

Memories of Gloucester Airport

Part I

By Linda Grow

Growing up in the 50's in a very sleepy neck of land called Ware Neck in Gloucester County you had very little excitement or amusement. For amusement on beautiful days, when the sky was bright blue and puffy clouds looked like cotton, my Mom would give us (my younger sister and brother) a quilt and tell us to go outside, lay out in the yard and watch the sky for planes and see how many shapes we could see in the clouds. I remember clearly the day that an airplane went over as we were lying there and I said "I wonder if the people in the airplane could see us and what we looked like to them?" I said I wanted to do that some day. I want to be brave and fly in an airplane and go over our house. Not my sister! She said you are crazy and we giggled and laughed about it, but I knew in my heart I would someday do just that.

Airplanes brought excitement to our little world. Military airplanes flew quite a bit over Ware Neck and quite low. A number of times we waited for the sound of crashing when they flew barely above the trees.

At times, guys, trying to impress some of the girls who lived on the river, would fly really low and circle the houses. All of the old ladies would think the airplane was in trouble and would be forced to land in the field in front of our house. I would run down to the edge of the field and wait. My grandmother, her friends and neighbors would claim the plane took off shingles and barely missed the chimney. When they figured out the pilot was doing that on purpose, tongues would wag for quite a while. The story was, on the second time a pilot tried to impress a young girl, he met the wires that ran across the creek and tongues wagged harder.

In the spring of 1966 I was in the 10th grade. I had a wonderful art teacher, Louise Boyd. She arranged with the State to take some of her art students for their first airplane ride. My Mom and Dad were very protective and I wasn't sure I would get permission to go. Mom wouldn't allow me

to go on the skating rink because she was afraid I would get hurt, and I was asking to go in an airplane. After much talking, my Dad said we think you are old enough to make some of your own decisions and we trust you



Joseph A. Washington, chief of Education and Safety with the State Corporate Division of Aeronautics, is shown explaining flight details to a group of Gloucester High School students prior to their first flight from the Gloucester Airport. This group was the first to take the 10-minute ride in the state plane here Tuesday in cooperation with special program offered by the state two years ago to interested persons who have never flown to become interested in that field. The students shown with the pilot are, left to right: Deborah Strickland, Helen Stansell, Dianne Rowe, Connie Chambliss, (Mrs. Louise Moorman, art teacher) and Linda Hudgins. The program is also available to reputable organizations. -- Staff Photo.

to make the right decision. I didn't show my excitement that he didn't say no, but I was so thankful and decided not to say anything more until morning. Next morning, when I asked my Mom to sign my permission slip, she was quite surprised as that wasn't the decision she wanted.

I volunteered to be first. Scared and excited in my new cotton dress I had made myself I did say a little prayer asking God not to let us crash. That 10 minute flight seemed like a blink. So much to see, so many emotions! After we landed I walked over to a small trailer at the airport. I knew Dr. Bill Brown who was there with another man who introduced himself as Colby, so I asked to use the phone. My Mom's reaction was great when I said "I did it! I'm safe and sound and on the ground". She said "What? You did! It's over? I haven't started to worry!" That was the start of Gloucester Airport being a part of my life. We spent the rest of the day sketching planes, enjoying the sky and sunshine.

In 1968, I married into a family with four pilots [Pappy, Dick, Bob, and Bruce Grow]. David became a pilot in 1971. With five pilots in our family, Gloucester Airport became a bigger part of our life.

Many beautiful afternoons were spent watching David washing and polishing airplanes while our daughter played under the wings. Niki went from baby seat to play pen to having David take her and her friends for their first airplane ride. Picnicking under the wing was a regular thing for us. We made it a social event. Also, many of our friends would fly in, and lunch at Sutton's was a must. Her crab cakes were heavenly. The closest restaurant to the airport was the Cup and Saucer owned by the Kemps, later becoming Michael's, now Damon's.

I loved walking around the airport. It was a fun way to exercise while airplanes landed and took off. Picking up golf balls by the runway filled my pockets. Most airports and golf courses got along well, but not in Gloucester. The golf club played a big part in not having Gloucester County owning and reopening the airport. Through the years David and I helped, supported and did whatever we could do to keep it open and operating. It broke our hearts when Champs, Cubs and Stearman no longer graced the sky above Gloucester Airport.



Linda Hudgins Grow lives at *Estate Little England* with her husband, David Grow, and is Vice President and Branch Manager for *Southside Bank* in Gloucester Courthouse.



Memories of Gloucester Airport

Part II

By Bill Corbett

Gloucester Airport made a big impression on me when I first visited it in 1964. I was 12 years old and had traveled there with my father and two Poquoson friends, David Gettings and Lee Ferguson, for a golf