

Barry Kurath 1951 – 1998

On July 25th, 1998, PASS lost one of its' most cherished members to cancer and AIDS. Barry, who was infected with HIV in 1981 from tainted "clotting factor" he received to treat his hemophilia, waged a courageous battle after a cancer diagnosis in September 1997. Barry was one of our most active and accomplished members, serving and inspiring our community.

Barry joined PASS in 1984 and was among a key group of new members who revitalized the club at that time and helped to bring about its considerable success in the following decade. He offered his services in several key roles over that period including President, Newsletter Editor, contest organizer and Board Member. There were few events or club activities where Barry did not play a key role, either as an official, organizer, promoter, vital helper or fierce competitor. He was particularly proud of his efforts at establishing the regional presence and considerable success of the annual Celebration of Silent Flight fun-fly and the May Two Meter contest.

One of Barry's most sought-after accomplishments was earned only a year before his death, as he became PASS's first member to achieve LSF level 5. Although he had been participating in LSF for many years, he seriously set his sights on this goal only two years prior, and his accomplishment was remarkable for its swiftness and the fact he did so in spite of his disabilities and afflictions. He also became the 1997 Northwest Soaring Society Seasons Points Champions shortly before his cancer diagnosis.

To most club members, though, Barry was the heart and soul of the club and a focal point for practically every activity. He was the club encyclopedia and rumor control. If you wanted to find out about the latest building technique, the latest kit or gizmo, or even who won the last handlaunch contest, Barry was the one you would call first. His help was offered to anyone who asked, but particularly the novice pilot or beginning competitor. Many pilots owed their interest and success in model soaring to Barry, his encouragement and help.

Barry's involvement in modeling mirrored his work as a speaker and educator for the AIDS and hemophilia communities in the height of the AIDS epidemic. He was tireless in his efforts to dispel myths, preconceptions and prejudices in the treatment and control of these illnesses, as well as offering his counsel and advice to those similarly afflicted. His efforts were recognized by his fellow members in the Oregon Hemophilia Foundation and Cascade AIDS Project who bestowed upon him numerous service and fellowship awards.

There are so many images that come to mind when remembering Barry, from using crutches or sitting on his stool while flying, regardless of the discipline, to enthusiastically introducing himself to every visitor to the field and showing them around, to his rascally sense of humor, but he will mostly be remember for the absolute joy he took in flying and the ever present smile on his face.