

Conversation
With
Bruce Edward Stutsman

1301 Hammond Boulevard
Jacksonville, Florida
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Recorded and Transcribed
by
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TAPE 1 SIDE A

LYN-Today is July 31, 2017 and I am at Bruce Stutsman home and Bruce has quite a long military story to tell us but I want him to begin by telling us where he was born and his parents and his background. Then he's going to tell us his military career and specifically memories of Cecil Field. Thank you for agreeing to do this Bruce. Tell us about your birth.

BRUCE-Well, my name is Bruce Edward Stutsman. My dad was career military. He was Army Air Corps and then Air Force. He participated in the Normandy Invasion at Omaha Beach and was in the transportation corps and he was a load master when he retired out of McGuire Air Force Base.

LYN-What is a load master?

BRUCE-Loads airplanes and makes sure of their weight, the loading of the weight is, there is equilibrium throughout the airplane. But, anyway, he was in the transportation area for most of his career. As with most army soldiers, they are infantry and then they have certain specialties. That was my father's specialty was.

When we were growing up, we grew up in Air Force bases because then he had transitioned in the late forties, early fifties over to the Air Force and I had my elementary school years were in England. We came back for a four-year respite in Kansas and then we went to Germany. So, I did my middle school years in Germany and then did my high school years in New Jersey where my father then retired out of McGuire in 1967.

LYN-Did you consider that a great way to grow up?

BRUCE-It's different. The one thing that you have to get use when you grow up in the military is that you learn to lose your friends. You learn not to get too close to people because of the detrimental effect of moving every three to four years. The nice thing about it is you sort of have a more cosmopolitan experience when you're growing up. You learn to make friends perhaps a little bit easier. But, you don't give of yourself I think. You don't have life-long friends. You have more really good acquaintances than you would say that you have life-long friends.

Then, so every four years in my formative years we moved and then I ended up going to a military college and joining the military too. Perhaps, not because of my father. I'm sure some of that had something to do with it but mostly because I did want to fly and I had an opportunity to go to the Naval Academy and then into pilot training once I graduated from the Naval Academy.

LYN-Was it a dream to go to the Naval Academy or did that just come suddenly that you were going to the Naval Academy? Was there preparation?

BRUCE-When I was in high school, among the sports I played I played football and in their recruitment the Naval Academy looks for perhaps not world-class athletes, otherwise I wouldn't have been there, but it's sort of a rounded individual. It's half academics, half athletics and they

were actually filming another individual at a football game but I just happened to have a very good football game at that time, serendipity, and then I was contacted by, at that time Coach Forzano at the Naval Academy. He sent me tickets to go to an Army-Navy football game.

At that time, it was at Franklin Field in Philadelphia back in 1969 and so I went, '69-'70 era then I went, I was very much touched by the comradery of the midshipmen and also the cadets from West Point. I elected, I did take a year off between high school and college. I needed that year off at the time. It was again the early '70's and I began my career at the Naval Academy the summer of 1972.

LYN-You mentioned flying so you already knew when you went to the Naval Academy you had a goal of becoming a pilot?

BRUCE-Well, I did. During your four years at the Naval Academy you have an opportunity to visit and participate in each of the branches that the Navy and the Marine Corps have. They have what's called PROTROMD the professional training of midshipmen and if I remember correctly that was the sophomore year. After the first year going into your sophomore year you go on PROTRAMD and you spend some time with the black shoe navy so I was on destroyers and cruisers. I spent some time with the submarine force. I did some time on what is called a "boomer", a fast attack and then I went to spend some time at Quantico with the Marines and I went down to Pensacola and I remember being in the airplane and just telling the guy to try to make me as sick as he could.

I was fortunate enough I didn't throw up so I figured that was the arm that I would take. When I graduated from the Naval Academy, you have what's called "selection night". I was fortunate enough to get on with the aviation arm of the Navy. I did my training in Pensacola, Florida and Corpus Christi, Texas for basic learning how to fly T-28's then did my jet training in Beeville, Texas before reporting to Cecil Field, the summer of 1978.

