



Hands Across History



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

Volume V, Letter I

February 2009

Darren Court Authors WSMR Picture Book

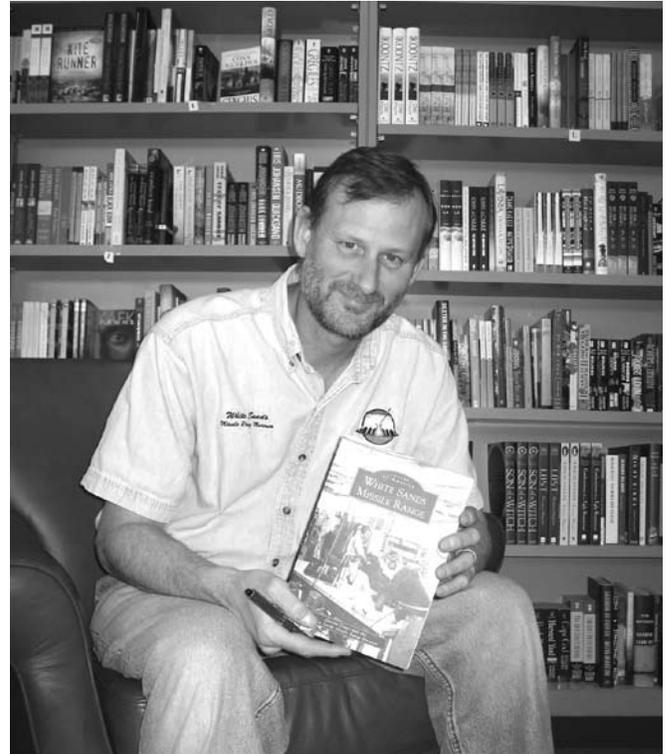
Darren Court, the White Sands Missile Range Museum Director, has authored a pictorial history of the missile range. The book was published by Arcadia Press in January and is now on sale in local book stores and at the museum gift shop. The list price is \$21.99.

Court said when he took over the museum he looked for a history of the missile range but couldn't find one. Then when visitors continually asked for a history of the range, he decided one was needed pretty quickly. After all, with Trinity Site and V-2 rocket launches White Sands has some world-class historical sites and has seen many history shaping events.

Once he got a green light from Arcadia Press for his idea, Court spent about eight months combing the museum archives for photos and the necessary information to caption them. He says many of the photos in the book have never been published before.

The book is a real boon for the historical foundation because Court has promised that any money he makes from the sale of the book will go to the foundation. What could be better than to take that money and apply it to building a new building for Court and all the visitors to White Sands.

To purchase a copy from the museum gift shop, call the shop at 575-678-8824. You will need a credit card but the book will be mailed to you so you don't have to drive anywhere to get your copy.



Darren Court during a recent book signing at the New Mexico State University campus bookstore.

Hall Of Fame Nominations Due By March 31

Nominations are now open for the White Sands Missile Range Hall of Fame. Established in 1980 as a way to honor former missile range personnel who made lasting contributions to the missile range, the hall of fame is the highest honor the range can bestow upon an individual. Past honorees include such individuals as Werner von Braun, the famous German rocket scientist, and Dr. Clyde Tombaugh, the astronomer who discovered Pluto.

Nominations close the end of March. For information on nomination procedures please contact Terry Garcia at the missile range's Incentive Awards Office at (575) 678-3221 or email her at terry.garcia@us.army.mil and request the White Sands Hall of Fame pamphlet. The pamphlet contains the forms, guidelines and procedures for the hall of fame nomination.

To be nominated for the hall of fame a nominee must have been responsible for significant and lasting deeds of achievements in support of the missile range mission. The contributions may be in various areas such as research, cost savings, technological advances, safety, public relations, equal opportunity or heroic deeds.

Last year, Richard W. Benfer, a major contributor to the Nike family of missiles, was inducted. There are now 44 individuals in the White Sands Hall of Fame.

All former military, civilian and contractor personnel who once served at White Sands are eligible for nomination. No one currently working at the range is eligible.

The White Sands Hall of Fame is located inside the main museum building just inside the Las Cruces gate at the missile range.

