



UNITED STATES BALLOONING HALL OF FAME

A Partnership of the Balloon Federation of America and the National Balloon Museum

Candidate Information Form

Date Submitted: March 1, 2017

CANDIDATE NAME: Bill Meadows

Address: 4193 Cambridge Cove #2 **City:** Southport **State:** NC **ZIP:** 28461

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Briefly describe the basis for the submission: Bill Meadows began his ballooning career in 1969 with an instruction flight with Tracy Barnes. Tracy sold him his first balloon, a new Piccard AX-6 that year and he soloed in October with his FAA pilot certificate issued in January 1970. He founded Balloon Ascensions LTD in March 1970 and trained over 100 pilots. He completed over 300 balloon promotions nationwide. He started as a distributor for Piccard Balloons and also was National Sales Director for Barnes Balloons. In 1974 he started the National Balloon Rally, now the Carolina Balloonfest, which is still an active event. He flew in the National Championships in 1970-1983 and served on the BFA Board of Directors from 1976 to 1980 and was active in the organization in many positions. He flew in the first Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta and founded the National Balloon Racing Association (NBRA) in 1980 and organized over 100 events nationwide. He was active with The Blimp Works with Tracy Barnes and founded the United States Airships International in 1988.

Provide references: Identify two individuals that can speak to the quality and significance of the achievement, and to the character of the candidate.

Reference Name: Sam Parks **Telephone or E-mail:** sam@parksqualityair.com

Reference Name: Beth Wright Smith **Telephone or E-mail:** pilotschool@lobo.net

PERSON MAKING THE SUBMISSION:

Name: Jim Thompson

Address: 9004 Murano Mews Ct, **City:** Kissimmee **State:** FL **ZIP:** 34747

Telephone: (515) 229-5804 **E-mail:** jim@thompsonaire.com

CANDIDATE HISTORY:



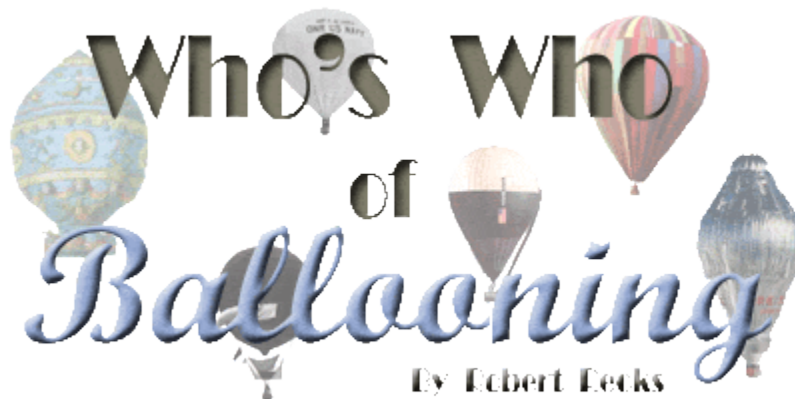
Bill Meadows

Notable – Accomplishments/ Contributions, Ed Yost Award

- Bill Meadows took his first hot air balloon flight in Statesville NC Oct. 4th 1969, his Instructor was Tracy Barnes.
- Tracy Barnes sold him a new Piccard AX 6 in Oct. 1969. This was before Tracy started building his own balloons.
- Bill's first solo in the new balloon was also Oct. 1969
- Bill's FAA pilot certificate was issued Jan. 1970
- Founded Balloon Ascensions LTD in March 1970 (2nd. FAA 141 Balloon School). The Company trained over 100 pilots, sold over 50 balloons and completed over 300 balloon promotions Nationwide
- East Coast Distributor Piccard Balloons 1970-1974
- National Sales Director Balloon Works 1974-1981
- Started the National Balloon Rally in 1974 (Now called Carolina Balloonfest) the first year 36 balloons flew, which was double the number of Balloons at the National Championships that year.
- Flew in the US Nationals 1970-1983
- BFA Board of Directors: Southeast Region, 1976-1979
- BFA Board of Directors: At Large 1979-1980
- BFA Events Committee: 1973-1975
- BFA Instructor Certificate Committee: 1976-1977
- BFA Liaison Committee: 1976-1977
- In 1971 Bill organized a promotional series of flight across North Carolina. He started in the mountains and after 31 flights over 69 days which covered 377 miles he landed on the beach in Surf City NC.
- Bill flew in the first Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta
- Bill has had over 1,200 flights in Hot Air Balloons
- Bill founded the National Balloon Racing Association (NBRA) in 1980 and they operated until 1990. In the 10 years they operated he organized over 100 balloon events nationwide and had a pilot membership of 760.
- In 1990 Bill became the National Sales Director for The Blimp Works. Tracy Barnes had sold the Balloon Works to Sid Conn and Tracy started building helium filled airships and blimps.