LYN-So, when you had orders to Cecil Field did you know anything about Cecil Field?

BRUC-I did not. When it came time, when I received my wings in Beeville, Texas I knew that I wanted to go to what is called "single-seat aviation", that was at the time the A-7's or the F-8's. I wanted the A-7's. I liked their mission. The two Navy bases that at that was where the A-7 Corsair was flying was Lemoore, California and Cecil Field in Florida, Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida.



A-7 Corsair II

I chose Cecil Field because it was east coast. I was familiar with Europe, the Mediterranean. My parents lived still in New Jersey. I had most of my relatives on the east coast and I liked where Cecil was positioned in Jacksonville, Florida. I had been to Lemoore, California. It was somewhat desolate as far as where Lamour is and again most of my family lived on the east coast so that's why I chose Cecil. I did not know of Cecil until reporting to Cecil the summer of '78.

LYN-So, you drove here.

BRUCE-I did. I left Beeville, Texas and in one day I appeared at, the next day I appeared at the bachelor officer quarters in Cecil Field.

LYN-So, first impression.

BRUCE-First impression, I was very impressed. We had a Marine A-4 squadron here. It was a master jet base. A lot of activity, very, very professional. As a young twenty, I suppose at that time I would have been twenty-five years old and very, I was single, very gun-ho, loved flying and I was very, very impressed with the professionalism at Cecil Field. Everybody, all of the aviators that I met in the what was called the RAG, the replacement air group of VA-174 were extremely helpful. They only wanted you to do, to achieve and do your best to succeed in the training in the A-7 Corsair.



Florida was a beautiful place to train. We had Avon Park. We had Lake George. We had a number of bombing ranges that we used here in Florida and it was a great place to learn how to or become a lot more proficient in low-level flying and air-to-air combat and also air-to-ground delivering air-to-ground ordnance. But I was very impressed with Cecil Field and like I said, the professionalism of the people that I met here.

LYN-So you're in 174 and how long is that process with the RAG?

BRUCE-The RAG was about a year. It's about ten months. The training was about ten months and a lot of it is dictated by the weather but generally speaking within nine to eleven months you

will go through the training syllabus and then get selected to go to one of the squadrons that are operating out of Cecil Field.

LYN-So did you have your eye on a squadron?

BRUCE-Not a particular squadron. You really don't have any say in it but when I graduated from the Naval Academy I did six-months temporary duty at the Bureau of Navy Personnel in Washington, D.C. There was a commander in the department that I was at, Bernie Smith, and Bernie was the CO of Attack Squadron 86, VA-86, the Sidewinders. Bernie knew that I was finishing my training at VA-174 and essentially, he selected me to be part of the Sidewinders.

I believe I was in the squadron for maybe one month before we deployed. It was a very, very active squadron. In the thirty-seven months that I was with VA-86 we were deployed thirty-one of those months.



LYN-Oh, my goodness.

BRUCE-But that included the training down at the VACAPES, over at the VACAPES, the training.

LYN-I don't know what VACAPES is.

BRUCE-The Virginia Capes. Our carrier was the Nimitz, the USS Nimitz, and the Nimitz was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia and so the carrier would pull out. We would do air operations and carrier quals and landing on the Nimitz and then before the Nimitz went on their cruises we would do operations in the Caribbean.



USS NIMITZ CVN-68

So, the thirty-one months that I was deployed that included not only my at-sea time but also in operations out in Fallon, Nevada and Reno. We did some operations out there with the Marine Corps, what's called "Red Flag." We were, I should say we were away from Cecil, at least during my time-frame, the thirty-seven months I was in the squadron, we were away from Jacksonville thirty-one of those months.

I was single so I enjoyed it. The more time at sea the more traps. In my time at or with the Sidewinders by the time I left the Sidewinders in 1982 I had over four hundred carrier landings. That was a lot to have as a Navy lieutenant. We were very operational. We did a lot of operations.

