

INTRODUCTION

“VAFB”

It is hard to talk about the experiences that I had at Vandenberg Air Force Base because much of what I remember are the good times that we had while there . My fear is that some will think that all we did was play and do jokes . Far from that . We worked very hard at a very hard and precise job . A lot of the time we worked 12 hour shifts around the clock . We had a launch window that had to be met and sometimes it was not “open” very long . The testing that was done required that conditions be just right and meant that we had to match that time frame . But - - - when the work was done , and the missile was gone , we played and played hard . Even the never ending clean up was made into a game . Anything to make the time go faster because when your in a slack time , time drags ! We painted the pad – and each other . We raced up the gantry tower . (guess that was our “PT”). There was always a competition to see which pad looked the best . And there was the games . Flame Bucket Ball seem to be the favorite . Played with a tennis ball in the flume below the flame bucket , it was a never ending source of adventure . One team would try to keep the ball away for the other . It got kind of rough sometimes but no one got hurt too bad . Fortunately Pad Two was not in service because the flume under the flame bucket was pretty short and the drop at the end was a long way .

Also from the pads we had the best show on the base to watch the other launches . There were a lot for a while and I never missed one if I could help it . We seen other Atlas , Titans , Minutemen , and an occasional Blue Scout or Thor . Strange , as I think back , I can’t remember if there were any launches from the “A” site in the Nike– Zeus program before I got there or not . Oh ya , we did the launching of the target vehicles that were used to test our missile defense systems . The anti missile , missile was named Nike – Zeus . All told I was privileged to take part in 26 (?) launches in the years I was at VAFB . Not something a lot of people can say . At times I was bored , disgusted , very tired , and felt like I was being picked on . At times we were so overworked we didn’t do anything but sleep and work . Am I sorry I was involved in the program , a resounding NO WAY . It was one of the best times of my life and I wouldn’t trade it for anything !