

Fond Memories Of Living And Working Here

By Larry Stanfel

My first glimpse of the White Sands Missile Range came in late May, 1969. Our journey to Las Cruces had been three days by car from far-away Gainesville, Florida with a cargo of three children and a cat. For three years I had been an Asst. Prof. at the University of Florida and in September would take a position as Assoc. Prof. at Colorado State University.

Some of my research at Florida had been funded by the Army Research Office – Durham, and the administrators acted as a beneficent clearing house, directing Army requests for summer faculty assistance to those with ARO-D funding.

I had an offer, too, from the Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C., but for people born, raised, and educated in Illinois before living three years in Florida, the idea of the Land of Enchantment was altogether enchanting.

The first installment of the charm appeared on the drive through the arid flats of eastern New Mexico, when a thin, brilliant white line on the horizon gradually expanded into the astonishing White Sands Monument, a place we would enjoy many times over succeeding years.

Installment two was the magnificent Organ Mountains, which always, to this day, look to me like a giant, 3-D projection across the entire sky, something too large to be real and with fascinating variegation throughout the course of any day.

We enjoyed that view from our apartment on Solano and gradually became accustomed to the

meteorological peculiarities of the place: huge dust devils that could suck papers a hundred feet in the air, a hail storm in mid-summer, and furious rain storms that poured water down desiccated arroyos with the force to wash cars off the road.

My route to work was by car to the bus lot, thence up and over the pass, where it looked as if the entire earth was spread below, and the base stood out as sharp and clear as a town seen from an airplane. For a long, long time this was an exciting journey for me and filled with novelties each trip.

My WSMR contact for arrangements had been Austin Vick, whose office – I forget its name – produced the summary titled “Quick Look Data Book,” but I was assigned to Quality Control, with Chief, Perry White, in National Range Operations.

It was unusual and inflated my self-importance to work in a building with nearly no windows and behind a fence tended by armed guards. I had a secret clearance for some of my university research, so that was no problem, but I don’t believe I ever saw a classified document. The nearest I approached actual testing was seeing a missile impact a distant drone at Family Day that summer and watching the radar trace of a B-52’s dropping a surface-to-air missile somewhere over the Range. The gentleman that invited me to witness the latter was Bart Goode, whose untimely death occurred not long after that summer.

My task was to make recommendations on the design of an information system to aid in

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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

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members of both groups informed about current events and share information of common interest. The editor 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.

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scheduling test operations. In those days the Range was a regular beehive, and with all the contingencies present in conducting a complicated test, cost-effective scheduling and re-scheduling was too much for humans alone.

I had to give myself a quick course in nearly every aspect of the Range's work, so I spent a great deal of my time interviewing personnel all over the complex, and QC was primarily just my base of operations, where I sat writing up findings and planning my next moves. I was able to meet MG Davisson, CO at the time, the Chief Scientist, Dr. Richard Duncan, and most of the office chiefs.

Mr. White's right-hand man was Don Larkin, later Chief of the Calibration Lab, and, it grieves me to mention, recently deceased. It was Don who hooked our family on rock hounding and minerals, which have occupied us all our subsequent lives and rubbed off onto some of the children. Over the following years we remained friends with Don, Phyllis, and several of their children and exchanged occasional visits. Nearly everyone in that office had on or in his desk a geode half or a mineral souvenir of some sort, perhaps a chunk of Trinitite picked up at Trinity Site, the A-bomb testing place.

Among my first WSMR colleagues in QC were also Clifford Fouts, Woody Jenkins, Angie Ontiveros, and Otis Pinto. In another hall one day was pointed out to me a woman technician that had been among the original German scientists when the Range was established.

In my office the lunchtime avocations of choice were dominoes and Paul Harvey radio broadcasts, but I never was able to sit inside much with the base and the Organs all around me. I liked to frequent the Missile Park, spent lunch periods at the library, and just walked around staring at those abrupt mountains, which looked as if they might collapse on us at any moment.

Though both of us were raised on bland food, we were quickly hooked on hot chile peppers, and after our Las Cruces summers we imposed on the Larkins to send us a couple of huge boxes of the Dona Ana Big Jim's every year. My wife also was swift to discover Juarez, where she and the chil-

dren spent many happy hours shopping and lunching. I also joined those excursions on weekends, when I wasn't slaving away on my project.