LYN-So you were not getting involved in life in Jacksonville, Florida at all. You were focused on this career. Or did you?

BRUCE-At the time, again being a young single male, time away from home really didn't mean much. I did buy a home here my last year and a half that I was at Cecil. I think that I lived in that house for two months during that time frame. Another squadron mate's wife was kind enough to take care of the house and the maintenance, the outside maintenance. Essentially it was a place to park my vehicle in the garage for the time that I owned the home.

But no, the more time at sea, the more carrier traps, the more operations the better for me. But, I did see, and I experienced it's a tough life for a married individual especially a married individual that has children. Some of the wives would go with their husbands and they would

follow them around at the different sea ports. Generally, a group of wives on every deployment would do that. Not many but a handful.

LYN-These are Med cruises.

BRUCE-North Atlantic, Med and then we did some operations in the Indian Ocean. We did, the Nimitz was involved in the hostage rescue mission, the aborted hostage rescue mission in Iran.

LYN-So that's during Jimmy Carter's

BRUCE-That was during Jimmy Carter's presidency. It was, it was actually sort of an exciting time. We, our carrier air group, a good friend of mine, Larry Musinzky "Music" was his call sign, he and Hank Cleman they shot down a couple of Ghadaffy's airplanes when we were in the Gulf of Sidra. Then obviously the build-up and the operation for the hostage mission was also a very exciting time.

It was, it was good to be a pilot because the pilots got to take off and at least see land. We, during our operation in the Indian Ocean we, it was sort of infamous record. We had the most days at sea, continuous days at sea of any Navy carrier at any particular point in the history of the U.S. Navy. In the build-up and then the operation for the hostage rescue mission.

LYN-How many days would that be?

BRUCE-I believe it was a hundred and fifty-two straight days at sea. By the time we left Naples when the Iranian hostages, or when the hostages were taken, when the American citizens were taken hostage we were at Naples at the time and we were ordered back from, anybody that had vacation or time off and we were port in Naples.

We got underway within two days of the alert and then we rounded the Horn near Madagascar and again trained for and then conducted the Iranian hostage mission along with the Special Forces and the Air Force and their C-130's at the time. It was a very interesting mission had they been able to get to get to their operating base outside of Tehran. All of this is public information now. If they had been able to get the number of Sea Stallions, the helicopters, outside of Tehran it would have been an extremely exciting mission. It was very much cutting-edge as far as what they were about ready to do.



CH-53 Sea Stallion Helicopters

LYN-The failure came because.

BRUCE-Because one of the, well, there were seven Sea Stallions that took off. One had developed a fissure in a blade which is helium filled. They had to settle, they essentially landed with the broken blade and were picked up by another helicopter. One helicopter had to sit down because as they were painting these helicopters, the Sea Stallions, onboard the Nimitz during that time frame. They were all camouflaged sand colors. They had left a piece of tape over a port that was part of the pitot-static system for the airplane, the navigation system. They no longer could navigate. They had to settle down and they were picked up by another group.

Then when we launched the third helicopter that took off after re-fueling with a C-130 in the desert, when it took off and banked right into the C-130, when we lost the third helicopter they had to abort the mission. There were a minimum number of helicopters that were needed and once they lost the third one that, they then, the JCS, the Joint Chiefs of Staff then made the decision along with President Carter to abort the mission.

LYN-I may have missed this. You may have said it. So, these helicopters launched from where?

BRUCE-The Nimitz.

LYN-So, you all were standing ready.

BRUCE-Sure. I still remember the morning that, I should say the evening, they took off at dusk.

LYN-You know what they were doing?

BRUCE-Sure, yes, we knew exactly what they were doing. All the pilots were briefed on the mission. Then it was hard to go to bed at night because we knew that there was a possibility that we were going to be called into action the next day. The catapult started warming up around, I think it was two o'clock in the morning. Once we knew the catapults were warming up, they were shooting what are called "No loads". They were essentially warming up the catapult system. We knew that something had gone wrong and we were briefed. We had our blood chips. We had our gold coins. We had our 45's and each of our airplanes had been painted a bright orange stripe on one of the wings so that the ground forces that were friendly to us would not launch ground-to-air missiles against those airplanes that had the stripes on them.

