

## 5. Book Evolution

### Book Motivation

A couple of years ago I sustained a back injury which forced me into early retirement. All the surgeons said I needed surgery, but my personal doctor said to give it some time and it may recover without surgery. He felt that any small risk of surgery complications was not worth taking until some time had passed. My doctor was right, which just goes to prove that "to a man holding a hammer, everything looks like a nail....", surgically speaking of course.

Because the back injury took me out of the work force for about two years, I had plenty of time to think about my life. I decided that I didn't want to continue working until I was too old and unable to do things in my twilight years. When my back began improving, I decided not to go back to work. Instead, I decided to live on my Navy retirement, vacate my current home and its mortgage, and attempt to build my own mortgage-free home in the country; even with my back limitations.

The more I worked in getting moved to a temporary location, the more my back improved. Once my back started improving (after two years of being unable to walk farther than 50 feet), the improvement was exponential. I felt truly blessed. The more I did, the better it got until my back has returned to near normal. My only limit now is that I can't twist and push at the same time. All other activities don't seem to bother me.

I located 5 acres of unimproved land in the country and began researching on the Internet for methods of home building. I knew I didn't want a stick structure



**Figure 3. Garage walls, 5 blocks high.**

because my location was in northern Florida, about 60 miles inland for hurricane protection. Termite protection, rot protection, and building strength against high winds were my primary concerns. The building process had to allow me to perform nearly all the work by myself, stop for extended periods of time whenever I wanted (to visit friends and relatives), and to stretch my meager savings. The final product had to be extremely low maintenance, since I am only getting older!

[Figure 3, shows the garage walls five rows high. Notice the roll roofing felt used to cover the tops of the walls. This keeps rain and leaves out of the walls during wall construction.]

### Where's the Beef?

Many websites talk aimlessly about the marvels of dry-stacked block construction, but none of these web sites were actually experienced with the process. I found a few rogue builders out there who were building with dry-stacked blocks, but they were cutting corners in extreme ways to

save a buck, which was their philosophy. From their website pictures and explanations, it appeared obvious to me that they were taking unnecessary exceptions to reliable building techniques. Don't get me wrong, I admire them for their courage and austere concepts, but I wanted a quality home, which would have resale value when completed.

### Roll My Own

Because I am an engineer (electronics) I tend to be very precise in my endeavors, I decided to engineer and document my own building techniques using dry-stacked blocks. I possess technical writing skills, computer skills, website development skills, teaching skills, magazine editor skills, and welding and mechanical skills. My father always told me to learn anything I can because you just never know when you will find a use for it.

I have lived my life by this philosophy, and have a broad yet detailed range of knowledge today, because of that philosophy. I decided to capture many pictures