



DOWNWIND CHASE

Official Newsletter of the Pacific Coast Aeronauts

♦ NOVEMBER 2025 ♦

Well, most of my 2025 balloon adventures for this year are complete. Starting at Ceres, CA and ending yesterday in Turlock with the 61st edition of WHAMOBASS.

I've asked our chief judge Claire Lucas to write an article on WHAMOBASS but I'd like to say I think it was an outstanding event. There were 16 new balloonists who participated in the ceremony, between Saturday and Sunday mornings. (including 2 young sons under 10) I was delighted when Dave Wakefield was able to put the host family in the basket for a ride.

In early December, you can expect to see an email from the PCA, with a link for the election survey. This year, Tom Sharpee and Jeanne Anson are up for re-election. As long time PCA members, they have been an asset to the board. Remember, if you want to get involved in the PCA, please email pca@pcaballoons.org (<mailto:pca@pcaballoons.org>) or contact one of the board members.

Then in early January, I'll be sending out a reminder to pay your PCA yearly dues. If you have changed your preferred email address, moved or changed phone numbers, please let me know so we can keep our roster current. You can pay your dues anytime by using the link on the website or by sending a check. Contact me if you need me to check to see

when you last paid your dues.

Lastly, although the balloon events are fewer this time of year, don't forget safety, Whether it's driving after a sip or two, cooking for the family or just going out with the sniffles, remember to keep in mind safety.

View from the Board

Linda Walton, Treasurer

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IMPORTANT INFO!

CLUB MEETINGS

VIA ZOOM, HELD ON THE FIRST
WEDNESDAY OF ODD-NUMBERED
MONTHS PLUS DECEMBER

7TH MEETING

OF 2025

Wed. Nov 4th

@ 7PM PDT

**ZOOM BOARD
(BOD) MEETINGS**

**FINAL MEETING
OF 2025**

Thurs Dec 18@ 7PM

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:
20th of each month**



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Keep the tripping hazards at a minimum.

Be careful anytime you need that "thing" on the top shelf. No matter what our age is, safety is important.

Enjoy the holiday season and see you on the launch field, next year. Or join us on Zoom.

Photos for this article provided by Dana Thornton, Linda Walton, April Turner, Claire Lucas, Tom Rossi, Magic Bob & Don Fernandez

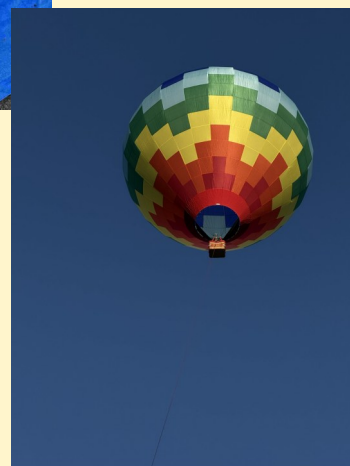
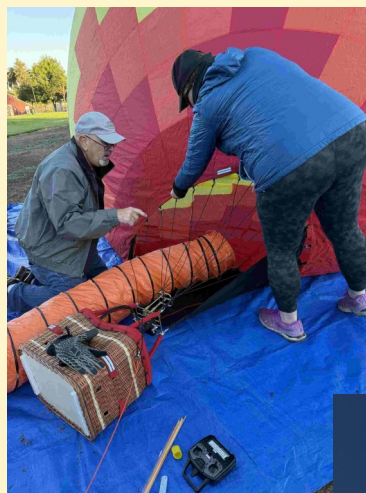
WHAMOBASS 61 Remotely

By Pat Moore

Well, as luck would have it I was not able to attend the launch of WHAMOBASS 61 in Turlock. So the thought occurred to us, why not have a short flight locally and celebrate Aerostation remotely. So Fran, myself, and a good friend Margo Tercy proceeded to setup and fly R3D2 at Christmas Hill Park in Gilroy CA. It was a perfect morning, little to no wind, temperatures in the mid 50's and slightly foggy. Now a cool thing about remotely controlled/piloted balloons is we can sometimes fly in conditions that would ground our bigger brothers and sisters. Our ceiling was about 300 feet and slooowly clearing. But that didn't stop us. We set up, launched, and flew for 30 minutes (limit of my fuel) to about 150 feet AGL. During the flight we had conversations with a dozen or so early morning runners, joggers, dog walkers, and even a passerby or two traveling through the park. Remotely controlled balloons afford a perfect opportunity for public education on the sport of hot air ballooning. Very similar to what we did early in Reno at the 2025 GRBR.