Then we ended up getting briefed before sunrise and took off as part of the rescue of the military individuals. We were called in to be ready for close air support during that time frame when we were extracting our forces from the desert.

LYN-So, go back to your preparation. You said you had your gold coins, your blood?

BRUCE-What's called a "blood chip". Essentially it is a, it's written in the language of the country that you are going to be going into. The essence of the blood chip says that if you deliver this individual to friendly forces that you will be given a reward, a monetary reward. That's what they call the blood chip.

LYN-So, that's knowing that you could be going down. I can't even imagine what it felt like.

BRUCE-It was very exciting.

LYN-That's what I wanted to hear.

BRUCE-Your adrenaline was going and you trained for this for months and years on end. We obviously had a lot of senior pilots. Our CO had over five hundred missions in Vietnam. So, they knew what they were doing.

LYN-Who was your CO?

BRUCE-At that time it was Commander Phil Gay and Phil was an extremely good leader. Phil and I flew a lot together. We were actually roommates here in Jacksonville before I bought my house. There was a group of us that had rented an airplane, excuse me, had rented a home and Phil been part of that. But, he was an extremely good CO, good skipper. We were ready. That was what we had trained for and so we were excited.

I don't think anyone is excited about delivering ordinance against anybody but if you have American soldiers that are in harm's way, you're ready to and prepared to give your life to help save those individuals.

LYN-You were making world history. You were part of that world history. When people talk about that period of time does it draw you back there? Are you...

BRUCE-It does but like with most military individuals, the men and women that are in the military that have gone through situations like that, it's hard for them to share with anyone who has not experienced the same level of adrenaline rush, the same level of potential harm, the loss of life that you see. It's hard to have a relationship, a verbal relationship with someone who hasn't gone through that. That's why you find a lot of military personnel aren't very willing to share those experiences with people that also have not gone through that experience. Why they tend to be very quiet.

My dad never spoke of Omaha Beach and I understood why after I had gone through not as a horrendous experience as he did but as we lost a lot of crew members. I've been to too many memorial services with pilots in training, flying into the water, flying into the mountains. I had a very good friend at the Naval Academy that I watched, he was flying in an A-6, two of them Tony Bilotti and Mark Gontkovic, we were doing an operation off of Avgo Ni Si, Greece and they were supposed to be flying what is called "welded wing" and he got underneath his lead and the lead dropped a bomb right on the A-6.

So, we lost a lot of individuals. One night, operating off the VACAPES, we lost I believe it was seventeen individuals when an EA-6 was driven by a young Marine Corps first lieutenant, I won't mention his name. It was a very, very bad night, lightening, very dark. The weather was extremely poor and he had missed the wire for landing three times in a row he had boltered. Then he came around and made a play, dipped in and sheared off the nose of my airplane that I had just gotten out of five minutes earlier. Then slammed into a F-14 that was fueling. Like I said, "We lost seventeen people that night" just in peace time.

LYN-That was on the Nimitz.

BURCE-That was on the Nimitz off the coast of Virginia when we were doing operations there. So, peace time is not a time to let down your guard. When we were on the ship I remember my CO always telling me, "Keep your head on a swivel because there are situations that can kill." We saw individuals that were cut down by propellers. We had a EA-2 which is an airborne warning system airplane, it's like the AWACS that the Air Force has but we had it for the E-2C Hawkeye was our plane at the time that gave early airborne warning and also helped direct us to our target.

An individual had walked through a prop. It's a very dangerous place to be on the deck of an air craft carrier. I saw two individuals sucked down the intake of, one of an A-6 and one a F-8 that was used as a reconnaissance airplane. So, even in peace time you go to war as proficient as you train and we tried to train at the level that kept us prepared to go into harm's way and we lost individuals. It's very hard to relate those kinds of experiences to people that haven't also experienced something like that.

