



# Hands Across History



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

Volume XIII, Letter II

June 2017

## WSMR Helps Restore Green River's Athena

By Victor Palma & Bill Godby

In November 2014 White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) Cultural Resources Program executed an MOA in support of the demolition of the Green River Test Site (GRTS) in Utah, an annex to WSMR. For you old-timers, the site was determined to be an eligible Historic Military District.

GRTS was originally built in support of the United States Air Force Advanced Ballistic Re-entry System (ABRES) Program, utilizing the Athena rocket to study re-entry phenomena, determining optical and radar signatures. The scale model ICBM Athena test

vehicle was designed to reproduce trajectory dynamics at re-entry and to facilitate the development testing of full size decoys. Between 1964 and 1973 the USAF launched 140 Athena rockets.

The O.K. Anderson Park in Green River is home to a full-scale replica of the Athena. Over the years it developed numerous cracks, blisters, holes, and large breaks in its external aluminum casing, particularly along the bottom half of the booster rockets attached to the lower sides of the missile. The City of Green River takes great pride in its past support of the ABRES program with the Athena rocket proudly representing that history.

In consultations with the Green River community, Bill Godby, WSMR archaeologist, learned that there was a great desire to restore the missile. Godby incorporated restoration of the rocket as one of the stipulations of the MOA developed as mitigation for the demolition of the facility (yet to occur), in addition to developing additional interpretation of GRTS. To execute the mitigation, AmaTerra Environmental, Inc., which also completed the National Register evaluation of the site, was awarded funds to repair and improve the Athena rocket display.

On initial inspection of the rocket it appeared that the project would not be too difficult and could be done in place. Previous repairs to the rocket were visible, largely concentrated toward the bottom. Godby and AmaTerra staff agreed it would be reasonable to attempt to subcontract an autobody repair shop or repairman to complete the repairs on site. However, after months of trying to attract local talent, AmaTerra had no success, only frustration and several very high-price proposals that included the rocket being removed and moved to the job shop.

Removing the rocket was out of the question due to logistics and cost. With this unusual mitigation proposal at a stand still Victor Palma, Vice-President of AmaTerra, decided to do it himself. Well, not quite all



The Athena in Green River's park.

see Seven Days For Repairs, page 6

# Honor Donations Made For Former WSMRites

By Frances Williams

Alberto "Al" Gonzales recently passed away in El Paso, Texas. Al was a graduate of Cathedral High School and earned his B.S. Degree in Electrical Engineering from Texas Western College. He began his career at White Sands Proving Grounds in 1953 as an intern in the Flight Instrumentation Laboratory, served as captain in the Army and was sent to Germany during the Berlin crisis. He was Associate Program Manager for the High Energy Laser Project, and Director of the Instrumentation Directorate. The Office of Personnel Management appointed him as Resource Staff of Personnel Management for Executives. His other appointments were President, White Sands Federal Credit Union and Area Governor for Toastmasters for Southern New Mexico and El Paso Region.

Those who were privileged to work with him knew him held him in the highest esteem because of his fairness, consideration of his employees and his sense of humor. He will be missed.

A contribution in his name can be sent to the WSMR Historical Foundation at P. O. Box 171, WSMR, New Mexico 88002. May his memory be for a blessing.

## **MORE DONATIONS:**

● In addition to a donation in the name of Al Gonzales, Frances made a honor donation in the name of Audrey Paczynski.

● Also, Jon Gibson has made a donation in the name of Tom Starkweather who recently passed away.

# Letter To The Editor: Remembering The 1950s & 60s

Jim,

I really enjoyed this issue. (John is referring to the previous issue, February 2017) Believe it or not, I was stationed at the WSPG from Jan. 1955 to May 1957.

I was privileged to be a part of a lot of the non-military activities that took place during that time. I worked on the tv show "Wide Wide World" at the Army blockhouse and I worked on the Corporal launch for the prologue to the movie "ATWI80D". I also worked on the visit of President Kennedy and I even met Audie Murphy at the Sergeant missile launch site, after I became a civil servant. A lot of neat stuff happened at WSMR nee WSPG during the 50s and 60s.

Before I went into the service, I lived in Philadelphia, a few blocks from Eddie Fisher's parents. I graduated from high school in 1952.

That was the year Debbie starred in "Singing in

the Rain." I really loved that movie. One afternoon before I joined the Army, I saw Debbie Reynolds outside our local drugstore surrounded by a bunch of teenagers. She was very famous then. I can't remember if they were married yet but because Fisher was a very popular Philly kid, we all knew when they got engaged.

