THE MISSILE PEOPLE: A COLD WAR PUBLIC MEMORY

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The Missile People: A Cold War Public Memory

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ABSTRACT

Disrupting the horizon with a startling physical presence on the flat North Dakota prairie, the remains of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex are the physical remnants of a decisive stage of the Cold War. The complex was part radar array, part computing marvel, and part nuclear launch control platform that represented a significant federal investment in rural North Dakota. Together, these pieces created the pinnacle of the Pentagon's efforts to create an effective antiballistic missile system. The local memories attached to the complex contrast with general perceptions of the Cold War. Memories of friendship and community are common when the topic of the Missile Site Radar is broached, adding detail to the general understanding of a Cold War experience that includes a boom followed shortly by a near-complete bust. Recent efforts by the Cavalier County Job Development Authority have reinvigorated interest in the structure, the town, and the story of the Missile People. Interviews with residents and excerpts from *The Guardian* newsletter describe an intersection of two communities drawn together by terrible circumstances yet were able to create memories that belie the nuclear finality the site ultimately represented.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I can’t thank my advisor and committee chair Dr. Angela Smith enough for her support, guidance, and patience through my education and research. I appreciate the assistance of my committee in directing the finer details of the thesis. The newsletter writings by Carol Goodman were as vital as her personal assistance in understanding the story of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex and the people involved. Additionally, the interview given by Janet Shill was an immense help in determining the perspective of the rural residents on the construction and operation of the site. Doug Fisher’s recollection of the arrival of the Complex kids appreciatively added depth and direction to my research, which resulted in meeting the Ratchenski family, a true representation of the entanglement of the Complex kids and the residents of Cavalier North Dakota. Above all, the support, encouragement, and nurturing of Heather Engeland, my friend, partner, and wife.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the Missile People and those that welcomed them into their community.

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INTRODUCTION

Cold War nuclear deployment brought the front lines of the conflict to the countryside of North Dakota. The significant placement of offensive and defensive nuclear weapons made a sure target of the rural region. Maintaining full operational capacity for less than five months between 1972 and 1975, the short lifespan of the Western world's only operational anti-ballistic nuclear missile system left a complicated mark on the local area. The distinctive stature of the pyramidic radar array commands the landscape and attention of passersby, while memories of a new community that was quickly lost are intertwined with the bleak Cold War reality that produced the site.

Fig 1. The Missile Site Radar and launch tubes, Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex. Photograph in *Seize the High Ground: the U.S. Army In Space and Missile Defense* 2003.

The system, named Safeguard, consisted of a series of massive radar arrays, one hundred nuclear missiles, and advanced digital computing power that worked in symphony to detect, track, plot, and fire long-range SPARTAN and high-speed SPRINT nuclear missiles to intercept

an incoming attack. The construction and operation of the complicated system required a significant labor force to be brought from duty stations across the world to rural Northeast North Dakota. The increase in population for the region surrounding the system was projected to peak at eight thousand new residents in an area where the largest town, Langdon, had a population of 2,100 in 1970.[1]

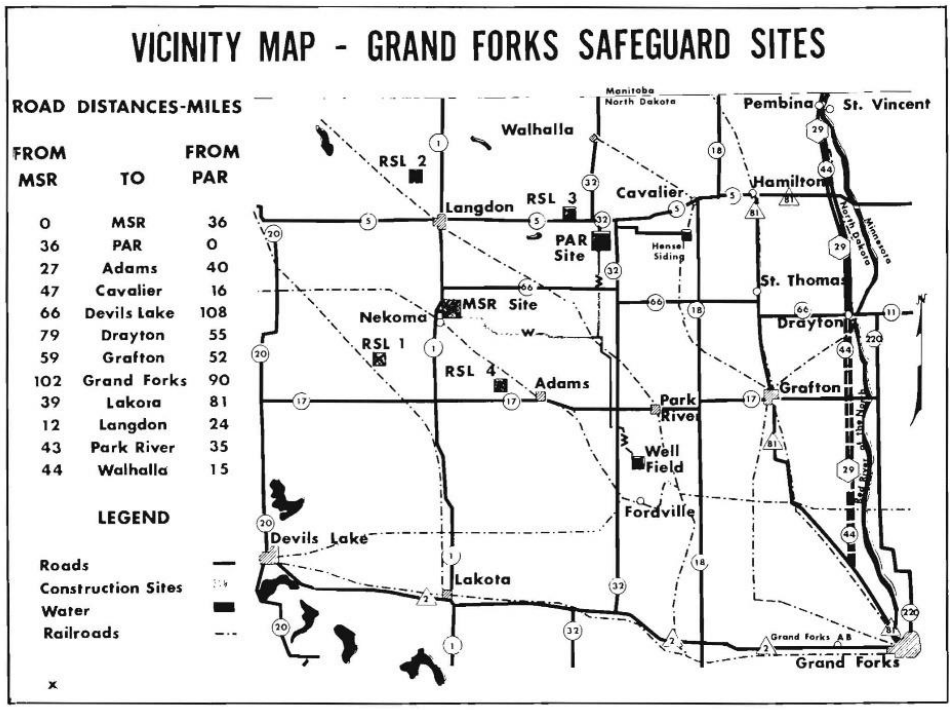

Fig 2. Map of the Safeguard System. Contained in *History of the Huntsville Division, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 1967-1976.* 1978.

The Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex contained the 13’ radar arrays and the monolithic concrete housing, which are the most prominent remains of the site. The secondary

[1] David W. Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land: Fighting Communism on the Northern Plains*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015, 281

Perimeter Acquisition Radar located at the nearby Cavalier Air Station is still in operation by the Space Force. Among the workers and support personnel brought to the area were electronic technicians for the several engineering firms tasked with bringing the Safeguard system online. Reporting from the local police reflects an overall increase in crime rates, yet the project received an 83% approval rating during construction.[2] In total, Langdon added 1,775 people, and Cavalier gained 1,052, which nearly doubled the town's size. Technicians and their families represented the majority of the new residents who integrated into the local social society after temporary workers had moved on.[3] The rapid closure of the site immediately resulted in a period of population loss that was faster than the previous increase. The physical remains of the system are still part of everyday life for the residents; the dramatic pyramid of the Missile Site Radar, the Fordville well system, the Cavalier Space Force Station, and the Cavalier Complex model housing unit serve as reminders of not just the nuclear reality of the Cold War but also the positive memories tied to the boom and the new residents it brought.

[2] Randal C. Coon, Norman L. Dalsted, Arlen G. Leholm, F. Larry Leistritz, "The Impact of the Safeguard Antiballistic Missile System Construction on Northeastern North Dakota," in *Agricultural Economics Reports* 23464, (North Dakota State University, Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics, Fargo), 1976, 32.

[3] James A. Walker, Frances Martin, Sharon Watkins, *Historic American Engineering Record Documentation for the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex (HAER Number ND-9),* (U.S. Army Space and Strategic Defense Command, 1996), 67.

Fig 3. Picture of the Stanley R Mickelsen Defense Complex, Contained in *A History of the Huntsville Division, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 1967-1976*.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

To best understand the context of the Missile People, three specific areas require examination: the Cold War and the domestic experience, the history of the Great Plains and the circumstances that shaped the people who lived there, and the role of community in the formation of collective memory.

The Cold War

Scholarship on the Cold War has shifted from the macro-effects on country and culture towards the more diverse regional experience. The domestic experience of the Cold War is often characterized as one of fear and anxiety. However, this experience is often contradicted when looking more closely at the people who lived through the event and their actions. Nuclear deployment was often protested due to the dangers and associated challenges, yet significant protests never materialized on the northern Great Plains." People were initially apathetic about having the Safeguard system near them, but changed their minds as the economic opportunities such a project presented dominated their thinking."[4] To some, terror and anxiety were the prevailing attitudes among the populace due to the ever-present threat of nuclear war. These oral histories build upon Mills's findings of an opportunistic populace with more agency than previously identified.[5]

The context for the Cold War experience on the Northern Great Plains is produced in the work of Cold War historian David W. Mills. *Cold War in a Cold Land* supplies a well-

[4] Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land,* 303-4.

[5] Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land,* 299.

researched perspective that details the effects of the conflict on a local level through community newspapers and oral histories. Mills mentions the Missile People in a story regarding tensions between residents and workers. While fears of violence and crime receded and acceptance grew, these intermingled populations into communities. The self-determination of the residents exemplifies Mills' concept.

Defense dependency is an outdated lens through which to view the Cold War on the Great Plains; it fails to account for the unique circumstances that can create an impact beyond economics.[6] The nature of the Cold War on the Great Plains was primarily through the positioning of nuclear weapons in rural communities; therefore, the remains stand as monuments of technological achievement. According to Gretchen Heefner, Chair and Associate Professor of History at Northeastern University, "…our Cold War touchstones become the missiles and the guns and the guidance systems with which the Americans outpaced and outspent the Soviets. The physicality of these Cold War sites demands that it is the technology, not the people that won the Cold War. As a result, it seems to be the missiles themselves that we are commemorating."[7] The remains of the Safeguard system exemplify the concept of a technological victory over the Soviet Union. Yet, the memories associated with those remains focus on the human side of the story that is often lost.

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[6] Gretchen Heefner, *The Missile Next Door*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2012), 14.

[7] Heefner, *The Missiles Next Door*, 203.

Great Plains

The historical context of the Great Plains is multifaceted, with economic and cultural dimensions that have been explored by scholars such as Carl Kraenzel and Elwyn Robinson.

Carl Kraenzel's work focusing on regionalism and adaptation provides a context to understand the effects that the introduction of a new population would experience. The growth and support of these small rural communities echo Kraenzel's thoughts on regionalism; the new residents were living, working, and adapting to life in their new environment and were accepted for it.[8] The workers were familiar with new environments, but they were not ready for the reception they would receive. The residents found kindred spirits in the newcomers, as well as the benefits of the local spending of federal funds.

Analyzing the story through Elwyn Robinson's six themes of North Dakota history allows additional perspective when understanding the Great Plains experience. The remoteness of the duty station, the dependence of growing communities on federal spending, the economic disadvantage that the semiarid climate brought, and a repeat of the "Too Much Mistake" allow us to view the topic through an established framework and see that the situation with the Missile People was to be expected. "North Dakota Nice" typically refers to the sense of small-town community and a neighborly culture that exemplifies the social nature of plains survival. Neighbors ready to make the newcomers feel welcome and wanted were a distinct difference from previous duty stations, and many decided to make a permanent home of the area after the

[8] Carl Frederick Kraenzel. *The Great Plains in Transition.* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), vii.

site's closure. Robinson stated, "if the prairie were lonely, it was better than the loneliness of the great cities, where many people were, or seemed to be, faceless, valueless, unwanted, and unneeded."[9] Used to being faceless among larger populations, the Missile People were made to feel welcome and wanted through the various social groups, sports teams, and community clubs that brought the groups together.

Memory

Local collective memory offers a means to orient oneself in a historical moment. National connections to that local history contextualize our understanding of those national events, and the concept of "those with whom we belong" is formed on that basis. Interconnected systems of inquiry lead the historical participant to a deeper understanding of the context of their local history and, subsequently, their own place in that national story. Managing this public resource, according to historian David Glassberg, "…is inevitably an effort to manage the multiplicity of environmental perceptions, values, and meanings attached to a place."[10] For the residents affected by the construction of the Safeguard system, their memories are more than simple economics. North Dakota values, such as those stressed by Robinson, are also attached to the remains, providing part of the human aspect often left out or lost with the technologically focused remains of the Cold War.

Memories of the Missile People lie primarily in the participants, and their involvement in shaping that memory bears discussion. A positive human story regarding the Cold War

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[9] Elwyn B. Robinson, "History of North Dakota" *UND Scholarly Commons, Open Educational Resources*. (2017), 552.

[10] David Glassberg, *Public History and the Study of Memory*, (The Public Historian 18, no. 2 1996), 19.

distinguishes the experience to the benefit of modern efforts to reuse the site. Similarly, the story of George Robert Twelves Hewes and the collective memory of the Boston Tea Party also underwent a memorialization with a purpose.[11] Social historian Alfred Young's work "The Shoemaker and the Tea Party" contends with the shaping of the collective memory of a specific historical event. While dwarfed in scope by the Revolution, the benefits of a positive, relatable story of the Missile People are part of the story, much like the development of the history surrounding Hewes. The efforts made by the engineering firms involved in the construction of the system to assist in the formation of this new community are evident in the base newsletter, *The Guardian*. Through the involvement of the Cavalier County Chamber of Commerce, a positive perspective assists in the hope of another economic boom in the future. The foreboding nature of the most prominent remains stands in contrast to the memory of the Missile People, and the dramatic physical presence attracts those interested in the nuclear finality that the Nekoma pyramid represents. The emergence of dark tourism as a concept has been an effort to place a name on the morbid curiosity drawn to sites of extreme circumstances. In the case of the Nekoma pyramid, the complicated nature of its narrative restricts its memory. Dark tourism, or Thanotourism, typically focuses on sites of atrocities or memorials associated with death. What do we do in the case where the remains speak to the potential for unquantifiable deaths that were never realized? Similar to the case study of dark tourism at the site of the Chernobyl accident,

[11] Alfred F, Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1999.180-194*

former residents' memories are still continually shaped by the modern day.[12]Cold War enthusiasts may drive by the site, but with no formal attempt at interpretation or a way to track visitors, the total number of tourists is unknowable. The value of the story of the Missile People lies in its contrast to the reality that the system represented. If circumstances were such that the system was activated, it would represent the beginning of a full-scale nuclear exchange, yet it did not. Does that atmosphere still cloud the remains of the site?

Research Methodology

The legacy of the site and the effects of its construction generate several questions: How did the construction and operation of the Safeguard missile system impact the local community in and around the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex and supporting installations? What were the immediate, short, and long-term transformations experienced by the community due to the missile system's presence? How do individuals who lived through the Cold War era near the missile site recall their experiences and memories? What were the challenges and opportunities associated with accommodating the growing student population?

Preliminary research in the fall of 2019 indicated that the Cavalier County Job Development Authority was purchasing the remains of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex. They were more than willing to share an impressive collection of digital materials provided by the United States Army that detail the construction of the site from the Government's perspective. Research conducted by historian James H. Kitchens III for the United

[12] Tony Seaton, "Encountering Engineered and Orchestrated Remembrance: A Situational Model of Dark Tourism and Its History," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*, ed. By Philip R. Stone, Rudi Hartmann, Tony Seaton, Richard Sharpley, Leanne White, (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan), 9.

States Army Corp of Engineers produced *A History of The Huntsville Division,* which details the size and scope of the construction project and the manpower involved in making it a reality. Additionally, two years of a site publication called *The Guardian* chronicled the newsworthy events and social gatherings of the local communities and their new neighbors. Coincidently, the advisor for the recent effort to purchase the site was the original author of *The Guardian,* Carol Goodman. She kept the workers informed of the social gatherings and events while working in the public relations department of Western Electric. Her involvement in the story, both during construction and the present day, makes her both invaluable as a source and potentially biased toward painting the situation in a positive light.

From this research, two topics emerge from which interview discussions were derived: their memory of the Missile People and their memories of life on the Northern Great Plains during the Cold War. Those discussions give perspective to what impacts the Cold War had on their lives in the proximity of a vital part of the American nuclear program. As an advisor to the Cavalier County Job Development Authority, Carol Goodman was a beneficial initial interview that detailed much of the site's history.[13] To gain perspective on the contemporary existence of the Missile People, I visited with Janet Schill, a local resident and organizer of a Missile People Reunion in 2013.[14] To diversify my interview pool and add context to the experience in the nearby town of Cavalier, I contacted resident and local teacher Doug Fisher, who shared the

[13] Carol Goodman, Interview by Shane Engeland. July 22, 2021, interview and transcript *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

[14] Janet Schill, interview by Shane Engeland, July 22, 2021, interview and transcript *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

student experience when the local population expanded with the addition of the Missile People.[15] Doug provided the contact information of Sheryl and Daryl Ratchenski, Cavalier residents and married couple that met in high school during the construction of the nearby segments of the Safeguard system.[16] While each interviewee has a vested interest in the long-term viability of their community, the information they share is invaluable when contextualizing how the Safeguard system affected the Cold War experience locally.

Definitions

This topic contends primarily with the concepts of memory and collective memory and the term Missile People. I define memories as foundational yet malleable pieces of our sense of identity, building upon Aleida Assmann's definition that memories are the embodied form of history linked to an individual, group, or institution. Likewise, the concept of collective memory is described by Assmann as a "crossover between semantic and episodic memory," formational to the sense of "we" in a community.[17]

The term "Missile People" is used by David W. Mills in *Cold War in a Cold Land* as a label for the transient workers constructing the Safeguard system.[18] For Mills, the Missile People included construction workers, laborers, and technicians, and that definition is supported through

[15] Doug Fisher, interview by Shane Engeland, July 22, 2021, *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

[16] Sheryl Ratchenski, interview by Shane Engeland. July 22, 2021, transcript and recording, SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

[17] Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory." *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008) 49–72.

[18] Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land,* 284.

interviews with residents while adding context to the different applications of the term. While *Cold War in a Cold Land* describes a social divide between the residents and the newcomers, interviewees recall a quick adaptation to the unfamiliar environment by each group. Bias can exist when people hope to spread a positive story related to a historical event. As evident in Jessica Clark's dissertation, "Germans from Russia on the Northern Plains: An Oral History," the established narrative may require conscious effort to breach in a community.[19] Collective efforts to place a positive perception of past events are possible in a small community. Modern attempts to market the site in the community favor positive stories over negative ones.

This thesis details the study of collective memory and the Cold War on the Northern Great Plains. The stories collected show memories distinctly different than one would expect from growing up during the Cold War from different perspectives and locations. This aligns with David Mill's conclusion that the Cold War was "opportunistic or transformative."[20] The collective memory of a group of people that adapted to their environment in true North Dakota fashion, seeing opportunity in their new station. Like the Missile Site Radar structure, the remains of the Cold War evoke technological success due to their physical presence. While the story of the Missile People has no physical presence, its effect on the collective memory adds depth to the understood Cold War experience.

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[19] Jessica Clark, "Germans from Russia on the Northern Plains: An Oral History Project." (PhD diss, North Dakota State University, 2010) xix. Jessica Clark details the conscious efforts taken to shape the story of the childhood of German from Russia immigrants to appear harsher than it was.

[20] Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land,* 294.

Oral History Analysis

The stories of Janet Schill, Doug Fisher, Sheryl, and Daryl Ratchenski all share a connection to the Safeguard program. Their memories and experiences within the context of the Cold War era emphasize the impact of the system on the local schools and social experiences. All four interviewees recalled a significant community transformation due to the Safeguard system's construction. Initially, they witnessed an influx of newcomers and an expansion of local infrastructure, including schools, to accommodate the growing population. However, this rapid expansion was followed by contraction when the system was quickly shut down. Doug's observation that this pattern mirrored other boom-and-bust cycles, like those seen in oil-rich regions, underscores the transformative nature of construction.

The system's presence had a profound impact on local families. Janet's account of her family's farm being considered a potential site for the facility highlights the threat of eminent domain some residents faced. However, as the missile site became operational, it also brought new opportunities. Janet's family, like many others, hosted people from the project in an extra room in their basement, forming lasting friendships and expanding their social networks.

All interviewees recalled the strain on local educational facilities due to the sudden influx of students. Class sizes doubled, and existing school buildings were repurposed to accommodate the growing student population. Janet's vivid description of the gymnasium being split into a cafeteria and classrooms and students being shuffled between various locations illustrates the challenges the local education system faces.

The interviews also reveal that while the rapid growth of the student population initially created challenges, it led to opportunities for building new friendships as well. Janet mentioned how she made new friends when girls from outside the area joined her classroom. These personal

connections became an integral part of the Nekoma community and carry on to the present day. Despite the eventual closure of the system, all interviewees spoke of the enduring bonds formed between local residents and construction personnel. Doug highlighted the powerful sense of community that developed, with people socializing, snowmobiling, and helping one another. These relationships extended beyond the workplace, emphasizing the personal connections that defined this period.

The reunion held in Nekoma in 2010 served as a testament to the lasting impact of the missile system on the community. Janet's efforts to organize the reunion demonstrated the enduring connections forged during the Cold War era. Around 150 former personnel attended, reaffirming the significance of these shared memories. All interviewees experienced growing up near the Safeguard system, yet they did not experience fear related to the Cold War or the presence of the missiles. They reasoned that the site provided protection and could defend from an attack if they thought of it at all. Carol, Doug, and Janet offered insights into how these perceptions contrast with contemporary anxieties and internal conflicts. Janet drew parallels between the perceived security of the Cold War era and her current concerns about divisions in the United States, finding contemporary issues more unsettling than the Cold War tensions she lived through. This perspective highlights the changing nature of collective fears and anxieties across generations.

