



Hands Across History



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

Volume XVIII, Letter III

August 2022

Work On The Museum's New Exhibit Hall Is Marching On

By Jim Eckles

At the Historical Foundation's July board of directors meeting, Darren Court, the WSMR Museum director, related the good news that the new exhibit hall construction is on schedule. That means the "new" museum will have its grand opening sometime this fall.

Court said that the walls for the exhibit space have been erected. This is a series of walls that turns the open space the Historical Foundation built into a maze. Walls are strategically placed to guide visitors through the displays and they act as huge spaces for photos and other art work. Court pointed out that many of the artifact display cases will be mounted on these walls. It puts the artifacts off of the floor and higher up so they are more at eye level and much easier to see.

One of the things that will make this a state-of-the-art museum is that many walls will have touch screens so visitors can call the specific information they want. For instance, near the entrance, in the area devoted to New Mexico in World War II, there will be a computerized screen with Bataan information. Visitors will be able to see a list of the Japanese "hell ships" used to transport American troops to prisoner of war camps in Japan. A map of

Japan will show all of the camps and by touching a ship's name, a visitor will be able to see the camp highlighted on the map.

The missile range's hall of fame will be similar. Eventually, a visitor will be able to see a list of inductees, select one and view the person's background as it pops onto the screen. And since this will be digital, the amount of information is not limited to a few paragraphs and a photo. If videos, more photos, more information are available, it will be easy to display.

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Karrie Porter Brace (left) listens as Darren Court, WSMR Museum Director, explains that this propeller is from a droned B-17 bomber shot down over WSMR by a Nike Ajax missile. It will hang on the wall in the area for early White Sands development. Brace is a newish member to the Historical Foundation Board of Directors. Photo by Jim Eckles

Foundation Donates Computers — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

There is still a dark area at the entrance to the exhibit hall, a place where new lights are needed. Court said the WSMR command has stated that the lights will be in place for the grand opening this fall.

In other museum news, the Foundation has purchased six computers for the museum's STEM program. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The computers will be equipped with educational and fun software that the Foundation will assist in purchasing which will challenge school tour groups visiting White Sands. It is felt that the availability of STEM activities, combined with the historical content of the museum, can provide a greater learning opportunity for students.

In addition, the Foundation is paying for a new opening and door leading from the museum back into the archives. This wasn't included in the original contract and the Foundation has stepped up to make it happen. The computers and door are just examples of work the Foundation continues to do even though it has completed its original mission which was to provide a new museum building. Now it is time to provide support for the things that fall between the cracks.



Museum Director Darren Court points out one of the makers on the newly built walls. The photos on the sheet are of what display sheets will be affixed to this wall. In this case, they are for the Hembrillo Battlefield. Photo by Jim Eckles

Foundation Needs New Treasurer

Jon Gibson, the Foundation's treasurer for decades has decided to retire. He is 85 and thinks it is time to pass the job onto someone younger.

If you are interested, please get in touch with the Foundation President, Frances Williams. She can be reached at ffw@newmexico.com OR contact Jon at Gibson_Jon@msn.com.

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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Two Belt Buckles Available For A Donation

Frances Williams has been cleaning up and found these two belt buckles from the 1980s. The first one was issued by the White Sands Missile Range Pioneer Group in honor of the missile range's 40th anniversary. Since the Space Shuttle Columbia landing at White Sands was just a few years prior in 1982, the shuttle figures prominently on the buckle.

Who issued the other buckle is unknown but

was obviously to commemorate the shuttle landing at the White Sands Space Harbor on March 30, 1982. Originally, the landing area was simply known as Northrup Strip. The designation was changed by the 97th Congress on May 11, 1982.

If you'd like to own one of these buckles, each will require a donation to the Foundation for \$250. Contact Frances Williams at ffw@newmexico.com.



In Memoriam - A Tribute To Former WSMR Army Officers

By Frances Williams

Two of our great warriors have left us. Both had commendable service in the Army and at White Sands Missile Range, but after retirement to this community as well. May their memories be for a blessing.

Colonel Joseph Warren Pollard III served at WSMR as Director of Missiles and Electronic Warfare. His assignments included two tours in Vietnam and NATO. He was instrumental in guiding the TACFire program and worked on the Patriot Missile.

After his retirement in 1982 he taught Electrical Engineering at New Mexico State University. He also helped build affordable housing with Habitat for Humanity. He led a life of service not only in the Armed Forces but to this community as well. His wife of fifty eight years, Heather Pollard, was instrumental in energizing the Arts Council of Las Cruces, and was also involved in

many projects which enhanced the quality of life in this community

Colonel Robert Neil Mathis served as the Director of Army Testing and Evaluation (ARMTE) at White Sands Missile Range. He was a graduate of West Point, earned his Masters Degree in Nuclear Physics and taught Physics at West Point. His other assignments included Eighth Infantry Division commanding the last of the 59th Air Defense Battalion and as Inspector General in Germany, Military Commander at Ballistic Research at Aberdeen Proving Ground, and as a military attache in Amman, Jordan. He was a graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

After retirement he started the Radio Station KROL at 99.5 FM, worked to establish the Organ Mountain Peaks National Monument and was active in the Sister City Program for Nienburg, Germany receiving the Sister Cities Medallion Award for his outstanding service to this organization.