Among other attractions for us were camping in the Gila Wilderness, descending into Carlsbad Caverns, picking up agates at Deming, and prowling over mine dumps at places like Lake Valley or fossil beds in many places. The recreational highlight of the summer and a central memory for all of us was the sensational moon landing with its primitive pictures telecommunicated back in July. A visit to the ghost town, Shakespeare, changed my life dramatically, but it did not exert its control for another 30 years. This is not the place to digress on that strange event, but my essays [L. Stanfel, "Pursuing a Shakespeare Mirage," Hidalgo County Herald, 3 parts, 6, 13, and 20 September, Lordsburg, NM, 2019] tell that story.

When it was time to move to my new job in Colorado, we hated to end our spectacular summer, but, happily, it was not to be the last one, and I was eventually gratified to learn my information system recommendations largely were adopted.

The Corps of Engineer contacts in D.C. remained interested in my joining them, and we spent the summers of 1970 and '71 there, as I worked in the Office of the Chief of Engineers on Independence Avenue. The summer of '72 was another time of moving preparation for us, as I had been asked to join the faculty at the University of Texas – Arlington.

By 1973, though, I was in touch with my first love and was invited to work in WSMR's Plans Office. That group was in transition, too, for its Chief, Ben Billups, who had hired me and was rather a tradition at WSMR, was about to retire.

His replacement was Dr. John Davies, who had quite an exciting task for me. His wish was to build a Systems Analysis team within Plans, and my job was to explore around the Range and identify problems for the incipient group to tackle.

Plans was in the primary Administration Building, so there were plenty of windows and space, but, once again, my work was considerably peripatetic, and I buzzed around many offices in

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search of Operations Research-type problems, the solutions to which would improve the function of the Range. The man that familiarized me with this new WSMR territory was Jack Smallwood, and in Plans I also became acquainted with Ismael Rel, who had an interesting position. People with mineral claims on Range property were permitted annual visits to examine them, and Ismael was one of those assigned to drive them. As a lucky by-product for me, he brought me a lovely fluorite specimen from one of those mines, and it sits at this very moment in one of our display cabinets .

Our living quarters that summer, as well as for the two future ones we would spend there, were an apartment on Desert Drive, down the street from Apodaca Park in Las Cruces. Yes, time had only sharpened the enthusiasm my wife and I felt for minerals, and the six of us – a 1971 daughter was the final addition to our family – drove and camped for rock hounding expeditions to many parts of the state.

Juarez had not lost any of the bargains it offered, and the apartment complex had two swimming pools, so my family had much to amuse them while I was on the job. For some weekends, Jane would pick me up outside Plans, and a weekend trip commenced there. Sometimes a weekend trip culminated with her dropping me back there in time to begin a new work week.

Neither was it all recreation for the family. My wife spearheaded their intellectual pursuits of topics such as Padre LaRue's legend, the Spanish and Native American histories of the state, and even arranged a tutor in Spanish. The intellectual stimulation made them wiser, more circumspect people, and they thank us for the exposure we afforded them. Their undergraduate degrees are from Cornell, Northwestern, Johns Hopkins, and Cal Berkeley, and they also collected a Master's from Penn and a Ph.D. from Stanford.

Professionally, WSMR offered me something more valuable than a summer income. Unlike most of academic colleagues that never left the campus for years, I was able, during those precious summer months, to confront a variety of real-world problems. That knowledge and awareness gained

increased relevance to the courses I taught, and my students were better aware of the tools they would need to succeed after they left school and the kinds of problems they might be expected to solve.

WSMR experience also opened my eyes to new research opportunities and led to a number of publications. In particular, one of my doctoral students wrote his dissertation on the placement of cinetheodolites to optimize a measure of data collection quality. He and I then published an article [S. Singhal and L. Stanfel, "A Statistical Model for Optimal Instrument Location," *Optical Engineering*, 19, 3, 1980, pp. 376-380] based on his work.

In the summer of '74, I was back with Dr. Davies to solve one of the collection of problems I had recommended to his Systems Analysis team.

The summer of '75 was devoted to a scientific meeting in Japan and to preparations for moving us all to Norway, where I had won a research fellowship. This ran until January, 1977, but we were home and back with Plans for that summer, which proved to be my last one there.

Such a beautiful, fascinating state it is, and I would have wagered we'd retire there, but other forces also were at work, and Montana, too, is a fine place to live.

In 2018 Jane and I, along with our elder daughter, three years old on our inaugural, 1969 stay, and her husband drove through several favorite N.M. locations. Certainly, Las Cruces and WSMR were primary on that list, and after passing Security to enter Missile Park, we found a small museum, new to us. Inside I was delighted to find photographs and short biographies of some of my earliest acquaintances, such as Ben Billups and David Herzmark, featured there.

