

## 1ST SPACE COMPANY SOLDIERS TAKE PRIDE IN HISTORY

By SGT Jonathan Aultman



Soldiers from 1st Space Company, 1st Space Battalion participate in the Adopt-a-Missile workday at the Peterson Air and Space Museum June 11. The Soldiers, who participated in the event for the first time, gave a much needed cleaning to the museum's Nike Ajax surface to air missile display. The Nike Ajax was the U.S. Army's first operational guided surface-to-air missile, and saw Cold War service defending U.S. cities from air attack from 1954 to 1963. The museum has two other Army surface to air missiles on display, a HAWK system and a Nike Hercules. Photo courtesy Jeff Nash, Assistant Director/Curator, Peterson Air and Space Museum

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers of 1st Space Company (Theater Missile Warning), 1st Space Battalion received a special honor recently, but it was unlike any they had received before. The honor was the opportunity to perform volunteer work on a piece of Air Defense history at the Peterson Air and Space Museum, June 11. The members of 1st Space Company volunteered for the museum's "Adopt-a-Plane/Missile" program and spent a day cleaning the museum's Nike Ajax Missile, a symbol of the freedom and constant vigilance that is represented by our military today.

The Nike Ajax missile proved a great asset to the Air Defense community and the United States Army. The Nike Ajax was the world's first operational surface-to-air guided missile system. The military realized that the only way to provide air superiority was through the surface to air missile. These missiles were first fired in 1946. By The

primary mission of this weapon system was to give coverage to personnel against fast high flying bombers. In order to do this, the people at Western Electric used a Bell liquid fueled rocket motor and the flight path was controlled by the four small fins on the nose of the weapon system. In 1958 there were nearly 200 Nike Ajax sites in the United States, but soon the first nuclear-armed Mobile Intercept Missile known as the Nike Hercules began replacing the Nike Ajax. By 1963 the last Nike Ajax missile was deactivated in the United States. The Nike Ajax continued to serve with U.S. overseas and friendly forces for many more years. In total, more than 16,000 missiles were built.

Although the Nike Ajax was retired, it remains an important piece of Air Defense history and is displayed proudly at the Peterson Air and Space Museum. The honor of keeping and caring for it is a responsibility that is approached with great pride by the members of the 1st Space Company.