LYN-All right, after '86. Did you get some shore duty? That's a lot of intense time.

BRUCE-I did. I met my wife in February of 1982 and I wanted to fly for the Blue Angles so I accepted orders for Pensacola. I knew several other pilots that were flying with the Blues at the time and the flight surgeon, Kevin Juan, was a good friend for the Blues so I wanted to what's called, "Chase the Blues". So, I accepted orders to Pensacola to do that.

But, life has a funny way of directing you down paths no matter the plans that you make. I met my wife in February after I accepted orders.

LYN-You met her in Pensacola.

BRUCE-No, no I met her here in Jacksonville and we were married four months later. So, I had a very, very good friend that had flown with the Blues and he was living in Pensacola at the time, Bruce Davey. Bruce had cautioned me, he had been the Blues narrator, he had a three-year tour with the Blues. As a narrator, you have three years.

LYN-What's the narrator?

BRUCE-He's the one that is the announcer during the Blues performances. The narrator is always a three-year tour. Most of the Blues are, the pilots are two-year tours. But, his is a three-year tour as a narrator. The first year he is the narrator flying Number 7. He's the one that flies the correspondence or news personnel in a two-seater. At that time, they were flying A-4's and then they transitioned out of A-4's into the F-18 but Bruce had been the narrator and then he was the slot man, Number 4. Bruce was living in Pensacola at the time and had cautioned me because of living out of a suitcase and there were a lot of temptations for the Blues pilots. As a newlywed, he cautioned me. Because of his guidance I didn't pursue the Blues any further.

LYN-What did you do?

BRUCE-I was an instructor pilot at VT-4 teaching air-to-ground ordinance delivery, low-level training, spin training, and air-to-air combat, air-to-air gunnery.



So, Pensacola is probably one of the most sought-after appointments for shore duty so my wife and I absolutely loved Pensacola. We had our first child two years after we married. She was born in Pensacola.

My wife was very supportive. My next set of orders were back to, would have been back to VA-174, at that time then transitioning to a Hornet squadron. I wanted to do something a little bit different with my children. I wanted them to have a little bit more stable life.

So, I didn't want the family separation. It's one of the reasons I did not fly with the airlines. I received what is called my ATP, airline transport pilot's license before I left the military. I did my flight engineers exam as though I were going to go into the airlines but then we shifted gears and I went to graduate school instead and changed professions.

LYN-Where did you do grad?

BRUCE-I did my law school in Cornell up in Ithaca, New York. It was half-way in-between Susan's parents in Columbus, Ohio and my parents in Burlington, New Jersey. I had not seen my parents a lot during my nine years of active duty and so I wanted to spend more time close to them. Once I was fortunate enough to be selected to go to Cornell that's where we went. We spent three years up in Ithaca.

LYN-Was there GI bill during that time?

BRUCE-There was GI bill. GI bill essentially paid for room and board and we came out of pocket for the tuition. I did do my active duty time, I was still in the military reserves and I did thirteen years in military reserves. I came back to Cecil Field to do my active duty and I actually did my active duty with VA-174 during my two to three-week stints for active duty. My weekend duty was spent with an intelligence unit out of Syracuse, New York.

LYN-So, Cecil Field stayed in your life then twenty years.

BRUCE-Well, we were in Pensacola from '82 to '85 and then law school at Cornell from '85 to '88 and the reason after law school that we came back to Jacksonville, most graduates from Cornell like to gravitate to the meccas New York City, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Illinois. But because of my military affiliation and being in the reserves I wanted to be associated, we came back to Jacksonville because essentially, we had Cecil Field where I could do my reserve duty. Our church at that time was here. Friends were here.

LYN-What church was that?