We also found a walkway where some of WSMR's important employees are commemorated on bricks. My good wife concluded that my four summers – total service greater than one year – and my contributions to the mission of the Range were worthy of inclusion. She purchased a brick for me, and my top travel priority now is to return, inspect my rectangle of paving, and reminisce on the delightful hours we spent as a temporary, visiting part of your historic family.

WSMRite Enjoyed Good Food On His TDY Trips

By Bruce Kennedy

TDY. Temporary duty. Official travel on government business. Pick up your plane ticket, take the flight, rent a car, find the hotel, grab a bite to eat (fast food, Dennys, or local diner) free breakfast at the hotel, then off to a meeting or other purpose. There are exceptions to food prospects while traveling. I will list a few of my favorites and the reasons for my travel to some exotic places in the world.

During the last two weeks in December, the range usually closed for maintenance. I took that opportunity to take the balance of my annual leave before the end of year. The year was 1971. When I returned to work in January my boss informed me that I had been selected to travel to India as part of an inspection team to evaluate the capabilities of an Indian rocket launching facility to support an international meteorological rocket comparison program. The catch: I was scheduled to leave in two weeks. So, I needed theater clearance, several shots, and a passport. The shots made me sick, I had to get a temporary passport at the American consulate in Juarez, and hoped the theater clearance went through.

The international program to compare upper atmosphere wind and temperature came about because analysts of the data over several years discovered discrepancies among the various instrumentation systems used by participating nations. Of particular interest were the differences among

the near-equatorial stations of India (Russia), Panama (United States), French Guiana (France), and Kwajalein (United States). The World Meteorological Organization was made aware of the problem and instructed their sub-office to organize a comparison program. Mr. Leviton was asked to head the effort, and I was asked to represent the US. Eventually, the following countries agreed to participate: US, UK, Japan, Russia, and France. The search for a suitable location continued.

INDIA

Two weeks later I departed and met with Mr. Bob Leviton, the head of the international program, who was on this assignment from the Air Force Cambridge Research Lab. We met at the New Delhi airport and took a taxi to our hotel. Our host was from the Indian Meteorological Service. One evening our host took us to a restaurant in Old Delhi. The building was partially open with a canvas tarp as a roof. The cooking area was a large fire pit in the ground. The cooks sat around the pit and held chickens on a stick. They rotated the birds until cooked thoroughly, then waiters delivered them to the tables. Bread in the shape of a large tortilla was cooked in the same pit and served with the chicken. The ambience was rustic but the food was delicious.

Our next stop was the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching facility. This was one of the proposed locations for the rocketsonde comparison program. The Russians had a team of technicians and scientists there who conducted met rocket

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Lunch in Old Delhi, India.



Russian lunch at their villa.

Seafood From Virginia

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firings once a week. They were a very hospitable group and invited us to their villa overlooking the ocean. We went swimming on their private beach and were served a wonderful seafood dinner in the afternoon. The fish was large enough to serve the twelve diners. I asked what kind of fish was being served, the reply was, "seafish". It was wonderful, and the experience was unforgettable.

VIRGINIA

Our next site survey was Wallops Island, a NASA facility primarily dedicated to upper atmosphere research using large sounding rockets and small meteorological rockets. Needless to say, the clams, oysters, scallops, and fresh fish were outstanding. Any restaurant in that area served outstanding seafood meals. I had previously made several trips to Wallops Island and made it a point to take a cooler full of an assortment of seafood home with me.

FRENCH GUIANA

Mr. Leviton and I continued our quest by traveling to Kourou, French Guiana. Kourou at one time was the home of the infamous Devils Island prison. I must say that French cooking is different. In one of their cafes I surveyed the menu (which was in French, of course) and recognized one item: steak. That's what I ordered. The actual menu item was steak tartare (whatever that means). When my meal arrived, it was a large blob of uncooked hamburger with a raw egg perched in

a cavity on top. To my embarrassment I asked the waiter to have the meat cooked.

From French Guiana I went to Natal, Brazil, to determine their capability to host the program. They had suffered a catastrophic fire



Timed exposure of two night launches in French Guiana.

in the recent past and were not able to compete for the comparison program. The obvious choice was Kourou where the French and European Space Agency had established a completely instrumented range. As it turned out Japan had fiscal problems and had to participate a year before the tests began. Wallops Island agreed to hold the pre-test. (More great seafood.)



The Japanese load their rocket at Wallops Island.