Museum Director's Update - New Registrar

By Darren Court, Director
WSMR Museum

The WSMR Museum has a new registrar. Callean Holly, pictured below, joined us at the end of November. A long-time WSMR employee, she worked at Child and Youth Services for 17 years and at Army Community Services for two years before making the jump to the museum world. One of her duties will be the development of educational programs for students. She will be (and has already been!) a valuable addition to the museum staff.

In other news, last year the museum accepted a loan of prints from the City of Las Cruces. These eight prints depict various scenes of the Bataan Death March and subsequent imprisonment of Benjamin Charles Steele, a survivor. While a prisoner, Steele kept an artistic record on scraps of paper, which was later lost. After the war he received his degree in art and subsequently recreated many of these scenes as paintings. The prints are on temporary exhibit in the museum, at least through the duration of the Bataan Memorial Death March, and are a remarkable documentation of a dark period in US military history.

An upcoming exhibit we will start soon will focus on the history of the Nike missile system and its role in the Cold War. When many people think of growing up in the 50's and 60's, they remember the missiles "in the back yard." We will develop a story showing the need for the Nike and a parallel storyline about the nuclear concerns that led to its development. We have some artifacts such as civil defense and fallout shelter items, "How to Survive a Nuclear Attack" books etc., but could use more. That said, if you have any of the "How to Recognize a Communist" type materials, please

keep us in mind. As time passes, more and more students are unaware of what the Cold War meant to the average American. We hope to educate them on the reason behind the development of the Nike series and America's "Rings of Steel."

We are currently discussing a number of other new exhibits, as well as how to improve current ones. One of the areas we are concentrating on is better interpretation. We have a lot of items on display with labels about what they are, but there is little that really "ties" these things together to more fully tell their story – we hope to rectify that this year. The museum needs to be less a collection of items, and

more a series of short stories that, together, tell who we are. We are also looking at a completely new layout for the museum, using temporary walls and other ways to better guide viewers through the gallery and rooms. We recently had a visit by the chief of all TRADOC museums and he found our museum very enjoyable and was impressed by the number of visitors we had. He also appreciated the non-military rooms, such as the pre-history and ranch-



ing rooms, as it gives visitors who might not be interested in rockets and missiles something to look at. When I asked him what we could do better, he mentioned we might want to either group like materials together better, or try to do certain things chronologically – so we have some work ahead.

We have an exciting few years ahead of us. Our goal is that a visitor can come here at least once a year and find a new and exciting exhibit each time, as well as gain a better picture of what you all did here during your time at WSMR and appreciate what "Fort White Sands" has done for America's defense. And, as always, please don't throw it out – DONATE IT!

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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Duggan Recalls Kennedy Visit

By Col. Dan Duggan, USA (ret)

President John F. Kennedy's visit to WSMR on June 5, 1963 was without a doubt the highlight of the week. As a young captain I felt privileged to have even a bit part which then turned out to be a major personal up-front role.

We heard through the rumor mill that because of JFK's Navy service as a lieutenant and PT boat commander, he preferred Navy lieutenant-type briefers (those with two silver bars) as opposed to guys wearing eagles and stars. As Maj. Gen. Thorlin's command brifer and a two silver bar guy, they gave me the hot spot briefings -- the countdown and actual firing of the Nike Zeus at the viewing stands followed by a personal, face-to-face briefing on the Zeus system at the secret level for the president.

As I look back on such a serious chain of events, many of the things that appeared serious at the time, bring a chuckle after 45 years. First, WSMR was given 90 days in which to prepare. This immediately called for an ad-hoc group of some 15 principals headed by a major who was supervised daily by the deputy commander and the chief of staff and no telling how many others spreading like a web from the center.

I personally gave a total of 93 formal briefing, "dry runs," to everyone from the janitor to the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. Everyone of them had "suggestions" on how to say it.

I felt sorry for the Navy brifer who was told three weeks before the event that he could not use a script because the Army Zeus brifer didn't use a script. I don't think he liked me too much after that.

