

James Robert Bruce, Jr. Life History

1942-1945

The first I now remember as a kid was having to cover our windows since we were living on the beach to prevent the submarines from seeing our light and our windows and also we had to cover the top part of our headlights. I was attending St. Simons Elementary school and my teachers were Lawson and Butler in the school building was built during World War II.

1949-1953

Between the ages of 10 and 15 updated a number of different things I had a Lionel train set up set up in a bedroom with many many cars in engines and other accessories and entertained my relatives by showing them all of the things that trains could do I also have a ham license radio license KN4MUS and W4YNN for a while and had a Heathkit transmitter receiver that I could talk on 15 meter band and send code only on the 80 meter band. Also on a side porch at our house I built a 14 foot wooden boat out of plywood and that boat was taken off the porch and I used it to water ski from when I was 15 until after I was 20 years old.

Between the ages of 12 and 18 I did quite a few things which included building a ski boat on family side porch on East Beach. Getting a horse and learning to ride at Mr. Long's stable. My brother and I built a Corral and a shelter for the horses behind the barn at Oatland and used to ride the horses almost every afternoon. I also joined the Civil Air Patrol and learned to fly an Aronca Champ aircraft I also became the electronics officer for the local CAP club and converted World War II radios to the CAP VHF frequency. The radios were operated at 24 volts with of dyna motor on the WWII aircraft. This required converting them to 12 volts and providing a power supply. I did about 25 of the conversions for the club. I also joined the National Rifle Association and used to go to shoot down near the airport and was awarded a number of different accomplishment pins for the activity. My brother and I spent a lot of time at Oakland plantation and were responsible for feeding the animals at 4 PM on a number of days a week and we enjoyed the woods and the time with the animals. With the ski boat that I had built, I spent lots of weekends skiing in the Frederica River and had a group of high school friends that used to join us skiing and we put on ski shows on 4 July at Gascogne Bluff each year. During my senior year in high school I met my future wife Barbara Thawley on the school bus at East Beach and we enjoyed the same outdoor activities and she went with me to ride horses and feed up animals at the Oatland farm.

1957 to 1962

I went to Georgia Tech in electrical engineering and my girlfriend Barbara went to GSCW in Milledgeville Georgia. I was in the Phi Delta Theta fraternity. I had no transportation from Atlanta to St. Simons and on two occasions a friend of mind at the fraternity. Marvin Griffin, and I hitchhiked to Milledgeville to see our girlfriends. I lived in the college dormitory for my freshman year and then moved to the fraternity house for my sophomore year. About the third month of my sophomore year, my parents bought me a 1968 Ford Fairlane 500 automobile so that I could visit home. In the summer of my sophomore year, I worked for a architect at St. Simons and produced engineering drawings for his company. At Georgia Tech I was in ROTC. At the beginning of my junior year my girlfriend Barbara and I got married at Christ Church and we rented an apartment in North Atlanta. Barbara worked at a bank to help pay expenses and later that year our first son was born, Robert (Robbie). We visited St. Simons often and doing that period bought a house trailer and put it on our property at Oakland plantation. After that we will able to come to St. Simons and stay in our own house. When I was a junior in college at Georgia Tech, I went to ROTC summer camp in West Florida. After I graduated from Georgia Tech in September 1962, I worked again for the architect until I reported for duty in November 1962 as a 2nd Lieutenant to Guthrie radar station in West Virginia, about 20 miles North of Charlston

1964 to 1972

After the discharge from Guthrie Air Force station in 1964 we came back to St. Simons with our young son Robert and young daughter Elizabeth and our dog maverick. We stayed with my mother at our house on East Beach while I went looking for a job at Cape Canaveral. On the first day I was at Cape Canaveral I had five opportunities for interviews. I selected the one I thought was best and the work started after Christmas in 1965. Barbara stayed at St Simons until our son John was born in January 1965. The job at Hanger I Annex was testing the Minuteman missile and at that location I was working for the Boeing Company. There were five engineers and about 20 technicians in the test department. About once a month a minuteman ICBM would be launched from a silo at Cape Canaveral and our job was to provide data for the five different contractors that built the portions of the Minuteman ICBM. During the testing program for the Minuteman we tested about 40 Minuteman II and about 20 Minuteman III ICBMs before the program ended in 1972. One of the engineers that I worked with was Don Anderson and he is still a friend and lives in South Florida During the time I worked at Cape Kennedy we lived on Merritt Island at two locations, we first rented a house and then we bought a house, Robert went to the local elementary school in 1966. Don Anderson and another engineer from the Cape, Bob Brown, played golf at a local golf course and Don and I fished in the Banana River very often. When the program ended in 1972, I

was invited by Honeywell to come and work in Clearwater Florida. For the first year I was a contract engineer working on the Honeywell version of the Minuteman guidance system and commuted to Merritt Island each week. At the end of 1972 I was hired by Honeywell as a Senior Engineer and we moved from Merritt Island to Clearwater Florida.

Oatland

I first saw Oakland when I was about six years old. My grandparents, Douglas and Bertha Gould Taylor, had just bought Oakland from the Sea Island company so that they could move from the Frederica fort area. The first thing my grandfather did was plant a garden near the South end of a large field. At that time there were no buildings on Oatland except the ruins of the Grant's house. The road that led to the Grant's house went down to the marsh and my grandparents decided to build their house on the left side of the road near the marsh. The first thing they did was to move some old small buildings from Frederica and assemble them as a temporary living quarters until their house was built. That makeshift house was called the Cove. They used building materials from the house at Frederica, which they disassembled, to build the house at Oakland. They next built a barn and chicken houses and big pens and bought animals. We visited the house often as it was being built. My grandfather did a lot of things for his two boys, myself and my brother Douglas. He built two small boats and made oars for us to be able to row our boats at the marsh. He had a causeway built from the edge of the marsh to Oakland Creek. He was hoping that he could use Oakland Creek to go to Little St. Simons to his job as caretaker on a daily basis. The creek ended up being too shallow for him to use with the Little St. Simons boat, Baby Helen. He then decided to build a dock at Lawrence plantation and use Lawrence Creek to navigate to Little St. Simons. As we were growing up and were in grammar school and junior high school we went to Oakland to feed animals in the afternoon almost every day. The road from Frederica Road to Oakland plantation was dirt. When the weather was bad it was muddy and hard to navigate. About 1955 the road was paved. When we were in junior high school my brother and I took riding lessons from Mr. Long at the Sea Island Stables. Shortly after that my parents bought horses for my brother and I named Prince and Wainwright. My brother and I got old material from Brunswick WWII housing demolition and built a horse shed on the back of the barn and cleared about an acre and made a fenced area for the horses. Over the next many years we rode the horses everywhere, including Fort Frederica, Butler's Point, Cannons Point and German Village. There were some old roads running east and west from Lawrence Road to the west coast of the island that had been used to transport cotton during the cotton days. Those roads were difficult to use since I had grown up, but we made it by cutting our

way as we went. When we got to high school we helped on the farm. My grandfather had bought a 1942 Ford Ferguson tractor and we helped use it to cultivate the fields. My grandfather raised hay, watermelons, beans, corn and other items in the fields. We used the hay is feed for the horses and cows. After I met my future wife, Barbara, she went with me riding horses and during those things on the farm that my brother and I did for years before that. After high school I went to Georgia Tech for four years, served three years in the Air Force in W. Virginia, worked at Cape Kennedy for eight years for Boeing and then Honeywell in Clearwater Florida for 25 years. During all of that time we visited Oatland