Suffice to say we had a great flight and got to try out some new inflation techniques and equipment.

Oh yeah, we did not forget to celebrate AEROSTATION!! We hope Deke was smiling down on us as we remembered him with fond memories and stories.



WHAMOBASS LXI:

by April Turner

A Memorable Gathering in Turlock

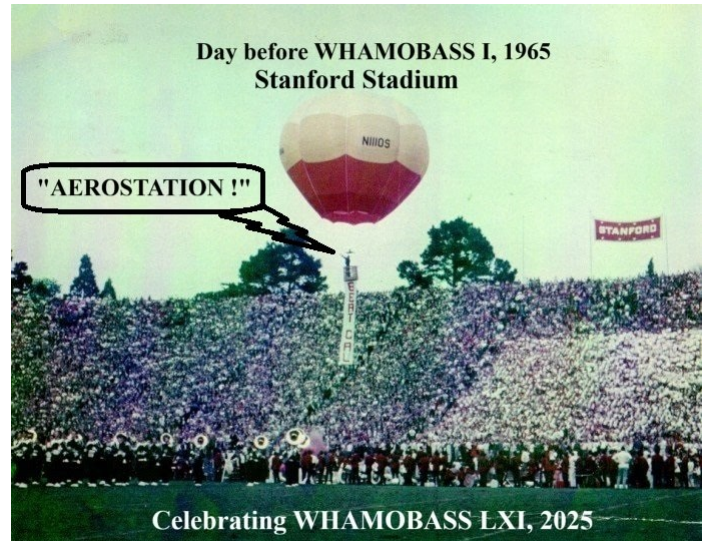
The sixty-first WHAMOBASS event has come and gone, leaving participants reflecting on a successful and memorable gathering. It is certain that Deke would be proud of the community's efforts and spirit.

Current Home Base in Turlock

For the second consecutive year, Alta and Donnie Fernandez secured a private airstrip in Turlock to serve as the home base for the event. The area proved to be an ideal location offering excellent landing sites, supportive landowners, and the volunteer crew were enthusiastic, good-natured and we were able to take many of them for a flight.

Celebrating History and Tradition

To start, Dana shared a bit of history about the event, emphasizing the significance of the various locations associated with the Whiskey Hill, Atherton, Menlo Oaks Ballooning & Sporting Society. Dana also presented the pilots with framed photographs capturing Deke Sonnichsen's flight from the Stanford Stadium, honoring the legacy and tradition of the event.



Chief Judge's Challenge

The presentation of the Chief Judge's pewter cup(s) was next, with the joined tankards bearing the names of all the women who have served as Chief Judge since 1965. Claire Lucas was honored as the judge for 2025. She challenged the participants to collect materials from their landing sites and create a song or poem inspired by their flight experiences. We closed the pilot's briefing with our traditional shout of Aerostation!

Balloon Flights and Aerial Photography

This year, four balloons took to the skies: Alta Fernandez with Summer Breeze, Dana Thornton with Free Spirit, Dave Wakefield with ReMax, and the author with Aurora Australis. Saturday's flights were particularly rewarding, with each balloon flying for approximately two hours. In addition, PCA pilot Kelly Couch flew his AutoGyro Calidus around the balloons, capturing aerial photos that everyone is eager to see.



