

Grumman J2F Duck N3960C flew the skies of the Caribbean, between Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands 1966 -1974



- •	J2F-6	Bu33559		USN BOC 26.5.45: offered for disposal SOC	.48
			N3960C	American Automotive Co	.49
				Ellsworth Hodges. Cherry Creek NY	63/64
				Jack R. Browne, San Juan Puerto Rico	66/69
				Jack R. Browne, St Thomas USVI	72/74
				Leon Barnum/ Crow Inc, Toledo OH	77/84
				crashed, water landing with gear extended, Maumee River near Toledo OH	12.7.80
				<u>Steven T. Hamilton, Reno NV</u>	86/89
				(wreck, rest. project)	
			N3960C	Jack A. Erickson/ Erickson Group Ltd, Medford OR	17.2.93/21
				(rest. completed, flies in USN scheme "J2F-6")	
				Tillamook NAS Museum, Tillamook OR	97/13
				(flew in prewar USN grey/red/yellow scheme)	
				Wulf LLC, Beaverton OR	21.4.16/21
				op: Erickson Aircraft Collection, Madras OR	16/21

*N3960C noted Miami FL 9.8.55 civil paint scheme;
 N3960C photo c75 at Beef Island, Tortola BVI without rudder or cowling;
 crash 12.7.80: landed on Maumee River, Toledo to celebrate a Great Lake tour by USS
 Robert Owens but Duck's wheels were down, overturned in water, pilot badly injured, pax died;
 further damage when salvaged from the river, wings lifted out full of water;
 photo 89 under rest by Steven Hamilton, on wheels, float rebuilt, rep. in hangar Carson City NV;
 N3960C noted Tillamook museum 98, & 6.01;*



Note: Leon "Tony" Barnum / Crow Inc. Toledo, OH – also operated AAB Grumman Mallards N51151, N2442H & N1208 See AAB Grumman G73 web pages.



Note: Steve Hamilton also operated Grumman Mallard N2442H as well as other Grumman aircraft. See AAB Grumman G73 web pages.



Jack Brown's Seaplane Base was started, in 1963, by Jack Brown. His fondness for seaplanes began at an early age, flying an Aeronca C-3 Float plane on the Kanawha River in West Virginia. This continued during WWII when he flew the Grumman "Flying Boats" and PBY's. Following the war, Jack was a civilian instructor and test pilot for the U.S Air Force station in central Florida. He put down roots here and became the fixed base operator at the Winter Haven Airport, now Gilbert Field.



Jack Brown's Cessna 180 floatplane moored at his houseboat in Trellis Bay, British Virgin Islands, where he did his own maintenance. It was found one day lying in water half submerged and thought it had had an accident. Jack stated that a hurricane was on its way up island, and so he flooded one float to stabilize it in the water, when the hurricane passed through.

Brown's Seaplane Base Is Still Flying High After 50 Years: Winter Haven, Florida



Jon Brown, left, and Chuck Brown at Jack Brown's Seaplane Base in Winter Haven on Nov. 7. Jon Brown, 66, uses yellow single-engine Piper Cubs to teach pilots from around the world how to take off and land on water.

PIERRE DUCHARME | THE LEDGER

By Ryan E. Little
THE LEDGER

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WINTER HAVEN | From up here, the alligators look small. They're bigger when you land.

But Jon Brown, in a warm, trusting tone, says not to worry. The smoother conditions are more troublesome.

With about 30,000 hours of dropping in and out of lakes around the Winter Haven Airport, Brown may be the foremost authority.

His business, [Brown's Seaplane Base](#) in Winter Haven, is celebrating 50 years in a business known for mediocre money. But through a touch of luck and applied focus, Brown has turned his father's company into one of the best-known seaplane operations in the world.

Jimmy Buffett even trained here.

Jon Brown, 66, operates the school now, using yellow, single-engine Piper Cubs to train students from around the world in how to take off and land on water. His father started the business in 1963. The company boasts it has trained more pilots than any other seaplane base in the world.

It's bound to keep it up, too. It trains more seaplane pilots than all the 120 or so other schools in the country, according to the Lakeland-headquartered Seaplane Pilots Association.

"When everyone else is shut down because their water is frozen, they're actively providing an escape for people to come," executive director Steve McCaughey said.

"(Polk County is) just kind of a nirvana for us as seaplane pilots. You can just bob from lake to lake to lake."

FLYING COSTS

Today, Brown's Seaplane Base consists of a small building, a worn wooden deck and porch, and an aged worn hanger with enough airplane parts to build at least three full Piper J-3s — the single-engine airplanes that drop in and out of Lake Jessie daily.

In the summer, things are quiet. There are just a few students on any given day. But in the winter, business is flying high.

A student pays \$1,400 or \$2,100 for 5 to 6 hours of training and testing, depending on the plane. They come with a pilot's license. They leave with a seaplane certification.

The costs have climbed quite high over 50 years. In 1963, it was \$100, Jon Brown said.

"With three of us in college, I came home and said, 'Dad, you've got to come up on the rates a little bit'" Jon Brown said with a laugh.

It went up \$25.

"Money wasn't a big thing for dad."

And keeping it tight still keeps costs down.

Every morning at 5:30 a.m., Jon Brown is still the first to arrive. He puts on a pot of coffee in the deck porch and cleans the bathrooms.

It's not the kind of work a top seaplane pilot might be expected to do, but it keeps the place going.

"It's a crazy way to make a living, but we get to meet the nicest people from all over the

world," said Frances Brown, Jon Brown's wife. It's the people who keep her and her husband going.

"Some famous people, mostly just nice people. But most everyone always leaves a happy person," Frances Brown said.

FAMILY

Jon Brown joined the family business in 1973. Two years later, his father Jack Brown died when single-engine plane he was ferrying to North Carolina crashed because of mechanical failure.

Jon Brown employs nine people, including three fulltime flight instructors, and his brother, Chuck Brown.

His wife is there more times than not. And employees love where they work.

"It's just unique," said office manager Pat Owens, a three-year employee. "Where else would you find this? To be on the water every day and meet people from all over the world ... it makes you want to get up and come to work."

OLD CUB, OLD TRICKS

What keeps people coming back to the base to pay \$185 an hour to fly a plane is the nostalgia.

"The world gets worse. Brown's always remains the same," said Thom Zink, 57, who's been to the base about 20 times over the last seven years. He's coming again in two weeks

"I really can't find a whole lot of places in this world I'd rather be than flying a seaplane in Winter Haven and hanging out with the Browns."

Even though the base doesn't sell food, again and again, customers talk about a nice meal on the porch.

It's a bring-your-own sort of place.

In 2004, after Polk County was hit with three hurricanes that damaged most of the county, a contractor wanted to do the porch up better.

"There were some of the old pilots around and they said, 'Don't, touch, this, place,'" Jon Brown said.

"I haven't done much to this place since my dad had it. I may have put a coat of paint on it, but it's pretty much the same way my dad had it."

That's the secret: Old planes, old tricks and nostalgic love.



Today the aircraft is part of the Erickson Aircraft Collection in Madras, OR



PHOTO BY
MATT BOOTY