



Hands Across History

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



Volume IV, Letter IV

November 2008

Annual Meeting Reveals Museum Growth

At the annual Foundation members meeting on Nov. 6, three board members (Pam Vick, John Bayer and Jim Eckles) were re-elected to the board of directors. Also Pam Vick announced she would not seek another term as the Foundation president. No one at the meeting volunteered to replace her.

Darren Court, WSMR Museum Director, reported visitation of the museum is still on the increase. During the last year more than 40 school groups visited and in fiscal year 2008 they recorded over 82,000 visitors to the building. He thinks they will exceed 100,000 per year in the near future.

His bad news was that the museum's budget has been cut along with most everyone else's at White Sands. He reported that hiring a registrar probably won't happen this coming year unless there is some breakthrough on money.

At the same time he has requests in for less expensive items like creating three exterior information signs for the V-2 building. He said many people visit the museum when it is not open. They can see the V-2 through the windows in its building but there is no posted data outside to explain it. The signs would provide background information on what a V-2 is and why it is important.

In addition, Darren has requested funding to redo the signs in Missile Park. Many of the signs are sand blasted and sun faded to the point they are unreadable. His proposed signs will be cheaper than the old ones and will include an actual photo of each missile in action.

He announced his new Trinity Site display is just about ready to go on the museum floor. He also is planning on an exhibit to feature the Nike family of missiles. They are a pioneering trio of missiles and were very important to WSMR in its early days.

He wrapped up his report stating one major goal is to do more educational programs with children.

Bob Lipinski followed with a "brick" report about the signature plaza between the V-2 building and Missile Park. He said since the Foundation started the program in 2003, almost 500 bricks have been placed and brought in about \$51,000. The net income after expenses is almost \$23,000. He said they now place eight to 12 bricks every two months and, although there is plenty of room in the current plaza, they have plans to expand the placement of bricks into Missile Park.

It was announced that several people have made donations to the Foundation in the name of someone else. Frances Williams has made donations in the names of Rob Cox and Jim Wise. Terrie Cornell made a donation in the name of Rob Cox. Bud Cranford made a donation in the name of Jim Wise.

The audience was invited to visit the museum afterwards to see some of the new displays – like the Air Force F-4 fighter, the sled used on the Holloman High Speed Sled Track and the Navy's Standard 2 missile.



An Air Force F-4 fighter is now on display in the Museum's Missile Park. The F-4 is currently the supersonic, full-scale target used on White Sands.



Other New Displays

In addition to the F-4 now on display in Missile Park, the Navy's Standard Missile 2 (SM2) has been added (above). To the left of the SM2 is the 5-inch Navy gun that was used for testing at LC-35 for years. The hatch is open so visitors can see inside.

A new display inside the Museum is the Air Force's Small Diameter Bomb (left). This recently developed weapon is on display with its fins and wings folded up in its carrying mode. Behind the bomb are test photos taken at WSMR.

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 Weapons Party

By Col. Dan Duggan, USA (ret)

In talking with some friends recently I made the remark “Do you remember when we did so and so?” I received a blank stare from some and a comment by one who said, “I was still in high school then.”

It quickly dawned on me, other than the fact I was getting old, that having been assigned to White Sands Missile Range from April 1961 to July 1965 and again from June 1980 to October 1985 that I had two different sets of friends and associates separated by some 20 years. In any case, I am proud of having served over 10 years of my 30-year Army career at WSMR and more than likely hold the record for “time served” as a commissioned officer here at “Fort White Sands.”

After some arm twisting I agreed to jot down some of my more interesting memories of the events and conditions from over the years at WSMR.

It all started on April Fools Day 1961 when as a young captain I arrived at WSMR to find a large contingent of military to include some 50 to 60 captains, a bunch of warrants and lieutenants with what appeared to be lots of majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels. Most were of the Ordnance persuasion. The post flag even bore the Ordnance Corps bomb icon.

My first assignment was as the range liaison officer to Bell Telephone Labs working on the Nike Zeus missile system.

We worked hard and long hours but there were breaks from the grind. Each quarter a specific group was responsible for putting on the “quarterly party” at the officers club. Lieutenants and warrants, captains and field grade officers took their turn in trying to out do the other.

This brings to mind the captain’s “Bring Your Own Weapon Party.” As chief of the Anti-Tank Test Branch at the Small Missile Range, I drew the chairmanship of this particular party.