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Festivities and Ceremonies

Upon returning to the field, participants enjoyed wood-fired pizzas and took part in a first flight ceremony. Dana's retelling of the origin story of hot air ballooning was both thorough and humorous, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Chief Judge's Task Submissions

For the Chief Judge's challenge, my crew, led by Jana Couch, dressed our skeleton passenger with corn husks and flora collected from the landing sites. However, Alta's youngest crew impressed everyone with an epic poem filled with heartfelt prose and accompanied by field pumpkins, earning unanimous praise and winning the task.

Saturday Evening Social

The day concluded with a delicious dinner and enjoyable socializing at Dustbowl Brewery in Turlock, further strengthening the bonds within the ballooning community.

Sunday's Adventures

Sunday greeted participants with another beautiful morning and nearly perfect box conditions. All four balloons landed within a block—a country field block—from their starting point, marking a successful conclusion to the weekend's flights.

Looking Ahead

The WHAMOBASS committee is already looking forward to future events, eager to create more memories and invite new participants to join in the adventure. **Join us!**



AutoGyro Calidus

Left Kelly Couch's AutoGyro Calidus

Right- April Turner's submission for the WHAMO competition.

The McFarland's hosted WHAMOBASS 61. Below is their Hangar full of wonderful aircraft. !



WHAMOBASS 61 Claire Lucas

.Dates: October 18 & 19, 2025.

Location: Turlock, CA. At a private airfield with a grass landing strip.

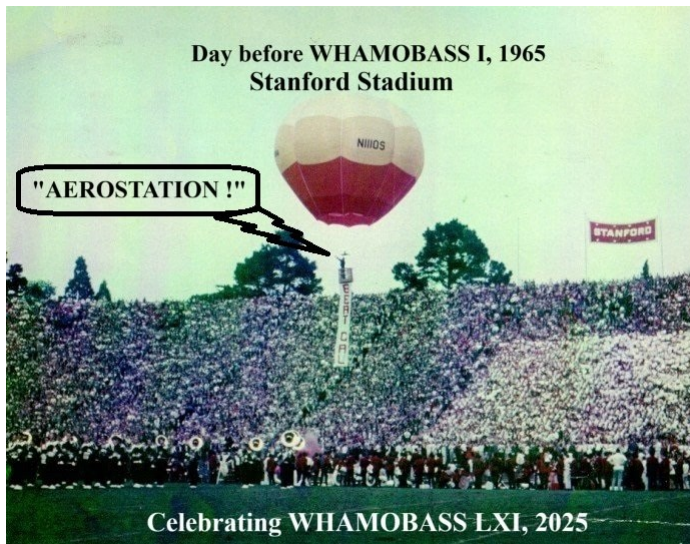
The Pilots and their balloons this year were the same as last year:

April Turner flying "Aurora Australis"

Alta Fernandes flying "Summer Breeze"

Dana Thornton flying "Free Spirit"

Dave Wakefield flying a ReMax Balloon.



Dana Thornton was the Balloon Meister and gave an interesting brief history of the longest continuously running balloon event. With a surprise for every pilot of a mounted photo of the very first WHAMOBASS flight that started it all.... all those years ago.

Larry Seiler provided a weather briefing. Light & Variable winds were forecast. Then it was time to reveal the Chief Judge's task: in verse form, on the next page.

As predicted the conditions were near perfect and all 4 balloons took off, with Dana piloting Free Spirit leading the way. Everyone had wonderful flights and commented on meeting very hospitable landowners on landing. After long flights, some with multiple hops we gathered back at the launch field to enjoy delicious, piping hot pizza from Echa Pizza, who'd set up a traveling (mobile) pizza oven. A very popular choice from last year. A first timers ceremony was performed by Dana & Alta for 6 first time fliers (new Aero-nauts). Alta & Don had invited many of their regular crew and friends to help, making it a very social, fun event.