Others Had Good Memories Of Their Time At WSPG

Editor's Note: In the last issue of Hands Across History I ran recollections of early White Sands by the "Kids of WSMR." Here are some opinions of early White Sands Proving Ground from some of the soldiers who dubbed themselves "broomstickers." This is early 1950s, during the Korean War. This material is from Arnie Crouch who once published a newsletter for Broomstickers called "Broomstick Scientist."

Below is Arnie's introduction to the posted comments. It is followed by an explanation by Arnie of what a "broomsticker" was. He got to help launch V-2 rockets.

By Arnie Crouch

For many of us, White Sands Proving Grounds turned out to be more than just place to fritter away our draft obligation, or in my case, my recall to active duty stint. We found a challenge in a field that few of us ever imagined would grow to the extent that it has over the years. More than a few followed this challenge and pursued the aerospace field for the rest of their careers. In correspondence since starting the *Broomstick*, many of you have commented on the effect WSPG had on you. Some of these thoughts are quoted below.

Addison Brainard- "I enjoyed what we did at WSPG and for the most part I enjoyed what I did during my working years." (He worked at Bell Aircraft/Minuteman Missile)

Arnold Bottari- "Thanks for your interest in keeping a very wonderful time period alive. You brought back some very interesting and exciting memories."

Jim Herzog- "How fortunate we were to be at White Sands"

George Gianopulos- "I agree with you (in your article) that this experience was unforgettable and valuable. For me, it changed my life entirely, for which I am forever grateful - despite the fact I hated the Army!"

Bob Hirschcron- "WSPG was a marvelous experience and I was indeed lucky to have been chosen as one of the broomsticks !"

John Schoneman- "It was a unique experience for us at White Sands. I think I learned more about my abilities and myself there than in any previous experience."

Tom Foley- "WSPG ("Old Fort White Sands") was for me a super experience."

The Broomstick Scientists were a group of U.S. Army personnel assigned to the Army's White Sands Proving Ground (WSPG) in New Mexico during the Korean conflict in the early 1950s.

They ranged in rank from privates to officers, and were chosen for the work they were to do based on their having prior engineering or scientific experience whether in the military or in the private sector. They were around 215 in number and were comprised of Regular Army, Army Reservists, recalled to active duty, and draftees.

They were assigned to the 9393rd Technical Service Unit (TSU) for administrative purposes, housing, pay, etc. For duty assignments they belonged to the 1st Ordnance Guided Missile Support Battalion. These duties involved many diverse areas of technical responsibility, missile propulsion, guidance, tracking, launching, and so on. Many were given temporary duty (TDY) assignments at aerospace contractor's facilities such as Jet Propulsion Labs (JPL), North American Aviation, and General Electric among others. Yet other Broomsticks worked on missiles and other projects at WSPG. One such group, the V-2 Section, was assigned to assume the responsibilities from GE engineers for the assembly, test and launch of captured German V-2 Rockets being used for upper atmosphere research by the Army Ordnance Corps. GE's contract for this service was expiring and the Army was taking over the conduct of the program.

The name Broomstick Scientist came about when a long term army officer who had come up slowly through the enlisted and commissioned ranks, which was normal, became envious of the speed these new draftees and reservists were promoted in rank. Many were going from private to staff sergeant in as little as four months.

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Slur Becomes Their Trademark — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



This is Robert Alley, one of the broomstickers that Arnie mentions. Alley was in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan and was sent to WSPG as a private first class. He was quickly promoted to corporal and acted as overall coordinator for the assembly and launch of the first V-2 after General Electric completed their contract. Alley and other broomstickers, to include Arnie Crouch, were featured in the April 5, 1952 article in Colliers called "Our Wonder Weapons" by Bill Davidson. They set a new altitude record at 132 miles. Here Alley is already a staff sergeant. (Courtesy photo)

He bitterly made the comment one day that he "was no more impressed by you young soldiers than I would be by a bunch of broomsticks!" The men readily jumped on the intended slur and quickly started referring to themselves as Broomsticks. At a later date such words as Brigade, Battalion, and Scientists were added, but Scientist seemed to be the most used.

I had the pleasure (although I'm not sure that I considered it that at the time) of being one of these Broomstick Scientists. I was a World War II

veteran who had stayed in the Reserves and was recalled to active duty due to the Korean activities. Having acquired an engineering background after World War II I was fortunate to be assigned to the WSPG group ending up as head of the electrical section of the V-2 Section.

As the Broomsticks completed their service obligation, their ranks began to dwindle and one by one they returned to their niche in civilian life. Some retained contact with those they had met at WSPG, and others went their own separate way. I kept in touch with several of my newly acquired friends over the years, some on a personal basis, and others through both a personal and business association. Many of us had taken the hint given us at WSPG and stayed in the aerospace field.