The party started with seemingly basic and doable plans. I decided to bring one of

the M-48 target tanks and park it on the club lawn near the front door. The tank was already on post so it was an easy drive to the club – except for one small detail.

I decided to drive it through the housing area by my quarters at 109 Goddard (the general’s street) and pick up my young son for the ride to the club. Turning the corner I was a bit out of alignment and “lifted” about 10 feet of street curb with the back track, leaving a nice bit of handy work for the general to see on his way home that evening.

But that was just the start. Everyone brought their weapons. We had Honest John, Little John, Shillelagh and we every towed the range’s salute gun to the party for show.

I can’t honestly say I remember a lot of the details of the party. I do remember it was a blast and I’m sure everyone must have had a good time. My first recollection of the fine time we had came about 0730 in the morning when the duty officer called to advise me that Col. Bane, the deputy commander, was having formation for all captains at 0800 in front of the club.

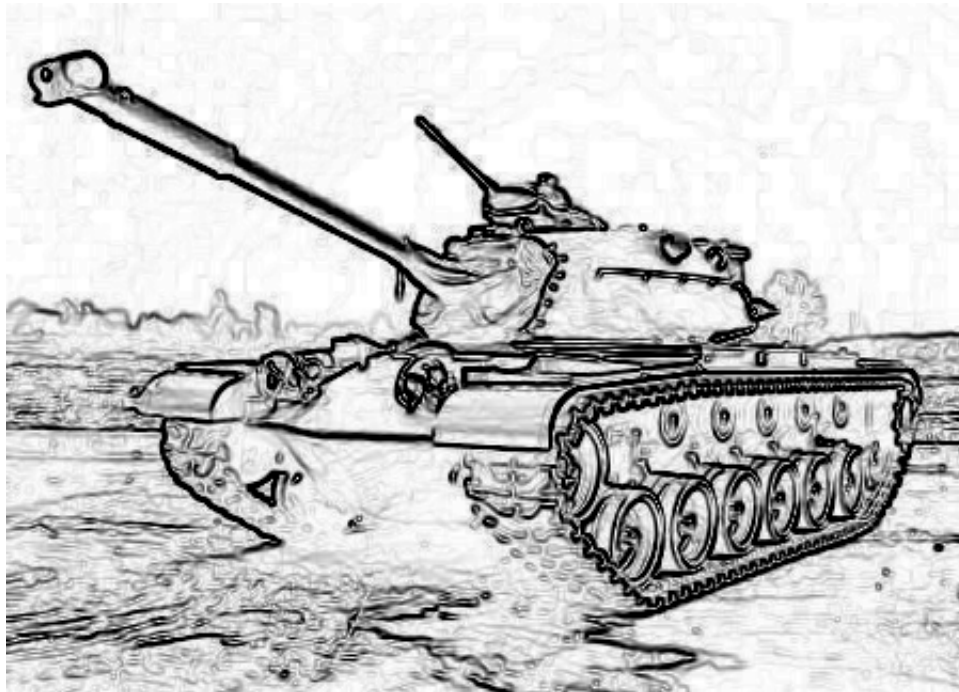
Upon arrival at the formation I noted that my tank still resided in its original position although I had not noticed last night how deep the ruts were on the lawn. I also noted that the Honest John, Little John missile and the salute cannon were missing. I assumed some early birds had returned them to the Tech Area.

Not so. The Honest John, Little John and the salute cannon rested at the bottom of the club’s swimming pool.

I will always remember Col. Bane’s concise and cutting remarks, “Gentlemen, you have had your fun and now you are going to pay the piper. The swimming pool will open promptly at 1000 hours. Your weapons will be

removed and the pool will be cleaned and inspected by the engineers by that time. If there is one, just one, scratch on that pool I will have more to say. Captain Duggan, I will see you in my office at 0800 tomorrow.”

Do you have any idea how much an Honest John missile full of water weighs? I do.



Radio Scripts Discovered For 1953

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of scripts written in 1953 for presentation on radio in Las Cruces. This kind of "pat each other on the back" programming still goes on today, of course, but the official is usually trusted and a script with every word laid out is not used. This canned approach seems pretty primitive today. I have done very little editing - only for brevity and continuity. For instance, in the original script, the lieutenant's name is spelled half the time with two 't's. I couldn't find him anywhere else so I decided to use the one 't' version to save space.

