



Hands Across History

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



Volume XX, Letter IV

November 2024

Pat Quinlan Inducted Into Hall Of Fame Sept. 29



Pat Quinlan poses with Brig. Gen. George Turner holding the hall of fame certificate proclaiming Patrick's induction into the WSMR Hall of Fame.

Here are some photos from Pat Quinlan's Hall of Fame induction at the WSMR Frontier Club on Sept. 29. They were taken by Miriam Rodriguez from the missile range Public Affairs Office. Quinlan is the 59th former WSMRite honored with Hall of Fame induction.



Pat Quinlan poses with Brig. Gen. George Turner after they revealed the Hall of Fame photo and certificate that are now on display in the WSMR Museum.



Patrick Quinlan's family and friends pose after the ceremony. From left to right: Friend Greg Hawk, Ezekiel Davis (grandson), Kelly Davis Quinlan (Ed's wife), Ed Quinlan (Pat's son), Pat's wife Jean, Pat Quinlan, Gavin Quinlan (grandson), Pat's daughter Kelly and her husband Dan Simon, Pat's daughter Gina Batchelor, Azariah Davis (grandson) and Cailyn Quinlan (granddaughter).

Frances Williams Is Leaving The Presidency

By Frances Williams, President

In 1952 my Navy husband was transferred to White Sands Missile Range for a two year tour. I followed with two small children, and when we arrived I was very upset and disappointed because the house we were to live in had a road that had not been built so we were faced with a big sand pile of dirt, and I asked "what sort of place have you brought us to" Eventually we accommodated ourselves to the desert surroundings. I got a job as a Voucher Clerk GS-4 in the Comptroller's office and retired as a GS-13 as the Manager of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office providing support for both military and civilians.

I had a variety of positions some because of promotions and some because of being riffed. Most of them were challenging because they were positions which were non traditional for women. When I was promoted to the position of Transportation Supervisor for automotive and aircraft spare parts and had the hand receipt for the Army Aircraft at Holloman Air Force base, the men I supervised would not talk to me unless I asked them a question. The Transportation Officer, came back from leave and asked what the hell was I doing there, and wanted me transferred. For a year I was in charge of the Motor Pool, and the hostility of the men in the shop was very apparent with one mechanic working the night shift showing up inebriated and spilled his beverage all over my papers. It was not unusual for me to show up at Logistic Conferences and told the secretary's

meeting was down the hall. For a time I was the only woman on the General's staff/ My how times have changed.

While serving as the Administrative Officer in the Instrumentation Directorate, I was deployed to Vietnam for seven months where I served as a Logistician at the 14th Inventory Control Center in Long Bing, the only woman on the team. I came under fire, when the TET offensive started and volunteered at the 24th Evacuation Hospital as a gofer and letter writer for patients. The best thing I ever did.

When I returned to WSMR I became the Federal Women's Program Manager and moved over to the Equal Employment Office. Because of the latitude I had in that position, we established many innovative personnel programs which were emulated by other Department of Defense Organizations, since this was a new position with not a lot of guidelines to follow. I then was promoted to the Equal Employment Officer for both Military and Civilian Programs. Even then my selection was challenged by a group of minority employees who told the General that I was not qualified for this position because I was a "Gringa." The General, not familiar with the Southwest, asked what that was. When they told him it was because I was a White Woman he said "She's got the job."

With the partnership with the Civilian Personnel Office, many new and innovative programs were started, most notably the "Upward Mobility

See Telling Her Story, Page 3

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 editor is Jim Eckles. His email is nebraska1950@comcast.net or use the ad-

dress below for snail mail.

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 us and we will send it via the Post Office or email.

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Telling Her Story — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Program” which allowed employees who were dead ended in lower graded positions, to apply for positions which would allow them to go into jobs such as Electronic Technicians, Meteorologist, Technicians, Range Controller to name a few. It was very successful but could not have been accomplished without the support and approval of the Commanders of WSMR and Tenant activities.

While we continued to have criticism from some minority groups, WSMR received awards from the Office of Personnel Management, Equal Opportunity from the Secretary of the Army, Equal Employment Commission, just to name a few. This could not have been possible without the unmitigated support of the Commanders, not only of WSMR, but Tenant Commanders and their staffs as well. I should add that I worked for 17 Commanders of WSMR and while they received many complaints about me and the EEO program none were substantiated as is witnessed by the many awards received from those organizations and more mentioned above.

