

JOHANN G. KUHN (1994)
(1927-1994)

Johann Kuhn's character has often been demonstrated. One special time was when he crashed his sailplane in a wooded area adjacent to a crashed and burning towplane and pulled the injured pilot to safety – thus saving his life.

Kuhn is also known as the person who brought soaring to Ionia, Michigan, and made it into a nationally known and recognized soaring site. Several Nationals and many Regional competitions have been held at this site and Kuhn was the Competition Director for most of them.

Kuhn started flying sailplanes in Germany in the Hitler Youth league. There he learned the trade of engraving tombstones. He came to the United States in 1955 and worked at General Motors making clay models of concept cars.

He flew many competitions at Ionia including more than 30 Regional and four National Championships. He also flew in the Canadian National Championships. While flying these competitions, he carefully noted the things he liked and disliked about them. He then applied these ideas to the competitions he ran. He was the Competition Director for 22 Region Six contests and four national championships. During that time he helped develop computerized scoring techniques.

He supported the U.S. Team by convincing General Motors to provide new automobiles for team members at world competition in Italy, Australia and Texas.

Kuhn applied his design innovations to several sailplanes – in particular a fiberglass nose to the Schweizer 1-26 (prior to the Schweizer version). He also designed a sailplane trailer. Most of his skills were directed towards repairing sailplanes and he earned the reputation as one of the finest aircraft wood craftsmen in the country and among the best for fiberglass repair.

He was a dedicated 21-year member of his club, the Detroit Vultures, accomplishing major repairs and refurbishment of several aircraft and recruiting new members as well as finding a new home for the club. He represented American sailplane pilots as



a liaison between the United States and German sailplane companies in obtaining parts, repairs, design data, repair instruction and shipping assistance. He served as SSA Governor for Michigan for 34 years. In that capacity he chaired the Michigan Soaring Awards Banquet. He designed and constructed the annual Ward J. Maynard Trophy which was awarded to the pilot making the best sailplane flight in Michigan each year. In addition, he used his artistic talent to paint beautiful water colors in honor of the outstanding soaring performance during the previous year.

Jerry Benz, the owner of Benz Aviation, Inc., at Ionia County Airport, says Johann Kuhn will be most remembered for his sense of humor, his outstanding soaring ability, his craftsmanship skills and his devotion to soaring.

Kuhn holds Silver #360 (1959), Gold #515 (1969), Diamond #570 (Intl #3614, 1984) and was awarded the Exceptional Service Award in 1992.