(Script for first WSPG program on "Public Service Hour," 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 9. Recording to be made at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at Radio Station KOBE)

Bob Bradley: And now it gives me great pleasure to introduce Lieutenant Louis M. Jiggits Jr., Assistant Public Information Officer at White Sands Proving Ground. Lieutenant Jiggits has consented to appear on this program to answer some of our questions about White Sands, in an effort to give our listeners a better understanding of what White Sands is and what it means to the people of this area. This will be the first of a series of presentations of the program featuring White Sands Proving Ground. Lieutenant Jiggits, our first question is fairly simple, but it seems to be a good one to start off with. What is White Sands Proving Ground?

Lieut. Jiggits: Well, Bob, first I would like to say that, as a representative of the Public Information Office, I appreciate the opportunity to appear on this program. I hope that in this way we can give our listeners some worthwhile information about White Sands, and thus bring about a better understanding of what we are, and better relations between our people and those of the Las Cruces area. White Sands Proving Ground is one of the principal rocket and guided missile testing stations in the United States. It is an Army Ordnance Corps installation under the jurisdiction of the Chief of Ordnance, Major General E.L. Ford of Washington, D.C. The Commanding General of the Proving Ground is Brigadier General George G. Eddy, a native of Norwich, Conn., and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1918.

Bob Bradley: Are Army men the only ones stationed at White Sands?

Lieut. Jiggits: No. The U.S. Navy maintains the Naval Ordnance Missile Test Facility there. The U.S. Air Force maintains an Air Weather Detachment as well as Holloman Air Development Center. In addition, there are hundreds of civilians employed by the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and a number of civilians employed by private contractors who have been commissioned by the Government to carry out certain phases of the work on some projects. Even within the Army, there are many different branches such as the Signal Corps, Corps of Engineers, Medical Corps, Quartermaster Corps, Infantry, Artillery, and Military Police Corps, all working together on the various phases of the

overall program or carrying out the assignments which make it possible for the others to operate.

Bob Bradley: Can you say how many people there are at White Sands in all?

Lieut. Jiggits: No, that information is restricted for security reasons and cannot be given out. But we can say that White Sands Proving Ground is more than a military installation. It is a vital defense industry as well, and occupies a very important place in our nation's defense program.

Bob Bradley: If and when the present emergency ends, will White Sands be abandoned or deactivated?

Lieut. Jiggits: Not under present long-range plans. White Sands Proving Ground was made a permanent Class Two activity on September 16th, 1948, when it became evident that the rocket, guided missile, and upper atmosphere research programs could be expected to become permanent activities of the Armed Forces. Since August 1945, when the first troops arrived at WSPG, the base has grown steadily. That growth may be expected to continue for some time, necessitated by increasing activities of the station and the important place these activities have in the guided missile program, and consequently in the overall defense program. Even when the growth levels off, we expect WSPG to continue its missile testing programs for many years to come. For as recent information from Washington indicated, "during perhaps the next thirty years there will be a mixed phase in which both piloted aircraft and guided missiles will be used by the Armed Forces."

Bob Bradley: In your opinion, Lieutenant Jiggits, what does that mean to the city of Las Cruces?

Lieut. Jiggits: Well, Bob, I think it probably could be described as one of the dreams of a Chamber of Commerce come true. It is obvious that White Sands Proving Ground has affected Las Cruces. Military personnel with families make their homes here. Many of the civilian employees live in Las Cruces. These, as well as those that live on the base, spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in Las Cruces each month. The payroll at the Proving Ground is over a million dollars per month. This area already has its basic industry of agriculture. But we all know that diversity of industries, assuring employment across the board for all who need it adds to the prosperity of the community by bringing in more business to the shops and stores. This is just one of the things most progressive communities strive to obtain. Some towns spend large sums of money through their Chambers of Commerce seeking to attract new industries to their locality. So we feel safe in saying that White Sands Proving Ground is a good thing for Las Cruces, and that Las Cruces is a good thing for White Sands. It is a matter of living together and working together for their mutual security, which might be summed up in one word: happiness.

Bob Bradley: Thank you, Lieutenant Louis M. Jiggits, Jr., Assistant Public Information Officer of White Sands Proving Ground. Next week, Lieutenant Jiggits will return to give us more information on White Sands.