The oral history analysis of interviews with Carol, Janet, Doug, Sheryl, and Daryl provides a multifaceted understanding of the missile system’s impact on the local community in the broader context of the Cold War. It details the importance of personal connections, community bonds, and the enduring memories that continue to shape perceptions of historical

events. These narratives contribute valuable insights to our understanding of local experiences within the larger framework of Cold War history.

Separately, Carol Goodman's work and proximity to the project bear special consideration. Carol's interview provides insights into the broader historical context of the Cold War and the prevailing fears of nuclear threats. Her account underscores the significance of the missile system as a response to these geopolitical tensions. Additionally, her role as a newsletter author places her within the historical context of documenting events at the site.

Carol describes the community transformations brought about by the Safeguard system, echoing the experiences described by Janet, Doug, and the Ratchenskis, mentioning the sense of security the site provided to the community and highlighting the demographic shifts and infrastructure changes within. Her narrative offers personal insights into her life and her role as the author of *The Guardian*. At the same time, her unique position as an employee of Western Electric and being a local adds depth to her firsthand experiences.

Carol's dual role as an interviewee and newsletter author positions her as a key figure in preserving the community's collective memory. Her oral and written recollections become integral to the broader narrative regarding the missile system's impact. Considering her role as the newsletter author, the possibility of bias can be identified in Carol's narrative. Her position as a documenter of events at the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex could influence her perspective, potentially emphasizing positive and downplaying negative aspects. However, her interview allows a more nuanced understanding of her experiences and insights beyond the newsletter.

Carol's interview, coupled with her role as the author of *The Guardian*, offers valuable perspective into the impact on her community. While her perspective emphasizes a sense of

security and her unique role in documenting events, it is important to acknowledge the potential bias stemming from her position. Combining her oral history with other sources and interviews allows for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impact of the missile site on the community.

Podcast Process

The growing popularity of podcasts and the accessibility of their creation allows for a more engaging experience. The democratization of quality audio and video recording allows for added authenticity by presenting the source's voice and personality. The details of the construction of the site benefit from an engaging presentation, while audio clips from additional media can be utilized to engross the listener further in the interpretation. The collective memory of the Missile People, contextualized with newsletter information and data from the Army Corp of Engineers, shows a story eager to be told. As a tool of public history, podcasts have been described as in "…stage 3.0 in which the emphasis is on active learning, collaboration, and enhanced interaction."[21] Sharing information via podcast to an engaged listener allows the benefits of the digital age to support the goal of the public historian.

The Missile People: Part 1: https://youtu.be/C9ywHXYlHJs?si=UE8adAJShJaiWCxB

The Missile People: Part 2: https://youtu.be/edYLId-rY5A?si=HL9U33QQ7uDCs9b2

[21] Daniel J Cohen, Michael Frisch, Patrick Gallagher, Steven Mintz, Kirsten Sword, Amy Murrell Taylor, William G. Thomas, and William J. Turkel. "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History." *The Journal of American History 95, no. 2* (2008), 452–91.

Section one gives details and context about the physical aspect of the site and the tremendous effort that has had effects that exist long after the site closed. The size of the project resulted in an impact on most residents of the area, representing a genuine effect of the Cold War on everyday life. Section two focuses on the narrative of the Missile People. Through primary sources and interviews, a story appears of a unique situation in a unique snapshot in time.

PART I: PHYSICAL LEGACY

World governments have contended with a shockingly different future than the one envisioned before the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After World War II and throughout the Cold War, there were two new defensive concerns in the minds of military planners: the new nuclear weapons that presented unparalleled destructive capabilities and the numerous methods used to deliver them. As space emerged as an increasingly relevant theater, military leaders became focused on the development of defensive capabilities that could counter a possible launch of nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles. As each military branch adapted to the use of nuclear weapons specific to their missions, competition brought advanced defensive options.

A Sizable Challenge

The U.S. Army pioneered a feasible countermeasure to a nuclear attack, meeting nuclear explosions with nuclear explosions.[22] The installation of MINUTEMEN subterranean silos in the area surrounding Grand Forks, North Dakota, led to the selection of the flat dry wheatlands of northeast North Dakota for placement of the nation's SAFEGUARD complex in the late 1960s. Construction created rapidly increasing demands on infrastructure, yet there were no existing avenues for the federal government to assist local communities with the massive influx of personnel. The Army initially identified three specific areas for concern: housing, labor relations, and minority hiring in the construction process. An already limited availability of housing was

[22] James Walker, Lewis Bernstein, Sharon Lang, *Seize the High Ground: the U.S. Army In Space and Missile Defense.* (Historical Office, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, 2003), 1.

soon stretched even further. Since water access in the region had always been challenging, contracts involving related infrastructure development were among the first signed in late spring 1970. This increase required tapping the nearby Fordville aquifer and constructing a system of three booster stations moving water through over fifty-eight miles of piping from ten wells, a system in use decades after the closure of the complex.[23]

Labor concerns like the one that had delayed SAFEGUARD construction in Montana were now part of a nationwide focus as labor unions identified the program, with its projected eleven additional complexes, as a major employer as more sites began construction. The long commute, coupled with the inhospitable weather conditions, affected pay in ways that locating a site in a different region would not. The relatively high per diem and mileage reimbursement costs for the sometimes one-hundred-mile daily commute drew the attention of labor groups. Unions in both North Dakota and Montana fought for increases in overtime and general wages, finding successes in North Dakota but being a factor in the cancelation of the Montana site. Unions saw these projects as an exemplary sign of potential upcoming experiences in additional states as new sites began construction across the northern border of the United States. The inability to reach an agreement over wages stalled a sister SAFEGUARD structure on the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana by fourteen months, a delay that eventually proved fatal to the site.[24]

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[23] James H. Kitchens III, *A History of the Huntsville Division, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 1967-1976.* (U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Huntsville Alabama, 1978), 44.

[24] Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land,* 288.

The housing crunch, foreseen and unavoidable at the time, eventually resulted in the military acquiring two mobile home parks and 180 mobile homes in Langdon and Cavalier. After 115 mobile homes were made available, the problem was alleviated but not resolved as minority workers were required to meet the government contract terms. The challenges met at the Mickelsen Complex could be expected in future construction projects, creating ideal circumstances for pilot programs of varying effects.[25] The Office of Federal Contract Compliance utilized the construction project to attempt expansion of the 1967 Philadelphia Plan that successfully integrated construction unions in Pennsylvania. Under federal contract, they were required to make a "good faith effort" to maintain a 6%-10% minority worker status that proved challenging to reach. The entire state only contained a 2% minority population, primarily consisting of Native Americans living in distant reservations. Cavalier County contained no eligible minority-status workers. In the nearby Grand Forks, Trail, and Steel counties, there were only 168 people who could have been considered a minority. Union negotiation and the realities of the situation resulted in a compromise acceptable enough to keep construction moving.[26]

The material projects of the site also required infrastructure investment. Over 238,000 cubic yards of concrete weighing nearly 500,000 tons were needed to construct the Perimeter Acquisition Radar and Missile Site Radar structures, a challenge complicated by the lack of a suitable aggregate in North Dakota. These challenges were met with a $150,000 investment in the construction of a suitable rail spur at nearby Hensel. A lack of contractor applicants

[25] Kitchens, *A History of the Huntsville Division*, 49.

[26] Kitchens, *A History of the Huntsville Division*, 46.

highlighted the challenges of the location and hindered qualified candidates' attempts to bid on the project. In the end, only three bids from contractor groups were willing to take on the monumental task. The complicated nature of the complex required 2,262,200 pages of drawings and 4,340,000 pages of technical specifications, with an abridged two-hundred-pound version for individual contractors. Bids were accepted on March 26th, 1970, and the winning bid of $137,858,850 was awarded to Morrison- Knudsen & Associates in the single largest U.S. Army Corp of Engineers contract until that time.[27] On April 6th, 1970, a crowd consisting of 200 onlookers, five mayors from the various local towns, state senator Richard Forkner, and project supervisors took part in a groundbreaking ceremony that preceded the excavation. Five inches of snow only offered a minor inconvenience to the six-day-a-week, ten-hour shifts in the first two months. Construction and operation of the system completed two goals; to serve as a proof of concept for eleven identical systems to be placed across the northern border of the United States as well as to act in a functional capacity protecting the Air Force's MINUTEMAN II missile silo fields planted alongside the wheat crops and pastures of North Dakota. The large pyramid shape of the Missile Site Radar has been the foundation of interest and conspiracy since its construction. The utilitarian scale and design, yet a distinctive Cold War aesthetic, is visible for miles around as it harshly contrasts with the rolling canola fields surrounding the nearby quiet farming communities.

[27] Kitchens, *A History of the Huntsville Division*, 50.

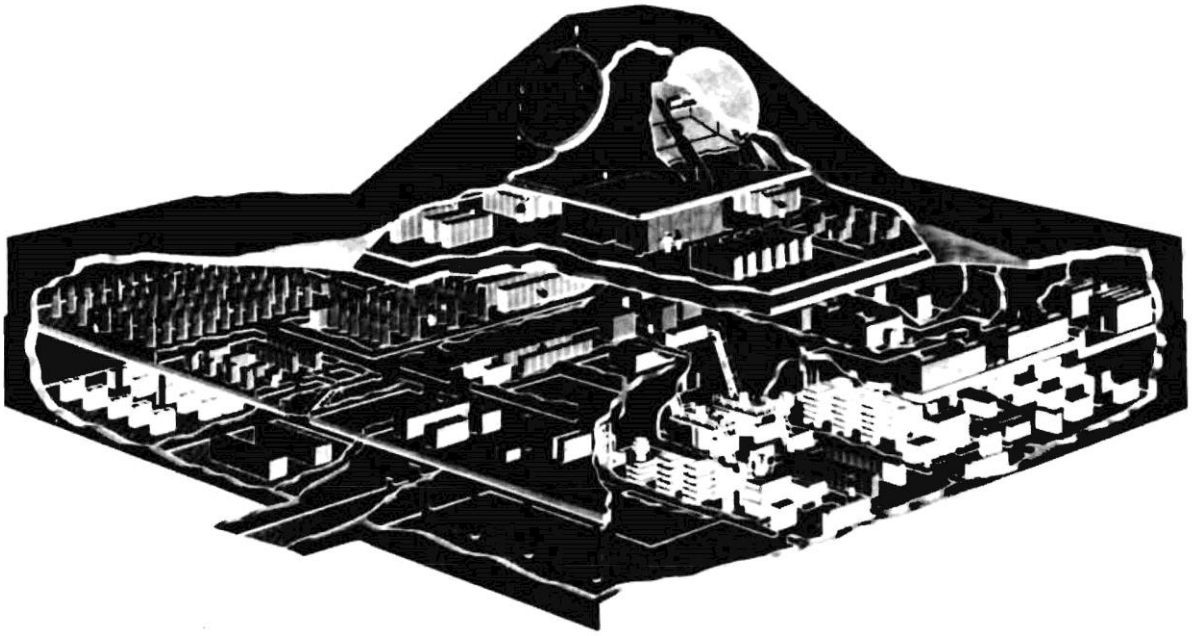

Fig 4. Cutaway of the Missile Site Radar, Contained in *A History of the Huntsville Division, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers 1967-1976,* 1978.

The manpower required to operate and maintain the system marked a significant population increase for the immediate area surrounding the complex and the nearby communities of Nekoma, Langdon, and Cavalier. The office of the Area Engineer was first placed in the Langdon Masonic Temple, establishing the presence that would be the first of many connections with the community. Construction of the site presented challenges familiar to any local. Harsh 40° below zero winters often created blizzard conditions that shortened the construction season and shut down work attempted during the winter. The roads, warped and pitted from the natural effects of the spring thaw, were undeveloped and rough from seasonal farm equipment usage.

The condition of the main roads placed a severe bottleneck in the transport of the incredibly substantial amounts of building material that would be needed for the contract[28]

Workforce

By October of 1970, the workforce numbered 2,200, and by the fall of 1972, there were 3,200 people employed at the site. Soon, construction was partially complete, and the workforce was cut by a third as the negotiations over the future of the nation's nuclear arsenal and anti-ballistic missile technology took the population and government spending away from the area as quickly as it had arrived.[29] The manpower involved required constructing on-base amenities that made the facility somewhat self-sufficient. In addition to maintenance buildings for the weapons stored on the base, there was housing for single workers, families, and enlisted and commissioned personnel. There was also a medical dispensary, a religious chapel, and recreational facilities. The local area began feeling the project's impact as early as 1970 when some of the preliminary workers were hired from the local area. A firm solution to nuclear defense never emerged at the national level, and consecutive presidential administrations (Nixon, Ford, and Carter) negotiated with the Soviet Union over antiballistic measures. The substantial increase of munitions required to expand the SAFEGUARD program to its end goal would create a substantial increase in the nuclear arms race. The outcome of each international negotiation

[28] James A. Walker, *Historic American Engineering Record Documentation for the Stanley R Mickelsen Safeguard Complex. Number ND-9,*1996, 3-23.

[29] Walker, *Historic American Engineering Record Documentation for the Stanley R Mickelsen Safeguard Complex*, 3-24.

between nuclear powers could mean the difference between an economic boom or a bust for those economically tied to the project.

In Langdon, employment opportunities increased by 47.1% from 1969-1973, while the rest of the state experienced a growth of 8.3%. For two years Langdon saw a 40% increase in local business sales. Nearby Pembina County saw an employment increase of 22%, while the influx of jobs and workers increased the Cavalier County average income by 200%. The area saw nearly 70 new businesses and 45 expansions and massive increases to the infrastructure to support it. The impact of the boom cycle was more rapid than most defense projects. Local communities saw little tax revenue; trailer parks and federal housing exempted from taxes housed many workers. Federal assistance in the form of impact payments to local city governments softened the blow that otherwise would have challenged the rapid growth needed to construct the facility on schedule.[30]

Available housing on-site or in nearby trailer parks was limited, and the local communities soon had Missile People living among them. The centralized location and proximity to the Nekoma site made Langdon experience a doubling of the population during the construction and operational life of the site, and a housing shortage was an expected consequence. Relief came in the form of bipartisan legislation sponsored by senators Milton Young from North Dakota and Mike Mansfield of Montana, representatives of the areas that the construction of the antiballistic missile system would impact. The Young-Mansfield Amendment

[30] Walker, *Historic American Engineering Record Documentation for the Stanley R Mickelsen Safeguard Complex*, 3-26.

appropriated fourteen million dollars to both North Dakota and Montana to alleviate the financial burden the communities would experience during the construction phases of the complexes.

As the workers for the sites arrived, their families followed. School enrollment more than doubled with worker's children attending local schools. Although population booms present challenges for children moving to new areas, the children successfully integrated socially and academically into the existing school systems. The Missile People, so labeled by the locals, brought both challenges and benefits to the area. Concerns about housing aside, the overall impression of the defense system, its workers, and its impact on the community was overwhelmingly positive in the near and long term. The opinions of the local community were formed not just from the economic impact of the site but also from the way the workers integrated themselves into the local community. This occurred in ways that not only endeared them to the local population but also left a positive impression of an unavoidable process that, while not delivering on the promise of long-term jobs in the community, helped create a positive view in the population because of the community participation efforts of the workers.

Negotiations for eliminating the SAFEGUARD Complex were being held between the United States and the Soviet Union before the ground had been broken on its construction. Once operational, its functional defense of America's second-strike capabilities in the face of certain nuclear attacks had sufficiently shifted the balance of power just enough to negotiate for its demise. The promised 2,200 workers that were to be a mainstay of the local economic picture vanished faster than the missiles being pulled from the ground. Infrastructure constructed to support the population became part of the lasting landscape. Trailer parks and a water system still in use today become part of the local story, including a period of population boom that left a favorable view in the minds of the local population. Friendships were made, and locals became

close with the new arrivals. The schools, planning for expansion after hiring new teachers, had to contend with the rapid loss of a substantial portion of their student body. The nature of the defense work had revolving personnel that would arrive, work briefly, then leave for another location. The consideration of that memory focuses on the human story of the Missile People, their lives, and how their involvement in the community shaped the memories attached to their Cold War experience.[31] The story of the site and the physical remains reflect the nation's relationship with the Cold War. Pieces were sorted out and sold, housing and structures moved, and wires pulled along with the components they connected, leaving an empty concrete husk that shifted from the world's premier technological wonder and a massive weight on the nuclear balance to a minor piece of local history, a memory with an eighty-foot reminder just 12 miles south of Langdon. The Cold War on the northern Great Plains often takes the form of underground missile silos, which are out of sight and easy to put out of mind. Contrast that aspect of the Cold War to the Missile Site Radar at the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, which is an empty nuclear-hardened monolith that both dominates the landscape and serves as an ever-present reminder of the nuclear threat both past and present to all that drive past.

The construction and operation of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, an effort that cost billions of federal dollars and thousands of military personnel, government contractors, and their families, led to predictable issues in the surrounding communities. Local schools were overwhelmed with new students, and utilities struggled to maintain service in the face of the new

[31]Mills, *Cold War in a Cold Land*, 308.

demand. Thousands of Missile People moved into the local communities as construction began and was completed, and over time, they created long-lasting friendships with the people who lived there. The 1974 SALT agreement limited the development of antiballistic missile systems. It changed the complex from an advanced prototype and model for a network of future sites to a monumental relic of the Cold War decaying as it shifts hands in a cycle of reuse. Ronald Reagan's move to modernize the American defensive infrastructure stirred interest in the site again as it was treaty-bound as the only location for such a system. The prohibitive cost to get the site operational and nuclear treaty negotiations left the site abandoned.

SAFEGUARD represented the culmination of several steps of testing and deployments. The radars, computers, and launch systems all needed technicians to install and operate the system, as well as training for new workers as they arrived. Previous stations in other places were only comprised of a small portion of the system for testing, and each location was among a larger population base to diffuse the social effects. Deployment in North Dakota was different; thousands of workers and their families moved to a rural and relatively isolated area. Once promising a temporary addition of over eight thousand people to the area when construction began in early 1970, the missile site closure in 1976 resulted in a loss of population that was just as rapid. Planned infrastructure growth and housing projects originally constructed with the belief in a larger population base to support were among the challenges associated with the SAFEGUARD site's closure. The permanent 2,200 workers would have supported the employment of teachers, policemen, firefighters, and additional social improvements that are common with large federal long-term projects.

The cancellation of a sister site near the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana before it was complete and after months of union negotiation and delay was likewise panned as a waste of

taxpayer dollars and nuclear posturing for the sake of the arms race. Public sentiment was dissatisfied with the closure of the site in North Dakota, yet social ties and close relationships remained. Shared interests and community involvement connected residents of the area with those that were new.

Newly formed social groups held gatherings that offered outlets for workers with incredibly stressful responsibilities. Rather than holding harsh feelings and hostility towards the memory of the workers and their families leaving so suddenly, favorable opinions were formed in the minds of the people of the area. The Missile People did not isolate themselves; rather, they joined the community and sought new experiences and relationships that would result in a public memory that extends past the towering reminder of the constant threat of nuclear war and the sudden arrival and sudden loss of a sizable portion of the taxpaying population. Friendships evolved through community involvement in sports, clubs, dances, and social gatherings and became associated with the memory of the construction of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex. What could easily have become a negative view of the site, and its past has in fact been softened by the sense of community experienced by the Missile People and the residents who welcomed them.

Through the interceding years, the state of the site has been a question that has only recently been answered. Years of neglect led to hazardous conditions that made any project require expensive and extensive repairs before any adaptation could be attempted. The Army maintained ownership of the property until it invited bids to purchase the site in 2012. While drawing the attention of the local Job Development Authority and wealthy doomsday preppers, a winning bid of $530,000 was placed by a representative of the Spring Creek Hutterite colony from South Dakota that was eying the site for expansion. After the purchase, the Army

completed a six-million-dollar environmental cleanup of polluted water that had accumulated in the silos and in the Missile Site Radar structure. Through the years, attempts at purchasing the site by the Cavalier County Job Development Authority were hindered by costs and public interest. The Spring Creek Hutterites viewed the location as a safe investment, either the start of a new colony or sale of the site would have a positive impact on the future of the colony. They planned to eventually use the standing structures as temporary housing until newer housing was constructed, but local zoning regulations involving livestock led to the decision to sell the property in 2021. With no plans for the Missile Site Radar structure, the Hutterite colony eventually worked out a proposal with the Job Development Authority; they would sell the Missile Site Radar structure separately while continuing with their plans to farm and develop the surrounding area into a new colony.[32] The belief is that the Hutterites could use the Complex land for their goals while allowing the Cavalier County Job Development Authority to reuse the site for the historical and economic benefit of the area.

