

## Byron C. Engle



**March 1, 1946 ~ November 24, 2024**

Byron was born in Austin, TX on March 1, 1946 to Norma Kasch Engle & George M. Engle III. In 1949, the family moved to Midland, TX, as his father worked for Shell Oil Co. and there was an oil boom in West Texas at the time. While living there, Byron happened to look out the window and saw a large airplane and the die was set; he became a “wing nut” from then on.

After graduation, Byron enrolled at North Texas State University in Denton, TX in the fall of 1964. In 1966, he enrolled in Cooke County Jr. College in Gainesville, TX and in the fall of 1967, received an induction notice from Uncle Sam to help with the conflict in Southeast Asia. Not wanting to become cannon fodder, he enlisted and was given his choice of occupation while under the employment of the U.S. Army. After basic combat training at Fort Polk, LA, he was sent to the U.S. Armed Forces School of Music in Little Creek, VA for 6 months of intensive training. He graduated from the school at a professional level of playing and was sent to active duty at Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio performing with the 4th Army Band, finishing his time in service there.

While in San Antonio, he employed the G.I. Bill for advanced flight training (he had earned his private pilot’s license while at North Texas), acquiring a commercial pilot’s license and a multi-engine rating. After leaving the employ of Uncle Sam, he reenrolled at North Texas, finishing in the spring of 1973. One of the courses he took was instrument repair (little did he know that was also a life-altering decision). His first teaching job was as middle school/assistant high school band director and assistant choir director for Lancaster ISD, just South of Dallas. While teaching in Lancaster, he married Betty on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1974.

After 2 years, a move was made to Smithville, a small town Southeast of Austin as elementary, junior high and high school band director. After a successful tenure, he gained employment with the Lyford CISD as junior high/assistant high school band director. While employed at Lyford, he used the G.I. bill again to acquire an instrument rating. Mr. Snavely the head director recognized his ability for instrument repair and helped set up a small shop in a practice/storage room in the band hall. Byron found that working with his hands was therapeutic and helped relieve the stresses of the day while in his shop.

In 1984, Byron left Lyford to teach at the Port Isabel Junior High and as high school assistant under. After 1 year in P.I., Danny Solis called and needed help at the South San Antonio West Campus High School for an assistant director. The job was great and so were the students, but the crowds and traffic were terrible, so when the junior high director’s job in La Feria opened (again, under the high school direction of Mr. Snavely), he made the move back to the Rio Grande Valley.

After 14 wonderful years as middle school director, he was moved into the head director’s position at the high school. Six successful years later, retirement loomed and in 2006, Byron graduated into retirement (if one could call it that). He continued his repair business and is enjoying his “retirement”. In 2016 he was inducted into the Rio Grande Valley Band Directors Hall of Fame. In addition to instrument repair, Byron has several other hobbies (perhaps too many-they can be a distraction), such as motorcycle riding, shooting his pistols & rifles (not hunting) and building a homebuilt airplane.

Byron was an active member of EAA Chapter 595 for over 45yrs holding several Officers positions most recently President and Treasurer at the time of his passing. He was the Chapters Young Eagle Flight Coordinator, giving more than 350 kids airplane rides. Byron was also building (from scratch) a Turner Super T-40.

Byron was also an active Pilot earning his Instrument Rated Commercial License in both Single & Multi Engine Airplanes and as a side note, both parents were also Pilots. In November 2021 Byron was the recipient of the FAA’s prestigious “Wright Brothers Master Pilot” award.

Byron is survived by his wife Betty of 50 years, Chris (stepson) and family in Denton, TX and his sister and her family in Austin, TX.