

Eugene C. Marlin

Newport News, Virginia



During his 30 year tenure as manager of the airport we know as Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport, Eugene Marlin became well known for his resourceful and unique style of management. By many accounts he was equally well known for his sometimes unorthodox but always effective management style of getting what he wanted for his airport. In 1947, following service in the Army Air Forces during WWII and as a salesman for Cessna Aircraft, Gene joined the city of Newport News as airport manager. The job should have been straight forward enough except for the fact that, at that time, there was no Newport News airport. Gene set about to rectify this problem and for 30 years dedicated himself to acquiring funds and building a modern airport that to this day provides airline and general aviation service to the peninsula and the cities of Newport News, Hampton and Williamsburg. Gene's skill and perseverance before the Civil Aeronautics Board brought the peninsula its first airline service in 1949 and by his retirement 28 years later, had resulted in direct service to six major cities by four major airlines. Over the years Marlin would sell timber and lease land for a trailer park to raise operating funds. He would persuade often indifferent local and federal officials to provide funding for improvements to upgrade airline facilities and he would salvage and modify surplus buildings for the airport's first terminal facility. At one point Marlin convinced the Army to release a large area of adjacent land for a golf course. When construction was complete it was only a coincidence that one fairway, described by Marlin as the only 8000 foot par 5 in the country, looked like a new runway. The airport known for 30 years as "Gene Marlin's baby" is today an essential part of the national airspace system. While Gene's unorthodox style might have raised some eyebrows, he was an effective manager and advocate for the airport. Gene could look back with great pride as being the man responsible for building what is now the Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport.