

know that they don't have to be pilots to join an EAA chapter. We are just as happy to see aviation enthusiasts as pilots."

He then added that the Franklin chapter, though only a year old, has more than 70 members and has many activities planned. Rich said that the Franklin EAA chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m. in the Franklin terminal building. The Williamsburg Chapter meets at the Williamsburg terminal building at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month.

Some upcoming events include the Virginia State EAA Fly-in at the Petersburg Airport on Sep. 18; a Franklin-Williamsburg-Chesapeake fly-in at the Franklin Airport on Oct 16 and a Women Air Service Pilots (WASP) reunion in late October. WASPs were the women who flew transport and training aircraft during World War II.

On Oct. 29-31 a B-17 will be offered flights at the Newport News Airport at the Mercury Aviation hangar. The B-17 tour is a special program offered by the EAA to introduce people to the aircraft of WWII. These flights are very expensive, \$395, because the EAA relies on the ticket sales to keep the aircraft flying. In fact the EAA's "Aluminum Overcast" had to be grounded in July. At the last minute they found and prepared a substitute aircraft and are using a borrowed B-17, "Fuddy Duddy" in its place.

How did he come by the nickname, "Buz?" Not the way you probably think. When Rich was at the Academy he ran track and cross-country. His team members said he buzzed past the finish line and started calling him Buzzer. Over time that was shortened to Buz, but he continued to use Buzzer as his call sign when in the air. Needless to say, Rich is still buzzing.



Gloucester Airport - "W-57"

by David Grow

The *Evans Airport* in Gloucester County, Virginia was opened in 1947 by Al Evans, who operated *Evans Clearing Corporation* in a plant at the south end of the airport. The company made stump pullers and heavy duty winches for logging and military trucks. Later it was purchased by Fred Ames, local lawyer and non-pilot. In 1965 the airport was bought by Art Lazero, Horace Gray, Earl Robbins, Clyde Royals, Dr. Bill Brown, and Frances Mellar, who formed *Gloucester Air*, changed the name to *Gloucester County Airport* and hired W. J. Colby as manager, with Mellar later purchasing the entire company.



photo from David Grow

David Grow's Stearman N79M

via David Grow



Mike Tomlinson's Ercoupe taxi-ing out at Gloucester

During the early sixties the airport was paved with the help of the Virginia Department of Aviation, and fuel pumps, runway lights, and a rotating beacon were added. (This rotating beacon was a slightly remodeled airway beacon, and is the only remaining aviation artifact left on the property). Many familiar names were associated with the airport in the sixties, such as W.J. Colby, FBO and instrument instructor, Gilbert Handy, instructor, James D. Doman, instructor and mechanic, Irv Lincher, FBO and mechanic with Kurt Nichols, and pilots Charlie Drummond, Dave Lyon, and the Grows – Pappy, Bob, Dave, Dick and Bruce and their families.

In the early seventies the first permanent building was build and opened as *Omni Enterprises*, by Col. L.O. “Bud” Night, USAF ret., and Bob Grow, and later Harold Wright. *Omni* was a *Citabria* dealership, and offered aircraft sales, primary and aerobatic instruction and aircraft rental and maintenance, and fuel sales. The fleet included Aeronca *Champs*, *Citabrias*, *Decathalons*, a Cessna 172 and 177. Jack Brandt ran the airport in the late seventies, after *Omni* ceased operations. Brandt, a flight instructor, operated a charter *Queen Air* out of Gloucester on charter. (Brandt had previously been the FBO at Tappahannock). After Brandt left, the airport was cared for by the owners of the aircraft based there, and *I.L. Aviation*, run by Irv Linchner as the FBO and mechanic. Irv was the last official FBO. Gloucester Airport closed in 1991.

via David Grow



This wasn't Alaska -- it was Gloucester Airport !

After the death of Frances Mellar in 1983, several attempts were made to purchase the airport, develop the adjoining property, and keep the airport in operation. Without support from the county and Department of Aviation, combined with local opposition, these efforts failed. Today a *WALMART* sits at the end of old Runway 2 - another local airport lost to development.

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David Grow - after high school and four years in the Air Force (1966-1970), David returned to Gloucester and along with his wife Linda worked together in the family business, *Mars Machine Works, Inc.* Today David manages the *Estate Little England* on Sarah's Creek in Gloucester County, Virginia, and is co-owner of a 260 H.P. *Skybolt* and a Stinson 108-3 with a 165 H.P. *Franklin*.



Bruce Grow from his Stearman 17P

Gloucester Airport, home to 15 aircraft, 1967, with 5,500 GA operations. In 1975 and 1976 it based 14 aircraft with 7,000 GA operations each year. Some years saw only 3 aircraft and only 2,700 operations. These data and the opening and closing dates in the story were supplied by Scott Denny, Virginia Department of Aviation.

Norm's Notes: There have been other airports in Gloucester County - i.e. Harcum, and several that were shown on the 1923 map on the cover of the book *Virginia Airports*, published by the VAHS. Some have confused the one identified as No. 4 Whitmarsh on the cover with this Evans - Mellor field, but that was too far south and on the east side of Route 17, near Wicomico.

That Citabria parked by the office may well be Mike Crane's N8554V I took from the tie-down there in April 1976 and flew to Anchorage, Alaska, solo on a five day delivery flight.