

## E. GENE HAMMOND (1996)

( - )



Gene Hammond was an airline pilot for United Airlines flying DC-10s. In 1969 he discovered sailplanes and starting working on his badges (Silver #1785 in 1970 and Gold #632 in 1971). He built a Schreder HP-11A.

In 1974 he discovered competition at the national level and placed 20<sup>th</sup> in the 41<sup>st</sup> U.S. Nationals at Adrian, MI flying his Libelle. He earned his Diamond #291 (Intl #1437) in 1974. After that, he entered the Ionia Regional contests placing from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> in the 15-Meter Class for several years. He flew the 1995 Sports Class Nationals at Albert Lea, MN in 1995 placing 11<sup>th</sup> (had been in 3<sup>rd</sup> but last day photo problems dropped him to 11<sup>th</sup>).

In addition to the HP-11A and the Standard Libelle, he owned a Mosquito and an AS-W 20. He was active in the Chicagoland Glider Club over many years as a tow pilot and instructor – also giving rides to youngsters and flying his own sailplane for fun.

Perhaps you are thinking – why is he in the United States Soaring Hall of Fame? Where does the United States factor in? His activity was mostly Michigan. How can he achieve fame with mostly local activity?

That is where his story gets interesting and where the self-imposed space limitation of one sheet will be a problem!

Hammond also belonged to the Chicago Glider Council and in 1979 the group decided to sponsor the SSA Convention and Gene became Co-Chair for planning and managing it. He also started taking on the task of Competition Director for regional meets and was elected a Regional SSA Director in 1979. He was initially appointed to chair the Safety Committee but soon moved up to the Chair of the Flight Training and Safety Board. Later he was also appointed to chair the Member Relations Board and the Governmental Liaison Board.

In 1986 he became Chair of the newly established Soaring Safety Foundation, a position he held for 12 years. He also edited the organization's newsletter, *Sailplane Safety*, which often was re-printed in *Soaring* magazine.

These positions emphasized his interest in safety and he established the Flight Instructor Re-validation Clinics which took place at Conventions and also at other locations. He was the Chief Instructor for these clinics so found himself all over the

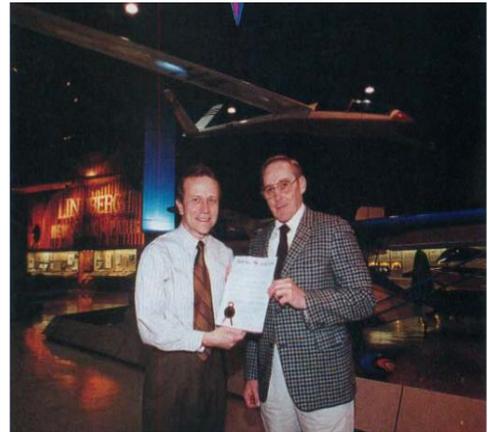
country from San Diego and Reno to Massachusetts and North Carolina and every place in between. He was a speaker at most of the Conventions during the 1980's and 1990's. He also wrote many safety articles for *Soaring* magazine and contributed to George Thelen's safety column.

He was part of the WSC'91 planning group for the Uvalde World Contest. During the contest, he was Operations Manager overseeing 1,300+ launches without incident.

He became Vice President of the SSA Board of Directors in 1987 and President in 1992 and 1993, coming back in 1996 to serve with the new designation of Chairman of the SSA Board of Directors. He was appointed to the OSTIV Training and Flight Safety Panel in 1988.

In these capacities he took on many other tasks – establishing the Bronze Badge requirements, re-writing FAA Part 61, clearing up the JAR-22 sailplane licensing requirements, participating in the International Coaches' Clinics, maintaining and using Washington contacts, serving with the Drug Awareness Group (1994) and the planning of the Re-alignment of SSA regions, and many other tasks.

One task we like best is his working with EAA on the Young Eagles Program where he not only helped establish the program but was one of the participating pilots. He arranged for SSA to be involved in the annual EAA AirVenture where he also served as a volunteer during the Fly-ins.



During this time, NAA recognized him for his efforts toward safety and Mal Gross of NAA awarded him the Special NAA Safety Award.

Note Hammond was also a team player – having cooperated with Bernald Smith and Tom Knauff on safety and training issues.

There is lots more so we shall have to leave that for you to explore.

Gene Hammond received the SSA Exceptional Achievement Award in 1989, 1991 and 1997, the Exceptional Service Award in 1985, 1988, 1990, the Ivans Medal in 2003 and (in photo at right) the Eaton Trophy (SSA's highest Award) in 1993.