The Missile Site Radar came under the ownership of the Cavalier County Job Development Authority on June 23, 2017, with a $600,000 grant from the North Dakota Department of Commerce. The Job Development Authority has, with the help of consultants, settled on seeking investors to adapt the structure into a data center, utilizing the existing infrastructure in a similar fashion to its original design. In an interview with the project lead of the Cavalier Job Development Authority, Carol Goodmen described a recurring trend in the

[32] Lisa Nowatzki, "Cavalier County JDA purchases Stanley R. Mickelsen site*", Cavalier County Republican*, 9/14/2017.

reuse of Cold War-era military installations.[33] Originally envisioning an industrial park able to leverage the iconic imagery of the Missile Site Radar, AECOM, an engineering consulting firm familiar with Cold War structures, reviewed the site and turned the Job Development Authority toward utilizing the structure as a data center. Common in the reuse of these Cold War Structures, fortifications are seeing new life in the world of data storage and server farms.

After acquiring the site in 2017, the Cavalier County Job Development Authority sought development bids and soon found a suitable reuse for the Missile Site Radar. On July 25th, 2022, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum announced the purchase of the pyramid structure by Bitzero Blockchain Inc., a data center firm that plans to develop the site into the center of future North American energy projects. Bitzero's planned five hundred-million-dollar investment was designed to turn the Missile Site Radar into a two-hundred-megawatt data center dubbed The Pyramid Data Center, soon to be joined by a graphene battery factory and the accompanying distribution infrastructure. The high energy demands will be met with nearby renewable energy sources and harnessing the accompanying heat dissipation through an above-ground greenhouse, representing a combination of technological advancements that mirror the site's militaristic history.[34]

Successful adaptive reuse in military installations has several unique challenges. Some, like the closure of the Fort Benjamin Harrison Army Base outside of Indianapolis, Indiana,

[33] Carol Goodman, ed. *The Guardian WSC Site Newsletter*, Vol. 1 No. 1, (Langdon, North Dakota), November 1972.

[34] "Burgum: Bitzero Signs Agreement to Acquire Nekoma Pyramid, Develop It into Highly Secure Data Center," North Dakota Office of the Governor, July 25, 2022, https://www.governor.nd.gov/news/burgum-bitzero-signs-agreement-acquire-nekoma-pyramid-develop-it-highly-secure-data-center.

provide an opportunity for growth. Community cooperation and meticulous planning assisted the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority in its goal of reusing the installation.[35] The need for a social gathering area was well suited for the site, and the conversion to its current state was popular throughout the process. Similarly, the Cavalier County Job Development Authority set out explicitly to adapt the site to benefit the community. A clear goal, financial support, and market forces have made the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex relevant to the economic discussion.

[35] Marci A. Reddick, "Adaptive Reuse: An Indiana military base closure turns into a successful downtown." *CIRE Magazine*, January, February 18, https://www.ccim.com/cire-magazine/articles/2018/01/adaptive-reuse/ Accessed 2/1/2023.

PART II: EMOTIONAL LEGACY

The development of the SAFEGUARD system required several different contracted groups in duty stations stretching from New Jersey to the Marshall Islands, and each stop presented a new experience for the workers and families that were shuffled through the different developmental stages of the system The ultimate form of the SAFEGUARD system required cooperation from seven different corporations and the US. Military: Western Electric, Bell Telephone Laboratories, Raytheon, Martin Marietta, Mcdonnell Douglas, IBM, and General Electric. Workers and their families were accustomed to moving, and different combinations of workers moved through various stages of project development. This often created a group of people who were aware of each other but did not function as "a community." Contracts expired, missions shifted, and people moved in and out of the program every few years.

Perceptions of locals were more binary. New people living in the area associated with the site became Missile People, and young residents of the housing complex built in Cavalier for incoming workers were called "Complex Kids." Their time in North Dakota exposed them to a unique situation due to the small size of the original population. Previous locations these families had called "home" were either more populated or consisted entirely of worker families on isolated military installations. Standing out as an outsider was an unfamiliar feeling.[36] In previous contract locations, the workers represented smaller increases to the overall population, less visible and distinctive. At the same time, the presence of the Missile People in the rural farming community in northeast North Dakota saw a near doubling in size from Langdon to

[36] Sheryl Ratchenski, interview by Shane Engeland. July 22, 2021, transcript and recording, SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

Cavalier. At first suspicious, the local business, and by proxy the people who economically profited, soon warmed and although farmers continued farming and the schools continued to run, the growing pains and rapid depopulation accompanying the boom-and-bust cycle left clear marks on the local memory. Many families settled in housing constructed for their use in the communities. The Cavalier Complex, a row of four-unit houses modeled after one initial unit that still stands today, was a concentration of new residents. The street was full of new people from distant places, bringing an interesting taste of the world to the rural town.

The new students represented an exciting addition to the community, and a testament to the cultural effects of the Cold War. Doug Fisher, a teacher now and a student during the system's lifespan, remembers a singular “duck and cover” drill with little emotion or connection to the Cold War or the new residents in the community. Contrasting the emotional effect of active shooter drills, Mr. Fischer uses his experience to connect the local Cold War remains to the local history that he shares with his students and provides information to connect to the national memory of the Cold War.

During the boom, public schools saw increased enrollment with the new arrivals and the need to expand education facilities and add educators. The SAFEGUARD system promised a consistent supply of federal dollars even after the shock of the initial building phase had passed. Mr. Fisher remembered seeing his graduating class increase by twenty-two, creating a total of eighty-one students. Remembering this growth fondly, he described it as a breath of life for his school, a mix that brought unique experiences to the students if sometimes at odds with disciplinary standards. In Cavalier, economic impact funds were used to expand and remodel the school as well as provide funding for a public pool. Funding was offered to construct an indoor

pool, but the school superintendent, envisioning a potential future with reduced funding and population, declined on the fears of upkeep costs.[37]

The experiences with the Missile People shaped the Cold War memory of the people who lived through it, not by directly reminding them of constant nuclear risk but despite it. The primary imprint of the Cold War in the region was the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system, a more direct and visible reminder than buried silos and collapsing exterior buildings. Rather than relay Cold War concerns into animosity towards this new population, the separation of the Cold War from daily life benefited the relationship between the local community and the newcomers. The locals saw the Missile People as a unified group that became involved in the community's daily life. Social clubs of all interests either formed to accommodate the increased population or swelled the ranks of ones that already existed. A new sense of community was quickly formed, small-town hospitality welcomed the newcomers, and soon, relationships were created that would remain long after the closure of the base.

Small Town Living

Life on the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex was recorded in *The Guardian*, a corporate newsletter detailing events and relevant news. Published in it was information about visits from politicians and major personnel changes, records of leisure activity such as sports and travel, and anecdotal stories of the community that share a story of a welcoming small-town experience. The Nuclear tension and brinkmanship that brought these technicians and their families to the area also placed unique stresses on them. Community activity through sports and

[37] Doug Fisher, interview by Shane Engeland, July 22, 2021, *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

recreation not only brought them together but also served as a pressure relief valve for people with jobs involving the launch of nuclear weapons. Even with the appearance of a massive pyramid, the Cold War did not seem to be a concern to many. The memories of an economic and population boom supersede memories of a singular "duck and cover" drill or more national problems such as communism and nuclear war. Sporting events, talent and fashion shows, and motorcycle clubs found local residents ready to support it and a booming population to fill the ranks.

Recreation centers constructed in both Langdon and Cavalier aimed to provide a place for many of the social celebrations that the Missile People would host. The Cavalier River Bend Estates Recreation Center opened with the formation of a council and a constitution created to oversee activities and community involvement between the Complex residents and the local citizens.[38]

Local groups welcomed the new arrivals. The local baseball leagues swelled with life; volunteers played and coached in the community and among the various company leagues that played tournaments on the site.[39] Various leagues grew along with the population. The American Legion, Babe Ruth, Little League, and T-ball leagues all fielded players from this new community. Once the Langdon community center was complete, the Missile People organized an effort to involve as many in the local baseball programs as possible. Nine of the thirteen

[38] Carol Goodman, ed. *The Guardian WSC Site Newsletter*, Vol. 1 No. 1, Langdon, North Dakota, November 1972.

[39] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 10, September 1973.

coaching positions were filled by Missile People, and their efforts were matched with funding from the American Legion, as well as paying for a full-time coaching position to oversee the season.[40] Local children and parents intermingled at these baseball games, sharing an interest that carries across many regions of the United States and its territories. Basketball leagues and tournaments were also common, organized by employers; these teams shared a fierce rivalry that brought local crowds and participants. The 1974 seven-team Missile Site Radar spring tournament champion immediately faced a local team of teachers in a charity basketball fundraising game that they lost by just a few points.[41] The Cavalier Country Club golf course saw an influx of new members. The courses were advertised in the site newsletter The Guardian as an "…excellent opportunity for WSC employees to participate in group activities and meet new people."[42] The Complex Managers Tournament saw employees from the Cavalier radar site and the Safeguard Complex compete against each other for the Managers Cup and featured a mulligan hole-in-one on a par three. Langdon also had a country club, but the grass greens weren't added until 1973, three years after Cavalier's.[43]

The families that came to North Dakota were accustomed to the move, if not the temperature extremes, common to their new duty station. Extreme cold was met with adaptation as winter sports involved many from the newly formed communities. The wintry weather didn't

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[40] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 11, October 1973.

[41] Goodman, Vol. 2 No. 4, April-May 1974.

[42] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 5, March 1973.

[43] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 7, May 1973.

deter the many technicians and their families, who became enamored with the feeling of a fast sled over fresh snow. [44] Hiking, fishing, and hunting were common as the Missile People took advantage of the area's natural resources. Sponsored groups would organize around the recreation center to plan group outings and events. The Ski Club embarked on a day-long trip in Manitoba to enjoy the brisk, negative, twenty-degree weather. The Club received a special presentation from the local Arctic Cat dealership, the fast machines and open prairies offering a unique experience to those willing to try it.[45]

Fig 5. Snowmobile Club Patch, Contained in *The Guardian, Vol2 no1*.1973

The abundant game drew the huntsman from among the workers; stories of duck hunting trips and a successful moose hunt endeared North Dakota to the visitors, and thus the visitors to the locals. One husband and wife hunting expedition encountered a youth named Elmer who had

[44] Janet Schill, interview by Shane Engeland, July 22, 2021.interview and transcript, *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

[45] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 2, December 1972.

recently embarked on a sleeping bag-only, four-day trek with a faulty rifle. Not fifteen minutes after many ill-received warnings, Elmer was found with a broken wrist and a discharged rifle, an accident that could have led to dire consequences. Quick first aid turned a serious situation for Elmer into a fun story for their families.

The recreation centers soon became important parts of the community, serving as a staging area for several teen dances, fundraisers, and other social events. The first large-scale gathering at the River Bend Estates Recreation Hall saw over two hundred and fifty visitors who came to enjoy the food, music, and dance hall decorated ala the Waldorf Astoria for the Christmas party. The committee was unprepared for the outpouring of community well-wishers that would stop in with their new neighbors a Merry Christmas and eventually the refreshments ran dry. Luckily, as is the small-town fashion, local store owners were more than willing to open what was needed to carry the party into the early morning hours.[46] The next day, the center fed six hundred pancakes to over one hundred and fifty guests to raise money for the children's Christmas play and reciprocate good will to the community. The following New Year's celebration was "one of the most entertaining parties Cavalier has seen."

Organizations, such as the River Bend Riders Motorcycle Club, organized around the center and used its facilities for get-togethers and staging; the Motorcycle Club was able to host thirty-five riders in a race near Concrete, ND. The Riverbend Riders brought home twelve

[46] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 3, January 1973.

trophies from competitions during the 1973 season, fans and participants drawn from the local area brought together to celebrate their combined team. [47]

The groups associated with each recreation center would occasionally switch between locations, as the Cavalier Estates Thursday Ladies Group used the Prairie View Estates Recreation Hall to accommodate roughly one hundred women from the area during their "Rainbow of Fashions" luncheon that presented the latest fashions from downtown vendors.[48] Local Scout Troops utilized the recreation centers as places to meet and hold ceremonies. The 1973 Fall Court of Honor celebrated Boy Scouts' achievements with awards and service pins for members of the Troop.

River Bend Estates also hosted a kindergarten started by families of the Missile people due to the lack of educational opportunities for five-year-old children in the local public school system. Under the direction of the Department of Public Instruction, twenty-two students from both the Cavalier Complex as well as the city of Cavalier attended kindergarten classes together four times a week, where they also received basic health screenings. A licensed teacher from New York who moved with the construction oversaw the program. [49]

The Site Extension Education Program cooperated with the University of North Dakota to offer credit classes to those interested. Meeting at the Langdon High School, the classes would give local residents the opportunity to take a course at will rather than attend a university over a

[47] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 11, October 1973.
[48] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 7, May 1973.

[49] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 2, December 1972.

hundred miles away.[50] The recreation centers eventually added small stores of books that could be checked out, with a bookmobile monitoring, replacing, and replenishing the supply of books.[51] Langdon High School began a mini-course program that brought in an expert as an "instructor for a day." Short courses on niche subjects brought workers from the site to interact with the students and demonstrate certain technical skills such as photography.[52]

Fundraisers and benefits were commonly occurring reasons to visit the community recreation centers, such as a benefit for a teen injured in a motorcycle accident. Additionally, a pair of luncheons were held that raised five hundred dollars for the Cerebral Palsy Center in Roosevelt, New York. Carol Goodman, editor of *The Guardian*, described the event as "…a fine example of what can be accomplished by cooperation between the Cavalier townspeople and the newcomers to the little town with a big heart."[53]

Personnel in Cavalier orchestrated a varsity show to raise money for the Athletic Field Bleacher Building Fund, and music and dancing were performed to packed houses over two nights. The money raised was secondary to the goodwill garnered by the unique entertainment.[54] After designing and constructing a vibrating chair from a special request from the nearby Grafton special needs school, the Site I branch of Old North State Chapter No. 79 Telephone pioneers garnered larger interest in the upcoming program of events. New arrivals eager to put their

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[50] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 10, September 1973.

[51] Goodman, Vol. 2 No. 2, February 1974.

[52] Goodman, Vol. 2 No. 4, April-May 1974.

[53] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 12, November 1973.

[54] Goodman, Vol. 2 No. 4, April-May 1974.

technical skills to use to benefit the community met to discuss areas where they could have the largest impact.[55] The fifty-six-person club was comprised of only Bell employees, but their efforts aided the community at large.[56]

Understanding the role of the experience in the formation of Cold War memory is a study of the human mind and emotions. The workers and residents were what could be considered the frontline soldiers in a conflict that never started, and where residents housed weapons of mass destruction among their farms and ranches. The startling figure of the Missile Site Radar pyramid projects a bleak finality that has drawn curiosity during this new era of Cold War tourism. Visitors to the area can take pictures from the nearby road that leads to the central site, yet the real story of the SRMC lies more in its lasting impacts on the local communities and the places where new friendships were made.

Modern Memories

Surrounded by neatly cut grass and trimmed road ditches, it is easy to envision the strict air of a military complex of the early 1970's. The recent purchase of the Missile Site Radar is part of a long-term plan to reuse the site to benefit the local community. Federal funds invested in clean-up efforts have made the project manageable, and the 200,000-square-foot facility has remained empty and abandoned on the horizon as well as in the minds of the locals. Two of Cavalier's original housing complex structures are still occupied, while the rest were leveled to make way for a new development. The pyramid structure's striking contrast with the surrounding

[55] Goodman, Vol. 2 No. 3, March 1974.

[56] Goodman, Vol. 1 No. 4, February 1973.

landscape serves not as a reminder of the risks and dangers of placing a nuclear target in your community but as a landmark to memories of a different community than what was before and what was after. The experiences of the Missile People and the Complex Kids demonstrate the existence of a unique Cold War history. When considering the area's history, the most important takeaway is the personal relationships developed. Thus, a series of interviews were conducted in July of 2021. These interviews contextualize circumstances related to the economic boom period in question. Each of the five interviewees was an active participant in the events and in the memory after. The oral history centered around three primary topics: Their understanding of the Missile People, their experiences after the close of the site, and their perception of the Cold War in light of their circumstances. From Nekoma to Langdon to Cavalier, the effects of the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system are still present in the memories of the local population.

Serving as a consultant with the Cavalier County Job Development Authority, Carol Goodman had a guiding hand in the future of the site. Originally hired by Western Electric to manage community relations on the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, she oversaw the application for and received funding opportunities to support purchasing the primary Missile Site radar structure. She hopes to eventually open an interpretive site in addition to an economically advantageous reuse project. Carol's memory is of a large population moving into the area and, with few complaints, positively impacted the community. With the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement and the closure of the Safeguard program in 1975, Carol remembered "…the sadness and you know they really couldn't believe that this thing was going to be not just terminated as far as Safeguard is concerned, but also that they were not going to do anything with the facility in the future. It was not a happy situation, and it was as if things went

quiet."[57] Those left behind had to either find employment locally or move. New contract locations and new jobs carried the Missile People to other parts of the world.

Growing up directly adjacent to the site, Janet Schill described her childhood in the rural area. In 2013, Janet assisted with a Missile People Reunion in Nekoma, a gathering that saw 150 travelers visiting the area. Remembering the friendships on farmland adjacent to the land selected for the Safeguard Complex, a young Janet Shill could watch as construction crews brought in thousands of tons of concrete. Janet's small school in Nekoma saw a doubling in size from workers and technicians who decided to settle in the countryside rather than in the local towns of Langdon and Cavalier. "So having the new students in my class was actually pretty cool because there were only four of us from the local area, it was me and three boys. So, when I had girls moving into my classroom, I made friends." Janet's parents, upon hearing the news of the closure, were saddened by the loss of their new neighbors. "I think it was more the devastation or despondency of losing all the friends you made because my mom and dad made many friends out at the site and they would come to our place, we would babysit their kids, we would, they would go snowmobiling together." Memories of new friends who were truly there for them, even driving a child and her mother to the hospital from a rock-picker accident. Friendships that she made with her new classmates continued for decades, leading to a 2013 MSR reunion in Nekoma. Janet, having a hand in planning the event, commented "…they were just excited and happy that we got all these people back. And I think what brought them back was the experiences that they had here and the people that they met. And it wasn't always the

[57] Carol Goodman, Interview by Shane Engeland. July 22, 2021, interview and transcript *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

locals that were here. It was the group of people that worked here. “Whether they were actual military or they were contract workers or the missile people. They were most excited to come back and get together with the people that they spent most their time with.”[58]

The Complex kids in Cavalier were met with an analogous situation. Doug Fisher, a born and raised Cavalier resident, remarked at the breath of life that entered his school. His sophomore year was among the most interesting as his classes and the school itself swelled with new residents. The row of complex housing became a fun area of town that was always full of people. For a young North Dakotan, it was a vastly distinct experience than normal. Fisher, on the metaphorical front line of the Cold War, could not have had the conflict further away in his mind. Remembering only one duck and cover drill from his early childhood, he has a stronger memory of the friends that he made in both school and through community involvement. The increased population dwindled soon after he graduated high school. Still, the active Perimeter Acquisition Radar at the nearby Space Force Station still brings a handful of workers and families to the area.

A semi-transient childhood, like the ones experienced by Complex Kids, is a contrast to the lives of the people of the region. Many local residents were, and still are, living and working on land purchased by their families under the Homestead Act. Homesteaders who live near the same town as their grandparents and grandchildren for that unique small-town experience. For Sheryl Ratchenski, moving to rural North Dakota represented just another new living experience. Sheryl’s father, a Bell Telephone Laboratory technician, moved their family to North Dakota in

[58] Janet Schill, interview by Shane Engeland, July 22, 2021, interview and transcript *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

1972. Moving from testing site to testing site, families tend to become more insular, focusing more on familial bonds than community due to the nature of the project. Born in New Mexico while her father worked for Bell Laboratories overseeing the guidance aspect of the SAFEGUARD project at the White Sands test range, Sheryl's life mirrors the development of America's antiballistic missile defense. From White Sands to the Marshall Islands, Sheryl's family moved from phase to phase of development, eventually residing in the Cavalier Complex for her high school years. Tensions were at first high, "…to be told, you can't come in here because you'll bring in drugs and this and that. I was beyond sheltered. I'm like, what do you mean? Aspirin drugs? What did we squirrel them in our suitcase?" Local young women had a new group to compete with. "I did get to be friends with some of the town girls, and some of the other town girls never forgave us for coming in and being new and taking the attention of the potential boys."

