

The Crossroads @50

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The 4th of October in '58,
The day we're here to celebrate;
We re-opened Camp Cooke for access to space,
And renamed it Vandenberg Air Force Base.

HE gave the direction ten years before,
To develop satellites to aid the next war.
The site here near Lompoc was considered the best,
Where we could launch safely to the south and the west.

On 16 December the first launch was a Thor,
The Discoverer Program soon followed with more.
Launched by a crew from the 392nd,
Surveillance from space tauntingly beacons.

It covered CORONA, the first spy in space,
At the start of the Cold War and the next arms race.
Atlas at V'berg, the first ICBM on alert,
With Sputnik spurring our need to assert.

These were the roots of the family trees,
Producing now our EELV's.
Then came Titans I and II,
The nuclear arsenal grew anew.

6591st, 392nd, 704th, 1st Missile Division,
Then transfer to SAC at the 'host base' revision.
The South Base was Navy 'til '64,
When the Air Force needed its acres galore.

Systems Command acquired the Range,
And relations with 1STRAD were certainly strange.
Space Command later offered the proof,
That the Wing and the Range belong under one roof.

The ATC presence went from Detachment to Group,
And SAC's CCTS was out of the loop.
The MOL established the 'curse of SLC-6',
Then Shuttle was scuttled—back to an expendable mix.

Minuteman launches, I through III,
Then the Top Hand program's OT&E.
Peacekeeper developed but was then called MX,
There were first stage retrievals on the Egabrag's decks.

We orbit with Taurus, and Pegasus, and Titan IV,
Agena, and Delta and Minotaur.
Even Bomarcs, late of 50's renown;
Were launched to the south for Mugu to shoot down.

NASA's a prominent part of our place,
Giving civilians a door to polar orbit in space.
The Army is back with the MDA,
To defend against those who might open the fray.

And for the last 50 years a common refrain,
Ever the place where all Missileers train.
But change is a constant, and it's painful I fear,
For they're wrecking the house where I wrote Missileer.

Here at the crossroads of Missiles and Space,
Flying Tigers have made this their own home base.
But it's our people who make this a remarkable place.