

## Space Ray Pathfinders

### #1 – Launch!

The rocket's long shadow slowly crept across the Space Ray Pathfinder's Operations Bay. A first time visitor would call the OB (Operations Bay) just a vacant storeroom with very little furniture for the 8 preteen boys and 2 girls. Space Ray was the nickname of silver-haired Ray Timmons – himself a retired missile guidance systems technician and computer programmer. He'd be quick to tell you he much preferred 'Gramps' – especially by the club members.

The rocket was a full sized mighty Titan II Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, no longer in its beneath-ground launch silo, but now a monument in front of Mathers Rocket and Space Museum. Each time Ray's eyes traced the rocket's sleek lines from engines to its nosecone, pointing to the heavens, he sensed great pride in his long-ago efforts to align its guidance system to remain on the planned trajectory.

But it was nothing like the joy and thankfulness to God, he had for being allowed to spend his 'golden years' of retirement guiding the lives of these youth – some people would call them 'throw-away' youth. Gramps firmly believed in the large orange-lettered poster Nancy had painted for him that proclaimed, “GOD DON'T MAKE NO JUNK!”

Another poster displays a cutout picture of the Bible and then the words, “EQUALS GOD'S SPACE MANUAL”. You had to smile and imagine all the work Pete and Charley put into their crude replica of the International Space Station hanging from the ceiling. It was a collection of sticks, Styrofoam cups, clay, and pasteboard backing from writing tablets – for solar panels.

Pointing up at the ceiling space station was a radio telescope for communications, sitting on the box in the corner. Because Jimmy didn't have any NASA funding or government grants, he built it starting with a dented salad bowl he found in Hanson's trash can. Only critical people would notice the coat hanger framework that held it all together.

No one knew for sure how Launch got his nickname. He was absolutely the laziest, sleepingest cat you ever laid eyes on. It might have been the time Benny stepped on his tail. Even without a

countdown, Launch was half way to the space station – the ceiling one, in a flash. That launch didn't need a drop of rocket fuel.

The most valued object in the OB was the 1 meter (true scientists use metric.) rocket that just got its detailed painting last week. Thanks to Bishop's leftover white house paint, she was a monument to the efforts of the clubbers. Bonnie did most of the lettering, but Gramps made sure every clubber had a hand in painting the little Cross not far from the section that housed the inertial guidance systems... that is, if the rocket wasn't actually constructed from paper towel tubes.

Every Saturday afternoon club meeting started the same. Gramps would lead everyone in prayer, asking God to guide each clubber to open his/her heart a little farther and fuel up on His promises, and purpose for them. A healthy dose of praise was always included. After the amen, Gramps would ask one of the clubbers to state the club's purpose. The response was always the same, “To learn how to always honor God in everything I do and think, and to see that 'all good works' certainly includes missions and rocketry.” Often they'd point to the wall poster that displayed the words from 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Since this was cleanup day, all the clubbers swept and dusted as best as they could. Launch headed out the door and to a safe place for cats, under the trash dumpster. When cleanup was finished, Gramps taught a neat lesson from the Bible, on how to continue trusting in God, even though He doesn't give you what you need, right on the spot. It was something about DO WAIT – DON'T WORRY – GOD GUIDES.

... Next week investigates BICYCLE ROCKETRY. ~ ~ ~

Note: 1 meter = about 39 inches