Dale Ratchenski, who grew up on a family farm near Cavalier, represented the typical rural North Dakota experience. The new residents were surprised to see children driving at an unheard-of early age of fourteen. The Complex kids were far more accustomed to the national driving age of sixteen, if they drove at all. Cavalier gave Sheryl's family a chance to relax and be part of a rural community, presenting a new world of freedom for Sheryl. Their normally close-knit family was able to experience the community through involvement and social gatherings. At first, friends were made among the children at the Complex. Sheryl didn't know other children associated with the project; the various duty stations and changing contracts were not only the cause of the separation between the children but also a shared experience that initially allowed them to relate with each other in a strange land. Eventually, through school and sports Complex,

kids could intermingle and befriend the local students, quickly forming a community in a way they had not before.

The nuclear fears that were a constant worry weighed heavily on the shoulders of those with direct involvement. “I remember one story, and I won't get it right. My dad has gone now, but that all the alarms went off and they didn't know if they were going to have to fire on Canada. Canada had a missile got away from them and it didn't detonate. It landed like dead across the border. But they were all like firing up and wondering. And, of course, [it was] Canada, I mean it had to be an accident. They were testing something and it just it invaded our airspace and dad said oh my God you wouldn't believe what went down today.”[59] These burdens of responsibility were dealt with through community involvement and social recreation, the community assisting in the nuclear conflict with camaraderie.

The Cold War experience differed globally. Physical remains elicit memories of historical context, experiences that form the foundation of one’s sense of identity. The Cold War had little direct impact on the average small town in the United States, but to the civilians living in the region hosting the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex, few aspects of their lives were not affected. Schools were overwhelmed, services stretched, and social group numbers swollen with new members. Business benefited, friends, were made, and when asked about the remarkably prominent Cold War remains, those who lived through the experience recalls an exciting period of growth and friendship that has had long-lasting benefits. These experiences differed from the national experience of the Cold War, where other regions would often see mass

[59] Sheryl Ratchenski, Interview with Shane Engeland. July 21, 2021. *SAFEGUARD Missile Defense Oral Histories* (UA 0215), NDSU Archives, North Dakota State University.

protests and the prevalence of NIMBY attitudes. The residents embraced the construction of the site, the wealth of federal spending, and the new residents that the experience introduced. A positive recollection of the Cold War in the growing scholarship of its regional effects.

CONCLUSION

The Cold War had a global influence with an extreme range of experiences. Understanding the depth of the experience is necessary to understand the widespread effects of the Cold War on various aspects of civilian life. Local cooperation and community are traditions in the region, a "North Dakota Nice" attitude, a desire for federal spending, and embracing the idea of a new population of residents. The interpretation of their situation depends on the interpreter, with local residents fondly remembering their growing community and advantages that followed. Supporting David Mills' conclusion of a willing population eager to take advantage of available federal funding and a general sense of ambition regarding the Cold War, this research dives deeper into the idea of the Missile People as a collective memory, one promoted by residents and detailed through the sources from the Army Corp of Engineers and the social reporting available in "The Guardian" newsletter.

How people remember something like the Cold War depends heavily on their experiences. The experiences of those interviewed show a positive image of a social combination that was not without its challenges. Early resentment from locals soon turned to acceptance, especially for those workers who moved their families to the area and integrated into the local communities. The dramatic remains of the Missile Site Radar are the most immediate signs of the Cold War on the Northern Great Plains, drawing curiosity and opportunity. To many in the area, the site evokes Cold War memories of an economic boom, a political bust, and a short-lived community that had as large an effect on the Missile People as it did on the locals. The human aspect often left out of our technological remembrance of the Cold War benefits from the story of the Missile People and grounds the event in relatable terms.

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APPENDIX A: ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTS

The story of the Missile People is part of a local history that is willing to be shared. Conversations in passing on casual topics can tread on the unconventional memory of the Cold War's impact on a small North Dakota town. Residents of the towns of Langdon and Cavalier were eager to share the story that remains connected to the Cold War in their minds.

The Cavalier County Job Development Authority was my first contact related to the Missile People due to their recent efforts to purchase the site. The request for an interview was answered by Carol Goodman, Job Development Authority project advisor, as well as past media relations representative for Western Electric, one of the contractors involved with the operation of the site.

Online communities and social networks have allowed the organization of reunions and the sharing of memories. A reunion organized in 2013 involved Langdon resident Janet Schill. The site has influenced her life since it’s construction, growing up in nearby Nekoma. In 2013, she helped organize a reunion of Missile People, resulting in over 100 former defense complex workers revisiting the area.

The growth was felt as far away as Cavalier due to the separate yet impressive Perimeter Acquisition Radar on a small military base southwest of the town. Doug Fisher, resident and current teacher, described the growth in the school and community. His interview detailed the community that formed, the current status of the radar, and the effects still present in the town. Mr. Fisher was kind enough to put me in touch with Daryl and Sheryl Ratchenski, his friends with a personal story relevant to my research. Daryl descended from Homestead era settlers, met Sheryl when she moved to the Cavalier Complex with her family. Their past gives a view into the relationships between the newcomers and longtime residents.

These interviews focused on two broad questions: the interviewee's relationship with the Missile People and their memories of the Cold War within the context of their childhood. Through these interviews, a more familiar perspective of the Missile People is attained and can be applied to our greater understanding of the Cold War experience.

Interview with Carol Goodman (CG)

Conducted by Shane Engeland (SE)

July 22nd, 2021

Caviler County Courthouse

Transcription by Shane Engeland

(SE) This is Shane England interviewing Carol Goodman of the Langdon Job Development Authority. So, if you could Carol, would you please introduce yourself and how you are connected to the missile people?

(CG) Well, sure, Carol Goodman. One thing I'll sort of correct right away is that I am from here. I grew up in Milton, just down the road about 20 miles southeast of here. So, my husband and I are lifelong residents of the communities. Didn't expect to be here in our adult years, but some situations changed in the family farming operations. So, we had the opportunity to come back here in 1972. We were in Fargo at the time and then coming home on weekends or whatever. Prior to 1972, all this chaotic activity and it was going on and I threw a job application resume out to the site and it landed on the desk of the Western electric manager. And it's just funny how things coincide, they had been thinking they needed to hire somebody to do public relations of various kinds both in house and, and you know, with the, with the communities and information gathering kind of a resource type person. So, I ended up with that job and started there in July of 1972.

(SE) Okay. And then you work there until the base closes?

(CG) Late summer 75 is when of course they were starting the big pull out, terrifically interesting times. The people that came here and I didn't, I wasn't as connected or acquainted with the construction phase, which is Morrison Knudsen company had the contract for the actual

construction of the pyramid and the Cavalier station and all that kind of stuff. But then, beginning in early 1972, that's when the contractor people for all of the equipment for the system started coming in. You got Western Bell Labs, Raytheon Martin Marietta, Mcdonall Douglas, Federal Electric, I mean Pan Am even they had service contracts for the sites, All of these companies. But the interesting thing was that the people who came here pretty much knew each other because they had worked on developing the piece of the project that their company was providing for this whole thing. They ran into each other at the various testing development sites on the east coast of North Carolina for Western Electric Bell Labs in New Jersey, and then White Sands, New Mexico proving grounds which is where a lot of the testing went on and then Kwajalein Island out in the Pacific is where they did the actual physical testing of the system and found out it worked. And so these people were somewhat very, very familiar with each other, which was fun to see, you know, and uh very, very smart people, very fun, I would say adaptable people because they've been all over with this project and so I went to work out there and worked for 3.5 years, I guess, and really enjoyed it. t's just mind boggling to even try to explain what the place looked like, you know, during those heady times, I guess you'd say. And there are people who are very proud of their work, and they should have been.

(SE) that's great. Could you, could you describe what your normal, how you describe your job out there as the liaison between the Missile People and the people of the community?

(CG) Well, yeah, in many ways it wasn't to the point where I was constantly calling press conferences because I was not the one that would have been in front of the media at all. It was arranging those kinds of things for the big, big dogs at the top of the companies and that kind of thing, and arrangements for visiting groups of people from those various companies that came here to see how their piece of this thing was coming together. I worked in an area of the site that

was a complex of double wide trailers strung together. I don’t know, several hundred people worked in that little complex. And, and it was interesting about the time that I got here was when of course you never did have permission or the reason to be roaming around the whole site at all. But by that time all kinds of security were in place, there were security protocols and there were M. P’s around. So, you went to work and went to your office and that's pretty much how I remember being there with all these people.

(SE) Okay. Oh, that's great. That's really interesting. So, let me think, how do I want to ask the next question here? So, the Oh, so you weren't considered a missile person? Really? You were, would you consider yourself? You were a resident?

(CG) I was kind of a hybrid because I was a local person who got hired because of a certain need at a certain time. All of these support staff as I mentioned, was hired and reported to Pan American, your administrative assistance, your mail people, your janitor and all of those people were pretty much from the local area. And when I say local, I'm really saying in northeastern North Dakota because a lot of people drive along ways every day for a good job like that.

(SE)how you considered yourself, how you viewed yourself in this? Because I've been, would you? And this could be a side question to those were those construction workers because I have come across people in my family that we've known people. I had a family member that ended up dying during the construction. But they were, they would come up as almost like unskilled labor contract to do roads and infrastructure. Were those considered missile people in the same vein.

(CG) We're talking specifically about this people that came in with the contractors. Okay. First with the construction phase under Morrison Johnson and then with all of these companies

that I've named because each one of those companies had a significant piece of the operational system of Safeguard. Under normal circumstances probably would not have hired like that, but just happened to walk into something. So, but you know, as far as what it felt like to be a part of this here, really bottom line it was a job.

(SE) Okay. I think that's a lot of people saw a lot of this. It was, it was, it was a good paying job in an area where they might have already wanted to be at, they had family at or besides, that's why I'm going to be touching on people that stayed, they came around so that I'll get that probably in some other interviews. But could you tell me how these two communities viewed each other? It was there that because I think that's kind of the crux of what I'm looking at, how the community looked at these missile people and how these missile people looked at the community. Could you …

(CG) And this is from a bird's eye view of coming in halfway through the development of the site for one thing. The people that were community leaders here when the ground was first broken in the spring of 70, how hard they had to work to get the infrastructure up and be able to accommodate this in, Langdon and Cavalier. They didn't have quite the impact that Langdon did because all the contractors were located pretty much here. I guess it wasn't something that in your early twenties that I was looking at the sociology of the whole thing. One of the things that I thought in retrospect, of course everything is always clear as you go on is that there could have been a lot more done maybe on the part of the contractors to prepare their people for to come to a rural America and they had all kinds of these world experiences. They were willing to do the job and they lived in trailers and modular apartment buildings and all that kind of thing. And, and they got involved in the community right away. That that's what, that's what you see from the military side of things like this is that, um, they moved from place and community, but they right

away, they get in and they help out and they join things, and they go to church. They did that from the get-go and then from the community side of it, on Main Street to talk to businesses because I worked out there and whatever. The community for the most part here was very welcoming. Of course, some aren't, you're always going to get one or two or five that are going to have some grip about the fact that the community dynamics have changed. That's going to happen again when we get this thing up and going again, because there's going to be lots of people again. And so, for the most part, I think everybody did a very good job of getting to know each other and respecting each other. And before I forget the thought, have you seen the write up that was done for the Nekoma history book?

(SE) I might have, but I would have to have seen a write up that someone had done. It was on part of that digital file.

(CG) a Clint google Clint Eskelsen, E S K E L S E m I think I actually talked to have that, I don't know, I haven't talked to him, but I do believe I have that right up in a very good description of very good and positive description of how all the people integrated in. And it's from the military perspective, because he was in the military, he was the chief warrant officer with the Army, and he was had a very important piece of this whole thing. He was one of the people that trained the Army personnel that were going to operate this system and started out, I think it White Sands and eventually then followed everybody up here and would have had that kind of a job, had the site stayed open when he left here, of course, continued in the military till retirement. And then they came back here, and he's been on our board of directors here for a long time and he lives in Nekoma. He’s very passionate about us getting this thing going again, as you might expect.

(SE) Firstly, could I ask about how the community reacted, how the people that you knew reacted to the base closure? Some people stayed, some people left, some people came back…

(CG) Yes, and I was not directly involved or paying the kind of attention I would give it today at the time. Okay, my job was coming to an end, all these people were leaving and I remember thinking that this this is not a good thing because everybody had worked so hard to get the site constructed and operational and all of this work within the community that much of which we see yet today. I do know that the people in leadership positions, again, the ones that helped get the community ramped up, they're also the ones that had to work with business closures. Like our utilities had extended services such as power and telephone and they did so by borrowing against the future. There's a there's a certain, I can't think of what the financial program is now, but utilities can borrow from the government programs for utilities to extend infrastructure. So, when everybody left here, they are stuck with um what they had their investment and the population just floated right them. And so, it was a sad time, I remember kind of watching people at work and it was just like somebody was putting a cold damp pressure on everybody. That was the sadness and you know they couldn't really couldn't believe that this thing was going to be not just terminated as far as SAFEGUARD is concerned, but also that they were not going to do anything with the facility in the future. It was very much you know, not a happy situation and if things went quiet.

I guess is what I would say, and people drifted away and our business community struggled um someday somebody should think about all the businesses that were here at that time and a lot of them sprang up because of the of the site and then all of a sudden everybody was gone. The population of Langdon doubled practically overnight and then went back down practically overnight. And uh that's a hard hit.

(SE) Absolutely, that's why that's why this has been such an interesting read because when I came up here, the infrastructure was surprising a lot of the times. And still, even though this is all these years later. So, I'll ask before I get into the use of the structure, which I'm dying to get into. So, the structure closed. I've had some videos digitized talking about how there were plans to move elderly and inmates into the area. I've seen plans or heard just heard of different reuses for like the Hutterites. So, could you tell me where the structure is now? In the planning phase? I've seen something about a data center, but I haven't uh, I'm trying to get some information from the architecture department at NDSU you because I believe they have more information about that for me. But could you tell me a little bit about how that's been going?

(CG) It's been going, you know, it's been a slow, long development process. That's why I'm still here because I retired for the first time a few years back and Shannon took over as director here. But I stayed on a consulting basis for this project. And over the over about 20 years, we've taken one step at a time to get the place used new uses for the property. And it's been an interesting long journey. You don't have time to listen to me talk about that. But bottom line is that when the government pulled out, there was a salvage contract let for the pyramid and for the technical facilities, pyramid and the power plant and the two bunkers and the contractor came in and cut and chopped. I mean just stripped it, just stripped it and then everybody walked away. Nothing happened out there with the exception of a brief time in the early 80s when there was a job corps program out there and I'm not real familiar with what that was, but it was a retraining type thing for people who needed that. And it didn't last very long. And then nothing from about 1980 until 1990-91. And so, I mean grass grew and buildings stick buildings started falling apart and I mean it was just totally abandoned. And what brought the interest to the forefront again is kind of an offshoot of President Reagan's pushed for another new missile

defense system in the 1980's. And it ended up that because of the treaties that had been signed in the 70s, this site was the only place by treaty that it could take place. And then the government walked away, they didn't not only didn't try to use the facilities themselves for a new use, they just didn't do anything with it. Starting in 1991, because of the possibility of a new missile defense system. The government came in and discussed putting the site on a status of having a couple of people out there employed to start working on cleaning things up and just maintaining the place. Pretty much they had quite a job to do because like I said, there had been no mowing, there were some of the community side buildings were falling apart. They were all there were stick buildings that were excessed out, moved out. All the housing was moved out after that time. The housing on the west end of the site signed

(SE) full of water.

(CG) Yes. Yes. And then what happened with the pyramid in the power plant is that the salvage company also pulled all the pumps, and the power was turned off. The military or the government didn't even pay to keep the electricity going. And so that's when all of this damage from water started to take place inside the pyramid and the power plant, they were, it was flooded to the ceiling and the water comes from the perimeter drain field. Well, they took the pumps out and so the water kept accumulating in the lower levels of those two buildings up to the ceiling and there are 28 ft ceilings. So, when the government came back in again, in 91, one of the first things they did was to pump all the water out and it was 34 million gallons and then was treated and disposed of somehow or another. And then the course I mentioned the excessing out of buildings that were no longer useful on the community side. And they came in and also and put in very simple electrical system. So, there were lights, conduit up on the walls and some light fixtures here and there, so it wasn't totally dark. There's a lot of work to clean out areas of

the pyramid in particular because when the contractor left, anything that they couldn't take with them, they just dropped on the floor, of course that had to be cleaned up. So, during the 90's then the possibility of new missile defense hung out there. This work was started and kept going and then by the time Bush 2 came in the government wanted to get rid of the property. So, they put it on the excess property status. And it took a long time for that to play out from 2003 to 2012 because they had to do another study, had to spend the money and all that kind of stuff. So long story short, the community here has followed the stages of and the condition of the site all those years without being able to do anything about it because the government held the site for the potential new use of the missile defense system. I have a library of development materials that we've put together over the years. Then it came up for sale in 2012. And the government would not negotiate on the one remaining environmental cleanup, and that was the water in the Spartan silos. By law. They were responsible for cleaning that up, but they pushed forward with the sale anyway. And this organization could not put the taxpayers of Cavalier County at risk for what was well over a $4 million dollar cleanup of the water that had accumulated in there. And finally, we were able to purchase the tactical area in 2017 The whole place was bought in 2012 by the Hutterite Colony. That's the first that they had anything to do with the site at all, is that they, it was an online auction and they outbid us. I don't have no idea, I'm not going to speculate publicly about why I thought they wanted it. But finally, in 2017 they were willing to sell us part of it and that's the tactical secure area. The rest of the community side is being looked at by a private investment group for some things they wanted to do. So, along the way, what emerged as a leading possibility for reusing the site is the data center industry and the characteristics of the buildings are perfect. You know, it's secure, it's got three foot thick exterior walls. It's that the security because of low population, it has average cool temperatures, so it doesn't cost you so

much to keep those processors cool. And so that's what we've been working toward. And I think it's going to be a possibility. We're sure pushing on it right now, just on the because…

(SE) I think that's something I've been thinking about, especially once we had fiber optic internet put right out to our house right next to the place. But uh, so where did was that done by like a, did someone specifically start with that idea of the data center or did someone come in and say do an analysis, decided a data center would be the right thing to do? Or is this because I'm sitting here, I've always been thinking what could be a use for it? And this is a really unique use. So, I was wondering, is there a trail for that, where that came from?

(CG) It's kind of a funny one and another unexpected one. Our work until about 2010, focused on primarily redeveloping the site for various industrial uses in a great big industrial park and maybe different types of businesses that could be out there, that kind of thing. And along the way, we had entered into an agreement with an engineering firm out of Minneapolis, they're called AECOM, all caps. And the individual we ended up working with came up here when we first started working with AECOM and we're wandering around to them up in the secure area and went into the pyramid and everything. And we're walking around, and he said, you know, this is a data center, ACOM, builds these things all over the world. And I mean, they’re big, big, big, big architectural engineering company. So, he recognized the characteristics of why it would be attractive to the data center industry simply because of how it's built. All the infrastructure is out there. You've got your electrical and communications at least to the site, if not too specific buildings. You have to remember that that's what this was. The system was a processing system, and it was considered to be the world's largest computer processing system in the world at the time that it was finished, it could process up to 22.5 million instructions per second. And I found that this is in 1970.

(SE) That's what I found. So fascinating reading about like, information about the Huntsville Division where I dug into the Soviet comparison, and they their system was overwhelmed with three targets whereas the American system could target hundreds of thousands, I believe they tested it on and that was fascinating. I never for some reason thought that it's not really an adaptive re use of the structure. It's just reusing what it already was. Except you're not turning on the radars and you're not launching nukes. What would I think of otherwise as a visual representation of the Cold War? Well, that's pretty darn imposing. So, I, you know, I don't, I don't think I have. Is there anything else you'd like to add? I think that's everything. I mean I'll probably have a million more questions at some point, but I can always call I suppose. Yeah, I really appreciate as I find when people are here at a job that they've already stepped away from consulting, it's because it's a passion, not really a job so…

(CG) well, I wouldn't probably be doing this kind of work if it wasn't for that project, but that project is extremely important to this community and part of it is that what was done out there was unconscionable In the first place, you spent $5 billion dollars on the SAFEGUARD program and you had all of these extremely smart people that put together a system and they were told it couldn't be done and they did it. And then just with the stroke of a pen, thank goodness we had the treaties and settled things down in the Soviet Union. That's not criticism whatsoever, thank goodness. We had that. But to walk away and to not use this taxpayer funded facility for something um for the future research and development, whatever that should never be allowed to happen. And suppose there are people who are going to read this and they're going to not like that very much, but it should not be allowed to happen.