You Can Help

Pioneers: Please Take A Look At Old-Timers Bulletin Board On Web

On the White Sands Museum website there is an area called "The Old-Timers Bulletin Board." It is a place for folks to post questions, announcements and interesting stories. In many cases, posters are asking for information about a loved one - maybe you can help.

For instance, Debbie Martin has a recent post asking if anyone knew her father Floyd Talbott who worked at White Sands from 1950 to 1954. She provides a little information about him - he pitched for the past-pitch softball team and went to Nevada to see at least one nuclear test.

Her contact information is there if anyone remembers Mr. Talbot.

Several other people have similar questions on the bulletin board. J.Peter Barragan is looking for people who knew his father Pedro "Pete" Mendoza Barragan who was at White Sands from 1953 to 1962. And Kim Diehl is looking for someone who knew her uncle Donald Diehl. She says he died in 1955 and she did not know him very well and would like to learn a little about his time at WSPG.

For the casual bulletin board visitor, you sometimes strike gold as people post some great stories about White Sands. Bob Schwendinger, a microwave radio repairman stationed at Oscura Range Camp in 1953 is looking for other Signal Corps personnel assigned to the camp. Here is some of what he has posted:

"Thus far I have the names of Stanley, Belladonna, and Crockett but I do not know where you are? And how about the others? Who could forget the many adventures we had at the Camp?

"Remember the wave of locusts that took over for several days and no matter where we went they were there: in the mess hall, in our food, in our beds, and crunching under our feet as we walked in the barracks and outside. Finally, in an act of desperation, we filled fifty gallon drums of fuel and ignited them after sundown. Then we sat back as if it were the Fourth of July, watching the fireworks some five hundred yards away with the drums full of flames lighting up the night sky and attracting thousands upon thousands of locusts as they dove into the flames and the sounds of sizzling, crackling insects resounded everywhere.

"Remember the morning we walked down to the latrine and when we opened the doors we found tarantulas everywhere: they covered the several mirrors attached to the walls, they were all over the toilets, and they covered like wallpaper most of the inside. Of course, the latrine was off limits for two or three days, and as suddenly as the spiders had appeared they just as silently disappeared.

"Who can forget our medic who used his ambulance as a roving bedroom, taking his dates out in his fancy wheels

and having the best of privacy anywhere?

"Remember the trips we took to Gran Quivira, prospecting for Indian arrowheads and imagining the days long ago when native Americans were the only inhabitants in that part of the world?

"And who can forget the drives down to the main post one hundred miles away to pick up mail and food and doing eighty-five or ninety miles an hour on a mostly unoccupied open desert highway? Or returning and being caught by a sandstorm, lucky to come out of it alive, however, noting that the newly applied brown paint on the military vehicle was missing as though it had been peeled straight away?

"Remember the coyote we found as a pup and tried to raise it like a common dog?

"How about the trip up to Oscura Peak, over 8,000 feet elevation, to bring mail and supplies to the men living in that camp, all the while going up and down that perilous, winding mountain road that you swore was constructed by the goats who lived in the valley below.

"There is much more we shared, especially our visits to Carrizozo and Joe's Yucca Bar, where you could borrow spending money until next pay day. We could dance the two-step to the great western singers belting out songs that were at the top of the charts, like Your Cheaten Heart. And don't forget those fantastic clear nights at the Camp; the neighborhood planetarium paled beside the enormous, starry sky, brilliant in its natural majesty, as though held aloft by the immense mountain ranges encircling the valley.

"Of course, there is more, for Oscura Camp was a special place where we did our jobs tracking the missiles and sending the information along in professional and responsible ways. Remember our CO, Thomas G. Marshall Jr. Where are you, Lt.,? You were absolutely the best! Remember Richard W. Steele, our civilian Chief of the Radio Branch? Where is Mr. Steele today? Let's hear from all of the vets of Oscura Range Camp, 1953!"

Great stuff. You can visit the bulletin board by going to the museum website and finding the "old-timers bulletin board" link on the left. Just click on the link and your browser will take you to the page. The Museum's URL is: <http://www.wsmr-history.org/>

Most of the people who have posted a message provide an email address for you to contact if you have information or want to join their group. Some provide phone numbers and snail-mail addresses as well.

If you would like to post something on the bulletin board, contact the museum and Foundation's webmaster who happens to be Doyle Piland. There is another link in the left column for sending email to him.

