



DOWNWIND CHASE

Official Newsletter of the Pacific Coast Aeronauts

♦ OCTOBER 2026 ♦

A view from the Board April Turner President & Co-Secretary

Still Looking Up, Even When We're Grounded!

We've been getting far more tether practice than most of us would choose, but that is part of life in ballooning. Mother Nature always has a mind of her own, and this season she has not been especially interested in letting hot air balloons drift serenely across the West. Between fog at the Sonoma County Classic and wind at two recent events —

Wings 'n Wheels in Lincoln, California, and GRBR in Reno, Nevada — 2026 has asked us to be patient, flexible, and very good at finding the fun on the ground.

Flags Out at Lincoln

The Lincoln Regional Airport's Wings & Wheels weekend opened with a glow where the balloons stood briefly, but the wind quickly made spectator safety the deciding factor. By the next morning, the flags and airport windsock were standing straight out. A couple of us had balloons freshly back from annual inspections, so we used the opportunity for a cold inflation to unwind knots and give kids a close-up look at a balloon. Even tucked between the hangars, the air was barely calm enough; only the little Re/Max balloon managed to stand, and only for a moment. Still, it was a great chance to visit, swap stories, and consume some buckeyes. IYKYK. Fingers crossed for gentler breezes next year. *Photo Above & Right.*

Reno's Wind-Whipped Weekend

The Great Reno Balloon Race, the world's largest free hot-air ballooning event, marked its 45th anniversary this year with an expanded four-day format at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park. It had all the ingredients for a memorable celebration. The balloons were ready, the crowds were ready, and the anniversary energy was there — but the wind insisted on becoming part of the story.



IMPORTANT INFO!

CLUB MEETINGS

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

MEETING

OF 2026

Wed. Nov 4

@ 7PM PDT

ZOOM BOARD MEETING

NEXT ONE IS:

Thurs Oct 15 @ 7PM

CHECK EMAIL 4 LINK

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Thursday gave us the kind of start everyone hopes for, with all scheduled flights taking place. For an event where we normally log plenty of hours, the new fourth day seemed like it would mean even more time in the air. By early Friday morning, though, pilots and organizers already knew the event would be grounded. Saturday brought a little more promise: Dawn Patrol launched and stayed tight for quite a while, but degrading shear left about half the mass ascension balloons on the ground. By Sunday, the wind had made the decision clear again. A candlestick gave the crowds something to enjoy for a while, and pilots had a welcome chance to talk with spectators and answer questions, but everyone was still on the ground wishing they were in the air.

Setting aside the weather, Reno's 45th anniversary did deliver one especially wonderful highlight: the chance to see one of our PCA members from the East Coast, Ron Thornton. Ron drove all the way from Massachusetts for the anniversary and flew Dawn Patrol with his brother Dana. His orange and yellow Balloon Works is a larger version of Peanuts Too, the balloon he and Ken O'Connor used when they developed Dawn Patrol back in 1977. On a personal note, one of my fondest memories is that Ron was the first pilot to hand me a striker so I could do my first inflation by myself. This year, Ron received the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award for 50 years of LTA flight. It was a real pleasure to congratulate him in person.



Photos from Face book.
Below Ron Thornton from
BFA post.

Montague is next up, and after that is WHAMOBASS on October 18th! Here's hoping Mother Nature smiles on us — and that the next report includes more flying, fewer windsocks standing straight out, and just as many good stories from the field.

Editor Comment: Ron Thornton also was the man that put a striker in my hand to inflate his very new balloon in 1979. So Amazing!