At tailgating the entries for Chief Judge's task were performed. The stand out winners were Daniel & Allie, of the "Summer Breeze" crew who recited a wonderful poem. Daniel flew for the first time that day and was inspired to create the beautiful prose. His poem finished with the following verse: "I'm very glad I could come to this event on this lovely morn, I wish someday I can return airborne". This truly captured the spirit of the event.

Thanks to the PCA WHAMOBASS committee and all involved in putting on such a successful and enjoyable event.

From Chief Judge, WHAMOBASS 61. Gentle breezes and soft landings, Claire

Chief Judge Task

WHAMOBASS 61



For This Task You Must Work as a Team,
No matter how strange it may seem,
To compose and perform,
With a spirit most warm,
The whim of the Chief Judge's Dream.

‘WHAMOBASS’, ‘Sixty-One’, ‘Alien’, ‘Blue’,
Mark the theme for each talented crew,
With voices that soar,
Like balloons evermore,
Rising high over the soft morning dew.

Write a song, or a poem, or some prose,
Put on a great show that just glows!
But perform it with Verve,
(If you can summon the nerve),
And delight us right down to our toes.

Use items encountered in flight,
Or found at the landing or launch site,
And things recovered on retrieve,
That no one will believe,
Bring the wonders of flight into sight.

And to you who shine forth like a star,
And show us how brilliant you are,
Your reward will accrue,
As is rightly your due,
And your praises sung near and sung far!

Empty Pockets Balloon Team Jeff Haliczar

2025 Taitung International Balloon Festival

Taitung, Taiwan

Balloon events all want to be unique and creative to draw in spectators and sponsors to fund the event. Some events are the 'Largest Annual' balloon event (Fiesta), some say they are the largest 'Free' balloon event (depends on who you ask and what you know is true), some say the 'Longest/Oldest' (WHAMOBASS), or my hometown event 'New Mexico's Premier Balloon Event' (Gallup) all in the effort to draw in the sponsorships and economic impact we all know balloon events can have on the communities that host them. The general public is not always aware of these tactics, and for the most part don't care, they want to see balloons and of course the pilots want to fly.



The Taitung International Balloon Festival is the 'Longest' event in the world and they don't brag about it to pull in the visitors. It is now a 6 week long spectacle of balloons and ballooning and more. It does draw in many visitors to the area. This is a bit shorter than when it first started back in 2011 then at 66 days (9½ weeks). The Taitung County Government is a major factor in the funding along with support of the Taiwan Tourism and various corporate sponsors and yet, the economic impact of the festival is felt all the way out to the farmlands and indigenous people of the Luye Highlands where the festival is held annually. This year the estimates are nearly 700K visitors that attended the festival over the course of its running. According to the Balloonmeister Wout they had nearly 1/3 of the flight windows cancelled due to weather (more on this later) so a pretty good attendance numbers. I realize it is nothing compared to Fiesta and others events in larger metropolitan areas but for a country like Taiwan it is a huge amount of people and influx to the area.

My initial contact with the event this year was a Facebook message from a woman I worked with on my first trip over with 'Off the Wall' balloon, since my initial trip over I had always sent them a quick note nearly every year to offer my shape(s) to attend. In my opinion this is one of the best run events. Now in 2025 her message was towards the end of February and not until the first part of March to get the actual 'invitation' to attend. Many details needed to be worked out in advance since I was unsure if they wanted 'High Top Flier' for all or a portion of the festival. Figured out later that I was the only US balloon to attend the event this year, they were limited by the 'Government' to 3 outside shapes per week with the majority of them were from Brazil.



Logistics for this sort of adventure were many from getting the equipment inspected, to getting everything ready to ship to Taiwan. Luckily this event takes care of the shipping details; I just had to have everything ready to go as soon as possible.

In April I finalized the contract with the event, it was for a 7 day block, the last week of the event, with morning and evening 'shows' and possibility of free flights in the AM's.

In May we were working on arrangements for flights, hotels and associated details with Leslie (a wonderful person to work with), along with translation of various things I needed/wanted for trading cards, t-shirts and pin design.

