The Catalyst

A Newsletter for the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation

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Two Concepts For Museum Are Now Available

The White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation and missile range officials now have two completely different concepts for the design of the new museum complex. It is possible that a third “volunteer” proposal may be coming soon as well.

The designs incorporate most of the same functional areas that museum curator Ron Burkett wants to see in the new building. “They all have exhibit halls, storage areas, archives, etc. They are just different ways of packaging or dressing it up,” he said.

The design from Studio D in Las Cruces, which the foundation paid for, is very modern and was

put together to reflect the cutting edge research done at White Sands in science and technology.

The design from the White Sands architect reflects a more traditional New Mexico pueblo style and is meant to fit in with the New Mexico landscape.

At a recent foundation board meeting, members were excited about having the two diverse designs and possibly another. One board member said, “These are great concepts. I think any individual or company can be a proud investor in the White Sands museum using one of these ideas.”

The foundation board and museum curator decided that they

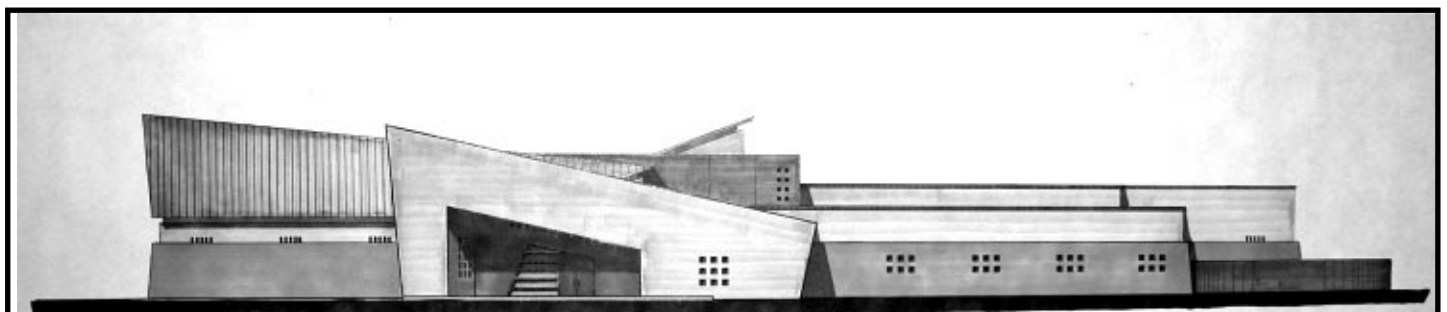
would not attempt to pick one of the designs at this point. A lot of money has to be raised before any of the concepts can be realized.

The final design and its scale will depend on the amount of money that can be raised in the near future.

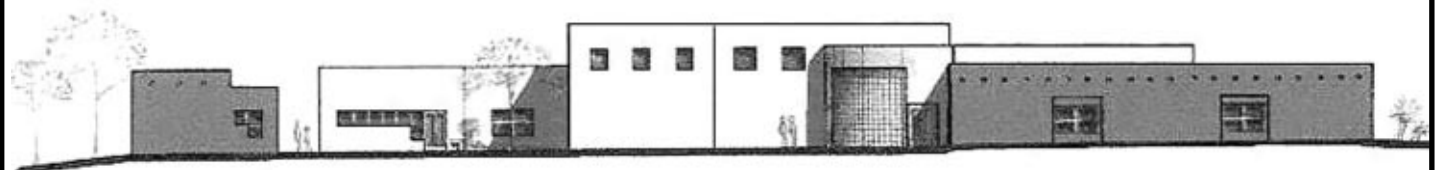
Nominations For The Hall Of Fame Due March 31

Nominations for the White Sands Hall of Fame are due March 31. For a pamphlet with instructions and forms, contact Terry Garcia at (505) 678-3221.

The hall of fame honors those who have made lasting contributions to the range’s mission.



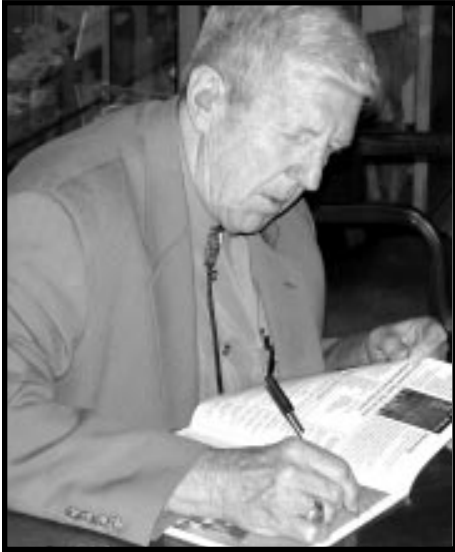
This is a possible design for the new museum complex from Studio D in Las Cruces.



This is the vision of Rich Willard, White Sands architect, for the front of the future museum complex.

Foundation Member & Writer Autographs Work

George Helfrich, a member of the White Sands Historical Foundation and formerly a board member, made his mark recently by



George Helfrich autographs copies of his article for history fans at the White Sands Museum on Dec. 10.

writing a short history of the Navy in New Mexico.