The WSMR Historical Foundation Board of Directors has done an outstanding job meeting their mission of raising funds to support the WSMR Museum. We exist only for this purpose. The Foundation has raised over one million dollars, giving it to the WSMR Museum to build the new exhibit hall, procure items as needed, provided funding to build the Administrative building when entering the Museum, funding equipment

requirements and helping to pay for exhibits. They are also responsible for The Hall of Fame activities, from receiving the nominations and making the arrangements for the presentations and the activities required to process them through appropriate channels and arranging for the luncheon which is given in their honor to getting into the Hall of Fame Gallery at the WSMR Museum. The Board members have served many years on the Board and have preformed these duties as volunteers devoted to the mission of the WSMR Museum.

I have served on the WSMR Museum Historical Foundation for more than twenty years, and for me this was a labor of love. We need more members to join, and more members for the Historical Foundation Board.

Because of my health and age I think it is time for me to step down as the President but will continue to serve on the Board as their Fund Raising Chair. No words can express my gratitude to White Sands Missile Range for the opportunities I was provided in my employment and working in so many different organizations giving me experiences I could not have had. My love and devotion of WSMR extends to the outstanding employees I have worked with and to the Commanders who gave me the support to do the challenging jobs I held. And my family who also supported and tolerated my long stays at work and travel. G-d Bless all of you, G-d Bless WSMR and G-d Bless America.

Turmoil At The WSMR Museum Delays Foundation Election

By Jim Eckles, Editor

Normally, this is the time of year we ask for board of director nominations in advance of the annual election, usually held in January. The board has delayed that because of important issues at the Museum. The Center for Military History has pulled the two positions, the only two positions, from the museum. Apparently they are needed at higher levels in CMH.

Darren and Jenn are going to be allowed to continue to run the museum but they are going to be carried by CMH as “over hires.” The really big

problem is that when they leave - take jobs elsewhere or retire - the positions will not be filled.

At that point, the museum would be unmanned with the doors simply opened each day by WSMR. Since an unmanned facility must be hardened, many of the artifacts will be moved to Fort Bliss for storage as the Bliss museum will be the local manager. It will be greatly diminished.

WSMR commander Brig. Gen. George Turner has stepped in to see if there is something WSMR can do. We felt it best to wait on the election until the dust settles from this. More to follow.

The Missile Range's Military Ghost Town

By Jim Eckles, Editor

Editor's Note: This article is lifted from one I wrote long ago about Red Canyon Range Camp.

I first heard from J.P. Moore in early October 1997 when he sent an email to the post newspaper looking for me. He told them he had read some of my articles on the Public Affairs webpage and wanted to contact me about a book he had just completed on Red Canyon Range Camp. He called it *The Malapais Missiles*.

It turns out that Jean-Paul Moore is a retired Air Force master sergeant but started out his military life as a missile man in the U.S. Army. He graduated from high school near Wichita Falls, Texas in the spring of 1954. He got himself a job and after moving thousands of 90-pound bales of hay in blistering heat that summer, he decided he needed a career change. He enlisted in the Army.

In early August he was sent to Ft. Bliss in El Paso for basic training. He was excited by the experience because it was so different from farming in rural Texas. No hay bales to be thrown in his new life. This was all radars, computers, screaming jets and guided missiles.

Being a farm boy meant learning about the big world in general too. He says he still remembers the six words the Army chaplain provided for the recruits to sum up personal hygiene and health. He said, "Flies spread disease. Keep yours zipped."

There were some detours through guard duty and kitchen patrol, but eventually Moore got to play with the Nike Ajax air-defense missile system through on-the-job training, not the formal air-defense school. He then spent almost all of his Army years at Red Canyon Range Camp providing launch support or working at Ft. Bliss and White Sands on one of the review boards charged with testing changes to the Nike system. He left the Army in August 1957.

Decades later, Moore harbored strong positive memories of his Army days especially his time at Red Canyon. In his book he says, "Few appreciated the paradox of working on the most sophisticated anti-aircraft guided missile system in the

free world, while living in a migrant camp straight from The Grapes of Wrath movie set."

