



EdWright

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## Noted for Refined Parafoils Californian Ed Wright Dies at 59

Ed Wright, of Clayton, California, who died May 28, 2003 at the age of 59, was a devoted kiteflier and kitemaker. Known to many in the kite world from his appearances at national and international kite festivals, and in particular for the wonderful parafoils he made with his devoted wife Bonnie, Wright had another significant impact on the sport of kiting. He was involved in brainstorming the Drachen Foundation, then served on its board of directors after the foundation's incorporation in 1994. He will be succeeded on the board by his wife.

Educated in accounting at the University of Hawaii, Wright was a long-time and widely-traveled employee of the federal government, first as an electronics expert with the U.S. Air Force, then with the Internal Revenue Service where he had an important role in moving the IRS into the world of computerization. He retired two years ago.

Wright became interested in kites when he saw stunts being flown in Hawaii in the early 1980s. Quickly tiring of kites with sticks, he became an unofficial apprentice of parafoil master George Ham of San Francisco and with wife Bonnie was soon specializing in making and flying parafoils. "The no fuss, no muss kite that you pop out of a bag and fly anywhere appealed to Wright's logical mind," recalls Scott Skinner, a close friend and president of the Drachen Foundation. "Soon the Wrights were creating parafoils of a refined design," recalls Skinner. "Their 'foils were characterized by a narrow profile and high flight angle---perfect for beaches with high, steady winds. Fano, Denmark, was one such beach and it held a special appeal for Ed, who made four trips there. He loved the almost fanatic interest in kites of the Germans. He loved flying there. It was perfect for parafoils because of the rock steady winds. He liked having a little house in the dunes to live in. It wasn't roughing it, but it was different."

Battling a variety of medical problems, Ed Wright made a final pilgrimage to Fano last year. "I think," says Skinner, "it was his chance to see all the good he had found in kiteflying---a beautiful place, wonderful weather, fine food, and unforgettable friends.

"Ed was a keen observer of contemporary kites and appreciated and applauded the work he saw in friends' efforts, from Peter Malinski, Jorgen Muller-Hansen and Wolfgang Schimmelpfennig, to Jose Sainz, Martin Lester, and Ed and Gail Lindsay. But he staunchly worked to make the finest parafoils, always insisting he had no artistic talent, but continually finishing flying masterpieces."

Skinner recalls that "Eddie Bob," as Wright was widely known after an early visit to the fabled annual Junction, Texas, kite retreat, had a sarcastic wit, an intolerance of children, and a love of good food. "This led to many moments of laughter, contemplation, and special friendship," says Skinner. Skinner recalls Wright "almost falling over himself with amusement" when he saw a "death from above" kite being flown by an 8-year-old in a competition he was helping judge in Berkeley, California. This boy had made his kite completely black with a skull and crossbones in white as its design. The word "Death" was written above the design. The kite stood out dramatically among the other conventional kites. "Let's give this kid the whole box of awards," suggested Wright to a fellow judge.

Skinner speaks for the global kite world when he says: "Ed was great as a friend, valuable as an adviser. He was a good influence on kiting with both his personal and professional ideas. He had a sense of humor, to say the least. He created a lot of fun on a lot of kite fields and kite beaches."

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