

S. J. “Steve” Wittman 1904-1995

Sylvester Joseph Wittman, the internationally known aviator and inventor who was born in the Town of Byron on April 5, 1904. Wittman began his aviation career in Byron.

Wittman was an unlikely candidate for a pilot. He was partially blind in one eye and he wore corrective lenses from an early age. This did not deter him. He and Perry Anderson introduced the world of flight to many Byron residents when they purchased a surplus World War I airplane and established their flying field “on Highway 15 south of Fond du Lac.”

S.J. Wittman (who eventually was known as “Steve”) was not a veteran, but he played a pivotal role on the homefront during World War II. Answering President Roosevelt’s call, Wittman trained 103 pilot candidates in the Civil Pilot Training Program from 1940—1943.

Wittman’s aviation career ended in 1995 when he died in a plane crash en route to his beloved Wisconsin, but his racing record remains legendary. He was a local boy who became famous, but he never forgot his Byron roots.



Special thanks to Linda Volmer, Bob Simon and Ethan Hackbarth
for preparation of the site, to design and completion.

In conjunction with the Veteran’s Memorial Committee, BHS unveiled two signs honoring the Town of Byron as the birthplace of SJ ‘Steve’ Wittman on Memorial Day 2009.

Many were involved in bringing these signs to fruition: The Oshkosh Chapter of the EAA and the EAA for assisting in the design, construction and costs of the signs, Cindy Boelk and the Baier family and many others. Although Steve Wittman was not a veteran, he played a pivotal part in training many World War II pilots. Arden Hjelle worked closely with Wittman for many years and spoke about him during the ceremony. There was a fly-by of several aircraft to pay tribute to the Wittman.

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