

Fred Weinholtz 1926 - 2016

Gliding was more than a hobby for him – it was his passion. Fred Weinholtz was one of the most competent and engaged officials of gliding. On Sunday, 21st of August, he died at the age of 90.

Fred Weinholtz was born in the German town Genthin on the 3rd of June, 1926. His love for aviation awoke in his childhood: As a seven-year-old boy he committed himself to model flying, at the age of 14 he sat in a sailplane for the first time. With the onset of the Second World War, flying is not innocent anymore: Weinholtz had to join the army where he was trained in motor flight. While the air force does not make use of his skills towards the end of WW2, the infantry does. In the last days of the war the young man was taken into captivity by US troops. He escaped in 1946. His flight led him to Potsdam and finally to Herford where he became a teacher.

Weinholtz had not forgotten his enthusiasm for gliding at that time – however, the sport was still forbidden. When it's allowed again, the go-getting man rushes into his old passion. In 1950 the "Interessen Gemeinschaft Segelflug" (Herford Gliding Club) was founded in Herford. Later on it became the "Herforder Verein für Luftfahrt" (Herford Association for Aviation) and Weinholtz assumed the chairmanship of the club. In 1955 he began to teach his knowledge about gliding to club members.

From 1965 on the pilot, teacher and official held his office as the chairman of the gliding school of Oerlinghausen, a job he held for two decades. In the 1960's he tried to establish the club class as a new competitive class in gliding. Although the Gliding Commission initially disapproved of his efforts, he succeeded in doing so. Another landmark in those times: "Grundtheorie des modernen Streckenflugs", a book, written by Weinholtz, became an international bestseller for the theory of cross country flying.

In 1967 Weinholtz also joined the gliding commission of the DAeC. For nine years, beginning in 1973, he worked as its chairman. In this time, he attended five world championships. In 1981 he organized the FAI World Gliding Championships in Paderborn and acted as the Championship Director of this event.

Meanwhile, Weinholtz was not only into theory and practice of gliding - he also fought for political ideals. He put himself out for the women gliding movement and brought a women's class into life and organized the first competition in women gliding in Germany in Kassel-Calden. He as well committed himself heavily in negotiations with the ministry of transport to achieve special airspace regulations for the benefit of gliding.

In 1972, Fred Weinholtz entered international circles. In the beginning as a member of the FAI International Gliding Commission (IGC); six years later as its vice president; and from 1987 on as secretary of the IGC (after his resignation in 1997 Weinholtz was appointed the "honorary secretary"). He also remained politically active at the national level: When a parliamentarian group for aviation was brought to life in 1985, Weinholtz was one of its founders. The group became an important political voice for pilots and General Aviation.

Later on Weinholtz was involved in the traditional community of the "Alte Adler" (Old Eagles). In 2004 he moved up in the board; in 2009 he became an honorary member. He was also a committed volunteer for the "Deutsches Segelflugmuseum" (German Gliding Museum at the Wasserkuppe) and acted as a board member for many years.

The gliding enthusiast worked for the International Gliding Commission of FAI at a total of 14 world championships and European championships. Weinholtz, bearer of the Federal Cross of Merit and the Lilienthal medallion of the FAI, remained active for the issues of gliding until his death. The list of honors can still be continued.

Fred Weinholtz was known as a modest and likeable person. Former DAeC president Wolfgang Weinreich says about his friend: „He was a tremendously great companion who sacrificed himself for the sport of glider flying. We all, the whole glider flying community, are very sad about the loss of this wonderful and great Man.“

