

BARRON HILTON (1991) (1927-)

Barron Hilton's love of flying goes back many years to his childhood in Dallas, Texas,



where he would ride his bicycle to nearby Love Field and watch the airplanes taking off and landing. However, he did not fly himself until age 19 when he joined the Navy during WW II and was stationed in Hawaii. It was there that he found a civilian airport on the north side of the island of Oahu, took lessons and earned his pilot's license.

His father, Conrad Hilton of the Hilton Hotels Corporation, encouraged him to join the family business but he chose, instead, the uncertain life of an entrepreneur. Among the businesses he founded was the Air Finance Corporation which leased and sold commercial aircraft. In 1955 he joined the family business when the Hilton Board of Directors

persuaded him to take the position of President. During the next 30 years he built the company into a \$4 billion enterprise with the strongest financial condition in the industry.

His aviation interests caused him to seek a relationship with the Society of Experimental Test Pilots which holds an annual meeting. In the early 1960s, Hilton was seated at this dinner beside the famed German test pilot Hanna Reitsch. It was this chance encounter that introduced him to the sport of soaring.

With his usual enthusiasm and his desire to share his love of flying with other pilots, he established the Barron Hilton Cup along with Helmut Reichmann in 1981: *“Pilots who complete the longest triangular flights in the five regions of the world win one of the most unique prizes in all of sport – a week-long soaring camp at Mr. Hilton's Flying M Ranch in northern Nevada.”* These lucky and talented pilots win the opportunity to soar in some of the best conditions in the world – the desert and mountain soaring of the Sierra Nevada and the high desert east of the mountains. In addition they stay at the well situated Flying M Ranch owned by Barron Hilton in Northern Nevada.

Another exciting part of the prize is that the winners have the opportunity to mingle with outstanding soaring pilots from all over the world as well as other celebrity pilots and many of the astronauts who are also soaring pilots – including Neil Armstrong, Gene Cernan and Bill Anders.

The Cup has been replaced by the Hilton Challenge. The Challenge is associated with completed declared triangular flights documented on the OLC (On-Line Contest). The following classes may participate in the competition: Open, 18-Meter, 15-Meter, Standard, Club, Multi-seat, and an overall class.

Barron Hilton is also known for his philanthropy, especially towards aviation groups including the Soaring Society of America, the National Soaring Museum and the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale as well as many other aviation related organizations.

Barron Hilton was awarded the FAI Gold Medal in 2009 and the SSA Chairman's Award also in 2009. He received the SSA Exceptional Service Award in 1985.