(SE) Well, that's, I mean, I don't think there's very many people could argue and that's why I found this so interesting because for many people, all the Cold War memory of the signing

of that treaty is probably if they're of that mind a breath of relief. But for everybody else, you said a cold dampening where everybody was thinking our jobs were gone. There's, I mean, even just driving down there having the highway separate in two. Unless you know why that's like that.

(CG) You mean why do you have a left turn or right turn opportunity to go into Nekoma? North Dakota? I mean, that would normally not make any sense.

(SE) Exactly. That's why this has been so because it's such a contrasting memory with what people would say with writers, historians, but they say the big national Cold War memory is so, uh, now that people are looking more at the local Cold War memory as part of the overall memory, Well, this is, I think it's a great story to tell because, well, like you said, there's, it's just like what people coming out during the homestead era, right? We expanded huge and then it's decades of recession, then we expanded huge again. And so, we can maybe use some parts of that infrastructure, but wow, that was a lot of money to just throw in the air or dig in the ground or uh, so, um, okay, I think I'll turn off my equipment here now.

Interview with Janet Schill (JS)

Conducted by Shane Engeland (SE)

July 22nd, 2021

Schill Residence

Transcription by Shane Engeland

(SE) This is Shane England recording Janet Schill. So, Janet, would you introduce yourself and how you have a connection to the missile site?

(JS) Well, I, my maiden name is Janet Lebron and my parents had a farm down by Nekoma we're actually about five miles out of town. But we're kitty corner across the field from where the site is at. And actually, before they decided where the site was exactly going to be, one of the locations was right where our farmyard was or is…

(SE) so you almost got eminent domained out of your farm?

(JS) We almost got eminent domained off our farm.

(SE) Okay. And then, so you saw suddenly your class size doubled when you were in third grade, roughly? 2nd grade.

(JS) Actually it started probably in first grade because of the missiles, I don't remember what year they started building. But by the time I started school, there were additional people in the area. So, the school started growing and the classes grew so big and so fast that the old school couldn't hold everybody. So, I'm trying to think what year it was. I believe it would have been my by fourth grade, Third grade. They had the gymnasium in the old school was split up into cafeteria and classrooms and for and then some kids actually they fan them out around town some one class. And I think my older sister's class actually had to go to school in the catholic parish home and I think another class was in the basement of one of the other churches. So, and

then they moved in a steel container beside the old school, and they set up partitions and set up classrooms in there and we kind of got shuffled around in there for a while and then they finally added on, finished the new school part. So yeah, we got kind of shuffled around and then by the time they got the new school done, they closed the base.

(SE) Okay. So then that was the new school in Nekoma…

(JS) The one that's still standing there, but it's falling apart because it hasn't been used since 1980. The school closed in 1980.

(SE) Gosh. So yeah, the schools expanded and then it's almost just like I see in my neck of the woods, I live over by Towner and it's just another contraction. That's what I've been finding a lot in these interviews that there's a lot of just almost similar to when people first came out here expansion. And then a little bit of contraction, you lose those one room schoolhouses. Nekoma grows and then it's just a really fast expansion. So then did that kind of like the idea that they almost put it on your farmland with that, did that kind of change. How did you view these people then, these new students in your class? And how have you thought of that since?

(JS) See at that time I was young enough. I really didn't totally understand what was going on. So having the new students in my class was actually pretty cool because there were only four of us from the local area, it was me and three boys. So, when I had girls moving into my classroom, I made friends. I had girlfriends and I actually still keep in touch with two of them. One of them is still my best friend. So, it's different and we had people living in our basement because everybody was renting out rooms because there wasn't enough. There were no hotels, there were no apartment buildings. So, these people were living everywhere. One of my teachers lived in this old house on this old farmyard that didn't even have a decent furnace in it. He just used space heaters. I'm surprised his old place never burned down. But he was one of my

teachers when I was in grade school. But we, it seemed like we always had somebody until I was probably, I don't know, maybe 2nd 3rd grade always had somebody living in our basement or in the summertime. They had their camper parked in our yard. And one of the guys actually was a guy from Winnipeg that was working down here on the base. He had to drive me to the emergency room one time because my mom was freaking out and my dad was nowhere to be found because he was out in the field someplace and I smashed my finger in the rock pickers. And like I said, he drove my mom and me to the hospital.

(SE) A side note, I was teaching over in Munich. So, I'm more from a ranching area. So, hearing all these stories of rock picking has always been kind of fun over here.

(JS) Yeah, be glad you didn't have to do it!

(SE) Exactly, I count my blessings for that. So, it's really small now and it's really interesting to see how that grew. So, uh, so then you went through high school who still lived in that farm. That structure is still over your shoulder now as a farm right next to. What did your family think of the place closing?

(JS) Well, I think it was more the devastation or despondent of losing all the friends you made because my mom and dad made many friends out at the site and they would come to our place, we would babysit their kids, we would, they would go snowmobiling together. And one of the best things that I thought as a kid, when the base left was the fact that all these people that had boughten snowmobiles because we didn't have snowmobiles, they bought snowmobiles and they didn't know what to do with them and they were getting shipped off to Kwajalein. It's like, well you don't need a snowmobile on a tropical island. So, my dad got all these snowmobiles cheap. So, we actually ended up with snowmobiles and kids that we never would have had because dad never had the money to buy snowmobiles.

(SE) And then one thing I wanted to kind of touch on for like when you were younger. So, did you do tuck and cover drills? Was there any kind of a bigger awareness as to what this? Because this was in some perspectives, a target right next to you?

(JS) We never did any of the drills. I don't remember ever doing any of those in school and we weren't afraid because when we were little, we were taught that we're in the middle of the country, their missiles were never going to hit us. We're too far inland and the missiles that this base controls are going to knock them out of the sky before they even get close to us. Right, okay. No, I did not grow up in fear of the Cold War, but I did not grow up in fear of Russia. Okay.

(JS) That's I don't know if I'm thinking a person should or should not. It's just because I came here, and I teach North Dakota studies. I went to college for it when I came up here from Lakota. I thought I was having a hallucination or something because there's this giant structure that is so I don't know, imposing on the landscape that to me it seems like it should almost be, I don't know what I'm expecting, but I would be expecting more. So that being something that's almost blaring in people's minds, but that's maybe while I'll ask specifically. So, people come back. You, can you tell me about these reunions?

(JS) I can't remember what year was. I thought it was 2010, but it might have been 2013. I don't remember. It was so long ago, but I don't know. I've always been trying to get my best friend and her family to come back and visit. And then I was talking Bob Wilhelmi who owns the farms beside us, and he was one of my teachers when I was in grade school also, we got talking and it's like, well why don't we try to bring some of these people back? Because once we got started the Dave Novak, I believe is the guy that started the website of the S R M S G or dot org. And we kind of chatted a little bit back and forth about, hey, what do you think? Do you

think we will get people to come back for a reunion? And so, we kind of threw it out there and one of the guys that ended up, he that did come back, said and sent me a donation, says, here, get the ball rolling. And I'm like, wow, people really do want to do this. So, then we just started fundraising. It's like, so I ended up getting, uh, all but one brother of my best friend back for the reunion. It's like because her parents always called him mom and dad power. And like I said for the two years, 2.5 years Tony was here, I was either at her house or she was at my house. So, we got really close and it's like, well this way, I got them all back. People I knew, some people knew my parents, you know, most of them, I didn't know, but they were just excited and happy that we got all these people back. And I think what brought them back was their experiences that they had here and the people that they met. And it wasn't always the locals that were here. It was the group of people that worked here. Whether it was they were actually military or they were contract workers or the missile people, the missile, what we called the missile people. They were most excited to come back and get together with the people that they spent most of their time with, who were working.

(SE) Okay. So, it was almost because that's what I've been kind of coming across that this missile people that have been kind of almost like a community, some people leave, Some people would go, but they almost follow the development of the SAFEGUARD system and then ended up here. And um from what, because I'm doing digital history is my focus. So I've been, I found a digitized version of all of the Guardian newsletters and what this what really drove it home for me is that every one of those read, like the community section of my local paper, like oh there might be, someone gets an award, Someone visited the site, but all of the rest of it was, this is what this person is doing in the community. This is what the community is doing with us. This is how every copy is just a new way of how everybody's integrating in the community. And I

thought my goodness, you know, sometimes there's animosity between these people. Like when I look at the west, there's animosity between people coming in for the oil field. When you have that boom industry and these people, it seems it's a different way to look at the Cold War. I look at it with these people that made these friends. They made these connections enough to come back up to North Dakota to visit like you said. Could you, how many people would you say came up for that reunion?

(JS) We had about 150. Okay. I think I still have some of the paperwork downstairs in a tote well.

(SE) And that's, I mean right now, I'm almost certain what I've been doing here is going to be more than enough for me to be writing about later on down the line. And it doesn't seem like in the mind of the people that went through it. They're thinking things like your best friend. You know, that's the experience of people here in the Cold War. That's different than most places.

(JS)Right. And you don't actually I look at what's going on in our country today and to me that is scarier than the Cold War was back then. Because back then, you know, it's like, yeah, everybody's talking about Russia, the Cold War, but like I said, we were never afraid because we were told that were protected, we're okay, we're in the middle of the country, all that stuff. But now with what's going on today, it's like, it's more like an internal, not necessarily even a Cold War, but it's an internal war in our country between capitalism and socialism and communism and Marxism. And you know, and to me that's scarier than the Cold War.

(SE) Sure, and that's I would say that's because you're also seeing that every day, like if you had Russian bombers flying overhead, maybe that would be that's completely different than just a large structure. That I mean, you see it enough, you probably don't even notice it really.

(JS)Yeah. Actually, I've never even been in it because when they did do tours of it, when they were closing it and even after they closed it, I wasn't old enough, you had to be at least 16, so I couldn't go on any of the tours. And since then, even at the reunion, it's like we didn't get to tour inside the building because it was privately owned at the time.

(SE) Okay, that makes sense. I believe someone died touring the site. Did I read that correctly somewhere?

(JS)I don't think he was touring. I think he was one of the guys that was working, stripping out all the wiring and there was a salvage company that came in and stripped out all the wires and stuff and he fell from one of the uh walkways catwalks or something like that.

(SE) Okay, well, and then I think maybe one last question I kind of come up with. So, there's talks about how they're going to be trying to revitalize the site into a data center for communications. What do you think about that?

(JS) I'll believe it when I see it

(SE) skeptical!

(JS) Well, because that's, its promising so much and for all the money that they have poured into that place and when you go up to the pyramid itself, it's starting to crumble on the outside. It's like in, it's our tax dollars are paying to mow the lawn out there and we see no return in it. And I think it's just somebody's pipe dream. And like I said, if it happens, wonderful, I have no problem with the community growing in industry or something coming in that would be awesome. But I'll believe it when I see it.

(SE) You've been living next to it long enough.

(JS) I've been living next long enough. Yes, definitely.

(SE) I've been trying to figure out the different angles that I wanted to go with and how the structure is reused and how the memory of that re use goes has been really interesting. I've kind of been looking at other complexes. I've never seen anything besides a site turned into a museum, anything like the one at Cooperstown. Right. Nothing has really, it's just been passing hands, and nothing has really been done except like you said.

(JS) The guy that is working at the site in Cooperstown. I it was last summer, I think it was last summer I visited with him and I actually at the reunion somebody gave me these two big black binders full of the daily diaries of, I don't know if it was the person that was in command or one of the upper people at the site, but they wrote down all the happenings that happened at the site and I never had time to read the whole thing. I just kind of skip through and read bits and pieces and the one that pops into my mind of one of the incidents was one of the base peoples that we're living in the trailer court outside on the west side Langdon here they had snowmobiles and one of their kids got their foot caught in the track or something, you know, So it was a description of okay this accident and the hospital thing and everything. So, it's like they wrote down all this little stuff that's interesting and he has them down there because he was doing some research and was interested in some of the stuff and I'm like I've got these binders. Take them. Thank you. So let me know when you're done with them, and I'll take him back.

(SE) I'm going to I'm definitely going to go because I remember I believe I read in The Guardian about a snowmobile accident or maybe it could have been a car accident. I was thinking about that. But yeah, that's I'm going to have to bark up that tree too. Yeah, but I think that's pretty much all the questions I had for you.

Interview with Doug Fisher (DF)

Conducted by Shane Engeland (SE)

July 22nd, 2021

Caviler City Park

Transcription by Shane Engeland

(SE)"This is Shane England interviewing Doug Fisher, please. If you would introduce yourself and your connection to the missile people or the complex kids.

(DF) Okay, my name is Doug Fisher. I grew up, born and raised in Cavalier, and graduated from here. And when I was a sophomore in high school, that's when the complex kids came to town. So, I'm not sure how long they were here after I graduated in 1975, I don't think that long, but once I left school in 75, I was kind of out of here for good. Which didn't turn out to be because in 1990 I came back as a high school biology teacher.

(SE) Okay. Did you recognize any effects from that group of people being here? Did anything stand out to you as kind of a legacy left when you came back?

(DF)1990s? Yes. What I saw was that Air Force site west of Cavalier was still functioning and that's still the base, right? And still the base. And it was a radar site. And then I also saw how the Bjornsson family had developed where the complex kids were where all those kids whose parents worked on this site lived and how that had been developed. That's the only thing things I really noticed.

(SE) Okay. And then so then when they came here, what was your view of those people that came?

(DF) I was pretty excited because so many new kids because like I said 22 out of my 81 graduating class students were from those who were those students. So that's a pretty big

increase in your class. and they came from totally different cultures than I did. And there was just so much action in life in that school, probably much to the chagrin of teachers. But for me as a student, it was awesome

(SE) That teacher perspective is exactly what I'm looking for because I completely agree with you. I love school parties until I'm in charge of dealing with the kids that think they're at a party. So, can you tell me then about the Cold War during your childhood specifically?

(DF) Ah the only thing I really remember about the Cold War was I probably was in 3rd, 2nd, 3rd or fourth grade where we would do the bomb drills where you get underneath your desk, and I wasn't really scared. They didn't really explain it. I don't remember, but I just remember going under my desk at least once and not really being afraid.

(SE) Just like kids doing a fire drill today. They're not really afraid. They're like, okay, this is what we're doing. And there's not really that often fires.

(DF) Because nowadays. You know, they do school shooter drills, which I think probably are pretty terrifying for some kids. And I tell the students I know teach here in social studies, hey, you have shooting drills. We used to have atomic bomb drills and I would kind of hold that over their head,

(SE) Just a little bit of perspective. That's all you give them. So, I was going to ask you about the re use of the complex. But do you have any thoughts about how the infrastructure has been reused here in Cavalier specifically?

(DF) Well, I got to say that I believe money was money. Well, they set up a place in school where they could put in a permanent building with the infrastructure that was set up with funds that came as impact funds. You know, they put in all that the plumbing, electrical and so they were able to build permanent buildings on the temporaries that they put there. So that was

definitely a plus for the community. I recall that money came in for the pool and they ended up redoing the pool

(SE)and that's where everybody's going today.

(DF) Right. Yeah. You better confirm that because there was the old pool and then there was the new pool and I think money came for that. And I you better confirm this too. But I had heard that they even got offered an indoor pool that the superintendent said no, not interested because of the future upkeep.

(SE) which is pretty prescient in hindsight I suppose.

(DF) I don't really know if that's for sure that's just hearsay.

(SE) Sure it's anecdotal but it's pretty interesting.

(DF) And then I know that the site itself is just a huge positive impact that the radar site west of Cavalier like still today right still impacts this community in a such a positive way. I think the kids actually go to school in Walhalla that live in that in the base itself. But there are a lot of people that worked there as contractors. I mean it's just a huge positive influence in this community.

(SE) Okay. And that's because I came across that they had to that's an adaptive reuse aspect to that. It's strange that they're using one arm of this giant thing that they built. For a different use but it's at least still being used. Like you said, there's people I know there's people that work on that base that live in Langdon that live in Cavalier and like you said they are sending their kids to Walhalla.

(DF) There's a lot of kids that do come to Cavalier when they do not live when they live in the Cavalier school district that work out there too. There are based kids sure they're still in the complex. Kids technically are still here right in a way, in a way,

(SE) I mean when, when I'm talking about the little people in the complex because I'm generally talking about the group as they moved around in so much as there was a group that moved around building these structures. So, is there anything that you can think of off the top your head that might be of interest like connecting the Cold War to these memories at all?

(DF) When it comes to students or kids from the complex moving into this community. I did not even think about the Cold War in any way, shape or form. I just thought about how awesome it was to have these new kids in town. Some of them were a lot of fun, but I empathize with the teachers, I guess there were fights and stuff that they had to contend with, but I didn't see any of that. You know, I thought the kids were pretty good. Really? Well, I'm sorry, I can't include anything about the Cold War. I know that's not thinking about it.

(SE) because that's like I said, that's exactly what I'm looking for. Data is good data. Exactly, exactly. That's what I'll be writing about.

Interview with Sheryl Ratchenski (SR) and Daryl Ratchenski (DR)

Conducted by Shane Engeland (SE)

July 24th, 2021

Caviler County Courthouse

Transcription by Shane Engeland

(SE) This is Shane England interviewing Sheryl Ratchenski, Sheryl. If you would please, could you introduce yourself and tell me how you're associated with the complex kids or the missile people that came to the area?

(SR) Okay, my dad worked for Bell Telephone Laboratories. He worked on guidance systems for missiles. And so, I grew up moving all around the country. I was born in New Mexico, where he worked at White Sands missile range. Then we went to Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands where they have a missile base. Interesting story about that. My brother joined the Navy and his ship had stopped at Kwajalein. This is long after he grew up and nobody of course is allowed on, it's completely buttoned down and because he had lived there, they let him get off the ship. He was the only one and he got to go around the island and see it again. Which was because he's only a little over a year older than me, kind of like your age. And uh, he hadn't seen it since he was a little boy that was kind of neat. And then we moved to back to, to New Mexico for a couple of years and then we moved to New Jersey. He worked in Persephone, a little bit of a commute for him and we were there five years and then it was the very first time that dad ever asked the kids were finally old enough and he said "they are offering me another transfer to North Dakota" we're like "North Dakota, where is that? Let's look that up." You know, nobody knows where North Dakota is, unless you're from here. It's really funny. And so, we looked it up and it was really funny because it gets old being the new kid all the time. And

yet we must have all been ready for a change because we took a family vote and you know, my oldest brother was going to college, so he didn't actually come. So next was my brother Gary and then me and Jim. So, the five of us ended up moving here and then Keith saw us in his breaks. But we all opted to come thinking “well, another adventure.” We were mostly worried about the cold coming from New Mexico, Kwajalein, New Jersey, which is the shore, right? We uh we're a little worried about the cold and I'm still not crazy about the winters here. So, we actually have a Florida place near my mom. So, we go there in the winter for a couple months and we see her. So, in 1972 we moved here, and dad had liked a 2.5-year contract. And then I was here for three years of high school. Mom waited six months before she moved back with dad and my younger brother, he had to go finish up school in New Jersey.

(SE) How did you, how did you think of those first few winters that you were here? Did they live up to your expectations?

(SR) Yeah. I think I expected a lot more snow than you had. I mean in my juvenile brain, I was picturing tunneling, you know.

(SE) they use that one picture of the blizzard in the 60s for our tourism.

(SR) With a rope to the outlying buildings, you know? Well never put up a rope yet. My years here and I've been here since 72. So. Uh huh. A lot of years.

(SE) So can you tell me after you move here what life was like, for instance the story that you told me earlier, just how you felt about the local community?

(SR) Uh There were a lot of pros and cons. I've never seen such freedom Because when you're well when you're younger you have no way to get around. Nobody, you know, has a car here, they were getting their licenses at 14 years old. I couldn't but you know farm kids could. Dale, my husband could so he was a designated driver everywhere and I think because it was

small town, the parents of everybody at that time. Now people are a little more wary because kids have been snatched here and there and you're not safe for complete freedom anywhere. But at the time, you know you could just go uptown, you could walk around, you get anybody's car drive around, we did a lot of driving around um Mostly I mostly walked from the complex, so it was a long walk to school, it was pretty cold. Kids never faced anything like that because we were here, we started at the old farmstead there and they took a bus, you know, but they didn't have a bus to the complex.