In addition to my two assigned Zeus briefings I received the additional duty of overseeing the development of ALA#5 (Army Launch Area) viewing area and administrative support. I remember two days before the visit the post engineers tore out and replaced all the stair steps the president would use because they didn't meet the president's special criteria -- JFK had a back problem and did not use regular steps. Power lines had to either be re routed or buried very deep if he was to pass over them.

We had to have two portable buildings. One was for a rest area with plush chairs, refreshments and the other one was equipped with

medical support equipment - just in case.

Of course, we put a big red cross on the second building. As it would happen we also put all the telephones in this building - just in case.

Wouldn't you know the president asked to call Jackie upon arriving at ALA#5 prior to going to the stands. He was immediately ushered into the "plush chairs and refreshment building" only to be ushered back out in less than a minute and taken to the "red cross" building where the telephones were. The media, of which there were a zillion, immediately started to ask if the president was ill or having medical problems.

Speaking of telephones, just as the sun was about to go down on the day before the visit I made a final inspection of ALA#5 to insure it's readiness. After finding everything "ship shape" I noticed a "stranger." Resting on a nice little table out in the open was a brand new red telephone in a clear plastic bag. A closer look indicated no dial but a small round disk with a photo of the white house on it.

This was strange. Perhaps I should. No, maybe I should leave it alone. Nope, curiosity got the best of me. After all I was responsible for the area.

Before I got the receiver to my ear I heard a very pleasant voice say, "White House Operator."

See Kennedy Visit, page 7



President Kennedy at the podium when he spoke to the WSMR workforce during his visit on June 5, 1963. Standing to the left are NM Congressman Joseph Montoya and Maj. Gen. Frederick Thorlin, WSMR commander.

Way Back When

What Is That Elephant Fence For?

Editor's Note: One of the common questions we used to field in Public Affairs was about the two huge pens out in the desert near the Orogrande gate. On a clear day they were visible from Highway 70 and other spots in the basin. Some thought they were for UFO research while others thought they housed big animals. Doyle explains their use.

By Doyle Piland
From the WSMR Museum Archives

Drive out Nike Avenue to the eastern edge of the missile range and turn left just before the Orogrande gate. Drive approximately 7.5 miles and turn left for another 2 miles. You come to a complex with a large dish type radar antenna inside a very high fence. There is also a building outside the fence with a large dish type radar antenna beside it (see photo below). If there is anyone around, it would be unusual. Well, that's not the way it was Way Back When....

The radar inside the fence was called RAM and the one outside was called RAMPART. The buildings, fence, and antennas are still there today. All radar equipment has been removed from the buildings. These two radars were part of the Air Force Advanced Ballistic Reentry Systems (ABRES) program.

The more familiar part of the ABRES program was the Athena missile. The Athena was a multi-stage solid-fueled rocket (see photo at right).

The Athena was launched from a White Sands operated launch complex at Green River, Utah. It was typically flown with four solid-propellant rocket stages with two additional solid-propellant boosters strapped to the first stage that ignited simultaneously with the latter. The first two stages lifted the rocket to an apogee between 125 and 185 miles. After that, the Athena pitched down and the remaining stages accelerated the re-entry vehicle towards the denser atmosphere

to a speed of up to 22,000 feet per second and would impact in the southern part of White Sands Missile Range.

See ICBM Simulation, page 5



The Air Force Athena Missile sits on its rail ready to launch from Green River, Utah.



The RAM radar antenna and building inside the fenced area and the RAMPART antenna and building outside.

ICBM Simulation

With a flight lasting only four minutes and going to a maximum distance of about 470 miles, the Athena could realistically simulate a 25 minute ICBM mission across 5,000 miles. The USAF launched more than 140 Athenas between 1964 and March 1977, testing reentry technology for the Titan, Minuteman, Polaris, and Poseidon missiles. The fiery nighttime reentry of the Athena provided a spectacular display as it streaked toward impact with the desert floor a little northwest of the RAM and RAMPART Radars.