Book Review

New Book About Treasure Is Out

By Jim Eckles

It has been more than 20 years since we have seen a book about the notorious Victorio Peak treasure. Well, the fourth one is now out. Robert Boswell from NMSU teamed up with an old friend, David Schweidel, to publish "What Men Call Treasure" from Cinco Puntos Press, \$25.95.

Most of you know this story. Supposedly Doc Noss discovered a cavern in Victorio Peak on what is now White Sands Missile Range in 1937. The many rooms are filled with 100 tons of gold, Spanish coins and church goods, skeleton guards, and a flowing stream. Over the years there have been many searches at the peak but nothing has ever been found.

The book has an unusual structure in that it hops all over the place in time and, because there are two authors, there are differing points of view throughout. As you read the book you leap from one decade to another and back again with an occasional foray into the 16th century.

The jumps back and forth in time may confuse the more casual reader but for those of us who are familiar with the myth, it is tolerable.

The authors must have had their differences over the book's point of view because they resorted to labeling many chapters with their bylines so we would know whose voice was in play. For instance, Boswell is pretty straight forward saying he doesn't think there ever was a treasure and that Doc Noss was running a con. Schweidel, on the other hand, says he doesn't believe the whole enchilada but thinks Noss found something of value and then, possibly, turned it into a deception. Schweidel thinks there is tangible evidence proving some of the Noss story – he might be a candidate for a desert ranchette out southwest of Deming.

The book does recount many of the legendary (or should I say over-the-top?) details that sound like they came right out of a 1930s pulp magazine. But the emphasis is on Terry Delonas and his Ova Noss Family Partnership (ONFP). In fact, as someone working in the White Sands Public Affairs Office at the time and dealing with the ONFP for years, I was engrossed to read about behind the scenes

details we never saw.

For most readers the biggest revelation will be the fact that Delonas is gay and he suffered from AIDS during his partnership's treasure search in the 1990s. He tried to keep it a secret from all but a few of his closest family members and friends. It ended up creating turmoil in the partnership that may explain why we at White Sands saw confusion and delays on their part.

The authors paint a sympathetic portrait of Delonas as a fairly quiet and unremarkable man who falls victim to his grandmother's (Ova Noss) tales. At first he hires people to manage the effort but that doesn't work out and Delonas has

to take over. As he grows in his leadership role at the head of the ONFP, he discovers the strength to overcome many problems and roadblocks. But in the end, like his grandmother, his vision narrows and he seems to have difficulty seeing the facts. He seems to become a victim of Doc's scam.

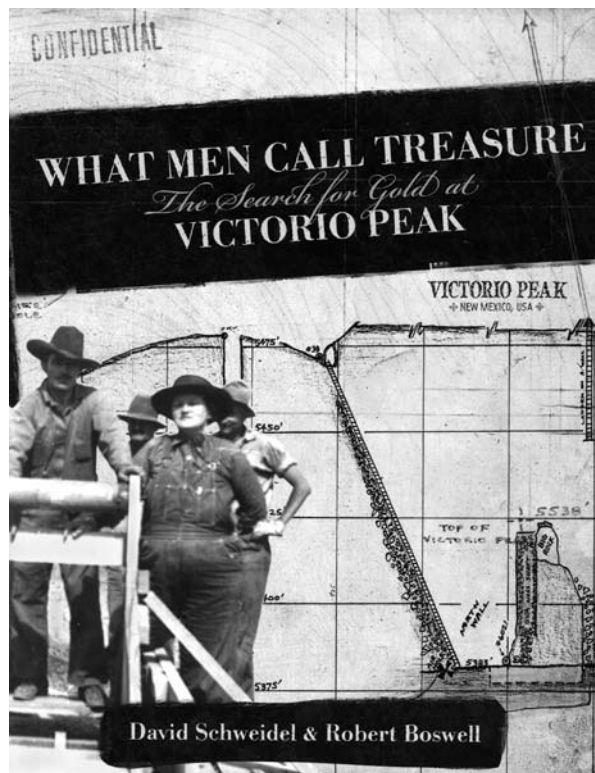
Of course, every good guy has to have a villain. In this book the bad guys are mostly the employees at White Sands Missile Range. Most of us are portrayed as bureaucratic thugs out to block the ONFP and/or extort money from them. Some are treated more unfairly than others.