Moore loved that contrast and, as it turns out, so did many other men stationed at Red Canyon. Where else could you go to live in a tent, bathe in 55-gallon drum, eat greenish powdered eggs reeking of gasoline fumes and then spend the rest of the day operating a state-of-the-art radar tracking missiles traveling over 1,500 miles per hour?

Like many good young boys in the service, Moore faithfully wrote his mother, telling her about his experiences. His mother saved them. Using the letters as a baseline, Moore was able to write about his experiences at Red Canyon. Then, he used internet postings and personal contacts to spin a web of Red Canyon connections. He became their focal point – the eye of the storm.

By the time I got a copy of the book to read and review, he was incorporating the memories of other Red Canyon vets. They couldn't have asked for a better coordinator. He collected their input and gave them all a voice.

Feelings in this group were amazingly positive and Moore's gusto led to two reunions in Las Cruces and at White Sands. I was involved in both reunions and the enthusiasm of the men and their tales were infectious. It was great fun to sit around and listen to them correct each other and tell of events that could only have happened at a place like Red Canyon.

Moore did a great job on the book. He is one of those rare individuals able to tell a good tale and do it with humor.

In June 1998 I wrote in the missile range's post newspaper, "The final product is a fun read with humorous anecdotes, a factual history of the camp and some nice commentary about the sometimes preposterous nature of military life."

One of my favorite descriptions is his portrayal of payday. On payday the men would line up by rank. Everything was based on rank down to when you could take a shower. The lower your rank, the longer you waited in line.

See Getting Paid At RCRC, Page 5

Getting Paid At RCRC — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

For payday, Moore wrote: “When I finally get to the pay table, there sits the paymaster and an NCO, usually the first sergeant or the field first sergeant. Both have 45-caliber automatic pistols, clips inserted. The guns are lying on the table in front of them, next to the large stack of cash.

“I salute and report to the paymaster ‘Specialist third class Moore, Jean P., reporting for pay, Sir.’ The paymaster scans the pay roster looking for my name and the amount to be paid. If I’m lucky my name is there and does not have a red line through it. Then the paymaster picks up the big bundle of cash lying in front of him, counts out the amount due me, and stuffs it in an envelope. He writes my name and the amount on the envelope, then seals it. You are probably thinking I get the envelope handed to me, right?

“Wrong. The paymaster hands it to the NCO sitting beside him who waits until I report to him as I did before. Then the NCO opens the envelope, counts the money in front of me, has me sign beside my name on the pay roster, indicating that I was paid, then gives me the money.

“Sounds like big bucks here, right? I think my pay was about \$78.00 a month, or maybe a little more as a Spec-3, minus deductions for the quartermaster laundry and social security.:

How primitive was the camp? Moore wrote this about the latrines: “The base-camp latrines are fairly large wooden buildings with vents all around the edge of the roof. Inside there is nothing but a wooden box along the center with a dozen holes cut through it and a vent pipe leading through the roof. Wooden toilet seat covers are hinged over each hole, six holes per side. During rush hour six men can use one side and six more the other, back-to-back. Nice and cozy.

“Modesty is out of the question and the stench is absolutely overpowering. Bags of quick lime are dumped through the holes into the pit dug below and that compounds the stench. Mounted on one wall are some galvanized metal urinals. In the winter it’s freezing inside. In the summer the flies will drive you crazy. A favorite saying is, ‘Close the door, you’re letting the flies out!’”

Red Canyon Range Camp is in the northeast

corner of White Sands Missile Range. Once it was the booming center for Army public relations and troop training. Today, it is cracked concrete slabs, deteriorating roads and a couple of crumbling fire control bunkers. Graffiti marks many of the remaining foundations. Deer and antelope are the most frequent visitors. It is a ghost town.

However, from 1953 through 1959 more than 10,000 visitors from 45 countries and 40 states passed through the camp to see some of the 3,000 Nike Ajax missiles fired by air defense troop units. About 300 troops were assigned to Red Canyon to run the facility. On some days the mess hall served as many as 1,500 meals to feed the cadre, troops shooting missiles and visitors. It was a boomtown.

The camp was opened in October 1953 by Fort Bliss as a place to conduct Nike Ajax training and annual service firings. At the time, Fort Bliss did not have the necessary area for such a mission. White Sands allowed the use of the northeast corner of the range as a temporary facility. Eventually, Fort Bliss established McGregor Range closer to the fort and moved the air defense firings there in August 1959.