(SE) Did you make friends more with the people that came to the area with you or more so with the people in the local area?

(SR) I'd say I was closer to the people from the complex because of our shared experiences, but they were all new to me. Uh we hadn't met anybody previously and I got to some of the girls that I got to be friends with, I got through being on the basketball team and they were from town. But again, we had a shared activity, you know, track and basketball and stuff like that and I love sports. So, I did get to be friends with some of the town girls, some of the other town girls and never forgave us for coming in and being new and taking the attention of the potential boys.

(SE) That’s been a common thread is when I ask and I'm interviewing anybody who is a young man at the time. They say boy, which was interesting having suddenly a bunch of smart worlds traveled men and girls and boys. So, it was quite an experience. That's so interesting to me.

(SR) It's funny you say world traveled because they think a lot of people have that impression of us and yet I felt I was so sheltered until I got here because moving around so much you become a very close knit family because they're the only ones, you know from place to

place, right? I mean, I would move somewhere, and I would feel lucky if I could get one close friend. Then I'm good. I'm golden. Somebody to stay with that lunch, somebody to do something with. Right. And so, I think a lot of my experiences growing up, we're doing things with my family and, you know, moving here to be told, "you can't come in here because you'll bring in drugs and this and that." I was beyond shelter. I'm like, what do you mean? Aspirin drugs? What did we squirrel them in our suitcase?

(SE) And that was, I'm guessing that was soon after you arrived right with them.

(SR) And that did get better. I think after we were here, not so much with some of the teachers, they held it all the way through. But I think uptown and as businesses kind of boomed, it was a boom period really. And I think they felt it when we all left. Well not all of us, the bulk. The majority of the community, we were only ever supposed to be temporary. We were going to come in but then people would have replaced us, but you're only contract so long working, right,

(SE) 2.5 years. So that's what you were used to basically. So it's just you're just thinking, okay, that's pretty normal.

(SR) Remember one story and I won't get it right. My dad has gone now, but um that all the alarms went off and they, you know, didn't know if they were going to have to fire on Canada. Canada had somehow a missile got away from him, and it didn't detonate. It landed like dead across the border. But they were all like firing up and wondering. And of course, Canada I mean it had to be an accident. They were testing something and it just it invaded our airspace and dad said oh my God you wouldn't believe what went down today.

(SE) That was one thing I've been really admiring the structure about is the engineers like Bell coming up with the computing technology for the structure of the tracking systems. Because the guidance is

(SR) in fact Canada of course called him and said this has happened. And so, they picked it up with the radar, they watched it, you know, and you know, is it okay to let it fall or do we have to shoot it down? I mean all of that was going back and forth between the two countries.

(SE) So you will just with that you got to feel the tensions of the Cold War right there a little more than the town people?

(SR) Because with dad saying, we're here now and we have a missile base, we will be a target. Russia would want to take us out. A lot of it was Russia at that time. Um you know, they're going to be looking for where they know you have bases and people here, I think, I don't think they realize what it meant necessarily. That pretty. I mean if something was to go off here, you're not safe for many, many, many, many miles and even from the wind. And so, I think, Dad was saying this is what we do. If something was coming, we'd get you our family into the PAR site and you know, and I'm like, yeah, like that's going to save us.

(SE) Yeah, that's something. My goodness. Like you said, more than most people.

(SR) Probably a little more than most. Because I could hear some of the conversation in the back. Sure. And I think really if you wanted to think about it, even though they don't have missiles, if we really went into a war, they're not going to want radar either. No. I mean you're still not safe if they want to take out radar here and there where that can track missiles. So, but I don't think about it. Right.

(SE) Yeah. Because you think about it then. You think, well, gosh would see when I was growing up, I thought myself is probably just a dumb conclusion I came to that. Would it really be a target when all the nukes would be launched by the time anything could get here? Mm. And then I've come across the sentiment of, well, the SAFEGUARD system would be effective and work and protect us.

(SR) which not too much would get through the net. Right, war game scenario where no one wins. Right?

(SE) Yeah. The idea is blowing up nukes with more nukes just on the surface sounds crazy. But that was the Cold War here.

(SR) I think it was probably pretty routine. I mean he enjoyed Kwajalein the most because that's where they were constantly testing missiles firing up. Remember the alarm used to go off and then we were all supposed to get within underneath the shelter of the house and kids came down on the island so it's only 2.5 miles long. You're all showed your company got to places, most of it was an airstrip. I think it was 3.5 miles long and a half mile wide at its widest and we biked everywhere. There were a few cars and stuff, but not much for cars. I mean sure it was all white. Even dad biked to work.

(SE) lots of time on the beach.

(SR) They brought a lot of that dirt in, you know, kind of built it up I suppose. You almost have to my goodness. And they transported all the Marshallese people um to the smaller islands. Most of the people were on this island. I mean they agreed, I think they were paid quite a bit. We had a maid because then they'd come to work for people and her name was Annie. I was such a little kid, but she would come over and you know, I guess do stuff. And remember she always had one of those big almost like a machete looking okay, chopping everything coconuts and the different things.

(SE) So yeah, you thought you were sheltered?

(SR) when I came here. I was more sheltered probably than people here had known. So much freedom sure around from a young age and walked all over the place and but

(SE) freedom to you than they saw that as their normal way of life. But then you had so many more experiences just being out of the state.

(SR) I would have, yeah, I would have seen a lot more of the country, things like that and maybe had those types of experiences and perhaps was resented for it. You know, in small towns and you're from a small town. They often get very puffed up with self-importance. They're just a small town in, in, in a big city, just a city. I mean it's nothing to take offense over. People get offended over. They know, but we're bigger than Neche and we're our team's better than, you know, Walhalla. and I was like what's the big

(SE) Yeah, I went when I went to elementary in Rugby and then went to Towner so that was a six mile move for my family. But my gosh I was seen as an outsider.

(SR) you an outsider because you

(SE) exactly I was an outsider. There's a little bit of what and I knew these people so I can't imagine what it would be like being from all the places that you came from.

(SR) Yeah. And the interesting thing was for adults, you know, the town girl. Yeah. There's some competition there that's understandable but a shop owner or a teacher to hold a prejudice one from somewhere else.

(SE) Oh is odd to me it's very odd. I don't know that that would get by today.

(SE) So yeah, we've just been talking about what youth life was like back here in the early 70's a little bit. I'm doing a research project and how that memory changes how people view the Cold War. So that's why I'm up here asking questions.

(DR) Oh, okay. That's why the missile bases were here.

(SR) Did you feel back when you were in high school that we were more of a target? Because there was a missile that, I mean, did that ever occur to you? Did you get stories from

your dad that made you a little bit more worried? Because that was the perspective, I had that most of you guys didn't, you didn't think about it?

(DR) No, we didn't give it much thought,

(SE) Right? And I grew up not very far away, right next to a base full of bombers. In Minot I didn't think about it much growing up either.

(SR) So that would they want to take this place out, right?

(SE) You hear nukes all the time, people talk about it, they say it's dangerous. But I taught over in Munich, and I would drive by the large complex pyramid over there and just think how, how people go by this every day, and they don't think of the Cold War every time they drive by it. Well, when I ask around, I get stories like we're talking about now of new people, some being part of a community, some prejudices.

(SE) Sure. Yeah. I could imagine you're hearing getting an earful of that once in a while. So that perspective is what I'm up here looking for. I mean, it's just basically my thesis project for my master's degree and I've been chewing on this for a while and just seemed like such an interesting topic to dig into.

(SR) You know, what's really funny is, I mean, I got the brunt of it being really outside, but my kids being rural versus town even felt it, you know, for getting off the bench on a sport or this was the town kids, It's people that knew the coach and hung out with the teachers and you know, so you really were aware of that too.

(SE) Oh, absolutely. Because I was a country kid.

(SR) So there you go. There was, that's what our kids had. Just, I don't think it was because Dale married me because after that he was a Ratchenski enriches case has always been here, but always been wrong.

(SR) Sure. So, the small town where I'm at now it's actually shifted and the town folks are the ones that are kind of like, are you? Uh, yeah, because my kids being town kids, they were kind of looked at as outsiders from all these rural kids that only wore cowboy boots and jeans.

(SR) That's interesting. So, because kids are almost like complex kids. People think, well you're rural, you all know each other. No, he's 15 miles this way. I'm over here, we're on the catwalk to anybody's house. But Shane and I were talking about how there was a perception from the town that we all came into. Like we all moved here from, everyone came from New Jersey, and we all knew each other. I didn't know a single person, not a single kid when I moved in here and neither did any of the other kids, but you guys' sort of thought, oh, you're all complex, you all know each other? No.

(SE) Is that pretty accurate? Is that what you felt when they moved in?

(DR) Well? Yeah, I guess we always thought they might, you know each other. Yeah, they would kind of make friends because it was easier for them to make friends with each other.

(SR) Yeah. except was the opposite sexes to each other.

(SE) That makes sense now. Did you? Because you came from other bases? Did you experience that on other bases? Only here?

(SR) Only here. That's right. Because Kwajalein was a base itself, there was no inside outside or anywhere else. Maybe just dad went in there to White Sands, you know, you had people all over the place here, we came on moss and just bloomed the whole town.

(SE) That was because you mentioned that before that it was probably a percentage issue to yeah, there's a percentage issue. Half the city is suddenly new.

(SR) Your class went from 40 to 87, right? 15, whatever.

(DR) Yeah. The population didn't double, but at least 50% more.

(SE) Right, and that's what I've been finding in cavalier in Langdon. It was more significant. So, I had some conversations there with some people that I did this morning. And it's just it's been really an interesting topic to dig into.

(SR) Did you talk to anybody in Langdon in my position? Not a not someone that came with. Not someone that was a complex kid.

(SR) Oh shoot.

(DR) Because probably hard to find.

(SR) Well and there's a couple but it moved.

(SE) I talked to Carol Goodman. She's the one that was she's in charge of the job development authority that just purchased the structure and they're going to work to change it into a data center because I thought I didn't know where that idea came from. So, I wanted to ask about that and I asked about it and I guess it makes sense because it was a data center because of what your dad did it. That's exactly what it was. So that's what they're trying to do again. So, I visited her about that because she worked for Western Electric, but she was from Milton.

(SR) It's like Mayo's um I mean Saddam oh she, she became a Mayo that you were mentioned to you Barb um they were from New Town originally, I mean they lived all over, just like us, but they actually were from North Dakota, so they jumped at the chance to come back to North Dakota. Where is it was a new state for us?

(SE) when I swing back through Fargo, I'm probably going to have to look them up and ask some questions. Um and then I met with Janet Shell who was in charge of the reunion that they had in 2013 where I don't know, maybe you didn't hear about it,

(SR) I guess I didn't hear about it.

(SE) That seems to me that seems strange to Because yeah, they had a reunion to bring up a bunch of, I think there's about 150 people that came up from all different parts for reunion over by Nekoma. But see that's what I've been finding interesting is it's almost like the Cavalier complex became almost like in some ways a socially separate structure than the Nakoma missile base.

(SR) So, and that's because before we didn't know each other, so we're not going to know in Nekoma either.

(SE) Exactly. So, before people mixed, they had bowling alleys and

(SR) dad was at Concrete.

(SE) and that's before I met with Doug, I was under the assumption that, well, there was kind of a, you know, a sharing of culture, social communication. But no, it seems like both. Like from this for instance, I would think that couple that met because of that. I mean, I don't know if they didn't have you associated with, it didn't get you in touch about that reunion.

(SR) Right. Exactly.

(SE) And see that. Has there ever been a complex kid's reunion up here?

(SR) No, I have been contacted when there's like an all-school reunion? Like, do you know where? So and so ended up, I'm trying to just get everybody from this class, something like that. But nothing to do with complex more to do with the great high school. Okay. Um, maybe it's something I should try, but I don't know how you get them back here.

(DR) at least 14. Um. Oh, at least.

(SE) In the city you were in the same grade? Oh, that's fun.

(SR) Yeah. In grade school, we had really started dating our senior year.

(DR) We had a little bit of juniors, so they were a population wiser or more adults there than there were kids because there's a lot of people, right? But Our class only grew by 14 that it grew by more than that. I thought we were, we were the biggest class, but maybe some of the other's groups graduated 86, but we had one of the juniors' graduates with us because they didn't want to move to a new school. So, they kind of stepped up. I think we have two maybe one or two that would have graduated the following year, but did you know their best so that they could have got 50% who wants to be a senior at a new school senior?

(SE) Oh, sure. That's what I found like a boy interviewed Janet Schell. She grew up just kitty corner to the structure. The big structure. So, her experience growing up was quite a bit different because she always had that over her shoulder and here. Well, we didn't, you don't see that at all really.

(SR) So they all commute to it. That's an interesting division. So that is the shadow of it. Exactly.

(SE) That's kind of what I've been angling at is the shadow of this structure behind me and I'll introduce it like that, that this thing is always looming over people's shoulders in the area, but they're not thinking about the weird shape, they're not thinking about some conspiracy or aliens or all the things that I thought when I first came across it.

(DR) I've never been in it.

(SR) Oh yeah, that's I don't even know if it was ever in it because...

(SE) I read about square dancing there but see now what I'm reading like that the Guardian, I am reading about what people here have been doing. It was it was just two years of the newspaper that there, the newsletter that they published out there. This person played sports with these people. And now I'm trying to remember if so, I remember them mentioning the

people living in Cavalier, but I don't remember if they were reporting on it the same way, so that's something I'm going to have to double check.

(SR) Okay. I don't remember dad ever mentioning any type of newsletter at, you know, it doesn't mean there wasn't one. Um, but he did a lot with people he worked with, but he also, he was very into sports also. Baseball probably comes across his name a few times. Norbert, Dietz. D I e t z. That's my maiden's name.

(SE) Okay. Yeah, I'll check that cause I'm going to read through them all and do a write up of just how well, because I, I think that that's interesting how those communities' kind of intermingled even though, you know, the town saw them as outsiders. But then as you said, it only took a couple of months before they saw that as, uh, oh, hey, maybe they're going to be a little bit more permanent. We're going to have an explosion of our infrastructure, our tax base, our schools are.

(SR) especially businesspeople started to see the advantages. Teachers, not so much.

(SE) See I as a teacher, I love having kids with different perspectives.

(SR) You would think right? Absolutely. Oh gosh. Could you tell us something new? But no, that was not the normal attitude.

(SE) "Let's see how much she knows" attitude?

(SR) We'll show her this morning.

(SE) What was your view of that that we talked about? That? You hear that? Gosh, I want to, I can't remember 75. I want to stay around there. So, I started getting close to 74,

(SR) I had to been at least at the earliest 75 because there was no mention of it when dad was still here and he left um, halfway through 75 because I graduated in 75. So maybe that was,

you know, if it was, it wasn't mentioned in the household. But um, we'll see. And I kind of, they had missiles for a bit after I left, didn't they? After mom left too from what I understand.

(DR) They kept track when they actually just shut it down. Right.

(SE) From what I understand they did keep nukes on for a while. But I was wondering could you shed light on what you guys were thinking when that happened? Were you're not thinking about it at all where you are just always another place I had to stay in my life before I went to college.

(SR) Yeah. I think of a kid. Your world is your activities and the people you're with. No other than a few things from my dad where I was aware of like “oh good. There's a plan if something happens.” But I don't think it was just uh you know I didn't lose sleep over. It looks like as an adult you would now when I hear there's Chinese troops working in Canada. I mean they are only 15 miles away. Are they going to come this way? If things go south as an adult, you worry more about it.

(SR) Cold Wars and things and my dad probably worried more about it because he lived it. And I think with the base it was mostly a treaty could be signed and it could be closed tomorrow. I think that's kind of the way they operated. So, it could just be based here or there would fall out of favor and then the next person would want to open up a lot of that. It was political and what they could get open. What state.

(SE) What do you guys do you guys feel any Connection specifically to the Cold War? Now, looking back on all of this, do you have any? I don't know, let's say a different view on that whole situation. Besides it just brings you up here.

(SR) Well, I know what affected that. It must have been after that treaty then. Um Bell Telephone Laboratories which used to be in missile guidance got out of it and he ended up

working kind of in the telephone industry. He hated it because they didn't do what he had done his whole life. And I suppose that kind of thing shut down then as they didn't need the structures, you know, to the extent that they had them. I mean we still have them here hopefully, but not like we did Bell Communications. That's really interesting laboratories. Yeah. It got out of missile guidance and went, I guess into telephone. He didn't like that. I tell you retired.

(SE) It's a lot less flashy.

(SR) Right. So yeah, I think his last missile guidance was when he was here and then when he went back to New Jersey kind of went out of it.

(SE) Okay, that's great.

(SR) But that would be everyone would be the Western electric people. Everybody Right. That would have affected them.

(SE) Sure. Both besides the ones that stayed behind. Right.

(SE) I decided to make a new life here, didn't I? Like these guys came in and kind of set it up and got everything going. But didn't they go to military for a while where from what I understand there was originally just a big push where they got basically everybody that they could get from the state to do concrete and road construction and because I mean I throw a rock in my family and I'll hit a few people that were over here working. I had a family member died working on the road crew up here on the missile site and just a freak accident. No fell I think they accelerated that. He didn't know they didn't know he was on the back, fell off. Just work. Yeah. The things that happened when you have big infrastructure projects and then from what I understand after the infrastructure was built then the people from Bell Labs, the people from Western Electric came into focus on the nitty gritty and then they would there be a group of those people staying behind that would then have army people come in to and they would learn

from the I don't know if you call them when I was in the service we would call them contractors because you're working with the military but you are civilian and making way more money.

(SR) Laboratories and Western. They were contracted by the government.

(SE) Your dad wasn't an officer, he was…

(SR) no he was in the Air force early on in his life but not with that term. Yeah. Okay. It was on missile bases but a private company.

(SE) Okay. And that's exactly what I was looking for and uh well then if is there anything either of you could think of that would be interesting. I might be in touch later if I have more questions, but I haven't been taking very long because it's I have the research done and I've just been kind of making sure I'm not wrong because nobody's really said I'm completely wrong.

(SR) I think what's interesting now is enough time has passed that people here wouldn't even know there was a complex there now and that that had happened you know how as time goes on you know if you're our age you know and you lived in but you know a lot of people move in work at the bus plant, work at the windows plant in Grafton whatever buildings left two buildings left the only ones that were made correctly.

(SE) The people coming up for harvest help. I mean that's all, there's always workers now coming and going. So yeah, I would say it's probably it's not as isolated as it was back then when you guys came.

(SR) Yeah and it's a neighborhood now, it's just town people that live in duplexes down there. I drive down at once in a while and it's so strange it just seems to be all the same building, Building, building, building, Yeah, each building has its own little shed. There was a rec hall which is kind of still deserted there.

(DR) I don't think they built those for 30 some millions.

(SE) Oh gosh, it was, it was a long road. We went walking and went driving on and yeah, we looked at that rec center too and I thought that was amazing. When I read that they built a rec center in Langdon, they built a rec center here. They built a rec center, different things and then that's what the Guardian has been. I've been coming across in The Guardian, is that well, there will be an event here. There'll be an event here, an event here and that's been really interesting to track. So, I'll be writing about all of that. But if you can ever think of anything else, I'll probably definitely ask some more questions at some point.

APPENDIX B: PODCAST SCRIPT

The Missile People. Part 1

Cold War nuclear deployment brought the front lines of the conflict to the countryside of North Dakota. Offensive and defensive weapons painted the surest target over rural residents that found themselves living alongside deployed weapons of mass destruction. Maintaining full operational capacity for less than 5 months, the 5-year lifespan of the western world's only operational anti-ballistic nuclear missile system left a mark on the local area. The distinctive stature of the pyramidic radar array was designed with the emotionless calculation of maintaining operation in the event of a nuclear attack. The system, designated SAFEGUARD, consisted of a series of startlingly massive radar arrays, one hundred nuclear missiles, and advanced digital computing power that worked in symphony to detect, track, plot, and fire nearby long-range SPARTAN and high-speed SPRINT nuclear missiles to intercept an incoming attack. The explosion and resultant electromagnetic pulse could disable anything short of a full Soviet attack and offered some measure of defensive security in a hopelessly insecure situation. The construction, equipping, and operation of the system demanded a significant labor force. Many positions were available to local workers on teams constructing infrastructure, but the more technical aspects of the system required the relocation of a considerable number of civilian military contractor families from various military duty stations across the world to rural Northeast North Dakota. These technicians and their families represented a significant change to many aspects of daily life for residents, yet the positive nature of the relationship makes the memory a true realization of "North Dakota Nice." Both the physical and emotional remains of the Cold War are juxtaposed on the landscape.