BRUCE-St. Peter's Church. So, when I came back in 1988 I did reserve duty until 1998 out at Cecil Field, then also Mayport. My last tour, or my last position, was as the Executive Officer of the USS Kennedy when it was stationed at Mayport.



USS JOHN F. KENNEDY
CV-67

LYN-Were you there when Kennedy left?

BRUCE-We were the last what is called the PRIONE unit, the reserve unit stationed with the Kennedy before the Kennedy then left.

LYN-A bad time for Mayport.

BRUCE-It was. The Saratoga had left, the Forrestal had left, and they were stationed out of, they were all what are called "fossil burners". The oil burners and the Kennedy was the last one. The Kennedy had actually been designed to be a nuclear carrier and it then transitioned essentially as the last fossil-burner that was commissioned and built for the U.S. Navy before the Enterprise.

It had originally been a nuclear carrier but there were no nuclear carriers and have been no nuclear carriers at Mayport because of the significant infrastructure that would be needed in order to place nuclear carriers at Mayport.

LYN-You don't foresee that ever happening?

BRUCE-I would love to see it happen but the Virginia politicians have somehow seemed to position themselves where that probability is highly unlikely. They keep citing the cost of building the infrastructure for Mayport but from a strategic point of view it would make sense to have carriers disbursed along the east coast and not all at, in Norfolk, Virginia where mining operations could essentially bottle-neck the carriers there. It would be better to have them

disbursed into different ports like they do on the west coast. It would also be better to have more than one base where the carriers can be stationed. I would very much support placing one or two of the carriers at Mayport.

LYN-I was just at Mayport and it is, I think it is a very unique base. It's a beautiful place but it's not a large land area. You think it would support that?

BRUCE-As with most Navy bases, it's not obviously as large as Oceana but that's where all of our, most of our Atlantic fleet is positioned is in Norfolk, Virginia. Again, the lobbying from the politicians in Virginia have essentially created through Oceana, as far as the air arm is concerned, when the master jet base left Jacksonville and positioned itself in Oceana as well as the Naval forces at Norfolk, they tend to, because of the amount of personnel that are associated with the flying arm, the brown shoe navy as well as the black shoe navy and the carriers as well as the small boys, it has grown extensively in that area. But again, I think a lot of that is political.

LYN-So, your thoughts when you heard Cecil was closing.

BRUCE-I was disappointed. I was very good friends with the last executive officer, Scott Morrison, in fact Scott Morrison was one of my wingmen in VA-86 and his call sign was "Huey". Huey stands about six foot four and two hundred and forty-plus pounds, big guy.

He was the last executive officer when Cecil Field closed in 1999. I was very disappointed to see that happen but once it happened Jacksonville transitioned very well and I think that Cecil Field, now called Cecil Airport is doing very well. We have an aviation arm out there. We do have, McDonald-Douglas has a site out there. The Marines still have a site out there that they are using.

It's been designated as a space port base so it has been able to make that transition from a military operation into a civilian operation. But, I was disappointed to see it leave.

LYN-I did not realize this until someone pointed it out, the westside suffered greatly. There are parts of great decline and crime on the westside yet where I am now, we are on the westside and there is enormous residential growth out here.

BRUCE-There has been. One of the areas that I, in my legal practice, I was the chairman of the Jacksonville Planning Commission for a number of years and we saw tremendous growth on the westside. It was a transition because when you have the Navy there with the F-18's and then the Super Hornet as far as the noise level was concerned it kept away growth in that area for many of the residential areas. Then once the master jet base was closed down in '99 a lot of the zoning ordinances essentially shifted and you saw a lot more growth towards the westside of Jacksonville. The transition I believe has been very successful.

LYN-So, you became an attorney in Jacksonville, Florida. Single practice or did you join a firm?

BRUCE-I had, as a lot of newly graduated attorneys out of law school, you try to get on with a large, prestigious firm in order to sort of pay the bills and pay for that education. I was fortunate enough to get on with a law firm, Smith-Hulsey here because Mark Hulsey, also an ex-Navy retired captain was the lead attorney in that law firm. He and I struck up and became, we had a very strong relationship so that's why, I essentially was able to come to Jacksonville and practice law while also maintaining my affiliation with the military during my reserve time.