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July 10th saw me headed to Albq. to have the envelope inspected and had it loaded into the tote/shipping container to send to Taiwan. Later I took the bottom end to Albq for the final packing and wrapping to make the call to the shipper. With a few minor hiccups the balloon was picked up on July 18th.

OK, enough of the background and back story you want to know about the event. It is a world class event in all aspects. I had to do the balloon 2x a day every day (they took our day off away) for 7 days, so a total of 14 inflations and 12 pack ups of the 680# envelope. Luckily they provided 6-8 +/- crew per 'show' and the crew at this event are in my opinion the best in the business on many levels, all young and strong. I had Betty Boop (what I called her) as the 'Crew Chief' of my group of young 20's kids, most had some English and more often than not they did not speak English.



It was an adventure; they were for the most part employed by the event and had been doing special shaped balloons for the entire event. They were paid 250 NTD per day (\$8.25 USD), which was both the AM and PM sessions with about 6 hours of 'work', which is about \$1500 NTD per week (\$50 USD), crew as well as pilots were fed 2x a day, may possibly talk more about the food later. From my talking to one of the crew they were satisfied with the pay from the event, because it was not all about the money it was also fun to help the pilots from around the world with the special shaped balloons, although she said it was 'good money' for the area. Most of the crew lived nearby, Indigenous to the area.

Luye Highlands is a park situated on a plateau about 40-45 minutes outside Taitung Taiwan around 1200' MSL about 6.25 miles from the Pacific Ocean. So this meant loading on a bus from the hotel in Taitung at 4:00 AM each day, and again at 3:30PM to ride out to the festival. The festival area is a park and has been transformed to the main venue for balloons in the region. The ride operator tends to fly from further north of the park so the passengers get a longer ride, the landings are limited depending on the direction and what crop is being grown at that time of the year. Pineapple, rice, tea plantations, bananas, mangos and more are the main crops, with the pineapples being the biggest 'cash crop of the region.

Upon arrival at the festival grounds we all headed into the briefing room for breakfast or dinner and waited for things to start. Weather was limited to what we got from the Balloonmeister Wout who did a good job of giving us the pertinent facts and launched a few pibals to see what was happening. I remember one day with thunder in the distance wondering if we were going to have to do anything, we did since the storm activity was moving away and did not pose a threat to the operation (also the Government dictated some of this too). Temps are in the mid 70's to low 80's and very humid as in 80% or higher, so heat index the temps were much higher. Yet the internal temps in the envelope were not crazy, typically around 200-205* on the static display and slightly higher for the free flight. I think we only lost one possibly two of the flight operations for the week I was in attendance. In order to 'free fly' I was supposed to let them know 2 days in advance (needed permission from the government), yet that is difficult to predict and mentioned this to Wout, and was able to do one free flight from the festival grounds and essentially 2 hops since the crew was not able to find the gate into the area of my first landing, missed the big field that is more or less dedicated to balloon and hang glider landings.



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Did learn that I can lie down and pack up HTF on a very narrow farm road between pineapples, did I say it was narrow. Second/final landing was in a field of scrub and we walked the balloon over to the farm road to turn the balloon 90 degrees so the toe was pointing down the road and pulled the deflation panel on the toe and laid the rest of the balloon over the top of that, which meant the inflation later that day things were a bit messy but it all worked out well. I took my son and Betty Boop (which was required by the government since she spoke English and Chinese) so communication with the crew was possible. This was only my 2nd free flight with High Top Flier and very enjoyable, on landing I had General Lee (Retired Taiwan General and past Crew Commander) arrive with his grandkids to watch and help along with the truck load of my assigned crew. We took a little longer to drive back to the festival because I insisted on stopping for beverages for the crew (no complaints).

