

JOHN M. BYRD (2004)
(- 2016)



John Byrd flew his first contest in 1969 at the U.S. Nationals and Pre-Worlds in Marfa, TX. He flew the BG-12B, which he built, against the likes of George Moffat in his modified Open Cirrus and Wally Scott in his ASW-12. He never crossed the finish line. From that humble beginning, the “Birdman” went on to earn a reputation as a tough competitor who could always be counted on to make it home if there was any possibility at all of doing so – usually faster than almost everyone else. Over the next 30 years, he was the Standard Class National Champion twice and won thirteen Regional Championships. Flying his familiar “30” contest number, he became a regular top-ten finisher at the Regional and National contests nearly every year. He flew mostly Standard Class gliders and often embarrassed the 15-Meter drivers by finishing in the top ten of the 15-Meter Nationals.

Byrd was a part of the U.S. Team at four World Championships, finishing as high as 11th and came in third at the 1998 Pre-Worlds in Bayreuth. In six Championships, he served as crew, starting with Norwegian team member Tor Johannessen at Marfa in 1970. As both competitor and crew at the Worlds, he represented his country with distinction and served as a world-class ambassador for the U.S. soaring community.

Byrd started his professional life as a high school teacher and his love of teaching spills over into his soaring activities – flying models with Charlie Spratt's “kids” or sharing his soaring experience with newcomers and old hands alike. He has served as an instructor at a number of cross-country soaring camps and currently provides training at his home in Marfa, TX. Always ready to lend a hand, give advice, or share a secret about how to fly more efficiently, John epitomizes the spirit and camaraderie of American soaring.

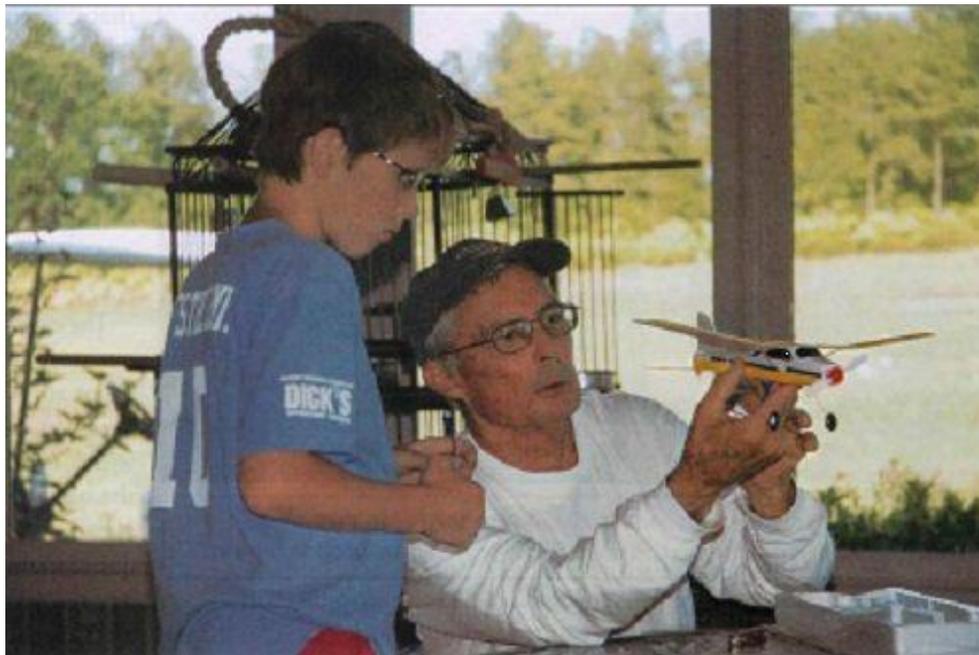
Reprinted from the United States Soaring Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony program.

John Byrd was awarded the Exceptional Achievement Award in 1998 and won the Standard Class Trophy in 1983 and 1995. He holds Silver #1398 (1968) and Gold #473 (1969).

Above picture from *Soaring*, January 2005, page 32
Winner of Region 5 World Class Contest



The John Byrds in 1975
Soaring magazine, June 1975, page 11



Josh Neumann listens attentively as John Byrd explains basic principles of flight. This passage of knowledge from our seasoned pilots to younger enthusiasts will nurture their interest in soaring, and possibly develop future competition pilots in this sport. Photo by Scott Neumann.