

Bill Grabb

Ballooning Pioneer

- 3rd President of Balloon Federation of America
- World Famous Surgeon and Professor Plastic Surgery at University of Michigan
- Authored many books on Plastic Surgery, Especially of the hand and cleft palates

1967 Started Flying Balloons.

Saw something about a hot air balloon and decided to get a balloon. Contacted Raven Industries and Ed Yost arranged for his purchase of a balloon. Went to the factory, got a training lesson from Ed, for his balloon with a chair basket/seat. Had one flight and went home. His next flight was out of his yard, the day of his party.

Bruce and Tucker Comstock, students at the University of Ann Arbor, saw the balloon and followed. Saw it land, helped pack up and jotted down the name "Raven". After graduating, they met Bill again and got involved in ballooning. When Bill was President of the BFA, he asked Bruce to be editor of BALLOONING Journal. Tucker volunteered to do Membership and put it on a computer. Tucker credits Bill with encouraging both she and Bruce to get involved in the BFA on a national level.

1970 Placed 2nd in US Nationals in Des Moines, Iowa

On the last task, Frank Pritchard and Bill were neck-and-neck for the title of champion. On the last flight, a Hare and Hound from the Iowa State Fairgrounds, the balloons were becalmed over a corn field south of town. It was a hot and muggy Iowa summer night. When distances were calculated, Frank was the winner by 2 feet, and there was the question, should we re-measure the two distances? Bill said that was too much to ask in the heat and dark and impending thunderstorm. No, he was content with 2nd place.

President, Balloon Federation of America

Bill was the third President of the BFA, after Peter Pellegrino and Don Kersten. When he became President of the BFA, the organization was in early and fragile years of the organization. And the sport was growing rapidly. Bill got *BALLOONING* Journal back into publication for members, and greatly encouraged the formation of the First World Hot Air Balloon Championship in 1973 in Albuquerque.

When Bill passed away in 1982, he was remembered as a "Gentleman Balloonist". Steven Langjahr, who was Secretary of the BFA during the same era as Bill, wrote:

Bill Grabb was a gentleman who happened to be a lover of ballooning, a lover of science and a lover of life. His contributions to each are appreciated by those who knew him. As President of the BFA, Bill was the consummate diplomat who never took himself or the organization too

seriously. He understood the need for our federation but chose to draw our attention away from politics. Writing in BALLOONING ten years ago, he noted "...the only thing that keeps running through my thoughts is: Ballooning is a genteel sport. Ballooning is fun. Enjoy it together."