

ROBERT E. GAINES (2011)
(1938-2011)



The smile on Bob Gaines' face tells you the most important thing about him. He always had a ready greeting for his friends who were many. He also gave much of his time helping people who had questions about anything to do with soaring in particular and aviation in general.

Bob started life in 1938 in Santa Monica, California. He joined the Air Force in 1959. While training to fly the six jet engine B-47, he made contact with the Wichita Soaring Association and had his first sailplane flight in the club TG-3A. He transferred to Little Rock, AR and flew the TG-1A "Cinema" perhaps initiating in him the love of vintage gliders which was soon to grow. Later military transfers found him in Texas where he joined the Texas Soaring Association.

Bob left the Air Force in 1968 and joined Delta Airlines as a pilot. After thirty years with Delta, he retired as a Senior Flight Instructor and Line Check Captain. During that time, he lived in Atlanta and became a regular on the competition circuit, placing first in the Region 5 South Open Class. He was also the east coast dealer for Glaser Dirks Flugzeugbau, an association that gained him many soaring friends throughout the world.

Soon his interest turned to vintage sailplanes and he worked hard over several years to become a master wood working craftsman and won numerous restoration awards for projects such as his Ka-3 (1991), MU-13D3 (2000) and Kirby Kite (2005). He became very active in the SSA and served as an SSA Vice President and Executive Committee member as well as SSA Director for Region 5. He was SSA Publications Board Chair from 1987 through 1991 and edited the monthly *Safety Corner* column from 1978 through 1986. He was on the Flight Training and Safety Board since the late 1970s and then SSA Safety Chair. He was Co-Chair of the SSA Atlanta Convention in 1988 and again in 2005.



In spite of all these tasks, he still had time to be President of the VSA from 1996 through 2000 during which time he launched one of VSA's most involved projects, the English translation of Hans Jacobs' 1930s sailplane repair classic. He was President of the Board of Trustees of the National Soaring Museum in 2004 and 2005 and was a Trustee for 14 years. He was part of the National Landmark of Soaring Committee from 1994 to 2008 and Chair of the International Vintage Sailplane Meet in 2000.



Bob had that rare talent of being able to get things done with logic and good humor. Bob's work is well-known throughout the United States and the world - with the enviable reputation of having made a significant difference to the sport of soaring.

Bob was awarded the SSA Certificate of Appreciation in 2009. He holds Silver #1418 (1968) and Gold #880 (1974).