- Bill Founded United States Airships International in 1998

Bill still flies Hot Air Balloons and will be flying in the 40th Anniversary Carolina Balloonfest in October, 2013 in Statesville. Bill has not had an accident nor has he had any FAA enforcement action



MEADOWS, William USA (1937- (HB)

See APPENDIX-BI/BK/BX. Professional balloonist

b: 30 June 1937, Lillington, NC.

e: N.Carolina State College.

s: U.S.Air Force.

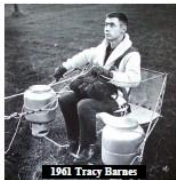
p: Salesman, Professional B-Pilots Assoc.; Electronics technician; Electronics engineer for Blimp Works-1992.

f: First B-Flight 4 Oct.1969 w/T.BARNES; First B-Solo 1969 from Statesville, NC.; FAA B-License 1970; B-Pilot Examiner; More than 1000 B-Hours by 1983.

l: 1970-90, Participated in all U.S.Nat. Hot-Air championships; Developed successful balloon "auto-pilot"; Certified first (?) FAA/FAR-141 Balloon Flight School in the USA.

m: BFA, Board of Directors, Events Chairman. ***Epic series of flights 1971 from Rutherford, NC. Crossed the State of NC (376 miles) in 44 hours, ending at Topsail Beach.

See additional information on following page



Statesville and North Carolina Ballooning History by Bill Meadows

Introduction

This single page history is about a special personal and business relationship between myself and Tracy Barnes. Our independent and joint efforts starting 47 years ago gave birth to the sport in North Carolina and influenced the sport nationally and world wide.

First I first would like to recognize the hundreds of fellow balloonist, pilots, crew, rally officials and volunteers who have contributed greatly to the sport and they in their own right have their own history to share. There are two people I would like to especially recognize and the first is my wife Nancy who was always there day and night supporting my ballooning activities. For 12 years she was my main chaser and ground crew chief. The second is Don Cline who is a native of Statesville and my old high school buddy. We were fellow CAP members at the Statesville Airport in 1951-1955. Don later became a balloonist and operated along with his wife Jo the Greensboro BalloonPort. Don is the only pilot to have flown in every National Balloon Rally and Carolina BalloonFest since 1974. Fellow balloonist Dave Little shared that record for 37 years until he passed away in 2006.

The stage is set 1961-1968

Tracy Barnes left the Army as a paratrooper and in St. Paul MN developed an interest in building a hot-air balloon. I do not know what triggered his interest or the details of how everything came about but he took a number of cargo parachutes and in 1961 build an one man balloon named "Old Lumpy". It was basically a chair balloon (no basket) with two tanks. See photo top left.

Tracy wanted to move to a part of the country which had good year round ballooning weather. He did a research and found piedmont North and South Carolina to be his top pick. In 1965 he invited a friend Terry Wright (an engineer and airplane pilot) to move with him to Chester, South Carolina to start a full time balloon promotion company. The adventure didn't work out for Terry so he moved back to St. Paul in 1968. Tracy decided he needed to move to a larger city so he moved to Charlotte NC.

The Meeting 1969

Tracy was living alone in the upstairs of a large warehouse on the south side of Charlotte in which he had all his balloon items left over from his earlier ballooning adventures. Read his bio for details. I met him there in the summer of 1969 and after a number of visits acquired a great interest in the sport which was non-existent in the southeast USA. Tracy had a vision of starting a balloon manufacturing company and I developed a vision of what balloon training, pleasure flights and promotions could grow into.

