

The Men and the Missiles in our Community

Perched high atop the rugged mountains overlooking Malibu, Santa Monica, and a magnificent stretch of the Pacific coastline, is a lonely outpost of freedom. The outpost is Battery "B" of the 4th Nike Hercules Missile Battalion, 65th Air Defense Artillery (ADA), LA Site 78. One of the nine sites in the greater Los Angeles area, LA Site 78, provides air defense to our community.

At LA Site 78, men stand ready every minute of every hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to detect the enemy. If detected, they will launch their deadly Nike Hercules missiles that streak across the sky at a supersonic speed to destroy enemy aircraft hundreds of miles away.

This story is also about the missilemen all over the country whose equipment constantly scans the skies to detect and destroy any airborne threat to the security of the United States.

The Men Behind the Missile

In whose hands does our security lie? Who mans the sensitive equipment that is ready to fire in our defense at a moment's notice? Who stands the long, lonely vigil while we sleep? And who works while we play? They are young Americans, young men, who may be the boy next door. A son, a brother, or a husband.

These resolute young men come from all over America, several from California. These young men represent a cross section of American society. They adapt to the monotony of endless training to provide a deterrent to would-be conquerors. They will fight and die, if necessary, to preserve our American way of life.

Operation Cooperation

Although the missilemen, when dressed in their Army Green, stand apart from those in the community who are not in the service, they are still an integral part of the community they serve.

On July 3, 1964, Lieutenant Colonel John L. Armstrong took command of the 4th Missile Battalion, 65th Artillery of which Malibu Nike Hercules LA Site 78 is a part. Shortly thereafter, he launched a program he called "Operation Cooperation."

The primary aim of the program Operation Cooperation was to inform the civilian community of matters about the Battalion, its aims, trials, tribulations, mission, and its impact on the community. By keeping the local residents informed about such matters, he hopes to foster a better understanding between the military and civilian groups.

The community services of our soldiers are many and varied. Several members of the 4th Missile Battalion are members of civic and fraternal groups including the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Veterans of Foreign Wars, YMCA, the Masons, Optimists, Lions Club, and others. Military men participate in a variety of Scouting activities, as council members troop and den leaders. They have escorted many hundreds of Boy and Girl Scout groups through the Nike Missile Sites. They

participate in coaching and athletic activities at local schools. Soldiers contribute blood to the local blood banks and attend and support the activities of the community's churches and assist in civic functions such as parades, Memorial and Veterans Day observances and wreath-laying rites. Their wives teach in local schools, work as nurses in hospitals throughout the community and are employed by local businesses or are active in the Scouting program.

Because these servicemen are not always dressed in uniform when they take part in community activities, many civilians are unaware they are serving in the Army. Others, however, like Richard J. Aus, Field Director for the San Fernando Valley Boy Scout Council, are keenly aware of the excellent work done by the Missilemen.

After members of the Battalion assisted in constructing the Jubilee Scout Camp in the San Gabriel Mountains, Mr. Aus, in a letter to Colonel Armstrong, wrote, "On behalf of the nearly 20,000 Boy Scouts in the San Fernando Valley Council, I want to thank you and the men of the 4th Missile Battalion, 65th Artillery for the exceptionally fine job they did at our Jubilee Scout Camp on the 25th, 26th and 27th of June. If all our military personnel are as fine as those from your Battalion, it gives us much faith in the future."

Million Dollar Payroll

The missilemen, in addition to contributions to the United Crusade and charitable agencies, place a considerable sum of money into circulation in the community. For example, the annual payroll for the officers and men of the Battalion is approximately \$1,225,000.00.

While numerous men exist on site, others live with their families in approximately seventy-seven government-leased homes or apartments. Additionally, many individuals rent privately or are buying homes in the vicinity. As a result, more than \$300,00.00 is spent annually on rent and utilities. The Malibu Nike Site pays the beach communities indirectly \$25,000.00 a year in utilities alone.

