

# Up, Up and Gone Away

## REMEMBERING THE ISLE OF PALMS AIRPORT



Before it had a bridge from the mainland, Isle of Palms had its own airport, located along the Intracoastal Waterway.

BY BILL FARLEY

Once upon a time, before it had a bridge from the mainland, Isle of Palms had its own airport. You couldn't fly directly to London or Los Angeles, but Atlanta and Altoona wouldn't be out of the question.

Perhaps the most important person in the history of this airfield was Haywood "Woody" Faison, who fell in love with flying at the age of 5 in his native North Carolina.

Faison learned everything he could about those early flying machines – how to fly them, how to build them, how to repair them – by hanging out at airports, bumming rides and working as a volunteer mechanic.

A 1939 Citadel graduate, Faison joined the U.S. Army Air Corps when the United States entered World War II, flying 35 B-29 combat missions in the Pacific Theater and winning the Distinguished Flying Cross. Faison stayed on when the Air Corps became the U.S. Air Force, spending 30 more years in uniform and earning the rank of Lt. Colonel.

When he retired, Faison headed to South Carolina, setting his sights on the Isle of Palms "Airport." Constructed in 1951 by the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission, the field initially was a simple 1,800-foot-long by 135-foot runway along the Intracoastal Waterway. North of the intersection of Waterway Boulevard and 34th Avenue, it was paved with crushed oyster shells and had no permanent facilities.

By the time Faison arrived, the runway had been lengthened to 2,900 feet but remained little more than a long, flat field used by occasional recreational flyers headed