Notes from the President
Georgia Institute of Technology
G.P. “Bud” Peterson, President
2017 Georgia Tour Blog Day One – June 19
06/20/17

When Val and I first arrived at Georgia Tech a little over eight years ago, we wanted to get to know our new home state so that we could better serve its needs on behalf of Georgia Tech. We sought a way of becoming acquainted with the state’s citizens, community leaders, current and prospective students, and people whose businesses Georgia Tech had helped create or improve. The first Georgia Tour was in the summer of 2009. It was such an enjoyable, informative, and valuable experience that we’ve made it an annual event, one to which we greatly look forward every year.

On Monday, June 19, we embarked on our ninth Georgia Tour. This year, we headed for south Georgia, where we’ll get to visit alumni, friends, and supporters in Brunswick, Jekyll Island, St. Simons Island, Waycross, Douglas, Tifton, Valdosta, Thomasville, Camilla, Albany, Americus, and Columbus. Several of those are “repeat” locations where we are returning to cities we’ve visited on previous Georgia Tours, so it will be enjoyable to reconnect with familiar friends and supporters.

By the time we’re done, we will have visited 44 counties, 12 cities, and had 25 meetings or events. This year, we will cover more than 970 miles — the most ever since we began the Tour. All totaled, our previous tours (2009-16) have covered more than 5,600 miles, with stops in more than 50 cities and nearly every one of Georgia’s 159 counties.

We began our journey in Brunswick, the county seat of picturesque Glynn County. It was celebrated by famed Georgia poet Sidney Lanier (1842-81) in “The Marshes of Glynn.” It doesn’t take long to know that you’re in an ocean-side city, beautiful and distinctive in its own way and very different from landlocked Atlanta. Want some engineering trivia? At 486 feet tall (and 7,780 feet long), Georgia’s Sidney Lanier Bridge, the state’s tallest cable-stayed suspension bridge, provides access over the Brunswick River and some of those impressive “marshes of Glynn” to Georgia’s Golden Isles. Because of the height of the bridge and the flat terrain of the coastal plain, it seems like you can see all the way to Atlanta, and it is awe-inspiring.

As an aside, Georgia’s geographical diversity is amazing. North of us at Georgia Tech are the picturesque Blue Ridge mountains. Located on the Piedmont Plateau, Atlanta, at 1,049 feet, is the highest major American city east of the Mississippi River, while Brunswick, located on the Coastal Plain, is the lowest city in Georgia, with an elevation of 10 to 14 feet above sea level.

In midafternoon, we visited the Colonel’s Island RoRo (Roll-on/Roll-off) terminal, one of four Port of Brunswick terminals operated by the Georgia Ports Authority, an important player in the state’s coastal economy. Georgia Tech’s Supply Chain & Logistics Institute (SCL) interacts closely with the GPA, which has representatives on the Georgia Tech Coastal Georgia Board and the SCL Industry Advisory Board. Two years ago, SCL opened a location on the Georgia Tech-Savannah campus to better support the training, research, and recruitment needs of companies along the Georgia coast. SCL recently conducted a Port Logistics Workshop at which the GPA participated and provided a keynote speaker. The SCL and GPA are in discussion about other collaborative efforts.
Bill Dawson and Lee Beckmann, both with the Georgia Ports Authority, were our gracious hosts at Colonel’s Island. The Brunswick port is a vital part of the city’s economy. Colonel’s Island is one of the nation’s largest auto facilities — the third busiest port in the U.S. for total RoRo cargo and second busiest for RoRo imports. More than 50,000 cars both are coming into and leaving from the port, all on acres and acres of parking lots.

Later in the afternoon, we checked into our hotel on Jekyll Island, which has an interesting history. Named by Georgia founder General James Oglethorpe for his friend, English financier Sir Joseph Jekyll, it became an exclusive resort island for families with such prominent names as Rockefeller, Morgan, Vanderbilt, and Pulitzer. After German U-Boats torpedoed two American tankers off nearby Sea Island, Jekyll was evacuated during World War II. In 1947, the state of Georgia purchased the island for $675,000 and opened it in 1948 as a state park.

Tonight, we met with an enthusiastic Georgia Tech alumni group of about 75 Yellow Jackets for a reception at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, just a short walk from our hotel. As is always the case, we were warmly received and had a number of folks stop by, including Congressman Buddy Carter and representatives from Senator David Perdue’s office.

The Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce annual dinner was also taking place in the Convention Center, and we were graciously invited to visit with many of these local leaders, including Chamber President Woody Woodside and College of Coastal Georgia Interim President Meg Amstutz. We appreciate the warm welcome we received while visiting the Golden Isles!

G.P. “Bud” Peterson

Photos from Day One:
Rear view of the Ramblin’ Wreck, a popular attraction at the Jekyll Island alumni reception

From left, Georgia Tech Vice President for Government & Community Relations Dene Sheheane, U.S. Congressman Buddy Carter, Brunswick City Commissioner Julie Martin, alumnus Dale Provenzano (78 IMGT), and Georgia Tech Assistant Director of Federal Relations Jeff Cullen at the alumni reception June 19 on Jekyll Island

U.S. Congressman Buddy Carter (GA-01) spent a moment with the Ramblin’ Wreck on Jekyll Island.
Marquee greeting for Georgia Tech alumni reception on Jekyll Island

U.S. Congressman Buddy Carter (right, GA-01) visited with Georgia Tech President Bud Peterson and first lady Val Peterson at the alumni reception on Jekyll Island.
Colonel's Island
From left, Georgia Ports Authority general manager of operations Bill Dawson, Georgia Tech President G.P. "Bud" Peterson, GPA Manager of Governmental Affairs Lee Beckmann, and Georgia Tech Vice President for Government & Community Relations Dene Sheheane pause before one of the massive cargo ships at Colonel's Island, one of the nation's busiest RoRo (Roll on/Roll off) terminals.