The adventure was with my son and it was wonderful, even with the added day in Taipei due to the typhoon hitting the Eastern side of the island (Taitung getting the 50+ MPH winds and gusts to 90), we did not mind the delay. It allowed us to explore Taipei for an added day, with the sights and surrounding area. The Taipei 101 the 3rd tallest building in the world, the National Palace Museum, a monument to Sheng Kua Shak and numerous Buddhist temples in the area, night markets and beyond. Once we figure out the trains it was easy to get around and inexpensive to travel about. Hotel in Taipei was nice and more than adequate for our needs; the hotel in Taitung was more spacious and more than met our needs for our stay in Taiwan. A wonderful breakfast buffet still open every morning after we returned from the event since we were typically back to the hotel by 9-10 AM. Between the AM and PM sessions, we used bikes from the hotel and rode to the beach and park on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, another day rented e-bikes and rode/drove to the Taitung Harbor and fresh Sashimi (the boat was pulling in as we rode up) to a local restaurant. Some amazing things to see along the way, despite seeing some of the damages from the typhoon earlier that week it was fun.



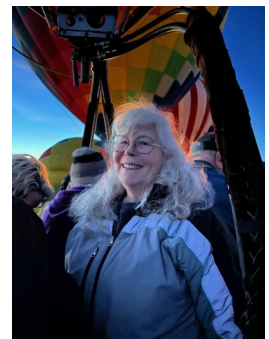
I hope to go back, but doubtful it will be with either of my shapes, possibly taking the Gallup Koshare balloon in the future. Made sure to hand out cards for that one in the hopes of returning to the Taiwan International Balloon Festival.

Great Pumpkin Balloon Glow

Each year the Sioux Falls Balloon Association has a Glow for the community. It is a random day around Halloween. We announce it on Facebook. This year we had about 2K show up. We have a Walk-In Balloon and 5 balloons Glowing. We pass out candy and balloon cards and everyone has a great time.

It's a great recruiting event for Crew and paid flights.

Photos by Deb Husby, Jason White, Jeanne Anson, Janelle Kelly, N. Sewell



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PCA BOARD of DIRECTORS Minutes

OCT 16, 2025 (Thursday 1900 hours PDST)

2025 Board Members: ☑ Pat Moore (PM) ☑ [April Turner \(AT\)](#) ☑ [Tom Sharpee \(TS\)](#)
☑ Linda Walton (LW) ☑ Jeanne Anson (JA)

Chair of Board: Pat Moore (PM)

Club President: April Turner (AT)

Club Vice President: Dave Wakefield (DW)

Club Treasurer: Linda Walton (LW)

BoD Mtg Secretary: April Turner (AT)

General Membership Mtg Secretary: Jeanne Anson (JA)

Guests: n/a **called to order:** 1900/7:00PM Pacific

1. **PCA Budget status/update** – LW Reviewed current spreadsheets Linda sent in August
Looking to ensure that WHAMOBASS is adequately paid for.
 - ♦ **Treasurer Report – LW** Quarterly summary report – 3rd quarter report status
Linda to sent reports 8/27/25, Will send latest at end of today's meeting.
 - ♦ **Interest bearing account – status – LW** \$8000 and opened up a 5 month CD accruing 3.5%
2. **New Business:**
 - a. Email – Status of functionality – DW - PCA Gmail account seems to work great and we can cc all out-going to PCA primary account.
Pat has sent an initial draft of procedures for board review.
Need to add process for email management – LW & DW. Meeting reminder process - A
 - b. WHAMOBASS – Update – LW & AT
Shirts are unfortunately late – supply chain issues cited. Next year we should find a local company and get artwork to fit instead. Pat has a source and so does Jeanne.
Next Year we will need to budget for Chief Judge shirts and cup engraving. This should be budgeted as part of the shirt markup.
 - c. Insurance companies adding in medical requirement for 2nd pilots for rallies - Pat
Noted -RPS is spearheading this for pilots aged 70+. Need to keep up with the rally's and report back.
3. **Continuing Business / Action Items:**
 - a. Google Calendars, Best Practices – membership and BoD – Pat
No way of tracking click rate on the calendars; Goggle does not have anything in place that does that. So how far in advance do we send email membership about the meeting? Send reminders 1 week and again at 3 days in advance of meetings.
 - b. Newsletter and website click rate –
Dave - has submitted monthly summary to Board 10/16/25. Includes the available breakdown.
DW – Don't see anything we can automate. I will create calendar reminder to send stats to BoD.
Monthly would probably be easiest to digest.
 - c. Procedural practices (proposals/storage) - Pat
What is our plan for Dropbox? What file types? DW - Jeanne has been editing .pub files locally and there are no .pub versions in the Dropbox.. Dave is moving to MSFT 365 for operational needs.
Can this be our new archive? AT to discuss with DW. We also have requirements to archive meeting minutes. We need to identify the process and what position/function does this.
4. **Committees:**
 - a. Newsletter – Jeanne A. Linda is up for the board Letter in November
Pat is up for the board letter in December. Jeanne is getting a new laptop. Pray for a smooth change to Win11.
 - b. Membership Development
 1. Outreach – Vacant.
April got the PCA cards from Melanee, handed out bunches at Clovis. Will bring to WHAMO and distribute to members.
 2. Communications – DW – I have not spent much time on the “Member Balloons” update. I'll send a blast out to the membership for updates/changes. Hard part is getting people to respond. ☑
 - c. Education and Training – April/Pat/ Jeanne -Table to January and then knock out a plan