Unmatched in size and scale, the otherworldly remains of the Missile Site Radar epitomize a nuclear hardened design, while the emotional memory provides a contrast to the traditionally understood Cold War experience.

As it related to many of the residents of the rural Great Plains, the most direct impact of the Cold War was economic. Increased defense spending represented a financial lifeline in the volatile agricultural region, concerns present on the national level were displaced by more immediate issues in everyday life. Although defense dependency is an accurate lens through which to view the Cold War on the Great Plains, it fails to fully account for the unique circumstances that can create an impact beyond economics. Evolution of the historical field encourages investigation and allows us to "…engage individual as well as collective memories." These collective memories preserve a story of two communities in tenuous circumstances creating positive memories that are attached to the physical remains of the Safeguard system.

Over time, the story of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex has grown beyond its Cold War shadow. An eighty foot tall, truncated pyramid remains on the site that brought thousands of workers to live and participate in local communities. The construction and operation of the complex had an unignorable effect in the local area and made the Cold War relevant in a visual, economic, and social way. Initial strains on infrastructure and patience were eased with the eventual allocation of federal funding and the benefits to the economy soon became evident. The largest increase in population for the region surrounding the system was projected to peak at eight thousand new residents in an area where one of the larger towns, Langdon, struggled to maintain a population of 2,100 in 1970. Among the workers and support personnel brought to the area were electronic technicians for the several engineering firms tasked with bringing the SAFEGUARD system online. These workers and their families represented the

majority of the 2,200 new permanent residents that integrated into the local social society after temporary workers had moved on. These residents became known then and now as the Missile People. The local residents describe the Missile People as intelligent and vibrant additions to the community. Their positive memories are powerful enough to displace the traditional conceptions of the Cold War experience as a part of a terrifying nuclear arms race. The remains of the Missile Site Radar remind the residents of something distinctly different than nuclear war. Although Cold War experiences varied regionally, its effects were felt by the residents through the way it is remembered and the effect it has left on the physical landscape.

The historical memory of the Great Plains was described by historian Walter Prescott Webb as one shaped by a "portrayal of high adventure on the one hand and intense suffering on the other." The populations of western settlers brought into rural North Dakota outpaced its production capability; this basic characteristic of the Great Plains influence the actions and behaviors of the people living there. Hardy and prideful in their self-sufficiency, they balk at government spending while also courting federally funded defense projects. Webb notes the tendency of people to relocate, avoiding the worst of the arid conditions that easily and often turned to drought. Although originally the primary source of income for the area affected by the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system, agriculture's uncertainty led to an easy acceptance of federal projects. This common life experience on the northern Great Plains created a shared culture that still is present in the population today. Residents of Webb's "Great American Desert" were accustomed to adaptation both physically and socially. The phrase "North Dakota Nice" was the approach of the regional populace to new residents, and these new people in a cold land found themselves in warm and welcoming company.

Local collective memory offers a means to orient oneself in a historical moment. National connections to that local history contextualize our understanding of those national events, and the concept of "those with whom we belong" is formed on that basis. Interconnected systems of inquiry lead the historical participant to further understand the context of their local history and subsequently their own place in that national story. Managing this public resource, according to historian David Glassberg, "…is inevitably an effort to manage the multiplicity of environmental perceptions, values, and meanings attached to a place."

This thesis focuses on the memories attached locally to the remains of the SAFEGUARD antiballistic missile system. The pyramid, visible for miles around with its unique aesthetic, echoes past Cold War fears. Yet, when asked residents, will fondly recall memories that emotionally contrast with traditionally understood Cold War concerns of nuclear conflict. The shift to local histories prioritizes local irregularities in the Cold War experience, and those surrounding the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex show how memories can run counter to assumptions.

The ownership and planned reuse of the Missile Site Radar give additional context for a regional memory that is interwoven in the local communities. Abandoned, repaired, and sold, the Missile Site Radar structure poses a unique challenge to the question of reuse. A longtime subject of interest for Cavalier County Job Development Authority, the purchase of the site concludes one plan and begins another with the goal of launching an economic boom for the region once again.

Central to this thesis is *The Guardian,* a newsletter from the complex that detailed the involvement of the Missile People with the local community through sports, fundraisers, and recreation. The documented interactions of varying subjects display the formation of social

connections month by month. To detail the memory of the Missile People, interviews conducted in the summer of 2021 describe the Missile People and their impact on the local community. Conclusions drawn from my examination of this information are not meant to reflect the Cold War experience for any other than those living and working in the area affected by the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system. The story of the physical and emotional remains give context to the lived Cold War experience in the shadow of the largest pyramid in North Dakota.

World governments have contended with a shockingly different future than the one envisioned before the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War, there were two new defensive concerns in the minds of military planners: the new nuclear weapons that presented unparalleled destructive capabilities, and the numerous methods used to deliver them. As space emerged as an increasingly relevant theater, military leaders became focused on the development of defensive capabilities that could counter a possible launch of nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles. As each military branch adapted to the use of nuclear weapons specific to their missions, competition brought advanced defensive options.

The U.S. Army, utilizing propulsion breakthroughs generated by Operation PAPERCLIP, created a feasible countermeasure to a nuclear attack, meeting nuclear explosions with nuclear explosions. The installation of MINUTEMEN subterranean silos in the area surrounding Grand Forks, North Dakota led to the selection of the flat dry wheatlands of northeast North Dakota for placement of the nation's on SAFEGUARD complex in the late 1960's. Construction created rapidly increasing demands on infrastructure, yet there were no existing avenues for the federal government to assist local communities with the massive influx of personnel. The Army initially identified three specific areas for concern: housing, labor relations, and minority hiring in the

construction process. An already limited availability of housing was soon stretched even further. Since water access in the region had always been challenging, contracts involving related infrastructure development were among the first signed in late spring, 1970. This increase required the tapping of the nearby Fordville aquifer and the construction of a system of three booster stations moving water through over fifty-eight miles of piping from ten wells, a system in use decades after the closure of the complex.

Labor concerns like the one that had delayed SAFEGUARD construction in Montana were now part of a nationwide focus as labor unions identified the program, with its projected eleven additional complexes, as a major employer as more sites began construction. The long commute coupled with the inhospitable weather conditions affected pay in ways that locating a site in a different region would not. The relatively high per diem and milage reimbursement costs for the sometimes one-hundred-mile daily commute drew the attention of labor groups. Unions in both North Dakota and Montana fought for increases in overtime and general wages, finding successes in North Dakota but being a factor in the cancelation of the Montana site. Unions saw these projects as an exemplary sign of potential upcoming experiences in additional states as new sites began construction across the northern border of the United States. Inability to reach agreement over wages stalled a sister SAFEGUARD structure on the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana by fourteen months, a delay that eventually proved fatal to the site.

The housing crunch, foreseen and, at the time, unavoidable, eventually resulted in the military acquisition of two mobile home parks and 180 mobile homes in both Langdon and Cavalier. After 115 mobile homes were made available, the problem was alleviated but not resolved as minority workers were required to meet the terms of the government contract. The challenges met at the Mickelsen Complex could be expected in future construction projects,

creating ideal circumstances for pilot programs of varying effects. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance utilized the construction project to attempt expansion of the 1967 Philadelphia Plan that successfully integrated construction unions in Pennsylvania. under Federal contract were required to make a “good faith effort” to maintain a 6-10 minority worker status that proved challenging to reach. The entire state only contained a 2% minority population, primarily consisting of Native Americans living in distant reservations. Cavalier County contained no eligible minority status workers. In the nearby Grand Forks, Trail, and Steel counties, there were only 168 people that could have been considered a minority. Union negotiation and realities of the situation resulted in compromise acceptable enough to keep construction moving.

The material projects of the site also required infrastructure investment. Over 238,000 cubic yards of concrete weighing nearly 500,000 tons were required just for the construction of the Perimeter Acquisition Radar and Missile Site Radar structures, a challenge complicated by the lack of a suitable aggregate in North Dakota. These challenges were met with a $150,000 investment in construction of a suitable rail spur at nearby Hensel. A lack of contractor applicants highlighted the challenges of the location and hindered qualified candidates attempts to bid on the project. In the end there were only three bids from contractor groups willing to take on the monumental task. The complicated nature of the complex required 2,262,200 pages of drawings and 4,340,000 pages of technical specifications, with an abridged two-hundred-pound version for individual contractors. Bids were accepted on March 26th, 1970, and the winning bid of $137,858,850 was awarded to Morrison- Knudsen & Associates in what was the single largest U.S. Army Corp of Engineers contract up until that time. On April 6th, 1970, a crowd consisting of 200 onlookers, 5 mayors from the various local towns, state senator Richard Forkner, and

project supervisors took part in a groundbreaking ceremony that preceded the excavation. Five inches of snow only offered a minor inconvenience to the six day-a-week, ten-hour shifts that took place in the first two months. Construction and operation of the system completed two goals; to serve as a proof of concept for eleven identical systems to be placed across the northern border of the United States as well as to act in a functional capacity protecting the Air Force's MINUTEMAN II missile silo fields planted alongside the wheat crops and pastures of North Dakota. The large pyramid shape of the Missile Site Radar has been the foundation of interest and conspiracy since its construction. The scale and design, utilitarian and yet containing a distinctive Cold War aesthetic, is visible for miles around as it harshly contrasts with the rolling canola fields surrounding the nearby quiet farming communities.

The manpower required to operate and maintain the system marked a significant population increase for the immediate area surrounding the complex and the nearby communities of Nekoma, Langdon, and Cavalier. The office for the Area Engineer was first placed in the Langdon Masonic Temple, establishing the presence that would be the first of many connections with the community. Construction of the site presented challenges familiar to any local. Harsh 40° below zero winters often created blizzard conditions that shortened the construction season and shut down work attempted during the winter. The roads, warped and pitted from the natural effects of the spring thaw, were undeveloped and rough from seasonal farm equipment usage. The condition of the main roads created a severe bottleneck in the transport of the incredibly substantial amounts of building material that would be needed for the contract.

By October of 1970 the workforce numbered 2,200, and by the fall of 1972 there were 3,200 people employed at the site. Soon construction was partially complete, and the workforce was cut by a third as the negotiations over the future of the nation's nuclear arsenal and anti-

ballistic missile technology took the population and government spending away from the area as quickly as it had arrived. The manpower involved required the construction of on base amenities that made the facility somewhat self-sufficient. In addition to maintenance buildings for the weapons stored on the base, there was housing for single workers and families, and both enlisted and commissioned personnel. There was also a medical dispensary, a religious chapel, and recreational facilities. The local area began feeling the impact of the project as early as 1970 when some of the preliminary workers were hired from the local area. A firm solution to nuclear defense never emerged at the national level and consecutive presidential administrations (Nixon, Ford, and Carter) negotiated with the Soviet Union over antiballistic measures. The significant increase of munitions required to expand the SAFEGUARD program to its end goal would create a substantial increase in the nuclear arms race. The outcome of each international negotiation between nuclear powers could mean the difference between an economic boom or a bust for those economically tied to the project.

In Langdon, employment opportunities increased by 47.1% from 1969-1973 while the rest of the state experienced a growth of 8.3%. Over the course of two years Langdon saw a 40% increase in local business sales. Nearby Pembina County saw an employment increase of 22% while the influx of jobs and workers increased the Cavalier County average income by 200%. The area saw nearly 70 new businesses and 45 expansions as well as massive increases to the infrastructure to support it. The impact of the boom cycle was more rapid than most defense projects. Local communities saw little tax revenue; trailer parks and federal housing that was exempt from taxes housed many workers. Federal assistance in the form of impact payments to local city governments softened the blow that otherwise would have challenged the rapid growth needed to construct the facility on schedule.

Available housing on site or in nearby trailer parks was limited, and the local communities soon had Missile People living among them. The centralized location and proximity to the Nekoma site made Langdon experience a doubling of population during the construction and operational life of the site, and a housing shortage was an expected consequence. Relief came in the form of bipartisan legislation sponsored by senators Milton Young from North Dakota and Mike Mansfield of Montana, representatives of the areas that would be impacted by the construction of the antiballistic missile system. The Young-Mansfield Amendment appropriated fourteen million dollars to both North Dakota and Montana to alleviate the financial burden the communities would experience during the construction phases of the complexes.

As the workers for the sites arrived, their families followed. School enrollment more than doubled with worker's children attending local schools. Although population booms present challenges for children moving to new areas, the children successfully integrated socially and academically into the existing school systems. The Missile People, so labeled by the locals, brought both challenges and benefits to the area. Concerns about housing aside, the overall impression of the defense system, its workers, and its impact on the community was overwhelmingly positive in both the near and long term. The opinions of the local community were formed not just from the economic impact of the site but also the way the workers integrated themselves into the local community. This occurred in ways that not only endeared them to the local population but also left a positive impression of an unavoidable process that, while not delivering on the promise of long-term jobs in the community, helped create a positive view in the population because of the community participation efforts of the workers.

Negotiations for the elimination of the SAFEGUARD Complex were held between the United States and the Soviet Union before the ground had been broken on its construction. Once operational, its functional defense of Americas second strike capabilities in the face of certain nuclear attack had sufficiently shifted the balance of power just enough to negotiate for its own demise. The promised 2,200 workers that were to be a mainstay of the local economic picture vanished faster than the missiles being pulled from the ground. Infrastructure constructed to support the population became part of the lasting landscape. Trailer parks and a water system still in use today become part of the local story, one that includes a period of population boom that left a favorable view in the minds of the local population. Friendships were made and locals became close with the new arrivals. The schools, planning for expansion after hiring new teachers, had to contend with the rapid loss of a substantial portion of their student body. The nature of the defense work had revolving personnel that would arrive, work for a brief period, then leave for some other location. The consideration of that memory focuses on the human story of the Missile People, their lives, and the way that their involvement in the community shaped the memories attached to their Cold War experience. The story of the site and of the physical remains reflect the relationship of the nation with the Cold War. Pieces were sorted out and sold, housing and structures moved, and wires pulled along with the components they connected, leaving an empty concrete husk that shifted from the world's premier technological wonder and a massive weight on the nuclear balance to a minor piece of local history, a memory with an eighty-foot reminder just 12 miles south of Langdon. The Cold War on the northern Great Plains often takes the form of underground missile silos, which are out of sight and easy to put out of mind. Contrast that aspect of the Cold War to the Missile Site Radar at the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, which is an empty nuclear hardened monolith that both dominates the

landscape and serves as an ever-present reminder of the nuclear threat both past and present to all that drive past.

The construction and operation of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, an effort that cost billions of federal dollars and thousands of military personnel, government contractors, and their families, led to predictable issues in the surrounding communities. Local schools were overwhelmed with new students and utilities struggled to maintain service in the face of the new demand. Thousands of Missile People moved into the local communities as construction began and was completed, and over time created long lasting friendships with the people who lived there. The 1974 SALT agreement limited the development of antiballistic missile systems and changed the complex from an advanced prototype and model for a network of future sites to a monumental relic of the Cold War decaying as it shifts hands in a cycle of reuse. Ronald Reagan's move to modernize the American defensive infrastructure stirred interest in the site again as it was treaty-bound as the only location for such a system. The excessive cost to get the site operational and nuclear treaty negotiations left the site abandoned.

SAFEGUARD represented the culmination of several steps of testing and deployments. The radars, computers, and launching systems all needed technicians to install and operate the system as well as training for new workers as they arrived. Previous stations in other places were only comprised of a small portion of the system for testing, and each location was among a larger population base to diffuse the social effects. Deployment in North Dakota was different; thousands of workers and their families moved to a rural and relatively isolated area. Once promising a temporary addition of over eight thousand people to the area when construction began in early 1970, the missile site closure in 1976 resulted in a loss of population that was just as rapid. Planned infrastructure growth and housing projects that were originally constructed

with the belief in a larger population base to support were among the challenges associated with the SAFEGUARD site's closure. The permanent 2,200 workers would have supported the employment of teachers, policemen, firefighters, and additional social improvements that are common with large federal long-term projects.

The cancellation of a sister site near the Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana before it was complete and after months of union negotiation and delay, was likewise panned as a waste of taxpayer dollars and nuclear posturing for the sake of the arms race. Public sentiment was dissatisfied with the closure of the site in North Dakota, yet social ties and close relationships remained. Shared interests and community involvement connected residents of the area with those that were new.

Gatherings that were held by newly formed social groups offered outlets for workers with uniquely stressful responsibility as well as endeared the workers and their families to the locals, relationships celebrated with a 2013 reunion held in Nekoma. Rather than holding harsh feelings and hostility towards the memory of the workers and their families leaving so suddenly, favorable opinions were formed in the minds of the people of the area. The Missile People did not isolate themselves, rather they joined the community seeking new experiences and new relationships that would result in a public memory that extends past the towering reminder of the constant threat of nuclear war and the sudden arrival and sudden loss of a sizable portion of the taxpaying population. Their friendships, built through community involvement in sports, clubs, dances, and social gatherings became associated with the memory of the construction of the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex. What could easily have become a negative view of the site, and its past has in fact been softened by the sense of community experienced by the Missile People and the residents who welcomed them.

The question of what should happen to the pyramid on the northern plains of rural North Dakota is unique. The term adaptive reuse is an architectural approach to reusing physical sites in ways other than their intended use and with the historical implications considered. This evolving and emerging discipline gives new perspectives on the Cold War in areas such as Denmark, the Korean Demilitarized Zone, and the Albanian hillsides. Each offers a distinct study of the role that physical remains of the Cold War have in the formation of a national identity. Efforts in preservation, or lack thereof, reflect the national Cold War experience and priority in preservation efforts. While nature erodes untended monuments, some like the Missile Site Radar and the memory of the Missile People endure. Solutions have been suggested and attempted, but until 2022 none have ultimately proven worthy of investment. An immediate idea was to use the housing to create a modern style correctional facility that would house inmates with the elderly, enacting a sort of geriatric cohabitation correctional rehabilitation facility that didn't proceed past the planning stages. The site had been used for vocational training for an abbreviated time, but the physical condition of the site had suffered the effects of time. The few buildings that hadn't been removed, collapsed. The compartmentalized nature of the SAFEGUARD system meant not every component was resigned to the same fate. The Perimeter Acquisition Radar tracks space bound objects and maintains a prominent role in American space defense at the Cavalier Space Force Station. The buildings that made up the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex were moved and salvaged until only the Missile Site Radar, silos cooling towers, and a couple of dilapidated guard stations remain.

The Army maintained ownership of the property until auctioned in 2012. While drawing the attention of the local Job Development Authority and from wealthy doomsday preppers, a winning bid of $530,000 was placed by a representative of the Spring Creek Hutterite colony

from South Dakota that was eying the site for expansion. After the purchase, the Army completed a six-million-dollar environmental cleanup of polluted water that had accumulated in the silos and in the Missile Site Radar structure. Through the years, attempts at purchasing the site by the Cavalier County Job Development Authority were frustrated. The Spring Creek Hutterites saw the population or sale of the site as both having a positive impact on the future of the colony and planned to eventually use the standing structures as temporary housing until newer housing was constructed. Local zoning regulations involving livestock had the colony lean more towards eventual sale. With no plans for the Missile Site Radar structure, the Hutterite colony eventually worked out a proposal with the Job Development Authority; they would sell the Missile Site Radar structure separately while continuing with their plans to farm and develop the surrounding area into a new colony. The belief being that the Hutterites could use the Complex land for their goals while allowing the Cavalier County Job Development Authority to reuse the site for the historical and economic benefit of the area.

The Missile Site Radar came under the ownership of the Cavalier County Job Development Authority on June 23, 2017, with a $600,000 dollar grant from the North Dakota Department of Commerce. The Job Development Authority has, with the help of consultants, settled on seeking investors to adapt the structure into a data center, utilizing the existing infrastructure in a similar fashion to its original design. In an interview of the project lead of the Cavalier Job Development Authority, Carol Goodmen described a recurring trend in the reuse of Cold War-era military installations. Originally envisioning an industrial park able to leverage the iconic imagery of the Missile Site Radar. AECOM, an engineering consulting firm familiar with Cold War structures reviewed the site and turned the Job Development Authority toward

utilizing the structure as a data center. Common in the reuse of these Cold War Structures, fortifications are seeing new life in the world of data storage and server farms.

After acquiring the site in 2017, the Cavalier County Job Development Authority sought development bids and soon found suitable reuse of the Missile Site Radar. On July 25th, 2022, North Dakota governor Doug Burgum announced the purchase of the pyramid structure by Bitzero Blockchain Inc, a data center firm that plans to develop the site into the center of future North American energy projects. Bitzero's planned five hundred-million-dollar investment was designed to turn the Missile Site Radar into a two-hundred-megawatt data center dubbed The Pyramid Data Center, soon to be joined by graphene battery factory and the accompanying distribution infrastructure. The high energy demands will be met with nearby renewable energy sources as well as harnessing the accompanying heat dissipation through an above ground greenhouse, representing a combination of technological advancements that mirror the site's militaristic history.

