

# Faison Man First Duplin Astronaut

There has been a real stir of excitement in the Faison area of Duplin County during the past week end as word has spread of a Faison native being named an astronaut.

Dr. William E. Thornton, Jr., 38, formerly of Faison, was one of 11 new scientist-astronauts named Friday by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"My telephone hasn't stopped ringing," said Dr. Thornton's mother, Mrs. W. E. (Rosa) Thornton, 79, of Faison. Friends have been calling to find out if it is true about Billy being named an astronaut and to offer their congratulations."

Dr. Thornton himself was one of the telephone callers to tell his mother of the news. "I'd rather have my place than the

President's," he told her.

Mrs. Thornton said that he also told her, "Don't worry."

The new astronaut's father, W. E. Thornton, died in 1940, when his son "Billy" was 11 years old.

Dr. Thornton, who was born on April 14, 1929, attended Faison schools, where he remembers Miss Elizabeth Hicks as one of his special teachers in

high school. He continued his education at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he met his wife, the former Jennifer Fowler of London, England, who was an exchange student at UNC, studying to become a doctor. He interned in San Antonio, Texas, having graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill on June 1, 1952.

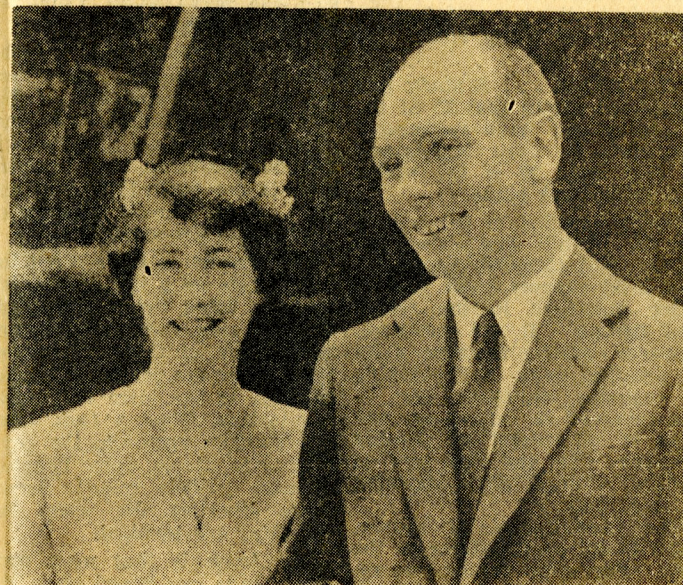
The Thorntons have two sons, Simon, 8, and James, 6. "The boys are coming on in

his footsteps," their grandmother said. "They both read everything they can find about airplanes and space-ships. My son has always been interested in flying. God was good to give him that mind."

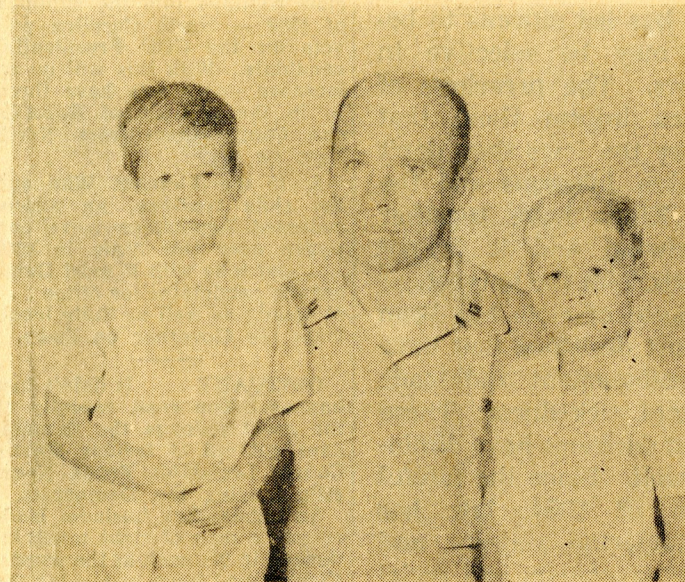
Dr. Thornton has been engaged in aerospace medical research for the U. S. Air Force

for some years. He received an award last year while at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for outstanding research in the aerospace medical field.

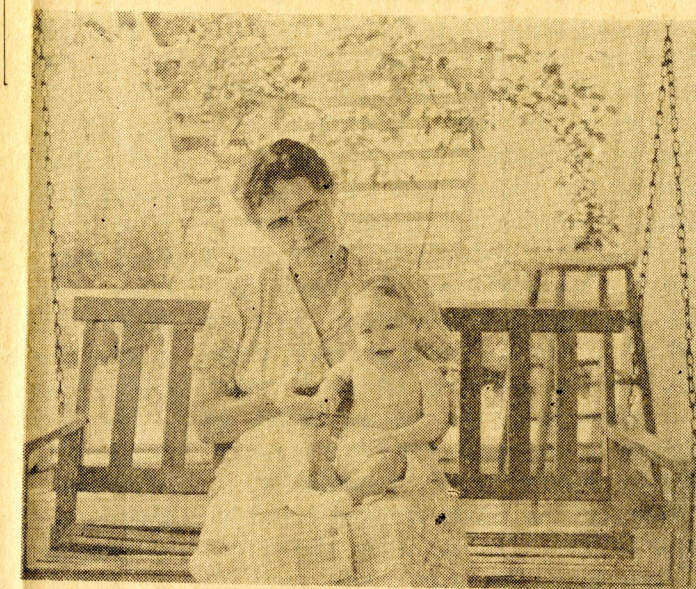
He is presently in Los Angeles, but expects to be transferred right away to the Space Center at Houston, Texas.



DR. AND MRS. THORNTON are shown at the time of their marriage. Mrs. Thornton is the former Miss Jennifer Fowler of London, England. The couple met while they were students at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. (See story.)



THE THORNTON CHILDREN — Simon, 8, and James, 6, are shown with their father. They are, of course, very proud of their dad. (See story.)



GRANDMOTHER, Mrs. W. E. (Rosa) Thornton of Faison is shown with her oldest grandson, Simon, when he was a baby. He is now a young man of 8. Mrs. Thornton was very pleased when she heard the news of her son being named one of the 11 new scientist-astronauts. (See story.)



DR. WILLIAM E. THORNTON, a native of Faison, has been selected one of eleven new scientist-astronauts by the Nation Aeronautics and Space Administration. In a telephone conversation with his mother, Mrs. W. E. (Rosa) Thornton of Faison during the past week end, Dr. Thornton said, "I'd rather have my place than the President's." (See story.)