LYN-What was the focus of that firm?

BRUCE-Well, I was fortunate enough when I was in Pensacola to get a master's in business administration so I combined my graduate business degree with my law degree and I became what is called a "transactional lawyer". I did a lot of what is referred to as "M and A work", mergers and acquisitions and a lot of intellectual property dealing with copy rights and trademarks. Essentially, business transactions, acquisitions and divestitures of businesses. We were a very busy law firm.

It just so happened I transitioned from the Navy wanting to be home with my family and raise my family and I found myself in a law firm that I did a lot of traveling on the east coast and west coast. During my first five years before I transitioned to more of a local practice in partnership with a medium-sized law firm and then in my last, I'm trying to remember, I think it was, let's see, eight years after I came back so it would have been about '96, in 1996-1997 I started my own law firm with a friend of mine. We were together for seventeen years before I transitioned into a solo practice for the last three years. I am now semi-retired.

I have a handful of clients that I work with because I enjoy what I do but I'm also enjoying spending more time with my wife, my kids, and my grandkids.

LYN-Would you mind putting your wife's name on our tape? We did not include that.

BRUCE-My wife's name is Susan.

LYN-Was she a Jacksonville girl?

BRUCE-No, she grew up in Columbus, Ohio and actually has more flight hours than I have. Susan was a civilian pilot. I think that's what sort of probably drew us together, but Susan was, she had a home here when we met but she was also flying out of White Plains, New York for a chemical company. At the time that Susan was a pilot, she was one of ten female corporate pilots at that time back in the late seventies, early eighties. She actually had an offer to fly for United Airlines but when we got married she essentially stopped flying.

LYN-Are either of you flying now?

BRUCE-I have, the answer is, "Not actively". We still fly or I still fly with a friend of mine who has a Sirius. In fact, the individual I mentioned earlier, Scott Morrison, runs the FBO out at Cecil Field. It's a civilian operation and he has a Sirius airplane that we go up in every now and then.

Each of my kids, I have given when they were growing up I gave them the opportunity to get their private pilot's license. My two daughters declined but my son took me up on the offer and so he actually had his pilot's license before he had his driver's license. He received his pilot's license when he was sixteen and then his instrument rating a year later when he was seventeen. Then he actually received his first automobile after that time frame when he was seventeen.

LYN-He's still flying?

BRUCE-No, he in order to fly, in order to be proficient at flying and not be a danger to those around you or those you take up with you, you need to fly at least fifteen hours, I believe at least fifteen to twenty hours a month. As a, when he was going through, obviously he had go through college, we did fly during that time frame. Then he was stationed, as a civilian teaching English in Korea for two years then he transitioned over to as a civilian again in the logistics department with the Department of the Army and is at the Aberdeen, Maryland Proving Grounds with the U.S. Army. He had done his college work at University of North Florida and we did fly together there but once he started his professional career there was no real incentive for me.

I did fly after that and I have flown some clients. I used to love, I was a member of the Navy Flying Club and I would rent an airplane and fly some clients. I think the last client that I took airborne was we inspected a granite mine in North Georgia. So, it was convenient to be able to rent an airplane, take the clients up there. I took another client to look at purchasing an automobile business up in Cairo, Georgia.

LYN-(k row) Cairo, excuse me. (Laughing)

BRUCE-It's spelled Cairo but it is pronounced K row. The football team is known as the "syrup makers".

LYN-They are because my high school played them. OK, I was from Quincy, Florida but we played the Cairo Syrup makers. They made pickles there I don't know if you know they were famous for pickles. Now, you've insulted a Southern girl. (Laugh)

So, we are sitting within fifteen miles, ten miles of Cecil.

BRUCE-We're exactly ten miles door to door Cecil to here.