**Wright
Brothers
Master
Pilot**
presented to
Ron Thornton

*Fifty Years of Dedicated
Service in Aviation Safety*



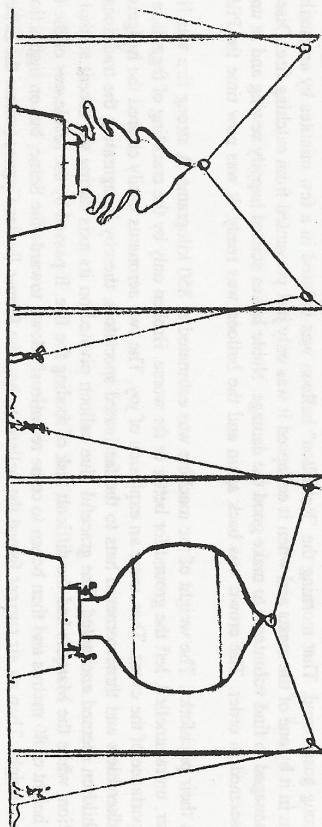
Congratulations to the Nevada State Hot Air Balloon Champions:

- 1st place: Karalyn Mumm, Citrus in the Sky
- 2nd Place: Will Vavra, Good Morning Sunshine
- 3rd Place: Pat Irwin, Battle Born

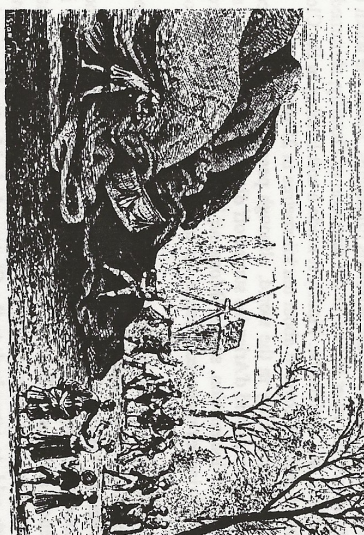
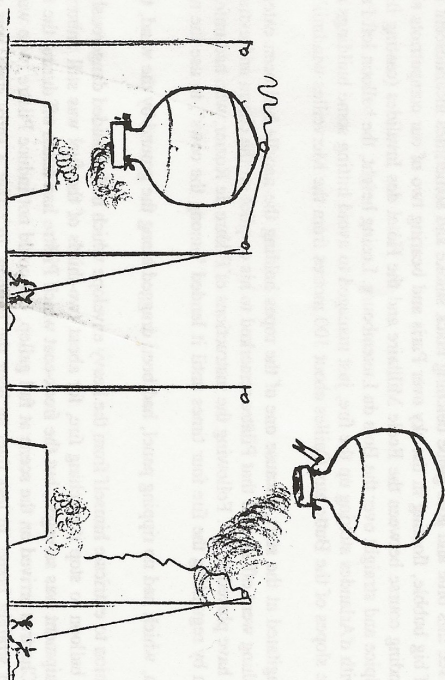


WHAMOBASS XXXIV

Aerostat Field Pass



Pilure de Rozier and d'Arlandes landing on the Butte-aux-Cailles, 21st November, 1783. Drawing by De Frene.



Pilure de Rozier and d'Arlandes landing among windmills on the Butte-aux-Cailles, 21st November, 1783. Taken from Sirros' and Puller's "Histoire des Ballons" (History of balloons), 1876.

Aeronaute

Jeanne Anson

N90854

More WHAMOBASS Memorabilia!

Above is the Aerostat Field Pass from WHAMOBASS XXXIV
Next page is the back side with the History of Aerostation!

Situated on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne, the Château de la Muette was far from the miasmas of Paris and stood amidst meadows and vineyards near the little Château de Boulaivilliers, the pretty estate of the Princess of Lamballe and the Hôtel de Valentinois, residence of the "electric" Ambassador, Benjamin Franklin. Artistic and literary celebrities used to come and breathe the wholesome country air in their residences on the Butte de Passy (a small hill), where they drank ferruginous waters unless they could get fresh milk from the Magu farm. From the top of the Butte one could see Paris and its surroundings, so it was an ideal launching site for the adventure.

Accordingly Etienne Montgolfier agreed to set up his new base at the Château de la Muette, whose park contained a fine row of trees for breaking the wind.