So much for my small connection to your latest issue. Thanks for the opportunity to reflect on the past.

Regards,  
John Bayer

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Thank you John. Ironically, I received more comments on the last issue than most and it was because of the Debbie Reynolds story. Somehow a story about a famous personality, with a little soap opera thrown in, seems to trump any mission story I could come up with.

## 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](mailto: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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## Letter To The Editor:

# Ken Lodding Appreciates His Time At White Sands

Hi Jim,

I'm writing for two reasons.

First, I really enjoyed your book, *Pocketful of Rockets*. Especially as I was stationed at WSMR as a Meteorological Observer with the Army (MOS: 93E20) during 1969 – 1970 time frame, prior to being sent to Viet Nam in my alternate MOS, 93F20: which we called Ballistic Meteorologist, but apparently it's formal name is "Field Artillery Meteorological Crew Member".

I was actually at three WSMR locations: WSMR proper, the Army garrison up the road at Holloman AFB (great duty at that time!), and I spent most of my time at Green River supporting Athena and Pershing (at Black Mesa, near Blanding).

There I worked for a really great individual, SP7 Roy Rulon, the base meteorologist. Not being a career soldier, one of the benefits of Green River life was not having to get my hair cut, unless we got a warning that a flight was coming up from WSMR proper, generally with Sgt. Frost aboard.

I have lots of fine memories of my time spent at Green River. It was especially interesting for a boy from Long Island, New York: it was a whole different and excellent way of life.



**Ken Lodding while at White Sands. Courtesy photo.**

The second reason I'm writing is that I could not find any reference in your book to MGM-52 Lance missile tests at WSMR. It was interesting to be in a support position at that time. We performed what was termed 'micro-meteorological' observations at the launch. This consisted of measuring very low wind velocities and associated direction directions, as well

as temperature and humidity data. This information was collected from a tower positioned right next to the launch vehicle.

Close by was a bunker containing row after row of stacks of paper strip recorders: this was before the days of digital data gathering. I seem to remember the bunker being only sandbags, but I could be wrong.

But what I do vividly remember and what makes the story interesting is that I (or some other 'assigned' individual) had to be in the bunker during a launch to watch the strip recorders and make sure they were all functioning. It was common for paper jams, ink flow problems, etc. so that is why we were there.

The Lance employed hypergolic fuels, UDMH + IRFNA. I was told to keep my pickup truck, which I drove to the launch site, facing back down the roadway and keep the driver's door open and keys in the ignition. Engine had to be off for the launch.

The reason for the 'escape vehicle' set up was that if the Lance exploded at launch, the fuel would result in a highly toxic cloud of poison gas being generated from the improper/incomplete mixing of the Lance fuels. Needless to say, I stood right at the bunker door when the moment of launch came, ready to get out of the area ASAP. SP5's were highly expendable at that time.

Well, I hope I haven't bored you with this story. But I felt inclined to share it after reading your book.

By the way, everything turned out real well for me. WSMR was my first exposure to computer (analog monsters used by range safety for real-time trajectory tracking) and after getting out of Viet Nam I used my GI benefits and went to college, got a BS in Computer Science, entered the very young computer industry and eventually joined NASA as a software engineer at the Langley Virginia site, from which I retired in 2015.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,  
Ken Lodding

P.S. If I can provide any further information, please just ask. I truly had an enjoyable time at WSMR and a great learning time up at Green River. The locals taught me a lot: how to add salt to a 3.2 beer so it would foam, how to ride a horse from a local ranch down to Ray's Tavern, where they actually had a horse tie-up outside. Things I wished I never saw: how to geld a horse, old cowboy way..ugggh! But I took away knowledge and memories I never would have otherwise had. I have no regrets