The Flight that started it all October 4, 1969

This flight set in motion the direction Tracy and I individually (and working together) took which give birth to ballooning in Statesville and North Carolina. Tracy had build a custom balloon "Wizard of Oz" for the Beach Mountain Resort and was going to drive through Statesville to deliver it. We set a date and time to meet for Tracy to give me my first training flight. The historical plaque pictured to the right is located in Statesville, North Carolina at Newtowne Plaza Shopping Center, Exit 51 on I-77.

In the following month Tracy and I completed all my training flights in the Charlotte area and I became the first balloonist to be licensed by the FAA in the southeastern USA. I decided to buy a balloon from Tracy and start my own balloon company which I named Balloon Ascensions, Ltd. Because I wanted a certified balloon (necessary for commercial operations) Tracy sold me a Picard Balloon build by Don Picard in California for \$3,900.00 (I still have the cancelled check). "Kitty Hawk" was delivered in Jan 1970 and was the first certified balloon in the southeast. Kitty Hawk is currently in storage at Firefly Balloons in Statesville.

In the next 4 years 1970-1974 here is what Tracy & I did independently...

Tracy & The Balloon Works (TBW) in Charlotte 1970-1974

- For more details and exact dates connect Tracy but here is basically what I remember happened in Charlotte.
- Tracy moved from the warehouse in south Charlotte to an abandoned Women's Prison in north Charlotte. A great place with plenty of room to work in.
- It is here he worked on the many design interventions he wanted to incorporate in the balloons he wanted to start manufacturing.
- He founded The Balloon Works (TBW) and brought in Terry Wright, Karl Stefan and Dodds Meddock to round out the design/support team for his new company.
- From upper left (top to bottom) is Karl Stefan, Dodds Meddock and Tracy.
- This team of four worked closely together to design and build the experimental version of the balloons which Tracy named the "Firefly" balloon.
- In the time period the triangle wings under the experimental canopy until the design could be refined and sold as a certified balloon which happens later in 1974.
- Don Cline was one of the first individuals who brought out the early balloons built in Charlotte. Don flew in the first National Balloon Rally at BAL in Oct 1974.
- In 1973 Tracy decided he wanted to move TBW to a smaller city away from Charlotte so he could do flights more or less out in the country. Now that decision to move from Charlotte to Statesville is detailed below.

Bill & Balloon Ascensions, Ltd (BAL) in Statesville 1970-1974

- I founded Balloon Ascensions, Ltd (BAL) in December 1969 which became operational in January 1970 with the arrival of my first balloon named "Kitty Hawk".
- In 1970 the Balloon School was constructed & propane tanks with pumps installed.
- In 1971 BAL became the East Coast Distributor for Picard Balloons and in the next three years was awarded 16 dealers. BAL and the dealers sold over 10 Picard balloons.
- BAL became the second FAA Approved balloon School in the nation. The first was in California. The school had built beds, kitchen, bath and a study lounge.
- BAL had five full time pilots (including Dave Little) with five Wansboro Motor Homes with balloons on a rear platform to offer training to students who wanted to be trained in their hometowns instead of BAL. Pictures to the right taken in Indiana, Iowa.
- The FAA was near nearly all in Balloons Designated Examiners to BAL to be trained.
- Oct 4-Dec 9, 1971 I made the first flight across NC (39 individual flights covering 377 miles) with Lt. Gov. Terry on the first flight and on Oct 20 Gov. Bob Scott for his first balloon flight from NC State Campus. Gov. Scott selected the city dump as the launch spot which was named "Gov. Landon in Dump".
- I founded the National Balloon Rally on October 5-13, 1974 as a reunion for the 10 pilot BAL had trained. 37 balloons showed up! The first 3-5 years most of the flights were done at BAL, but gradually moved to TBW to accommodate growing crowd.
- Kitty Hawk made it's last flight in 1974 and is now in storage at Firefly Balloons.

Here is the sequence of events which brought Tracy to Statesville...

Tracy called me one day in 1973 and said he was getting close to becoming certified and he wanted to move TBW to a smaller town maybe 30 to 50 miles from Charlotte and would I look around the area north of Charlotte for a possible location for him to consider while he look at other ways and he mentioned the area around Statesville and Chatham.

