

**OXIDIZER LEAK DESTROYS TITAN I
INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE SITE
McCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE
533-7 ROCK, KANSAS, AUGUST 24, 1978
by Jeanette Bielby Nichols**

TITAN II ICBM ACCIDENT, AUGUST 24, 1978

Site 533-7 Rock, Kansas. Cowley County

Something was wrong! A dark reddish-orange cloud was forming over U. S. Highway 77 south of Rock, Kansas. A huge cloud originated from deep in the earth, and the air was soon filled with toxic fumes. The growing cloud was drifting toward the north, and could be seen miles away. Curious local farmers and residents made their way to the access road which led to the Rock TITAN II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) 533-7 site to observe the strange sight.

TITAN II HISTORY

On Aug. 1, 1960, \$1 million was released by the Air Force for the construction of access roads and development of utilities for eighteen TITAN II intercontinental ballistic missile sites to ring McConnell Air Force Base at Wichita, Kansas. The entire project was scheduled to cost approximately \$80 million. This was the second release of funds for the project. The first of one hundred and twenty-nine thousand dollars was for purchase of property for the launching sites. The sites would range from 20-50 miles around the base, with the majority of them to the east, south and west of Wichita. The 381st Strategic Missile Wing was activated on March 1, 1961, with operational control of the sites.

TITAN II Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), the largest and most powerful in the free world, were turned over by Martin Company's Denver Division to the Air Force Ballistic Division (BSD) on December 12, 1963, as "War Ready". The combined resources of some 10,000 U. S. industrial firms joined the military-civilian operations that in only three years fashioned TITAN II from a remarkable concept to a reality. Martin Company of Denver, later named Martin-Marietta of Denver, hired hundreds of local civilians to help clear the eighteen sites, surrounding Wichita, Kansas. TITAN II complexes were also established in Arkansas and Arizona, bringing the total number of complexes to fifty-four.