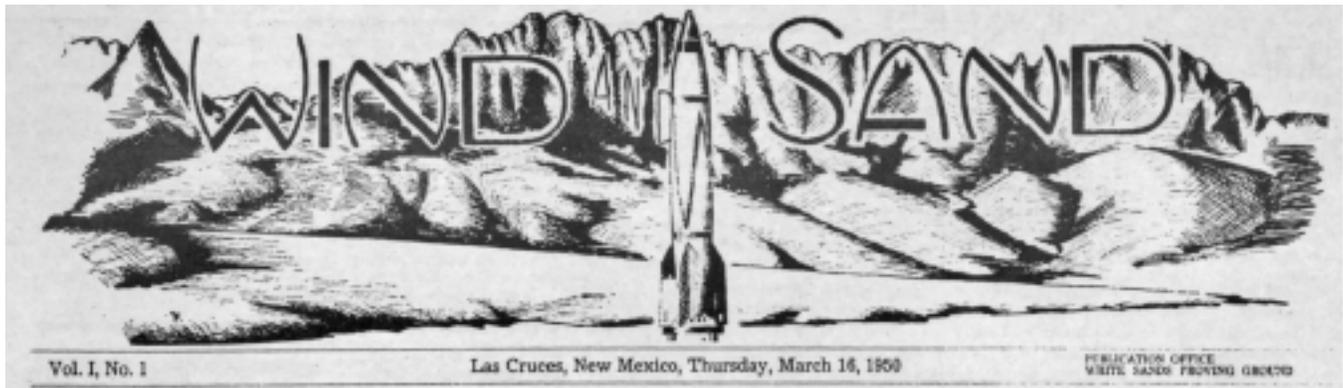
# Wind & Sand/Missile Ranger: Rest In Peace Its The New Age Of Electronic/Social Media

Article courtesy of WSMR Public Affairs Office  
Images from WSMRhistoric.com

After being in publication for 67 years, the Missile Ranger, the White Sands Missile Range weekly post newspaper, will no longer be distributed in hard copy format, but will be available in a digital format instead. The change took place Jan. 26, when the last printed issue of the *Missile Ranger* will be distributed.

forward I see a lot of opportunity to bring more diverse content to our audience,” said the missile range’s Interim Chief of Public Affairs Drew Hamilton.

The *Missile Ranger* will make a transition to provide news to the community through several different venues and through several different formats. The PAO *Missile Ranger* staff will provide news to the community through the installation’s Facebook, Twitter,



**The original *Wind and Sand* “flag” on the first issue of the paper, dated March 16, 1950. The flag is the newspaper’s title and usually appears on the front page at or near the top. A newspaper’s “masthead” is usually on the editorial page and lists editors and other detailed information about the paper.**

“The Missile Range has and will continue to serve as a necessary tool to keep our community informed,” said WSMR Chief of Staff Glen Adams. “The transition from a paper copy to a digital format is a sign of the times. Our community will now be able to get real-time information through social media and receive news articles directly after a major event happens as opposed to waiting for a weekly newspaper to come out,” Adams said.

“This transition will serve to benefit our community by getting timely news and information the way we need it and how we want it.”

The Public Affairs Office staff was informed late last year that Gannett Company Inc., the company that prints the *Missile Ranger* via the *Las Cruces Sun-News* and *El Paso Times*, was no longer able to support the Army Civilian Enterprise Newspaper agreement to print the *Missile Ranger*. The company was no longer able to honor the agreement due to the loss of advertising dollars with the decline of military troops on post, which was the main revenue source to pay for printing the newspaper.

“Having worked on the *Missile Ranger* for so long, I am sad to see the end of its print days, but moving

YouTube, Flickr, and Pinterest page and a new *Missile Ranger* page within the [wsmr.army.mil](http://wsmr.army.mil) website at [www.wsmr.army.mil/Ranger](http://www.wsmr.army.mil/Ranger). The social media pages will be updated on a consecutive basis; Facebook will be updated daily, Twitter and the web page will be updated once an article becomes available, YouTube will be updated once a video product is complete and Flickr and Pinterest will be updated on a weekly basis.

News will be provided in new and different formats like live-feeds with real-time question and answer sessions, timely articles and photo albums for events like health fairs and the annual Safety-Stand Down.

However, articles will continue to be written, now in a timelier manner, and uploaded to the appropriate sites.

The change will allow the PAO staff to provide information to the public without having to wait for weekly newspaper publication deadlines.

The first *Missile Ranger* was printed on March 16, 1950 under the name “Wind & Sand” with a welcome remark from Col. G. G. Eddy, the commanding officer at the time at what was known as White Sands Proving Ground. The newspaper continued to print for 70 vol-

see [Name Changed To \*Missile Ranger\*, page 5](#)

# Name Changed To *Missile Ranger* — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



On April 2, 1953, the newspaper's flag was changed to an artistic representation of both wind and sand while down playing the V-2 rocket by putting it more in the background.

umes with several notable stories that included President John F. Kennedy's visit to the installation in 1963, the landing of the Columbia space shuttle in 1982 and the Endeavour flyover in 2012.