Successful adaptive reuse in military installations has several unique challenges. Some, like the closure of the Fort Benjamin Harrison Army Base outside of Indianapolis Indiana, provide an opportunity for growth. Community cooperation and meticulous planning assisted the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority in its goal of reusing the installation. The need for a social gathering area was well suited for the site, and the conversion to its current state was popular through the process. Similarly, the Cavalier County Job Development Authority set out with the explicit goal of adapting the site to benefit the community. A clear goal, financial support, and market forces have made the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex relevant to the economic discussion once again.

The Missile People. Part II

The development of the SAFEGUARD system required several different contracted groups in duty stations stretching from New Jersey to the Marshall Islands, each stop presented a new experience for the workers and families that were shuffled through the different developmental stages of the system The ultimate form of the SAFEGUARD system required cooperation from seven different corporations and the US. Military. Workers and their families were accustomed to moving and different combinations of workers moved through various stages of project development. This often created a group of people that were aware of each other but did not function as "a community." Contracts expired, missions shifted, and people moved in and out of the program every few years.

Perceptions of locals were more binary. New people living in the area associated with the site became Missile People and young residents of the housing complex built in Cavalier for incoming workers were called "Complex Kids." Their time in North Dakota exposed them to a unique situation due to the small size of the original population. Previous locations that these families had called home were either more populated or consisting entirely of worker families on isolated military installations. Standing out as an outsider was an unfamiliar feeling. In previous contract locations the workers represented smaller increases to the overall population, less visible and distinctive, while the presence of the Missile People in the rural farming community in northeast North Dakota saw a near doubling in size from Langdon to Cavalier. At first suspicious, the local business, and by proxy the people who economically profited, soon warmed and, although farmers continued farming and the schools continued to run, the growing pains and rapid depopulation accompanying the boom-and-bust cycle left clear marks on the local memory. Many families settled in housing constructed for their use in the communities. The Cavalier

Complex, a row of four-unit houses modeled after one initial unit that still stands today, was a concentration of new residents. The street was full of new people from distant places that brought an interesting taste of the world to the rural town.

The new students represented an exciting addition to the community, and also a testament to the cultural effects of the Cold War. Doug Fisher, a teacher now and a student during the lifespan of the system, remembers a singular "duck and cover" drill with little emotion or connection to the Cold War or the new residents in the community. Contrasting the emotional effect of active shooter drills, Mr. Fischer uses his experience to connect the local Cold War remains to the local history that he shares with his students and providing information to make a connection to the national memory of the Cold War.

During the boom, public schools saw increased enrollment with the new arrivals and the need for expanding education facilities and adding educators. The SAFEGUARD system promised a consistent supply of federal dollars even after the shock of the initial building phase had passed. Mr. Fisher remembered seeing his graduating class increase by twenty-two, creating a total of eighty-one students. Remembering this growth fondly, he described it as a breath of life for his school, a mixing that brought unique experiences to the students if sometimes at odds with disciplinary standards. In Cavalier, economic impact funds were used to expand and remodel the school as well as provide funding for a public pool. Funding was offered to construct an indoor pool, but the school superintendent, envisioning a potential future with reduced funding and population, declined on the fears of upkeep costs.

The experiences with the Missile People shaped the Cold War memory of the people who lived through it, not by directly reminding them of constant nuclear risk but in spite of it. The primary imprint of the Cold War in the region was the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system,

a more direct and visible reminder than buried silos and collapsing exterior buildings. Rather than relay Cold War concerns into animosity towards this new population, the separation of the Cold War from daily life benefited the relationship between the local community and the newcomers. The locals saw the Missile People as a unified group that became involved in the daily life of the community. Social clubs of all interests either formed to accommodate the increased population or swelled the ranks of ones that already existed. A new sense of community was quickly formed, small town hospitality welcomed the newcomers and soon relationships were created that would remain long after the closure of the base.

Life on the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex was recorded in *The Guardian,* a newsletter that detailed the events and relevant news. Published in it was information about visits from politicians and major personnel changes, records of leisure activity such as sports, travel, and anecdotal stories of community that share a story of a welcoming small-town experience. The Nuclear tension and brinkmanship that brought these technicians and their families to the area also placed unique stresses on them. Community activity through sports and recreation not only brought them together, but also served as a pressure relief valve for people with jobs involving the launch of nuclear weapons. The Cold War, even with the appearance of a massive pyramid, didn't seem to be a concern to many. The memories of an economic and population boom supersede memories of a singular "duck and cover" drill or more national concerns such as communism and nuclear war. Sporting events, talent and fashion shows, and motorcycle clubs found local residents ready to support it and a booming population to fill the ranks.

Recreation centers were constructed in both Langdon and Cavalier to provide a location for many of the social celebrations that the Missile People would host. The Cavalier River Bend Estates Recreation Center opened with the formation of a council formed and a constitution

created to oversee activities and community involvement between the Complex residents and the local citizens.

Local groups welcomed the new arrivals. The local baseball leagues swelled with life, volunteers played and coached both in the community and among the various company leagues that played tournaments right on the site. Various leagues grew along with the population, the American Legion, Babe Ruth, Little League, and T-ball leagues all fielded players from this new community. Once the Langdon community center was complete the Missile People organized an effort to involve as many into the local baseball programs as possible. Nine of the thirteen coaching positions were filled by Missile People, and their efforts were matched with funding from the American Legion, as well as paying for a full-time coaching position to oversee the season. Local children and parents intermingled at these baseball games, sharing an interest that carries across many regions of the United States and its territories. Basketball leagues and tournaments were also common, organized by employer, these teams shared a fierce rivalry that brought local crowds and participants. The 1974 seven team Missile Site Radar spring tournament champion immediately faced a local team of teachers in a charity basketball fundraising game that they lost by just a few points. The Cavalier Country Club golf course saw an influx of new members as the courses were advertised in the site newsletter *The Guardian* as an "…excellent opportunity for WSC employees to participate in group activities and to meet new people." The Complex Managers Tournament saw employees from the Cavalier radar site and the Safeguard Complex compete against each other for the Managers Cup and featured a mulligan hole-in-one on a par three. Langdon had a country club as well, but the grass greens weren't added until 1973, three years after Cavalier's.

The families that came to North Dakota were accustomed to the move, if not the temperature extremes, that were common to their new duty station. Extreme cold was met with adaptation as winter sports involved many from the newly formed communities. The wintry weather didn't deter the many technicians and their families that became enamored with the feeling of a fast sled over fresh snow. Hiking, fishing, and hunting were common as the Missile People took advantage of the natural resources that the area had to offer. Sponsored groups would organize around the recreation center to plan group outings and events. The Ski Club embarked on a day long trip in Manitoba to enjoy the brisk negative twenty-degree weather. The Club received a special presentation from the local Arctic Cat dealership, the fast machines and open prairies offering a unique experience to those willing to try it.

The abundant game drew the huntsman from among the workers, stories of duck hunt camping trips and a successful moose hunt endeared North Dakota to the visitors, and thus the visitors to the locals. One husband and wife hunting expedition encountered a youth named Elmer who had recently embarked on a sleeping bag-only, four-day trek with a faulty rifle. Not fifteen minutes after many ill received warnings Elmer was found with a broken wrist and a discharged rifle, an accident that could have led to dire consequences. Quick first aid turned a serious situation for Elmer into a fun story for their families.

The recreation centers soon became important pieces of the community, serving as a staging area for several teen dances, fundraisers, and other social events. The first large scale gathering at the River Bend Estates Recreation Hall saw over two hundred and fifty visitors that came to enjoy the food, music, and dance hall decorated ala the Waldorf Astoria for the Christmas party. The committee was not prepared for the outpouring of community well-wishers that would stop in to with their new neighbors a Merry Christmas and eventually the

refreshments ran dry. Luckily, as is the small-town fashion, local store owners were more than willing to open what was needed to be opened to carry the party into the early hours of the morning. The very next day the center fed six hundred pancakes to over one hundred and fifty guests to raise money for the children's Christmas play and to reciprocate goodwill to the community. The following New Year's celebration was "one of the most entertaining parties Cavalier has seen."

Organizations, such as the River Bend Riders Motorcycle Club, organized around the center and used its facilities for get together and staging, the Motorcycle Club was able to host thirty-five riders in a race near Concrete, ND. The Riverbend Riders brought home twelve trophies from competitions during the 1973 season, fans and participants drawn from the local area, brought together to celebrate their combined team.

The groups associated with each recreation center would occasionally switch between locations, as the Cavalier Estates Thursday Ladies Group used the Prairie View Estates Recreation Hall to accommodate roughly one hundred women from the area during their "Rainbow of Fashions" luncheon that presented the latest fashions from downtown vendors. Local Scout Troops utilized the recreation centers as places to meet and hold ceremonies. The 1973 Fall Court of Honor celebrated Boy Scouts achievements with awards and service pins for members of the Troop.

River Bend Estates also hosted a kindergarten, started by families of the Missile people due to the lack of educational opportunities for five-year-old children in the local public school system. Under direction of the Department of Public Instruction, twenty-two students from both the Cavalier Complex as well as the city of Cavalier attended kindergarten classes together four

times a week where they also received basic health screenings. A licensed teacher from New York that moved with the construction oversaw the program.

The Site extension Education Program cooperated with the University of North Dakota to offer credit classes to those who would be interested. Meeting at the Langdon High School, the classes would give local residents the opportunity to take a course at will rather than attend a university over a hundred miles away. The recreation centers eventually added small stores of books that could be checked out, with a bookmobile monitoring, replacing, and replenishing the supply of books. Langdon High School began a mini-course program that brought in an expert as an "instructor-for-a-day." Short courses on niche subjects brought workers from the site to interact with the students and demonstrate certain technical skills such as photography.

Fundraisers and benefits were commonly occurring reasons to visit the community recreation centers, such a benefit for a teen injured in a motorcycle accident. Additionally, a pair of luncheons were held that raised five hundred dollars for the Cerebral Palsy Center in Roosevelt, New York. Carol Goodman, editor of *The Guardian* described the event as "…a fine example of what can be accomplished by cooperation between the Cavalier townspeople and the newcomers to the little town with a big heart."

Personnel in Cavalier orchestrated a Varity Show to raise money for the Athletic Field Bleacher Building Fund, music and dancing performed to packed houses over two nights. The money raised was secondary to the goodwill garnered by the unique entertainment. After the design and construction of a vibrating chair from a special request from the nearby Grafton special needs school, the Site I branch of Old North State Chapter No. 79 Telephone pioneers garnered larger interest in the upcoming program of events. New arrivals eager to put their technical skills to use to benefit the community met to discuss areas where they could have the

largest impact. The fifty-six-person club was comprised of only Bell employees, but their efforts aided the community at large.

Understanding the role of the experience in the formation of Cold War memory is a study of the human mind and emotions. The workers and residents were what could be considered the frontline soldiers in a conflict that never started, and where residents housed weapons of mass destruction among their farms and ranches. The startling figure of the Missile Site Radar pyramid projects a bleak finality that has drawn curiosity during this new era of Cold War tourism. Visitors to the area can take pictures from the nearby road that leads to the central site, yet the real story of the SRMC lies more in its lasting impacts on the local communities, and the places where new friendships were made.

Surrounded by neatly cut grass and trimmed road ditches, it is easy to envision the strict air of a military complex of the early 1970's. The recent purchase of the Missile Site Radar is part of a long-term plan to reuse the site to the benefit of the local community. Federal funds invested in clean-up efforts have made the project manageable, and the 200,000 square foot facility has remained empty and abandoned on the horizons well as in the minds of the locals. Two of the original housing complex structures in Cavalier are still occupied while the rest were leveled to make way for a new development. The pyramid structure's striking contrast with the surrounding landscape serves not as a reminder of the risks and dangers of placing a nuclear target in your community, but as a landmark to memories of a different community than what was before and what was after. The experiences of the Missile People and the Complex Kids demonstrates the existence of a unique Cold War history. When considering the history of the area, the most important takeaway is the personal relationships developed. Thus, a series of interviews were conducted in July of 2021. These interviews contextualize circumstances related

to the economic boom period in question. Each is an active participant in the events and in the memory after. From Nekoma to Langdon to Cavalier the effects of the deployment of the SAFEGUARD system are still present in the memories of the local population.

Serving as a consultant with the Cavalier County Job Development Authority, Carol Goodman had a guiding hand in the future of the site. Originally hired by Western Electric to manage community relations on the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex, she oversaw the application for, and received funding opportunities to support, the purchase of the primary Missile Site radar structure. She hopes to eventually open an interpretive site in addition to an economically advantageous reuse project. Carol's memory is of a large population moving into the area and, with few complaints, had an incredibly positive impact on the community. With the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement and the closure of the Safeguard program, Carol remembered "…the sadness and you know they really couldn't believe that this thing was going to be not just terminated as far as SAFEGUARD is concerned, but also that they were not going to do anything with the facility in the future. It was very much not a happy situation, and it was as if things went quiet." Those left behind had to either find employment locally or move. New contract locations and new jobs carried the Missile People to some other part of the world.

Growing up directly adjacent to the site, Janet Schill described her childhood in the rural area. In 2013, Janet assisted with a Missile People Reunion in Nekoma, a gathering that saw 150 travelers visiting the area. Remembering the friendships on farmland adjacent to the land selected for the Safeguard Complex, a young Janet Shill could watch as construction crews brought in thousands of tons of concrete. Janet's small school in Nekoma saw a doubling in size from workers and technicians that decided to settle in the countryside rather than in the local

towns of Langdon and Cavalier. “So having the new students in my class was actually pretty cool because there were only four of us from the local area, it was me and three boys. So, when I had girls moving into my classroom, I made friends.” Janet’s parents, upon hearing the news of the closure, were saddened by the loss of their new neighbors. “I think it was more the devastation or despondency of losing all the friends you made because my mom and dad made many friends out at the site and they would come to our place, we would babysit their kids, we would, they would go snowmobiling together.” Memories of new friends that were truly there for them, even driving a child and her mother to the hospital from a rock-picker accident. Friendships that she made with her new classmates continued for decades, leading to a 2013 MSR reunion in Nekoma. Janet, having a hand in the planning of the event commented “…they were just excited and happy that we got all these people back. And I think what brought them back was their experiences that they had here and the people that they met. And it wasn't always the locals that were here. It was the group of people that worked here. “Whether they were actual military or they were contract workers or the missile people. They were most excited to come back and get together with the people that they spent most their time with.”

The Complex kids in Cavalier were met with an analogous situation. Doug Fisher, a born and raised Cavalier resident, remarked at the breath of life that entered his school. His sophomore year was among the most interesting as his classes and the school itself swelled with new residents. The row of complex housing became a fun area of town that was always full of people. For a young North Dakotan, it was a vastly distinct experience than normal. Fisher, on the metaphorical front line of the Cold War, could not have had the conflict further away in his mind. Remembering only one duck and cover drill from his early childhood, he has a stronger memory of the friends that he made in both school and through community involvement. The

increased population dwindled soon after he graduated high school, but the active Perimeter Acquisition Radar at the nearby Space Force Station still brings a handful of workers and families to the area.

A semi-transient childhood, like the ones experienced by Complex Kids, is a contrast to the lives of the people of the region. Many local residents were, and still are, living and working on land purchased by their family under the Homestead Act. Homesteaders, who live near the same town as their grandparents and grandchildren for that unique small-town experience. For Sheryl Ratchenski, moving to rural North Dakota represented just another new living experience. Sheryl's father, a Bell Telephone Laboratory technician, moved their family to North Dakota in 1972. Moving from testing site to testing site, families tend to become more insular, focusing more on familial bonds than community due to the nature of the project. Born in New Mexico while her father worked for Bell Laboratories overseeing the guidance aspect of the SAFEGUARD project at the White Sands test range, Sheryl's life mirrors the development of America's antiballistic missile defense. From White Sands to the Marshall Islands, Sheryl's family moved from phase of development to phase of development, eventually residing in the Cavalier Complex for her high school years. Tensions were at first high, "…to be told, you can't come in here because you'll bring in drugs and this and that. I was beyond sheltered. I'm like, what do you mean? Aspirin drugs? What did we squirrel them in our suitcase?" Local young women had a new group to compete with. "I did get to be friends with some of the town girls, and some of the other town girls never forgave us for coming in and being new and taking the attention of the potential boys."

Dale Ratchenski, who grew up on a family farm near Cavalier, represented the typical rural North Dakota experience. The new residents were surprised to see children driving at the

unheard-of early age of fourteen, the Complex kids were far more accustomed to the national driving age of sixteen, if they drove at all. Cavalier gave Sheryl's family a chance to relax and be part of a rural community, and it presented a new world of freedom for Sheryl. Their normally close-knit family was able to experience the community through involvement and social gatherings. At first, friends were made among the children at the Complex. Sheryl didn't know other children associated with the project, the various duty stations and changing contracts were not only the cause of the separation between the children, but also was a shared experience that initially allowed them to relate with each other in a strange land. Eventually, through school and sports Complex kids were able to intermingle and befriend the local students, quickly forming a community in a way that they had not before.

The nuclear fears that were a constant worry weighed heavily on the shoulders of those with direct involvement. "I remember one story and I won't get it right. My dad has gone now, but that all the alarms went off and they didn't know if they were going to have to fire on Canada. Canada had a missile got away from them and it didn't detonate. It landed like dead across the border. But they were all like firing up and wondering. And, of course, [it was] Canada, I mean it had to be an accident. They were testing something and it just it invaded our airspace and dad said oh my God you wouldn't believe what went down today." These burdens of responsibility were dealt with through community involvement and social recreation, the community assisting in the nuclear conflict with camaraderie.

The Cold War experience differed globally. Physical remains elicit memories of historical context; experiences that form the foundation of one's sense of identity. The Cold War had little direct impact on the average small town in the United States but to the civilians living in the region hosting the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex, there were few aspects of their

lives that were not affected. Schools were overwhelmed, services stretched, and social groups numbers swollen with new members. Business benefited, friends were made, and when asked about the remarkably prominent Cold War remains, those who lived through the experience recall an exciting period of growth and friendship that has had long lasting benefits.

Memories attached to monuments occur regardless of if the site is transformed into a data center or an interpretative site. The preservation of offensive Cold War structures while neglect of the defensive is reflective of the national Cold War mentality. The prominent, pyramid shaped Missile Site Radar may soon tell a story shaped by the efforts of the local community rather than the one formed naturally. The abrupt appearance of a massive pyramid on the prairies of North Dakota is a memorable event, reflected in the memorable events tied together in the participant's memory.

The workers that moved their families around the world to support the development of the SADEGUARD system found themselves in warm company, if not necessarily a warm climate. Even though they were more accustomed to sandy beaches and tropical weather, the characteristics of rural North Dakota drew the Missile People into the community in a way that previous postings did not. Unique stressors found relief in the community, creating an emotional memory coupled to the Missile Site Radar at the Stanley R. Mickelsen Defense Complex. Missile People were welcomed into the community and were happy to have found a community to involve themselves in. Sports and social events created a sense of wellbeing that served as a stress relief for the workers who would have the responsibility of overseeing the launch of numerous nuclear weapons. The growth in the local communities countered the issues endemic to rural Great Plains communities; depopulation and agricultural instability incentivized a focus on the benefits rather than the costs of becoming a nuclear target.

In the memories of the residents, the SAFEGUARD system represents more than nuclear conflict or wasteful government spending. This experience provides an alternate perception to the commonly understood reaction of U.S. citizens to the conflict. New people moving into a new place is a common story. Boom and bust cycles are also common. North Dakota is no stranger to these trends. The region itself was populated in a boom cycle that is still reaching economic equilibrium. Moving families thousands of miles can be challenging for the social well-being of groups like the Missile People, but community involvement on several levels made the situation more bearable for the new arrivals that were accustomed to different surroundings. The local people, in their Cold War experience weren't faced with the prospect of a cold and faceless military boarding of troops near their families, but the defensive systems that were being managed by friendly workers and their families that were quick to call the area home. The workers and the residents may not have been the front-line soldiers in the Cold War, but their experiences were what shaped the local memory. The Missile Site Radar structure, a near constant visual reminder on the primary road to the next largest town, brings up not memories of possible nuclear war but of a fond memory of new neighbors that brought more to the community than defense dollars.