What is left of the camp is about four miles south of US Highway 380 with the turnoff 16 miles west of Carrizozo, N.M. That’s 165 miles from Fort Bliss headquarters. At the turnoff, a gate made of red rock still stands where the camp had its outer entrance. At one time both sides of the gate were topped with Nike missiles.

Nike Ajax batteries received most of their training at Fort Bliss. When the units completed the basic required training, they moved to Red Canyon Range Camp. There they received further training that culminated in the firing of at least one successful missile. Once this was completed, the units would be considered fully prepared for around-the-clock operations at a Nike site somewhere in America.

Those visiting troops didn’t use their own vans, radars and computers. All of the support equipment to fire the actual missiles was permanently stationed at Red Canyon and maintained by

See RCATS For Targets, Page 6

RCATS For Targets — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

the cadre. The equipment was turned over to the shooters for their tests while the cadre offered support when needed.

Red Canyon Range Camp was built from scratch in the eastern foothills of the Oscura Mountains. Initially tents and then dozens of Quonset huts and other temporary buildings were erected in a flat area below Chupadera Mesa. Besides the usual barracks, mess hall and motor pool, there was a small post exchange, dispensary, fire department and a recreation and service club. The men also had softball diamonds and volleyball and basketball courts for their use.

Several miles southwest of the camp a missile assembly area was built on a low ridge. Nike Ajax missiles were repaired, assembled and fueled at this site and then moved to the launch area further to the southwest. The missiles were fired at drones as visitors watched from the ridges to the east. For decades an area west of the launch points was littered with Nike boosters that were stuck in the ground like arrows after being shot straight up in the air.

For targets the Army presented the Nike units with RCATs (radio controlled aerial targets). These small propeller-driven aircraft were about 10 feet long with a 12-foot wingspan. They were quite tiny compared to the Soviet bombers the Nike units were supposed to be protecting American cities from. They were equipped with radar reflectors that made them look much larger to the Nike radars.

The RCATs were launched from Oscura Range Camp south of Red Canyon on the eastern boundary of the missile range. Most of the targets were launched from a circular asphalt track just north of Oscura.

The RCATs were placed on a wheeled trolley on the paved circle. The trolley was connected to a center pole via a cable. Soldiers would fire up the RCATs engine, tweak its throttle and let go of it. The RCAT and trolley would roll forward but the cable would keep it turning in a circle.

Eventually the target would get up enough speed to take off from the trolley. Once high enough, the RCAT could be tracked by radar and a

controller could fly it up to Red Canyon to present as a target.

If these launches were not done with some precision, the RCATs sometimes went cart-wheeling into the desert creating interesting explosions – especially during night operations.

The men who manned Red Canyon (no women were stationed there) seemed to like the duty. Their tour was supposed to be a short five months because of the isolation of the camp but most stayed on for several tours. The last camp commander, Lt. Col. John McCarthy, liked it enough to stay four and a half years.

In fact, McCarthy was the spirit and guiding hand behind Red Canyon for most of its existence. He implemented dozens of projects to improve the camp and make it more fit for his soldiers and the many visitors arriving.

In addition, he didn't insist on busywork to keep the cadre moving all the time. He expected them to do their jobs, do them well, and then relax. The normal tour for cadre at Red Canyon was five months. According to McCarthy's daughter, over 90 percent of the men assigned to Red Canyon asked for at least one more tour at the camp. That is a testament to the leadership of McCarthy.

One of McCarthy's more interesting projects was the building of a chapel.

For several years the camp held church services in the small camp theater. McCarthy wanted something better but could get no funding for a chapel. So he and Master Sergeant William Sidell, the camp's senior NCO, drew up plans for a building and turned the project over to the troops. Over 100 men, representing 32 states, volunteered to work on the building. Work started in December 1957.

The men spent their spare time, weekends and holidays, scrounging materials for the chapel. They salvaged steel railroad track from the Southern Pacific Railroad for the frame. Bracing was cut from the steel doors of the old Lincoln County jail. The interior walls and roof came from the tops and sides of Nike booster crates. They quarried red

See Boosters For Bells, Page 7

Boosters For Bells — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

rock from a nearby canyon for the walls and used plastered telephone poles as the pillars on the front entry. Using cellophane and shellac they were able to simulate stained glass windows.

For bells they hung three Nike boosters in the steeple. The boosters had been used and the intense heat gave them a pleasant resonance. Since they were three different lengths they produced three different pitches.