The newspaper changed names to the *Missile Ranger* in 1969. The *Missile Ranger* received several recognitions and awards to include a first place award in 1999 from the U.S. Army Keith L. Ware annual awards for Civilian Enterprise Newspapers, a third place award in 2004 from the U.S. Army Keith L. Ware annual awards for Civilian Enterprise Newspapers and an honorable mention in 2004 for a tabloid newspaper.

Community members can browse through older issues of the *Missile Ranger* from 1950 to 1990 on [www.wsmrhistoric.com](http://www.wsmrhistoric.com). The website allows users to type in key words or lookup an issue by year or date. Users can choose between viewing the newspaper in low resolution, high resolution or flip format.

Due to a limited staff at the Public Affairs Office that may not be replenished in light of the recent hiring freeze announcement, and because more news will be covered in different formats, the Public Affairs Office is requesting unit representatives to become Unit Pub-

lic Affairs Representatives (UPARs) in order to assist with coverage of on-post events.

If you look at the newspapers from the 1950s at [www.wsmrhistoric.com](http://www.wsmrhistoric.com), you will see regular reports from the major organizations. Each one had a "reporter" to report who was on vacation, whose kids were getting married, who had the most hours of sick leave, who was new and who was leaving. It was gossipy news that really reflected the small-town, tight-knit group that established White Sands.

The nice thing about the website with all the papers is that they are searchable since they are digitized. That means you can type some friend or relative or your own name in the search engine blank and see what comes up.

Also, the papers are available in low or high resolution. At low resolution, the papers load faster and searching goes quicker. However, if you find something you want to save as a hard copy, you can download a higher resolution image and work from there. The various flag images for this article are just screen shots of the high resolution papers with a bit of tinkering in PhotoShop Elements.



The *Wind and Sand* newspaper ceased publication in May 1968 and was replaced, after a two week period without a paper, by the first issue of the *Missile Ranger*.

Over the years, various editors of the *Missile Ranger* changed the flag and other design features to fit their own preferences and those of the Dept. of Army.



# Last Army Huey Is Retired From WSMR

By J. D. Edwards  
Army Air

The last UH-1 Huey, tail number 74-22478, made its final flight as a U.S. Army operated aircraft on Dec. 15, 2016.

This was the very last UH-1, one of the “Dirty Dozen,” to be proudly flown over southern New Mexico before it was transferred to the Louisiana State Police, where it will continue to serve the public.

The UH-1 started its career as a replacement for the Bell H-13 “Sioux” used primarily during the Korean conflict. The H-13 demonstrated the utility of the helicopter in combat, saving multiple servicemen during the conflict. Although it proved useful, the H-13 had many shortcomings including range and payload deficiencies. In 1952 the U.S. Army developed the

requirements for a turbine-powered helicopter with extended range and increased payload for medical evacuation and utility transport requirements.

Bell Helicopter designed what would be first designated as the HU-1 Iroquois, and in true aviator fashion was simply called “Huey” by its operators.

The UH-1 became the first turbine-powered helicopter and entered military service in 1960 where, through the innovation and advancement of the capability, it revolutionized warfare.

Shortly thereafter it was introduced to its iconic combat role in Vietnam. Over the next 16 years more than 16,000 UH-1s were produced with some 7,000 seeing combat action in Vietnam.

The other services saw the utility of the UH-1 and  
**see Huey Was Revolutionary, page 7**

## Seven Days For Repairs

by himself. He took along John Henry - not the single-minded, steel-driving man of American folklore but a more useful jack-of-all-trades who Victor has used frequently.

Palma and Henry flew to Green River in June of 2015, on a mission to get the work done no matter what. Despite a few surprises, they completed the effort in about seven days and came away with an interesting story to tell.

The team discovered the missile has an internal “skeleton” of steel and an external casing of aluminum and in-between is a mortar/concrete layer. Upon further inspection, they found a hole at the top of the booster, there by design, that allowed precipitation from snow and rain to enter the interior of the missile. In turn the water was absorbed by the concrete middle layer like a sponge. During winter, the collected moisture froze, expanded and caused the cracks in the external aluminum casing, and ultimately caused several large pieces to break off.

After inspecting the situation and much discussion of how to proceed, the two devised their initial plan of action to complete the effort on site. For minor repairs the team used their power grinder to smooth broken and exposed edges and filled the cracks and holes with an epoxy mixture. At a minimum, three

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

layers of epoxy were necessary to completely fill these areas. Once the epoxy layers reached a point where they were raised slightly above the casing, the epoxy was sanded smooth to be even with the casing. It was then repainted.

