

A love letter to Biloxi

We asked Fred Haise to write a message for the people of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, about growing up in Biloxi, the fame he achieved and how he feels about the pending 50th anniversary of Apollo 13. We told him 400 words. We regret that. It's a great read.



Hometown hero recalls the simple life before he took off

Growing up in Biloxi gave me a great start on my career ahead in the Marine Corps, as a NASA Test Pilot and Astronaut, and as an Aerospace Executive.

Life was simple and safe with lots of friends. I ran to school at Gorenflo Elementary and either brought a brown bag or ran home for lunch. I was allowed to stay after school playing with friends until dusk, climbing trees or hunting for tadpoles in the drainage creek running through the south end of the school yard.

I moved up to a bicycle in junior and high school and started work at 12 years old as a "paper boy" for the Biloxi Gulfport Daily Herald. I had Route 16, which covered from Main to Croesus Street and from Howard Avenue to the Beach Boulevard with about 170 customers. The newspaper owner, Mr. E.P. Wilkes, gave me my first lessons in responsibility for running my own little business with about 170 customers, to earn about \$17 a week. Mr. Wilkes was also my Boy Scout leader and scouting provided a lot of those character traits that stood me well on Apollo 13.



Fred in 1966

I spent lots of time in the water swimming, fishing, crabbing, and floundering. With my Dad and I casting a net, we enjoyed many mullet dinners. My Dad and I also enjoyed fishing in the Pascagoula River and even ventured in our wood skiff with a 5 horsepower outboard to Horn Island.



Fred today

I got interested in journalism though being the Sports Editor of the Biloxi High Tide and went on through two years at Perkinston Junior College to be Sports Editor and Editor of the Bulldog Barks. But the Korean War made a drastic turn in my aspirations when I became a Naval Aviator. From when I first flew I knew that my future was going to be in aviation... Space hadn't arrived yet.

My subsequent paths involved a lot of moves over the next 45 years that took me away from the Mississippi Coast. But I always came back at every opportunity to visit with my family. My Mother and sister Brenda Johnston still live on Haise Street, which used to be Church Street.

I feel very blessed and humbled by the honors my hometown is planning for me at this 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 13 mission. It's a mission that Mississippi played a role in our success, with the rocket engine testing at Stennis Space Center and more than a dozen Mississippi State grads who served in Mission Control.

Mississippi Power presents

See Fred in cyberspace

Unveiling of the Launch Pad
Saturday, April 11, 2020



BTV

• See "Fred Haise: From Biloxi to the Moon," a BTV documentary by August Taconi, daily in April, at 8 a.m., 8 p.m. and 2 p.m.

• See "Apollo 13: The Inside Story," with Fred Haise, a BTV documentary by August Taconi, daily in April, at 7 a.m. 7 p.m. and 1 p.m.

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