To track and evaluate the characteristics and performance of the various reentry technologies being tested, a sophisticated S-band radar system, named RAMPART, and a UHF and L-band radar system called RAM were installed near the impact area on the southern end of the range. A similar UHF/L-band system that included a VHF measurement capability was installed at Stallion at the north end of the Range to provide high-aspect-angle data.

Now, while the Air Force was primarily interested in measuring the characteristics and performance of their equipment, other agencies, in particular the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), were also interested in information that could be used in dealing defensively with enemy reentry vehicles. Because the Special Test Vehicle program offered ARPA an excellent chance to test their “ARPA Measure-

ments Radar” (AMRAD) and its discrimination techniques, White Sands was selected as the site for that radar.

The AMRAD was located approximately 2.1 miles east-northeast of the RAM-RAMPART complex. AMRAD was built by the Raytheon Corporation to Lincoln Laboratory specifications. It was an L-band system with a sixty-foot dish (see photo below).

In addition to the radars discussed above, there were other radars that also participated in the ABRES activities in support of ARPA. The Target Tracking Radar and Discrimination Radar from the cancelled Nike Zeus program, the Multifunction Array Radar (MAR), part of the Nike X program, and the “Hard Point Defense Array Radar” (HAP-DAR) installed in the Nike Zeus Acquisition Radar Receiver Building, another ARPA project, were all used to various degrees. There was also a large dish radar antenna a little south of Highway 70 just before the turnoff to what was then MAR site (now HELSTF), which most likely played some roll in this programs as well.

Since the radar buildings of the RAM, RAMPART, and AMRAD had large Radio Frequency (RF) shielded rooms, they are very useful to other agencies such as the Survivability/Lethality Analysis Directorate (SLAD) and the Nuclear Effects Facilities of the Material Test Directorate and have been in intermittent use for many years. But, there isn't near the activity and excitement that there was Way Back When...



The ARPA Measurements Radar (AMRAD) located about 7.75 miles north of Nike Ave. on the eastern edge of White Sands Missile Range.

Kennedy Visit

I responded with some gibberish like, "I-ugh, umm."

She said, "You are calling from White Sands, New Mexico and were just checking out the phone, right?"

"Y-y-yesmam" I stammered.

"It works fine and by the way have a great day tomorrow when the president arrives. I know you will do well," click, and she was gone.

That really boosted my morale.

Tomorrow came, the president arrived and everything went like clockwork. The briefings and missile firings, called MEWS (Missile Exercise White Sands), were all "successful."

Of course, the grand finale was the firing of the Nike Zeus for which I had practiced some 93 dry runs. I had the countdown clock on the podium and while I was authorised to "hold," if necessary, I wasn't going to be the one to explain that to the CG.

Just as the president was seated in the stands and I opened with "Mr. President," Vice-President Johnson said something to him and he turned to speak to the vice president. Not many people, if any, caught what happened next. I cleared my throat in the microphone and followed with a resounding "Mr. President." JFK reacted as if someone had hit him with a baseball. He turned, looked directly at me, leaned forward with a big grin and gave me his full attention. Right then I knew he and I would get along for the rest of the day and we certainly did.

The classified briefing was scheduled in an adjacent building to the ALA#5 viewing stands. On the way to the entrance, we passed around the back of the building and a small door there. JFK asked, "what's in there and can we go in?"

Since it was the same building we were briefing him in, just not the front door, we knew the Secret Service had already cleared the entire building. We said sure and went in. Just inside we encountered an armed WSMR civilian security guard.

"Hi! I'm Jack Kennedy," the president said to the guard and extended his hand for a shake. The security guard had absolutely no reaction. It was as if he had been frozen in place. He could neither speak nor move.

Only after the chief of WSMR security spoke to him twice did he blink. I don't believe he ever recognized the president. I am glad he had a strong heart and didn't have an attack right there.

This, of course, brought the president into the back of the room and confused the people waiting to greet him at the front. It took a few minutes to get things sorted out.

Looking back on this bit of confusion I would equate it to throwing one banana into a cage of monkeys. Everyone fell over themselves trying to get to one man for a hand shake and introduction.