For the larger cracks and breaks, a bigger challenge was at hand, involving a good deal of creative “on your feet” thinking. Victor and John decided that a concrete polymer in combination with epoxy and fiberglass cloth would be best to fill the larger sections. Upon removing sections of the middle concrete/grout layer they continued grinding the edges of the broken and cracked external casing surface, preparing the areas for the concrete polymer and epoxy fill.

Ultimately, six layers of concrete polymer followed by three layers of epoxy were required to fill the larger cracks and breaks. The entire process, for both major and minor repairs, was completed with the application of two coats of white, oil-based exterior paint.

As mitigations go, this one was certainly a first. What seemed to be the easiest tasks of the plan, turned out to be not so easy. Fortunately, as a small company, AmaTerra had the flexibility to find a homegrown solution with access to John Henry. AmaTerra can now add “rocket restoration” to its list of capabilities.



**John Henry making Athena repairs. Courtesy photo.**

## Huey Was Revolutionary — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

quickly adopted the aircraft. In all, this revolutionary aircraft was operated by all four services and over 35 countries. The UH-1 quickly evolved and was modified to fill a variety of roles from troop transport, medevac, command and control and armed gunship roles.

More importantly, it revolutionized Army combat operations by providing the ability to rapidly mobilize large concentrations of troops en masse. This ability forever changed the face of warfare and gave a new name of “Air Mobile” to the concept of operations. It served in that role for several more years seeing combat once again during the invasion of Grenada and limited use during Gulf War I as a medevac platform.

Finally, age and performance limitations saw it replaced by the UH-60 in most active Army and National Guard units. By 2006 almost all had left the inventory. The only aircraft retained by the Army belonged to the Army Test and Evaluation Center. Officially, 11 were retained - three at Redstone Arsenal, four at Yuma Proving Ground and four at WSMR, where they served the country’s needs as test-support assets.

This particular aircraft, the UH-1, 74-22478, was one of the last produced by Bell for the Army. It rolled off the assembly line in early 1976. However, Bell Helicopter retained the aircraft at its Fort Worth, Texas, facility where it was used to further test modifications to the UH-1 fleet. While at Bell it flew approximately 2,300 flight hours. Following the end of Gulf War I and with limited utility in a combat role, the aircraft was transferred to White Sands Missile Range in 1992.

Since then, the aircraft has flown over 2,600 hours

and supported a variety of test projects. With the ability to modify the aircraft, it has supported many major tests for White Sands Test Center.

Recently, it was the aircraft of choice that carried the seeker head, test data recording equipment and contractor personnel to execute over 3,000 individual “missile runs” during captive flight test for Small Diameter Bomb II development. The net results continually improved the seeker head performance without the cost of having to fire an actual missile. It was also used over the years as a Patriot Missile “target” to improve the radar system.

The last flight, made in December, was the last Huey flight for the National Guard, Reserve, or any active inventory. It launched as Nike 06 and was flown by myself with Chris Lowe as Copilot, Randall Gillespie as Flight Engineer and Art McKinney as our final passenger.

This aircraft would not have been able to perform its job without the support of the maintainers who looked after it. They are the unsung heroes who kept it in the air. This particular aircraft served the Army admirably for 42 years.

Following the Huey’s final flight it was transferred through the Army’s Law Enforcement Support Office to the Louisiana State Police. Fittingly, the transfer to the LA State Police took place Dec. 22 and the aircraft departed Holloman Air Force Base for the last time 20 minutes before the last flight of its partner, the F-4, during the Vietnam War. Together, two iconic aircraft closed the book on that portion of aviation history.



**One of WSMR’s Huey helicopters being posed for a photo opportunity above some of the white gypsum dunes found on the missile range, north of the national monument. WSMR photo.**

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## **The Back Page**



**This large stone corral is on the old Dave Wood ranch in Little San Nicolas Canyon which is west of WSMR's Range Road 7 in the San Andres Mtns. It is probably the largest stone corral on the missile range. Dave Wood arrived in southern N.M. with the California column during the Civil War. Later, as a deputy sheriff, he helped escort Billy the Kid back to Lincoln after the Kid was convicted of murder in a Mesilla trial. The structure is very visible on Google Earth or Google Maps at these coordinates: 32.584876, -106.493934**