For 4 years BAL (located 5 miles north of Statesville off Chipley Ford Road) had been making regular pleasure and training flights early in the morning and late afternoon. A friend of mine named Raeford Rhyne who was a 1-3 Paper Cub and a Low Value would often fly around the balloons and afterwards we would meet at the Redwood Club near the Statesville Bus Station and have coffee together. In our next coffee together I asked Raeford (who was a Raeford) if he knew of any property with buildings that might be available. He said he had just got out of the chicken house business and had 2 small round chicken houses plus a couple of our buildings he would be glad to sell them. He was especially excited because he was an engineer and he could be more exciting than having a balloon manufacturing on his property. The property where he had his longer, 1-3 Paper Cub and grass airstrip is named Raynes Aerodrome.

So I set up a meeting between Tracy and Raeford at BAL. I introduced them and let them meet alone in my office. After an hour or so they came out, shook hands and Raeford departed. I asked Tracy how did it go and he said "I am moving to Statesville because Raeford made me an offer I can't refuse." "He is going to give me the use of his two chicken houses, two out buildings, airstrip, plenty water and keep all the grass mowed... all for \$50 per month." The move placed TBW and BAL only 9 miles apart. So Tracy moved along with Terry Wright, Karl Stefan and Dodds Meddock to Statesville in late 1973 and the rest is ballooning history.

The Golden Years of Ballooning in Statesville...

Tracy & The Balloon Works (TBW) in Statesville 1974-1982

- When Tracy moved into the chicken houses at Raeford Aerodrome he had built dirt floors & screens were walls which he simply covered with clear plastic.
- Over the next few years carpet was installed on top of the plastic floors and 14 small units installed to provide office and work rooms. For visitors it was a sight to behold but historically a wonderful and interesting place to witness first hand the manufacturing of Firefly Balloons. This brought many visitors, dealers and balloons for a visit.
- By the late 70's TBW became the largest manufacturer of hot air balloons in the world, selling out in many competitor Raynes Balloons located in Statesville, MD.
- When TBW moved from Charlotte Terry Wright, Karl Stefan and Dodds Meddock continued in their positions and were great contributors to the success of TBW.
- Raeferd Rhyne's wife Anna became the front desk secretary and she contributed greatly to the friendly welcome everyone received in on the phone and as a visitor.
- At the peak of production of over 2 balloons per day I was a busy place and with over 60 employees there was never a dull moment. We had to much fun and great achievement it was hard to describe what it was like in the chicken houses those days.
- Later on another building was just for the production of wicker baskets and all the wicker goods were produced in one of the two out buildings.
- After the first few years of the National Balloon Rally at BAL the event gradually moved to Raynes Aerodrome which provided more room and parking. By the late 70's all the activities and balloon flights were being held at Raynes Aerodrome.
- Today the main building remains intact and is a must visit for any balloonist.

Bill & Balloon Ascensions, Ltd (BAL) in Statesville 1974-1982

- I continued to manage the BAL operation for the next 8 years.
- BAL operated for 12 years (1970-1982) and had 13 different pilots over the years giving over 2,000 pleasure flights, 300 balloon promotions nationwide and trained over 100 pilots for their balloon riding, some from Central and South America.
- BAL had a show room next with as many as 13 balloons in stock for immediate sale. Dealer's had to have a license to fly a flight ready balloon and take it home.
- Every other pilot trained at BAL bought a Firefly Balloon, so of the 100+ students trained at BAL 50 bought a balloon during their training and before leaving Statesville.

Bill & The Balloon Works (TBW) in Statesville 1974-1982

- In 1974 just after Tracy moved to Statesville Tracy and I had a series of meeting in which Tracy asked me to become his National Sales Manager.
- In the agreement BAL dropped Picard Balloons as their balloon provider and started selling Firefly Balloons. Don took over the 26 dealers BAL had created.
- In the agreement Tracy agreed to allow BAL to continue to operate at the same time I would be the National Sales Director for TBW. This work we did both of us.
- With this agreement and close working relationship with Tracy I was able in the next 8 years to create a nation wide sales organization made up of 182 dealers who sold 1,045 balloons totaling \$10,464,000.00. February 1979 was a record month with 50 balloons orders totaling \$498,000.00. The 8 year average was 10.92 balloons per mo.

