

Victors In the Cold War

We began this trek in '54,
In the fading light of the Korean War.
When men of vision looked to 'near-earth' space,
And perceived the tools of a new arms race.

What began back then as WDD,
Has evolved today as SMC.
It was tough at the time for funds to avail,
When most then thought it a Buck Rogers tale.

Development then was trial and error,
With frequent trial and moments of terror.
It was noted off' times, perhaps to excess,
We learned more from failures than we did from success.

The Sputnik shock finally opened the door,
First came Atlas and quickly Thor.
These two are the roots of the family trees,
That now are bearing the EELV's.

Next came Titan, both I and II,
And the first silo launch by a sheltered crew.
But the Cuban Crisis set the missile role,
The Minuteman then was our "Ace in the Hole".

Both sides of the standoff considered the worst,
We were eye-to-eye; and they blinked first.
Surprised again by a Russian ASAT,
We were reminded again that we cannot stand pat.

With Deltas and Scout and heavy-lift Titan,
Our prospects in space continued to brighten.
DISCUS, and Milstar descended from SCORE,
We re-wrote the book on fighting a war.

MOL was cancelled, and Dyna Soar,
It was STS then came to the fore.
As technology grew at a rapid pace,
It was to become our sole access to space.

But with Challenger gone it came time to scuttle,
The dreams of so many for a West-Coast Shuttle.
Evicted again from snake-bit SLC-6,
Back to -3 and -4 with an expendable mix.

We raised the ante by fielding MX,
Then Star Wars Projects stacked the decks.
With technical progress that they couldn't follow,
The Soviet threat was revealed to be hollow.

Reconnaissance, surveillance, early-warning, weather;
And Space Command to pull it together.
Reducing data from an enormous yield,
For use by the troops deployed in the field.

Taurus, Pegasus, Athena, Minotaur,
Now Atlas V and Delta IV.
Threats from abroad remain and increase,
Our duty now is to keep space for peace.

We're celebrants here in 2004,
Victors now, in the First Cold War,
We build on all that has gone before.

By Robert A. Wyckoff

For the Air Force Ball August 21, 2004 - Celebrating 50 years of Space and Missile Operations
Thanks to the Association of Air Force Missileers for sharing their motto.