His two articles make up the fourth issue of the "New Mexico Space Journal" published in November 2002 by the NM Museum of Space History. The issue is titled "On a Sea of Sand: A History of the Navy in New Mexico."

Helfrich has worked in the guided missile business for 50 years now. He first saw White Sands in 1954 as part of a Nike unit training at the proving ground. Later he came back, working for the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) in support of the Navy at White Sands.

With his decades of experience with the Navy, most feel

Helfrich is the most knowledgeable person on the subject. In fact, last year he delivered a major presentation on the Navy at the New Mexico-Arizona Joint History Conference on April 12, 2002 in Las Cruces.

The "Space Journal" article focuses on White Sands but Helfrich also includes a spotlight piece on Rear Admiral William Parsons. This native New Mexican was a major player in developing the proximity fuse, radar and then he topped it off by arming the Little Boy atomic bomb on the flight to Hiroshima.

The first issue of N.M. Space Journal was devoted to the V-2 rocket. These issues are available at the White Sands Museum gift shop.

Museum Gets A Facelift With Authentic Missile Paint Patterns

The White Sands Missile Range Museum is being spruced up with new paint inside and out.

Painting the exhibit hall and surrounding rooms is just about complete. Curator Ron Burkett said he hopes to have new carpet in the exhibit area soon, as well.

The paint outdoors is going on rockets and missiles in the missile park. Since they were last coated with more white paint, the wind and sun have taken their toll. Layer after layer of paint is deeply pitted and peeling off.

According to museum registrar, Terrie Cornell, the missile painting will be an ongoing task for several years to come.

The exciting thing about the new paint in missile park is that the vehicles will no longer be painted

the same black and white.

Cornell said, "We are going to paint them using authentic colors and patterns that testers would have seen during launches. To make sure we get it right we are using old launch photos and consulting people who may have been associated with a particular project."

So far four of the smaller vehicles have been repainted. They are the TOW (Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided), Copperhead, Falcon and Shillelagh. The Copperhead is a howitzer launched projectile while the others

are missiles.

Part of the funding for this effort came from a grant from the Army Historical Foundation for \$890.

Cornell says the first objects were all painted by James Harper, a local contractor working out of Tularosa. He is using automotive painting technology to refinish each vehicle. The feeling is that auto paint and techniques will provide a finish that will stand up better to the harsh conditions found in missile park. Other museums are doing the same thing.

In Memoriam

Currently, there are seven names on the Memorial Board in the museum. Names can be added for any reason for a small donation.

MG Thomas J.P. Jones
 MG Alan A. Nord
 Mary Bochman
 Harris & Hollingworth Family
 Edward F. Southworth
 Sumiko Piland
 William "Bill" Lieberman

John Douds Puts Together Ordnance Collection

White Sands Historical Foundation board member John Douds has been doing his part to improve the displays at the White Sands Museum. A new exhibit showing the evolution of bomblets and submunitions carried by missiles tested at White Sands has been put together by Douds.

Many of the items in the collection come from the former chief of the Warheads Test Branch, Richard Overley, and the current chief, Louis Perez.

The development of these bomblets and submunitions began in the late 1940s. They were designed to be the shotgun pellets of the missile world with small difference. These items explode.

The bomblets vary in size from golf balls to things about the

size of softballs. They come in various shapes as well.

The basic idea is to have a missile dispense hundreds of bomblets in a target area and destroy multiple targets instead of just one. The bomblets have to be spread over the target area in set pattern and are armed to detonate on impact.

The Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) is one of the most successful systems developed to use this approach. Each MLRS rocket can carry 644 of the M-77 submunitions. The launcher vehicle can fire all 12 of its rockets in less than a minute. Simple math tells you that commanders can put over 7,700 small bombs on an enemy target in less time than it takes to fill your car with gas.

During Desert Storm the Iraqi soldiers called such an attack "steel rain."



John Douds holds one of the bomblets he has collected for museum display. He is a longtime foundation member.

Gary Turner Donates Valuable Records That Offer Insight Into WSPG Beginning

Gary Turner, the son of the first White Sands Commander, Col. Harold Turner, recently donated several boxes of records and artifacts to the White Sands Museum.

Already on display is a small model of the V-2 rocket painted in the yellow and black paint scheme used on the first launches. Turner said that he used to play with the model as a small boy making like he was flying in it - like Buck Rogers.

Also included are scrapbooks with articles from all over the country dealing with activities at White Sands through 1947. There are recordings of interviews Col. Turner had with local radio stations. Finally, there are many photographs that no one can recall ever seeing before.

Many thanks to Gary for his generosity.



Gary Turner during a visit to the museum.

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The Back Page

Through an appeal to the public, the museum, with the help of Public Affairs, was able to date this photo of entertainer Jack Benny and singer/actress Ann Blyth when they stopped at White Sands Proving Ground. They visited on Christmas day in 1951 and performed in the brand new post theater at 4 p.m. They reportedly ate with the enlisted men in the consolidated mess. Benny is riding a WAC Corporal rocket like the one in the museum. A smoke bomb marks the countdown at zero.