Not sure of just how smart this young captain was in discussing system capabilities and strategy with the president, the White House gave me plenty of support. My

immediate backup was the Chairman of AT&T, followed by the president and CEO of Bell Telephone Lab, someone from Douglas Aircraft, a gaggle of more "expert" contractors and, of course, our ever-present commander, Maj. Gen. Thorlin.

I pointed out to the President that we had some refreshments, even Heineken Beer (his favorite) should he like one. He declined, reminding me with that ever present grin, that he and I were still working.

I was ready to proceed with the classified briefing when he said, "I know you have worked on this briefing for some time. How many dry runs did you make?"

"Ninety-three times," I replied.

General Thorlin turned a bit purple then red.

"I am sure you are thoroughly prepared and have an outstanding briefing ready but we are running a bit late. Would you mind just sitting down and let's talk about a few things on my mind?" JFK asked.

Wow. I still can't believe I was able to answer his questions and discuss the program intelligently without having to call on one of my many backups. Everyone did have the opportunity to say a few words during the discussions.

Upon his departure he shook my hand and said "My thanks to you and everyone for their hard work in making this an outstanding informative day. Now you can enjoy that after-action party."

The entire post celebrated a very successful day that night..

I wonder if that briefing is still classified.

Pioneer Group Is Preparing To Support 2009 Activities

The White Sands Pioneer Group is preparing to support several missile range events this year. As you may have seen on page one, nominations for the White Sands Missile Range Hall of Fame are due by the end of March.

As in the past, the pioneer group will put together a committee to review the nominations for WSMR and make recommendations to the selection board.

Once a selection is made by the commanding general, the pioneers will support the induction luncheon by paying for inductee lunches. This is necessary because the government still won't pay for the lunches of our hall of fame members.

Later in the year, the group will again sponsor a "then and now" luncheon featuring presentations on some past and current aspect of the missile range. In 2008 the old Navy was featured and contrasted to the current Navy and its testing of missiles capable of shooting down satellites. The year before NASA's Little Joe II testing was contrasted with the upcoming NASA Orion spacecraft escape system testing scheduled to start at WSMR this year.

To support these events and pay our fair share for the publication of this newsletter, we need pioneers to come forth again this year and pay their dues. Checks can be sent to P.O. Box 318, White Sands, NM 88002.

New Officers To Guide Foundation Board

Sharon Reese has been elected to serve as president of the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation. She is replacing Pam Vick who has stepped down but will remain a member of the board of directors.

Reese said afterwards, "I want to thank the board for giving me the opportunity to serve as president this year. I look forward to working with the board and all our members in our push to get a new museum building. I'd like to ask foundation members and pioneer group members alike to be on the lookout for our next newsletter. In it I will be sending out information on our upcoming Kick Off/Recognition Reception. To get this done we are going to need all of you."

David Soules remains vice president of the foundation but Bob Lipinski is replacing Pamela Hoscheit as secretary. And, long-time treasurer Jon Gibson is returning to serve another term as the foundation's money manager.

In addition to the elected officers, Robyn Mann has started attending meetings. Robyn is the wife of White Sands commander Brig. Gen. David Mann and is acting as a special advisor to the board.



Sharon Reese, the new president of the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation, listens to other board members discuss fund raising initiatives as she presides over her first meeting as president.



Don't forget the 20th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March on March 29 at WSMR. There is the traditional 26 mile route and now there is a new 15 mile route if you don't think you can do the whole thing. For more info and to register go to: www.bataanmarch.com

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Linda Lovelady Epstein

Marion and COL (R) Robert Mills

Austin and Pamela Vick

**Hands Across History
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The Back Page



This photo of a 1946 Funk plane belonging to the White Sands Proving Ground Flying Club was taken in October 1953 at the Las Cruces airport - note the Organ Mountains in the background. According to the photo's caption, the club had several members with private licenses and that several women were working toward their licenses. If you don't recognize the Funk name it was a small Coffeyville, Kansas company run by twin brothers, Howard and Joe Funk. In 1946 they probably produced just over 300 of these planes. They were out of business by 1948 because of the glut of war surplus aircraft and competition with other new companies. The Funk Aircraft Owners Association estimates more than 200 still exist.