The Selling of TBW was the event that changed many careers, the sport and spawned new companies!

Tracy sells The Balloon Works in 1982

- Tracy sold TBW in 1982 and moved to Colorado for two years before returning.
- The new owners closed house of nearly all the original employees included myself, Terry Wright, Karl Stefan and Dodds Meddock. Leaving all the experienced talent was a disaster. They replaced me with a used car salesman who had never seen a balloon.
- The real problem was the new owners relationship with the dealers and balloon owners. If you didn't work with TBW dealers and sales just withered on the vine.
- After changing hands a couple of times the name changed to Firefly Balloons which is still in business in Statesville. It is held together by a few dedicated employees from the past and who I love for the Firefly Balloons and Sport of Ballooning as the glue that binds. You should visit Firefly Balloons at 850 Mechanic Rd anytime you are in town.

Tracy & The Blimp Works 1984-Present

- Tracy moved back to Statesville from Colorado in 1984 and founded the Blimp Works which manufacture and sells helium filled Blimps, Balloons and Special Shells.
- The company has been very successful and produces a quality product which is very popular among their customers, dealers and owners. The manager is Charles Willard.
- For more information and details go on line and look up The Blimp Works.

Why was 1969-1982 considered the "Early Years"?

From the October 4, 1969 flight to the time Tracy sold TBW in 1982 the events during these fourteen years gave birth to the sport in North Carolina as we know today. After Tracy sold TBW everything changed. Tracy & I advanced out in different directions and many balloonist founded many new balloon operations. Don and Jo Cline's BalloonPort in Greensboro survived and the Carolina Balloon Association was founded. The National Balloon Rally was renamed the Carolina BalloonFest and continues year after year. So from that first flight Tracy and I made together, hundreds of individuals in and around Statesville and North Carolina are active in ballooning and tens of thousands attend the Carolina BalloonFest each year. Hope to see you there!

44th Carolina BalloonFest *** October 20-22, 2017



BALLOON ASCENSIONS, LTD.

"Pioneering the art of ballooning"

ADVERTISING - FLIGHT TRAINING - PROMOTIONS

PICARD BALLOON RALLY



BAL BalloonPort 1972



Bill & The Balloon Federation of America (BFA) 1972-1978

- In 1972 while serving on the BFA's Executive Committee (Karl Stefan was Chairman) I wrote all the original official BFA Race Rules which did not exist before then.
- In 1976-1978 I served on the BFA Board of Directors along with Malcolm Forbes with board meetings in his house in Pea Ridge, MD and my home in Statesville, NC.

Bill closes down BAL in 1982

- In 1982 when Tracy sold TBW and the new owners closed house so I had to sit down and decide what I wanted to do in ballooning next. It was a big decision.
- While running BAL I had the opportunity to put on a couple of balloons events or balloon races in Winston and Burlington NC and I really liked the challenge and opportunity of doing such, so my decision was to close down BAL operations and move forward to create, produce and manage balloon events and races.

Bill & National Balloon Racing Association (NBRA) 1982-1992

- In 1982 I created the NBRA along with my brother Jim Meadows who lived in Raleigh NC at that time. Jim was a great sales Director and working together we created and managed over 60 quality balloon races nationally over a two year period.
- Our NBRA pilot membership grew to 760 pilots and we were putting on as many as 13 balloons races per year. Our budget grew to over \$100,000 per year with \$10,000 going to prize money. In support of the BFA all NBRA races were BFA sanctioned.
- We had a staff of 13 with headquarters located on North Center Street in Statesville.
- NBRA had a own trucking company, a number of trucks and vehicles, our own communications system, a computer (new device at that time) to keep scores, team, 13 cold air advertising balloons and was our own sponsor.
- In 1992 over half of the races were weathered out and the financial disaster would not provide the necessary funds for the NBRA to continue operations into 1993.

Bill & US Airship International (USAI) 1992-1997

The lack of space requires I cover this LTA venture under a separate publication.