A rectangular platform rather like the one used at Versailles and Revelillon's factory was installed by the active Marquis d'Arlandes on the lawn behind the château. The balloon was transported from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and was ready by 20th November, but the wind, the rain and the cold persuaded d'Arlandes and Pilâtre de Rozier not to try an ascent that day.

On Friday, 21st November the sky was half clouded over and there was quite a strong gusty wind. That morning the "Reveillon" balloon was inflated in a few minutes by an auxiliary fire under the platform. Unfortunately a gust of wind blew it sideways so that a wide tent was torn in it by one of the masts and when it collapsed it was only just prevented from catching fire. Discouraged and numb with cold, most of the spectators returned to Paris, but Etienne and Pilâtre soon managed to find volunteers to make good the damage. Noble ladies started happily sewing and in under two hours the machine was repaired. Etienne Montgolfier made a final inspection. Everything seemed in order. The crowd was back again and the balloon was ready. It was now time for Pilâtre and d'Arlandes to get ready also.

The gallery was stocked with straw and the two companions climbed on board with their pitchforks. The weight of the machine was estimated at 850 kilograms. A strong fire was lit and at 1.54 p.m., the historic hour of the first "cast off", the Marquis d'Arlandes and Pilâtre de Rozier, untethered, left the ground for better or for worse. Broken only by the crackling of faggots, a strange silence spread around, as if the two thousand or so witnesses of this take-off realised the importance of the event. Then came an explosion of joy. The two aeronauts easily cleared the hedgerows and trees in the park, moving towards the valley of the Seine, and with dignity waved their handkerchiefs and three-cornered hats to the fascinated spectators, thereby inaugurating the traditional salute given by all well-behaved balloonists. Some impressionable ladies fainted and the King's children seemed enchanted. The graceful blue balloon pivoted on its axis during the ascent so that Pilâtre, who was in charge of the take-off, was facing the direction of flight, which facilitated navigation, while the Marquis had the difficult task of feeding the fire. It passed by the residences of the Princess de Lamballe and Benjamin Franklin, flew over the Couvent de la Visitation de Chaillet at a height of 80 metres and then began to come relentlessly down towards the Seine, but on instructions from the pilot, who was somewhat on edge, d'Arlandes stoked up the fire, which enabled it to regain height. Then an air current forced the balloon to hug the former Ile des Cygnes (where the Eiffel Tower now stands) and follow the Seine, which it crossed near the present Pont d'Iena, not far from the former Cabaret Galant du Cygne Rouge. It continued its ascent up to 900 metres and (do you remember the Montgolfiers' dream?) even flew over a small cloud. Consequently a great many Parisians could see this blue and gold globe belching black smoke and sometimes incandescent flames. This was something never seen before, difficult to imagine, impossible to understand, a flying flame, a kind of big bubble, floating in the sky over Paris and bearing two of our compatriots slowly away on God knows where! The bubble, moving according to the wind and the relief of the terrain, followed a winding course between the Ecole Militaire and the Hôtel des Invalides (casting its shadow on the towers of Notre Dame), then over the Missions Etrangères, round the south of the Church of Saint Sulpice and straight over the Bois du Luxembourg. Losing height, the balloon left Paris near the city gate of Italie, crossed the river Bièvre in the direction of Gentilly, skimmed over a little pond and, with d'Arlandes stoking up the fire, just managed to avoid hitting some buildings along the Bièvre near the water-mill at Croulebarbe. Finally it made a soft landing in the Clos Payen, a meadow on the slopes of the Butte aux Cailles about 100 metres from the Merveilles windmill and the Moulins Vieux. Our two heroes had covered about ten kilometres in 25 minutes.

