



Moving a MISSILE

Employees of Crane Service Inc. pose with the Redstone guided missile as it reached its new permanent home at the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in southeast Albuquerque.

One of the more interesting and unusual – if not particularly difficult – rigging and transportation jobs accomplished last year by Crane Service Inc. of Albuquerque involved relocating an old Redstone guided missile to a new home at the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History.

First launched in 1953, the American Redstone missile was a direct descendant of the German V-2 rocket of World War II. The Redstone was used for the first live nuclear missile tests by the United States. It was also referred to as the Redstone MRBM (medium-range ballistic missile). The Redstone missile was in active service with the U.S. Army from June 1958 to June 1964, and some Redstones were modified in the mid- to late 1960s for follow-on special test projects. Outfitted to carry a Mercury space capsule instead of a conventional or nuclear warhead, a Redstone missile carried Lt. Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard Jr., America's first man into space, on May 5, 1961. At least one – or at least the shell of one – was subsequently preserved at Albuquerque's Kirtland Air Force Base as part of the National Atomic Museum.

But in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, increased security restrictions at the air base made it difficult for visitors to access the museum, so it moved to a temporary location in Albuquerque's Old Town. The temporary quarters were occupied for over seven years, until a new facility could be completed on Eubank SE in southeast Albuquerque, near Kirtland Air Force Base and Sandia National Laboratories. When the new facility – a 30,000-square-foot building on a 12-acre site – opened last year, it was renamed the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History. And the Redstone was once again a centerpiece exhibit.

Old Town residents had long complained that the guided missile didn't fit the area's character, and Crane Service Inc. was pleased to facilitate its removal and relocation to a new, and

hopefully permanent, home. Using a Grove GMK5165 all-terrain crane with 197 feet of boom and a capacity of 165 tons, CSI's crew had no difficulty picking and loading the 69-foot, 10.5-ton missile onto a company lowboy for transport across town. Reversing the process at the other end, the missile was easily placed in its new display location.

While Old Town residents were not sorry to see the missile go, Albuquerque City Councilor Don Harris is pleased to have it, and the museum, in his district. "It's a great addition to my district," he said. "So many people up here work at the labs and the base ... It works well with redevelopment of the area."

Museum director Jim Walther is happy, too, remarking, "It's a great place for us as a final home."

The employees of Crane Service Inc. are gratified that they were chosen to move the landmark missile and that they successfully completed the move without a hitch. ■

By Hol Wagner



Picked from its temporary display site in Old Town, the 69-foot, 10.5-ton Redstone missile posed no challenge at all to CSI's Grove GMK5165 all-terrain crane, which has 197 feet of boom and a 165-ton capacity. Albuquerque Journal photo by Richard Pipes, reproduced by permission