Along about the summer of 1999, having retired from the business world in 1995, I was looking for a challenge to occupy my "retired" time. What triggered the thought I don't recall, but it occurred to me it might be fun to chase down the guys from the V-2 Section. I knew where several were, Jerry Warren, Bob Lyghtel, Bob Alley and John Schoneman. Using the Internet and references from people that I had located, I began to get a good list of addresses. This hunt led the idea of starting a newsletter for the V-2 guys.

Going one step further, I became enamored with expanding my vision to include all the Broomsticks. I solicited the aid of Betty Moffat, who had been our 1st Ord Guided Missile Support Bn's civilian secretary back in fifties. Betty had always led the way in putting out address lists for a number of years in an effort to keep us tied together.

Thus started what has to date been a five year run of THE BROOMSTICK SCIENTIST Journal/Newsletter, published quarterly. Originally it was identified as a Newsletter, but along the way it became obvious that it was really more of a collection of memories written by the Broomsticks themselves, hence the addition of the term Journal. It is published free and mailed to about 100 Broomsticks and 10 or 15 "Honorary" Broomsticks.

Editor's Note: The journal was discontinued years ago.

Believe It Or Not, WSMR Once Hosted Bicycle Rides

By Jim Eckles

Back in the 1990s, I proposed that Morale, Welfare and Recreation sponsor bicycle rides for the public in uprange areas. They agreed. Being a mountain bike rider, I found those routes first -- places like the Hazardous Test Area (same route as the Bataan March) Rhodes Canyon (loop involving Bear Den Canyon and other options) and Hembrillo Canyon. Then, road riders asked for a paved route. I figured out a century route (ended up at 106 miles) from the football stadium in Tularosa to a big loop on the range. These photos are from that first century ride. We had to take advantage of portable toilets already in place, thus the line at Malpais Spring. Lunch was served about halfway.



Sam Jones, Former WSMR Basketball Great, Dies At Age 88

The greatest basketball player to ever lead a New Mexico team did not attend any of the state's high schools or universities. He played on the White Sands Proving Ground team in 1955 and 1956. His name was Sam Jones and in 1996 he was named one of the 50 greatest players in the history of the National Basketball Association (NBA). Sam died on Dec. 30, 2021.

Jones was born in 1933 in Laurinburg, N.C. He played high school ball in Durham, N.C. where he was selected to the All-American high school team in 1951. He then attended all-black North Carolina Central College.

In September 1954 Jones entered the Army and took basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C. He then attended the Pole Lineman's school at Camp Gordon, Ga.

At White Sands, in addition to his commo job, he played basketball. He led the post team and his talent was obvious to everyone. He led

the post team to second place in the Fourth Army Basketball Championships. He averaged more than 26 points per game even though he only played the first half in a couple of games. When awards were given afterward the *Wind and Sand* reported, "Sam was given a standing ovation, longer and louder than for any other player in the tournament."

His talent was soon in demand by other Army teams. In basketball, when it came time for the big "All-Army" and "All-Service" tournaments, installations would put together all-star teams to be as competitive as possible. Sam Jones was asked to join the Camp Chaffee, Ark. team as it entered the All-Army Tournament.

According to the *Wind and Sand* newspaper, "Jones led Camp Chaffee to the All-Army championship ... after being with the team only two weeks. His work on the back boards, plus his better than 18-point game average, gave Chaffee the shot in the arm they needed as they came back from the loser's bracket to defeat the Fort Lewis All-Stars in two straight games to cop the crown for the Fourth Army quintet, their second All-Army championship in three years."

For his efforts Jones was picked for the All-Army team and the All-Service team. He was also given a chance, with other military stars, to try out for the U.S. Olympic Team. Although he didn't make the Olympic squad, he would soon join gold medalists K.C. Jones and Bill Russell with the Boston Celtics.

After Jones left the Army, Red Auerbach of the Boston Celtics selected him in the first round of the 1957 NBA draft. Jones, at 6'4", was paired in the backcourt with K.C. Jones. Add the likes of Bill Russell and John Havlicek and a dynasty was created..

Sam Jones played in the NBA for 12 years. The Celtics won the NBA championship 10 of those years and at one point ran off eight in a row. Jones averaged 17.7 points per game for his career and almost 19 points a game in the playoffs. His best year was 1965 when he averaged 25.9 points



This photo from the March 23, 1956 Wind & Sand newspaper shows the post's basketball team. The caption reads: Trophy Winners – Pictured after receiving the the runner's-up trophy in the class "AA" Fourth Army tourney at Ft. Hood, Texas are left to right, standing: Bob Wallace, trainer, Sam Jones, Bob Lampert, Tom Deeming, Bob Taylor, Sam Sartain, Phil Oren, Bob Williams, coach. Kneeling: John Blue, manager, Max Wilson, Jack Miller, Henry Frazier, Tony Mahar, and Joe Masciarelli. This tournament ended the season for the Rockets, giving them a 22 won, 18 lost record for the season.

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per game and was fourth in scoring behind Wilt Chamberlain, Jerry West and Oscar Robertson.

Jones made five All-Star game appearances and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1983.

Having a world championship ring for all 10 fingers certainly qualifies for greatness.

Photo of Sam Jones in action for the Boston Celtics is courtesy of the Celtics.

