,,The Optimist Club of Treynor, Treynor, IA
Iowa District, Zone 2 Club Number 40-109
Iowa District Governor: Sue Wunsch

Lt Governor: Susan Enewold, CB

NEWSLETTER

Treynor Optimist Club President:
Dale Willenborg

July 12, 2025 Vol. 41, No.28

Gary Guttau, The Honest John Missile



Gary Guttau, two days before his 89th birthday, shared about his experiences in the Army from 1960-62 with the Honest John Missile. Gary remembers the nuclear blast that took place at Hiroshima in 1945 when he was 9.

In 1955 he headed to Iowa State University. Every male was required to take ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) and could choose their military branch. In the summer of 1957, Gary went into the Advanced ROTC, reporting for duty for $312/month which was higher than others because he had already joined and served in the Reserve in college. His experience was in a 155 Howitzer Unit at Camp McCoy in WI.

Gary reported to Ft. Sill in April, 1960 for OBC (Officer Basic Course) in artillery. There was one missile there – the Honest John, which had nuclear capabilities. This was the first atomic rocket warhead, started in the 50's. It was not a guided missile. Europe and Canada had Honest John missiles but those countries weren't allowed to have the nuclear warhead, but they could have detachments, and US troops were the only ones allowed to be in charge of their nuclear warheads.

The Honest John missile existed before the nuclear missile rockets that were at the Missile Site, west of Treynor. All missiles after the Honest John were guided missiles.

The missile was 2000 lbs. of solid black powder. In the front was a round piece of metal and the igniter was put in it. A small telephone wire was run from the igniter and it was ignited that way.

The missile was in two parts – the back being propellants, and the front being the warhead. The tip of the warhead is what Gary displayed today. Fins on the missile were slightly tilted to give it a spin. Spin rockets assisted with the spin too. The platoon included trucks, trailers, and launchers that held/launched the Honest John. The firing squads had the truck with the launcher.

The missile could shoot up to 15 miles. Before it was fired, a 6-layer weather balloon was set up to determine the wind directions at all levels. The missile was fired at about a 45 degree angle. The wind could affect this which made it a complicated affair. The missile would be accurate within 1000 ft. of its target.

When Gary was pursuing his military career, he found out nuclear warhead units were going to Europe and he had hopes of doing that, but the program was cancelled four months later.

Placing uranium (ball sized which could be held in both hands) at the center of the high-explosive nuclear warhead to create critical mass is key so it will explode. Gary said he never fired a nuclear missile, but loaded one.

Gary's unit put on demonstrations for artillery school which as an officer he helped lead. Mass firings started with the old 75 mm cannons from the Civil War for training and ended with the Honest John missile. One firing was done for 5000 people and it was a very nervous time. They count off and light the line to fire. Forward observers would practice with maps and coordinates to fire on. Another time he led the firing demonstration before 25 generals. The nose cone he displayed is from one missile fired at a mass firing. (See pictures below.)

The distance the artillery shells go depends on the number of bags of powder. One time someone didn't put in enough propellant and the missile landed behind them.

Each artillery unit had six missiles per year to fire. But at Ft. Sill they received more because of the demonstrations for Artillery School. Even military personnel from Canada came to be trained. The missiles were fired but without warheads at Ft. Sill. New Mexico was the only place where missiles were fired with warheads.

Next Week's Program

The History of the Treynor School Building
Gary Guttau

Famous Quote:

"Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart."

Roy T. Bennett

Meeting Minutes

Dale Willenborg, President, called the meeting to order. 19 members were present.

Prayer: Mick Guttau

Jokes: Steve Chambers, Keith Denton

50/50: Steve Irvin

Attendance: Jordan Campbell, but he was not present to claim.

Birthdays/Anniversaries: Gary Guttau's 89th Birthday is Monday. Dee provided freshly baked cinnamon rolls in honor of his birthday.

Bragging Rights: (Dollars are contributed to benefit local youth programs.)

- Judy Guttau shared that one of their largest trees, a hackberry, had been split by lightning from top to bottom over a decade ago. Mick used a tractor and bucket to join the two halves together with a log chain as high as he could reach. It has survived all these years until Tuesday night's storm.
- Dick Fox shocked his wife this week from Sam's that are normally $25, but were on sale for $14.58.
- Dick also reported he has had over 4.5" rain for the month and there is more coming.

BUSINESS:

- WestFair helpers at the gates are needed from our club on Thursday, July 24. Dee Guttau and Kirk Vorthmann will take the 2:30-5:00 shift. Workers are needed for the noon to 2:30 shift.
- Flag damage stories were shared and Dale said he will repair them.
- A card was circulated for our Optimist member, Gary Funkhouser, who is in hospice care.
- A motion was made by Dee Guttau to pay the registration fees for Dale Willenborg and Judy Guttau (as representatives for our club) who will attend all or part of the upcoming Optimist District Convention in Council Bluffs. Both declined.
- Kirk Vorthmann volunteered and was approved by the members as our next year's Vice President. The new year starts in October. Dale Willenborg will serve as President, Kirk as VP, Judy Guttau as Secretary, Gary Guttau as Treasurer.
-



Sydney Burmeister was presented her $500 Optimist scholarship by President Dale Willenborg. Sydney will attend Coe College where she will play volleyball and study ecology and environmental science. She may choose a minor in art or Spanish.

Events this week in Treynor:

- **Sat. July 12:** Annual Tristan's Trail 5 K Run/Walk
- **Sat. July 19:** Stand-up Comedian, Tyler Walsh, at Silo's 5:30.
- **Sun. July 20:** Zion Ice Cream Social 5-7 PM
- **This week:** Tournaments for Varsity Softball and Baseball Teams

Other:

- **July 11-15:** Mill County Fair
- **July 16-21:** East Pott County Fair
- **July 23-27:** Westfair
- **July 25-Aug. 3:** Cass Co. Fair
- **July 25-27:** Optimist District Convention, Council Bluffs, IA
- **July 31-Aug. 2:** Carson Rodeo

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

HUMOR

"If you boil a funny bone, it becomes a laughing stock. Now that's humerus!"

CALENDAR

Events:

July 19	Meeting 8:00-9:00 AM Treynor Community Building

Birthdays:

July 23	Jerry Hempel
July 27	Jim Clausen

Anniversaries:

July 14	Jeff and the late MaryBeth Jorgensen
July 15	Jordan and Katie Campbell

Programs:

July	Gary Guttau
August	Dale Willenborg
September	Jim Clausen (1st/2nd Sat.)
	Bill Vorthmann (3rd/4th Sat.)

Speakers

July 19	Gary Guttau, History of Treynor Community School Building
July 26	TBA

Editor: Judy Guttau, judy.guttau@tsbg.com , 402-670-4330. Contributors: Dee Guttau, John Klein, Mick Guttau
Dues/Donations/Flag Money: Mail to Optimist Club of Treynor, PO Box 354, Treynor, IA 51575