The Malibu Nike Missile Site

The Malibu Nike Missile Battery, LA-78, presently commanded by First Lieutenant Richard W Pilcher, was originally equipped with the Nike-Ajax surface to air missiles and the predecessor of today's Nike Hercules.

Over the years the battery has amassed an outstanding record for operational efficiency. This year, for example, it was awarded the 47th Artillery Brigade's Semi-Annual Trophy for best Battery in activities and administration.

Commenting on this outstanding achievement, Brigade Commander Colonel M.A.(Buck) Rogers expressed his pride in the unit and his gratification at the superlative appearance and evident high morale of the officers and men of Battery B. Another of the Battery's achievements was the

receipt of the Secretary of the Army's Minuteman Award of Achievement for 100% participation in the Savings Bond Program.

What makes for an outstanding Missile unit? It is a combination of inspired leadership, loyal obedience, hard work, and detailed training in the maintenance procedures to provide system reliability and safety.

Life on site is an endless cycle of training under simulated wartime conditions, so that in the event of a real attack, actions become automatic. Responses must be rapid these days when enemy aircraft, carrying nuclear weapons might approach our cities at supersonic speeds. The time available to react to a surprise attack is so short that each Missileman must know his job thoroughly so that it is second nature to him.

Citizen Soldiers

On the missile site, the Nike men are urged to continue the education they might not have completed in their youth. They are encouraged to better themselves by studying for a high school diploma. Several of them are working towards a college degree, others are studying to become a Warrant Officer, and others are preparing to enter Officer Candidate School (OCS). They take courses on site, by correspondence from the University of Maryland extension division, and the US Armed Forces Institute. Others, in their unpredictable off-duty time, attend local colleges or adult educational facilities.

One of the things all officers and enlisted men have in common is their pursuit of a higher level of efficiency in their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). This is essential if they are to understand fully the intricate workings of the complex missile equipment for which they are being trained to fire. At the very least our citizen soldiers are trained to accept responsibility and learn skills and attitudes which will make them better members of their communities when they assume vocations in civilian life.

Nike Hercules

The most important function of the Los Angeles Nike Hercules missile units is their ability to detect enemy aircraft as far away as Las Vegas. The Nike Hercules can detect and destroy enemy aircraft as far away as Palm Springs and Bakersfield. Indeed, Nike site provides 20,000 square miles of protection, and its altitude capability exceeds 150,000 feet.

The missile can carry a nuclear warhead or a fragmentation warhead. It is directed to the target aircraft by a command guidance system which automatically sends flight and burst commands through the radar beam to the missile.

Defense Network

The individual Nike Missile site is but a small part of the vast defense network, North American Air Defense Command), (NORAD), established by the United States and Canada for the protection of the North American Continent from attacks from the air.

The radars of the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS), ranging across Canada and England, the radars of the Mid-Canada line, the Distant Early Warning (DEW), the Pine Tree Lines, the Naval picket ship radars, and the Air Force radars provide our first warning of imminent attack. The information collected by these systems is immediately relayed from NORAD to the Army Air Defense Command (ARADCOM) and to the Nike Missile sites encircling our cities in a ring of steel. These Nike sites are the final stand against fiery destruction. They dare not fail! Thanks to the caliber of men and equipment who man them, they shall not fail!

Evening comes and the monotonous roar of the surf lulls the residents of Malibu and Santa Monica to sleep. But, up there on the mountain, a vigil is kept. The gravel crunches under the boots of the guard patrolling his post. A sentry dog whines. Is it an intruder or just a rabbit?

The radars scan the skies and in the radar vans, the alert operators tirelessly focus on their radar screens to detect a telltale “blip” which will cause them to sound the alarm to penetrate the dreams of the crew asleep near their missiles.

The siren alerts the men to an instant awareness to man the battle stations. The men tumble on the run from their cots and off to their nearby battle stations. In minutes, their missiles will be ready to fire.

The siren may sound at any time. Each time the siren sounds, the Nike soldiers wonder, “Is this just another one of a continuous round of tests or is this the real thing?” Whatever the answer, he is ready!