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BOD meeting Minutes Continued.

5. Calendar based Events (not a committee)

- a. BFA Youth Program: no updates expected until spring, though BFA has organizational changes.
- b. Awards – AT (Cup engraving & appreciation plaque/ champagne glasses)
AT to get quote for champagne glasses from engraver when picking up the cup
- a. WHAMOBASS – AT & LW see above
- b. PCA Christmas Party – LW/AT/JC December 13, 2025 at the Couch's in Elk Grove. Invitation sent 10/21.

6. For the good of the order:

- a. PM nothing
- b. AT nothing
- c. TS nothing
- d. LW will send Board Letter soon
- e. JA raining, thunder and lightning in SD – Please take pictures at WHAMO

7. Motion to close:

Moved: Tom Seconded: Jeanne Closed at: 8:02PM





PACIFIC COAST AERONAUTS CLUB CONTACTS

2025 PCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CLUB OFFICERS

Names & Email Addresses	Board Term Expires at End of Year	2025 Officers
Patrick Moore pcamoore587@gmail.com	2026	Chair of BOD
April Turner pca.april@gmail.com	2026	President & Co-Secretary
Dave Wakefield pca.dwake@gmail.com	Volunteer	Vice President
Linda Walton pca.lindaw@gmail.com	2026	Treasurer
Jeanne Anson ansonlta2@gmail.com	2025	Co-Secretary
Tom Sharpee tomsharpee@gmail.com	2025	

2025 PCA COMMITTEES

Committee	Chairperson	Members
Newsletter	Jeanne Anson	<i>And All Members!</i>
Membership Dev. Outreach	TBD	TBD
Membership Dev. Communications	Dave Wakefield	TBD
Education & Training	Pat Moore April Turner	Jeanne Anson Tom Sharpee
Calendar Based Events	Not Committees	Start Dates
BFA Youth Program	Melanee Scarborough	On Going
Awards	Linda W & April	Later in the year
WHAMOBASS	Board	Planning starts 3/25
Christmas Party	Jana Couch	Oct 2025 planning starts



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FOR SALE

Balloon and Equipment

Right-click on picture captions for more details



Raven S-55A



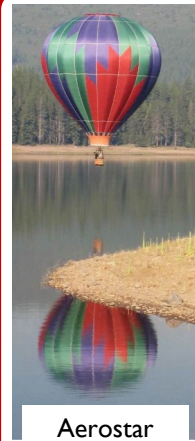
2001 Cameron 'Shoe 90



TBW AX-8B—Racer



TBW FF7 & Trailer



Aerostar S49A