BELGIUM & GERMANY

In the early 1980s I was part of a NATO program that required several trips to Brussels. There were two restaurants that served great food: Chez Leon and Vincents. Chez Leon specialized in steamed moules (mussels) in the shell. Our waiter had a lapel pin of a Texas flag...said his brother lived in Texas. Vincents just had great food. After our meeting concluded, we boarded two German Army helicopters for a trip to Heuberg where the NATO test was to take place. We stopped at a French military base to refuel and were detained for a couple of hours. Seems the flight authorization was not right. We finally departed and our pilots decided to fly VERY CLOSE to the ground for the next hour. When we arrived in Heuberg we were offered wonderful BBQ right off the grill. I could go on about wonderful German food, but lets head to England.

ENGLAND

I was involved in a research program near Bedford. Our choice of places to eat were: Tandoori, pizza parlors, Italian, and cafeterias. Did I

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mention Tandoori? Take your pick. The beer was good but not cold enough for my taste. I think the German beer was better.

C-141

On one of my many trips to Kwajalein Missile Range I had a stopover in Honolulu. The following day I checked in at the military terminal for a flight on a C-141 transport. The plane had about 90 passenger seats but also carried cargo in the rear area. I was offered a box lunch for \$2.50 which I took. I was also told that there would be no smoking on the flight (about 5 hours duration). The reason? There were rocket motors in the cargo section. They were my rockets to be used for experiments at the range. The box lunch was not one of my most memorable meals.

HOME

I had some wonderful and exotic food during my many TDY trips. However, nothing compared to the wonderful Mexican food in the Las Cruces and El Paso area. The T-bone steaks at the Cattle-



Russian shipboard rocket launch.

man's restaurant near Fabens are hard to beat. Welcome home.

EDITOR'S

NOTE: I worked at White Sands for 30 years and my experience was completely different from Bruce's. Most of my TDY trips were to places like Gallup, Deming, and Socorro. I think I can safely say I've stayed in every motel in Socorro because of

Trinity Site. In these communities, you just looked for local guidance on where to find the best Mexican dinner. Early in my career, I spent eight weeks in school at Fort Ben Harrison on the outskirts of Indianapolis. With no car, the closest food joint was a sandwich shop a few blocks away. Bruce, I would have carried your bags.

WSMR Is Now Accepting Hall Of Fame Nominations

In 2020, the White Sands Missile Range Hall of Fame program was put on hold because of the pandemic. It is up and operational for 2021 with the likelihood of virtual meetings for Foundation members and range officials to discuss the nominations. As in the past, the deadline for nominations is the end of March.

The Hall of Fame was established in 1980 to give recognition to those members of the WSMR workforce, military and civilian, who made significant contributions to the missile range's mission. It is the highest award White Sands can bestow on one of its own. Past honorees include such individuals as Dr. Clyde Tombaugh, the astronomer who discovered Pluto, and Wernher von Braun, the German V-2 scientist.

The last inductee was Las Cruces resident Bill Agee, a mathematician who made missile testing

safer for those working at White Sands and those people living in surrounding communities. He was inducted in 2019.

The hall of fame includes 55 individuals. It contains both men and women, both civilian and military personnel, both government and contractor employees and a huge mix of professions – everything from chaplain to missile flight safety to public affairs to professional engineer to equal employment opportunity. It is the embodiment of "Team WSMR."

For information on nomination procedures or to request a copy of the White Sands Hall of Fame Guide, email miriam.u.rodriguez.civ@mail.mil or call 575-678-1134 at WSMR Public Affairs. All *former* military, civilian and contractor personnel who have served at White Sands are eligible for nomination.

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FOUNDATION MEMBERS - DUES ARE DUE

Strategic Plan _____

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The Board completed a final draft of the Foundation strategic plan. The plan is closely tied to the Museum Director's annual plan and it will be an important tool for fundraising in 2021.

The Foundation received an invitation from CMH to participate in a Virtual Symposium held for Army museums throughout the US. Darren Court, Gerry Veara and Jon Gibson attended the symposium and reported on the activities. Speakers made many useful suggestions, and we are reviewing them for our own operation as we look ahead to the rest of 2021. A few concepts for consideration are supporting the museum's efforts to rehabilitate the exhibits in Missile Park, museum outreach, continued improvements to archive operations, and helping the museum establish its Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math program.



Although there was no Hall of Fame activity last year, the missile range and historical foundation came to an agreement on a simplified review process for future nominations. From now on, an equal number of missile range officials and foundation representatives will look at nominations and make recommendations to the WSMR commander.