This first air journey in the world, although peaceful in appearance, was in fact somewhat agitated at the start, because one of the ropes holding the nacelle had been eaten by the flames. Without losing his sang-froid d'Arlandes staved off disaster with the aid of a sponge. After that everything went off so well that Pilâtre remarked to his co-pilot on the charm and extraordinary silence of this new mode of locomotion, saying "Monsieur le Marquis, if you had brought your flute, we could have played it...". Following the instructions of Pilâtre de Rozier, who had unfortunately broken his pitchfork, d'Arlandes managed, despite his lack of experience, to control the height of the balloon by regulating the fire four times until it landed "among the cows", to use the modern jargon of French pilots.

The return to earth was fortunately a gentle one, but we can imagine the danger if the balloon, which had no ripping panel, had been dragged along the ground by the wind, throwing the fire from its stove onto the two passengers.

d'Arlandes, with his sleeves rolled up, jumped out of the nacelle and helped his flying companion to extricate himself from the heavy envelope which had subsided dangerously onto the stove. There was nobody waiting for them at the landing and they had difficulty in tearing the base of the balloon to stop it catching fire, for about two-thirds of the fuel was still unburnt. Finally some market-gardeners and tanners from the Bièvre valley arrived all out of breath to rescue them. The equipment was salvaged, but the frock-coat which Pilâtre had taken off during the flight because of the heat from the fire was purloined by souvenir-seekers. The Count of Laval and then the Duke of Chartres arrived on the scene at full gallop, but could not induce Pilâtre, who was exhausted and shivering with cold, to come back to the Château de la Muette. He was lent some clothes and went straight home. In less than an hour the balloon, in rather a sorry state, was put into store at Revelillon's factory.

Meanwhile the Marquis d'Arlandes was in fine form. He had managed to recover his clothes and had ridden to the Muette, where he was welcomed as a "god of the atmosphere borne on the clouds". This was more than he asked for! The Duchess of Polignac gave him a sumptuous lunch. Aristocrats, members of the Academie and learned men (including Benjamin Franklin disguised as an American farmer) drafted a report in his presence, then at nightfall he went off to the Academie des Sciences and made a report which was much applauded. A well filled day. Pilâtre de Rozier's unsuitable behaviour in not accompanying him is hard to explain but, as we shall see, our hero was to be much in the public eye again later.

On that day the King and Queen were staying at Fontainebleau. They were at once informed of the ascent by special couriers and many details were no doubt given to them later from the mouth of Diane de Polignac, who was on intimate terms with them.

The Marquis d'Arlandes had no further opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of these new trips in the sky, although in July, 1784 he volunteered to accompany the aeronauts Miotlan and Janinet, and he envisaged floating a loan for making a balloon with which the crossing from Calais to Dover would have been child's play. He died rather miserably on 1st May, 1809 in his "Château de Saligny", which he had had to mortgage. Thanks to Pilâtre and d'Arlandes, Etienne Montgolfier had triumphed, but only just, because Professor A. Charles also had joined in the race to conquer the air. -----Montgolfier's Pierre-Louis Clement 1982



PACIFIC COAST AERONAUTS CLUB CONTACTS

2026 PCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CLUB OFFICERS

Names & Email Addresses	Board Term Expires at End of Year	2026 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	2027	Co-Secretary
Tom Sharpee tomsharpee@gmail.com	2027	Member

2026 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	Jeanne Anson	On Going
Awards	Linda W & April	Later in the year
WHAMOBASS	Board	Planning starts 3/26
Christmas Party	Jana Couch	Oct 2026 planning starts



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FOR SALE

Balloon and Equipment

Right-click on picture captions for more details



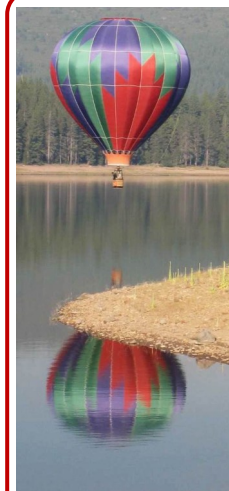
Raven S-55A



2001 Cameron 'Shoe 90



TBW AX-8B—Racer



Aerostar S49A