LYN-So, why did you land on that close proximity? We are sitting in your home on several acres of land out on the westside and they have conveniently built an exit on Hammond Blvd. for you to be able to conveniently be here. Why did you land over here?

BRUCE-Well, after graduate school in New York and we knew at least we wanted to come back to Jacksonville, primarily because of the ability to affiliate with the Navy Reserves out at Cecil Field. We knew the westside intimately and we decided to live here and raise our family on the westside. We very much enjoy the westside of Jacksonville.

LYN-You are on several acres.

BRUCE-We've got, we live on approximately six acres and we have access to an additional seven-acre pasture that I maintain for a church next to us. My kids grew up having horses and so it was a good place to have our horses. It was enough land to be able to raise and train our horses here.

LYN-It's good you have the land because there is a lot of encroachment going on out here.

I'm glad you are in our city. You mentioned serving as chairman of the Planning Commission. How did that come about? How did you get involved in city service?

BRUCE-I had a friend of mine who has since become a judge, was on the Planning Commission at the time, Russ Healey. Russ had approached me to essentially, he was leaving the Planning Commission and would I be interested in serving in a position with the Planning Commission. Since I was, as a transactional lawyer I also did a lot of commercial real estate so I was familiar with the real estate industry. It was a good opportunity to be involved in the future development and growth of Jacksonville. So, I was on the Planning Commission for I believe five or six years.

LYN-You did enjoy that?

BRUCE-Very much so. You, it was good to see and be involved like I say in sort of the direction of the development of Jacksonville, Duval County. I got to meet and be involved in each of the mayor's administrations and their administrative staff, very professional. The Planning and Zoning Department at that time was headed up by Jeannie Fuel. They were a very, very professional staff to work with. The mayor's administrations at that time were very good to work with. It was an exciting time of growth.

LYN-So, you were dealing with exceptions mostly.

BRUCE-Exceptions, variances, and re-zonings.

LYN-Well, thank you for serving our city. That's a strategic position, I think, in our city and your service to this nation.

BRUCE-You are very welcome.

(ADDITIONAL RECORDING)

BRUCE-During my time frame with VA-86, as a single person you're not emotionally impacted to the extent that someone who is married, especially a pilot who is married with children. It was very tough to see the more deployments that an individual would have, a barrier would be erected essentially between him and his family. At that time, we didn't have the internet, we didn't have the ability to speak with our families, or the married individuals didn't have the opportunity to speak with their wives and children like they do in today's service. It was a very, very, trying time for the married individuals and I, some of the pilots that were in my squadron were very successful in essentially demolishing that barrier when they got home.

You had to have a very strong wife to be able to have, well, or I should say a cohesive family unit. You had to be very strong when at that time there were only male pilots and when her

husband was away in order to be able to take care of plumbing, the electricity, the I mean anything that went out in the house, raising the kids, being a soccer mom, a home school mom, whatever they had to do they had to then fill two sets of shoes whenever her husband went out to sea.

Like I said, in the thirty-seven months I was in my unit or my squadron we were deployed thirty-one of those months. So, those individuals, the individual the wives, my hat's off to them.

Some of the husbands weren't as successful in demolishing those barriers and the walls that were erected every time they went on cruise and obviously when that happens and you are not able to demolish those walls, some of them ended up in obviously separations and divorces and very, very trying profession to be a Navy pilot and away from home for six, seven, eight, nine months at a stretch and then for the pilots to then come home and fill their rolls that they have been away from during that time period.

Like I said, today as far as communication is concerned you have those opportunities that we didn't have back in the late seventies and early eighties. So, it makes it somewhat easier but still you have that separation so you have to admire anybody who is in military service and admire the spouses and the children that are able to have and maintain good relationships with that service member while he or she are away from our shores.

It's a hard life-style but a very rewarding one if he can do that successfully and maintain good relationships with his spouse and children.

LYN-Thank you for saying that because it is a very difficult thing to be left behind as they fly off to be on the carriers and you don't know if you're going to see them again.

I thank you for that.