

# The Lighthouse

Matecumbe United Methodist Church  
"Bringing the Light of Jesus Christ to Our Islands"

## Matecumbe United Methodist Church

E-mail - [matumc@bellsouth.net](mailto:matumc@bellsouth.net)

Website – [matecumbeumc.org](http://matecumbeumc.org)

January 2022

### Susan and Brooks Bateman

This fascinating couple, married in 1985, haven't changed much since then but they certainly have had a positive impact at the church. And to think it was something as simple as canned chicken and vegetables that brought them together.

Years ago, they had a mutual friend who tried diligently to arrange a blind date but Susan just wasn't interested. And then the friend suggested, "At least let Brooks take you out to dinner."

Susan's eyes lit up at the suggestion. She was on a tight budget, frankly tired of the same boring nightly dinners of canned chicken and vegetables. But it was more than the meal that enticed Susan to accept future dates. It took three years but when Brooks didn't propose marriage, Susan did! The two had much in common, but their unique diversities of interests and lifestyles were appealing as well.

Susan had a degree in engineering, probably influenced by her engineer father, and a degree in art though she insists she had no artistic talent. Art was the closest degree available at the University of Central Florida for someone considering a career in interior decorating.

Brooks had an associate degree in criminal justice from a junior college and then his bachelors degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He followed his father's lead in law enforcement and became a deputy sheriff in Orange Co Florida. With thousands of hours of flight experience, Brooks transported maximum security prisoners by air, including the likes of Ted Bundy and Squeaky Fromme.

Susan grew up in Minnesota recalling that her memory of childhood was accentuated by the death of her beloved big brother Jimmy. When Susan was eight, Jimmy had a horrific accident doing an experiment in their garage. Young Susan and her other two brothers were often cared for and fed by loving community members as their mother spent a majority of her time at the hospital at Jimmy's side until he died, still hospitalized, more than a year after the accident.

Brooks' father's law enforcement career took the Bateman family from one Florida location to another as Brooks grew up, and the family spent much time in the Florida Keys. Brooks was named after Uncle Brooks who worked for the Florida Department of Transportation back in 1935 when the destructive Labor Day storm hit the Keys. Uncle Brooks was in charge of the highway for a number of years when the railroad right of way and the bridges were used to create the Overseas Highway after the storm, a conversion completed in just three years. Brooks remembers many stories of Keys history relayed by family.

Both retired now, Susan and Brooks have interesting stories of their careers. What didn't Susan do? She sold handbags at Burdines Dept store, worked for a florist, was an engineer for Martin Marietta, sold carpet, sold Weekenders clothes (taking outfits to ladies' homes, teaching them how to dress for success), and then she worked at a CD molding factory! She was continually in search of a position that would provide a sense of self worth, provide motivation and inspire her creativity. Our church is probably where she found all of that as a volunteer designer, instructor, facilitator of a stained glass group effort to create amazing windows in our sanctuary and Fellowship Hall!

[Click here](#) to read church news and the story of the stained glass windows that will leave an impact on our church forever.

When Brooks left the Orange County Sheriff's Department, he flew corporate planes for a couple years until hired by Eastern Airlines. Then in 1988 he took a job with US Customs Service as an officer/pilot, going through intensive training for interdicting drug smugglers, managing crime scenes and flying a variety of fixed wing aircraft and military type helicopters. Following the Customs years, Brooks worked for Airborne Express and simultaneously worked parttime for Monroe County as a road deputy. In 2009, Brooks became Director of Flight Operations for the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, responsible for Trauma Star. He retired in 2015 but then the FAA enticed him to be an aviation safety inspector for 747s.

Now most Sundays you will be greeted by Brooks as you come into the church that boasts the fantastic stained glass windows. Susan often sings solos during church services. She plans to write a sequel to the book "God Made Me Do It," the story of the incredible windows. She also hopes to write a book about taking care of her dad, Lewis, for the years before his death. Lewis was a regular in the church stained glass workshop and an incredible influence in life with the Batemans.

Aren't we all happy that Brooks invited Susan to dinner all those years ago.

