

# IAC Achievement Awards Program Enters the 21st Century . . . A great program with a new look

Photos by Bonnie Kratz



By Vicki Cruse

While many people have heard of the IAC Aerobatic Achievement Awards program, often referred to as the “Patch” program, many new IAC pilots may not know what the program is about. The Achievement Awards program was conceived in 1970 by Verne Jobst, then IAC president with many years as a glider pilot, who wanted an equivalent to the popular soaring badges. He, Bob Davis, and Mike Heuer completed the inaugural set of rules in May 1971.

The program was formulated to promote and advance sport aerobatics. The IAC sanctions many regional contests all across the country every year; however, it realizes that all pilots who fly aerobatics may or may not wish to enter competition, yet they deserve recognition of their abilities. The IAC Aerobatic Achievement Awards program furnishes the mechanism in which a competition and non-competition pilot can work in reaching various levels of proficiency. Aerobatic competitions will benefit as more people will be encouraged to enter, and the IAC has a means by which to provide aerobatic education.


There are five categories of achievement awards that can be earned: Primary, Sportsman, Intermediate, Advanced (power only), and Unlimited. There is a gradual step up in proficiency and skill required to successfully complete the maneuvers in each respective category. The required maneuvers can be completed in one flight or individually on different

days. Chapters are encouraged to hold “Achievement Award Days” as a way to get people together for reasons other than competition.

The first pilot to qualify for an award was 16-year-old Debbie Forshee, from Louisiana, who flew for the Basic Patch (now called Primary) in 1971. To date, a total of 6,312 Achievement Awards have been earned. Only one glider pilot has earned all of the smooth and star awards (called an All-Seven), and 60 power pilots have completed all 10 awards. A complete list of pilots earning each award may be found on the IAC website.

Smooth awards are earned by flying a designated set of figures in front of a judge listed on the current IAC-approved judges list (which can be found on the IAC members-only site at <http://Members.IAC.org>). The judge must sign the application for the award, and a grade of 5 on a scale of 1 to 10 is the minimum score for each maneuver. Star awards must be earned while flying competition aerobatics at an IAC-sanctioned contest. Smooth and star awards are available for both powered aircraft and gliders, though gliders do not have the Advanced category.

In the fall of 2006, the IAC board approved the redesign of the Achievement Awards, including a series of pins and accompanying decals. Each category is represented by a different color. Smooth awards and stars awards, with stars in the concentric circle, were redesigned. A commemorative plaque has been commissioned to display the pins

and is available for order. Members wishing to purchase pins or decals to accompany the patches they have earned in the past may do so using the application forms. 

For more information on the Achievement Awards program and for application forms, please visit [www.IAC.org/programs/achievement.html](http://www.IAC.org/programs/achievement.html).

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