One of the requirements for the ONFP to be at Victorio Peak was to have an archaeological monitor on hand to make sure they didn't disturb non-treasure things – like the

1880 battlefield where Apache Chief Victorio battled buffalo soldiers. Of course, most of the time, this person had nothing to do. He or she mostly sat in a truck and read or napped because the ONFP volunteers were working on the peak itself.

These poor folks were skewered by the ONFP and by the authors. In reality, they were contract employees ordered to do the job. It certainly wasn't their fault – kind of like blaming the private for the war.

The authors do point out some of the ONFP tomfoolery during their search at White Sands. When Delonas proposed the gold hunt to the government he assured everyone it would be done with the latest science and technology. There



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wouldn't be any helter-skelter digging.

In fact, Delonas told us the whole thing would take only three months. The Army then generously wrote the first license out for one year.

Very quickly, the science and technology either failed or proved old stories to be phony. So what did the ONFP do? They turned to such magical things as dousing for tunnels.

They brought in a leading expert and he quickly mapped out a maze of tunnels interconnecting huge caverns. The ONFP volunteers dutifully wasted time and money drilling a number of holes trying to find the tunnels. You guessed it. They came up empty.

The funny thing is they did find water. This event shows the gullibility of authors. They and the ONFP say no one predicted there was water where they found it. It is now described as a "pool" of water like it was some sort of underground lake. Hint, hint – it might be part of the famous Doc Noss underground river flowing through the peak.

Having seen the springs where Victorio camped in 1880, the springbox at the Henderson ranch at the foot of Victorio Peak and the many springs down Hembrillo Canyon, any hydrologist or old cowboy would have predicted there was plenty of underground water in the drainage. The gravel and sand fill as well as the fractured rock in the canyon acts as a sponge every time it rains. In some places the water is right at the surface and others it is down a ways.

Other foolishness retold is how Lambert Dolphin, the guy with the ground penetrating radar, said there should be a room the size of a football field down in the peak. A football field is 57,000 square feet. Only the biggest hotels have ballrooms that large. It is hard to imagine such a room fitting

into such a small hill. How the various teams drilling into the peak could manage to keep missing it is unfathomable.

Sometimes the authors seem to twist factual information to prop up the Victorio Peak legends. For instance, they report the legend that Chief Victorio may have been protecting Apache loot stashed in Victorio Peak when he fought the US Army there in April 1880. Sure the battle took place but they chose to ignore all the factual information that has been collected during the past 10-15 years about Victorio's movements and his deteriorating condition at that time.

The writers then post a laundry list of gold-producing areas in New Mexico and imply that the Apaches could have been robbing all these places to gather up 100 tons of gold.

Of course, this is pure poppycock since almost all the sites listed didn't produce that much gold and, 'oh, by the way,' most didn't start producing gold until around 1880 or later. To find this out I simply checked a New Mexico ghost town book and found out when the mines were opened and closed in these places. The authors didn't bother to check.

They didn't bother to check other things as well. For instance, they have the wrong date for the establishment of the missile range, they have the Ojo Caliente reservation near Tularosa and they fail to report that the famous F. Lee Bailey gold bar from the 1970s was 14-karat jeweler's gold.

Now that the book is out it will be interesting to see how much interest it renews in the treasure story. There are always believers out there and I am sure they will not be swayed by any counter arguments or evidence.

Generally the book is obviously pro Noss. However, through selective reading and recollection, it might just be used to affirm the skeptical point of view.

WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE MUSEUM SPONSORS

PLATINUM

(\$50,000 +)

None

GOLD

(\$25,000 - \$49,999)

Lockheed Martin

Citizen's Bank

El Paso Electric

In Memory Of Mary Bochmann

SILVER

(\$5,000 - \$24,999)

CSC

Sunwest Bank

COL (R) Leonard Sugerman

TRAX International

NewTec

Raytheon

MG (R) Niles J. Fulwyler

Doyle Piland

Jon and Elvia Gibson

Linda Lovelady Epstein

Marion and COL (R) Robert Mills

Austin and Pamela Vick

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The Back Page



The walls to the assay office at Estey City still stand. Estey City was a small copper mining community in 1904 and dead by 1910. It is just east of the Oscura Mtns. and is the only real ghost town on WSMR. Photo by Jim Eckles