It might not sound like much of a building, but it was. The men referred to it as “90 percent junk, except in appearance.” They worked hard and were able to give the chapel the appearance of one built with large amounts of money and built by a contractor. McCarthy was proud of the chapel and of his men who worked on it.

Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryan, then Army Chief of Chaplains, was impressed with the effort and made a special trip to Red Canyon from Ft. Bliss in 1958 to dedicate the chapel. He told the men, “A building such as this means a great deal more than a large and more expensive chapel built by congressional appropriation. This has the heart and soul of you men in it.”

According to McCarthy, having the Army’s chief chaplain on hand upstaged a similar dedication at Fort Bliss the next day. All the news media emphasized the Red Canyon effort and just added at the end of their stories that “Ryan also went to El Paso.” Apparently, Army brass in Washington called Fort Bliss and wanted to know, according to McCarthy, “Why the hell that place in the desert got all the publicity?”

The chapel ended up being a cross-shaped building, 87 feet long and 36 feet wide in the main section. Officially, the only cash spent was \$200 for shingles, which the men contributed. After he retired, McCarthy did admit to some creative administrative work to help the project. He said they transferred the building number from an unused temporary shed to the chapel. This allowed them to draw funds to maintain it once it was complete.

In 1965 McCarthy wrote, “General Snodgrass was enthusiastic about calling it Saint Barbara, after the patron saint of artillery. I felt, if anything, it should be called St. Dismas, after the good thief

on the cross. After all a certain amount of conniving has to go into a project like that.”

After the chapel was completed, McCarthy included it in the tours he gave visitors. Most of these visitors were part of “Operation Understanding,” which was a special Army program to educate community leaders about the Nike Ajax. They were VIPs from cities all over the world where Nike units were on site or where units were contemplated being installed.

The visiting groups were made up of mayors and city officials, civil defense leaders, church, civic, educational and industrial leaders, and newspapermen. Occasionally, a governor or senator made the trip. They were all flown in military aircraft but paid their own expenses.

The program was dubbed OU and was credited with smoothing the way for many of the Nike installations. In 1957, the proposed location of a site at the Los Angeles International Airport drew adverse public demonstrations. After the mayor and other city officials went through OU and then told the citizens of Los Angeles about what they had seen, opposition evaporated.

When the groups went through the chapel, McCarthy always had someone there softly playing hymns on the organ. The camp mascot, a burro the men caught and raised, also liked to sing in the chapel. They called it Nike and, according to McCarthy, it liked to try to attend the Catholic masses on Sunday.

According to Joe Perry, one of Moore’s Red Canyon vets, he and some other soldiers captured Nike as a baby. He said his wife made the blanket for Nike’s back to use when there were special events. The blanket had the word “nike” and a cutout of a missile on both sides. When the camp was abandoned, Nike was turned out to go back to the wild.

When Fort Bliss left Red Canyon for McGregor Range, they took the temporary buildings down. The men who worked there remember leaving the chapel standing since it was not an official building. However, eventually Ft. Bliss had the chapel sold as scrap and the buyer came in and tore it apart - the last reminder of the camp.

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The Back Page

HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS DUE

White Sands Missile Range is now accepting nominations from all sources until the end of March for its Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame was established in 1980 to honor members of the WSMR workforce, military and civilian, who made singularly significant contributions to the mission on the Range and to the surrounding communities. It is the highest award the missile range can bestow on one of its own. There are 59 members in the Hall of Fame. You can see the current honorees at the museum's website: <https://wsrmuseum.com/wsmr-historical-foundation-hall-of-fame-2/>

The Hall of Fame 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 to “movers and shakers.” It is the embodiment of

“Team WSMR,” the phrase missile range leaders have thrown around for decades.

For information on nomination procedures or to request an updated copy of the White Sands Hall of Fame Guide, **email Jim Eckles at nebraska1950@comcast.net** The guide contains the forms, guidelines and procedures for nomination. It is available as a PDF and will be emailed.

To get into the Hall of Fame a nominee must have been responsible for significant and lasting deeds or achievements during their career at WSMR. The contributions may be in various areas such as research, innovations, cost savings, technological advances, safety, public relations, equal opportunity or heroic deeds.

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

The deadline for turning in a nomination is March 31, 2025.