

**BALLOON FEDERATION OF AMERICA
HALL OF FAME COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION FOR INDUCTION IN 2018**



UNITED STATES BALLOONING HALL OF FAME
A Partnership of the Balloon Federation of America and the National Balloon Museum

Candidate Information Form
Date Submitted: 2013

CANDIDATE NAME: Ward Van Orman

Deceased

Alternate Contact: Name: Rick Dunn (grandson)

Address: 11595 SW Holland Ln. **City:** Beaverton **State:** OR **ZIP:** 97008

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Briefly describe the basis for the submission:

Ward Tunte Van Orman (September 2, 1894 in Lorain, Ohio – March 11, 1978) was an American engineer, inventor and balloonist. A lifelong employee of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company credited with invention of Goodyear's inflatable life raft and self-sealing fuel tank, Van Orman set an unprecedented record of winning five annual National Gas Balloon Races (including the first ever Litchfield Trophy issued by Goodyear's Paul Litchfield in 1925), participating in ten and winning three International Gordon Bennett Races (1926, 1929, 1930).

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: John C. Davis IV

Telephone or E-mail: jcdiv@outlook.com

PERSON MAKING THE SUBMISSION:

Name: Rick Dunn

Address: 11595 SW Holland Ln.

City: Beaverton

State: OR

ZIP: 97008

Telephone: (503) 504- 0786

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CANDIDATE HISTORY:

WARD VAN ORMAN



Notable – Achievements/Contributions, Record Holder

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Born in Lorain, Ohio, Ward Van Orman was inclined to science and mechanics since childhood. At school he managed to save enough cash to enroll in Case School of Applied Science.^[4] In 1917 he graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA and joined the staff of Goodyear in Akron, Ohio; in 1918 he qualified for a balloon and airship pilot's license. His first invention, a leak-proof cover for gasoline tanks, was filed in 1921 and patented in 1928; eventually, he developed reliable self-sealing fuel tanks. Later in life, Van Orman (who preferred to be called simply "Van") considered his inventions, and not the record flights, his greatest accomplishments.^[3]

During the 1925 International Race Van Orman performed world's first emergency *night* landing of a balloon on a deck of a steamship at high seas. The race took off June 9, 1925 at Brussels; at first the *Goodyear III* balloon floated over France towards Spain but desperate about inevitable death by drowning, intoxicated himself with cognac and attempted suicide at least twice. As Van Orman struggled to restrain Wollam from jumping overboard, he noticed navigation lights of a ship that turned out to be a small German freighter, *Vaterland*.^[1] Van Orman flashed morse code message to the captain, who assisted the landing by turning on all available lighting and steering the ship towards the descending balloon. The balloon safely landed on *Vaterland's* forward deck. Van Orman and captain Rudolf Norman remained friends for life. This flight was the longest in 1925 International Race, but Van Orman was disqualified and denied the Gordon Bennett Trophy according to the race rules requiring *landing* literally on *land*. Fifty years after this event, Van Orman was still bitterly hurt by the disqualification: "the memory of that unfair decision never has grown dim".

Van Orman picked a new partner, Walter Morton, and easily won the 1926 National Race, qualifying for this year's International Race. He won the 1926 Gordon Bennett Trophy flying from Antwerp to Solvesborg in Sweden. The win automatically qualified them to the next year's International Race, where Orman and Morton came third.



May 30 1938 Van Orman (left) and Walter Morton check instruments prior to the fatal flight that killed Morton

The National Race of 1928, held on May 30 in Pittsburgh, turned out a disaster. Lightning strikes downed three aircraft, including Van Orman's. A direct thunderbolt killed Morton instantly and ignited hydrogen in the gas bag. The balloon's basket fell from three thousand feet, supported by a "parachute" of what remained of its gas bag. Van Orman, unconscious in his basket, survived the impact without serious injuries.

I was looking directly at the flash... hardly thicker than my finger ... it passed within two feet of my eyes. I had time after the flash to look up over the edge of the 'rain dodger' we had spread across the top of the basket and note that the bottom of the bag apparently was still intact. Probably it was two or three seconds after the flash before the concussion knocked me unconscious. How high we were, I don't know. When I came to, my head was lying outside the basket, with rain falling on my head. I felt Morton beside me...Van Orman, 1928.

Van Orman survived other, less inspiring incidents: once he was assaulted by an unidentified man, allegedly hired by one of Van Orman's competitors; on another occasion during prohibition period he landed a balloon in the middle of an illegal distillery operation, and was confronted by bootleggers wielding shotguns who mistook him for a federal agent.^[11] During the 1933 National Race Van Orman's balloon flew deep into Canadian forests. He and his partners wandered through the wilderness, starving; back at home they were already considered dead. Finally, they reached a telephone line running through the forest; they chopped down a pole, severing the line, expecting that a repair crew will eventually locate them. After this incident Van Orman, a single parent (his first wife died in 1932), quit balloon racing forever.

After retiring from active ballooning sport Van Orman served as a researcher with Goodyear until 1962. His works ranged from fuel tanks to developing waterproof fabrics for diving suits and airtight zippers for pressure suits. In retirement Van Orman, a shiner, travelled across the country as a motivational speaker, periodically flying hot air balloons until the final year or two of his life. He died of a stroke in 1978 and was buried at Rose Hill cemetery in Akron, Ohio.

Van Orman authored an autobiography, *The Wizard of the Winds* (ISBN 0878390324), published posthumously in 1978. **A copy of this rare book has been made available for loan to the National Balloon Museum if Van Orman is selected for induction in the Hall of Fame.**

The following is a list from *The Wizard of the Winds* of first place finishes in the prestigious Gordon Bennett Cup and the National Balloon Race, the P.W. Litchfield Trophy.

Ward Van Orman					
First Place Finish					
Year	Gordon Bennett	Litchfield Trophy	Year	Gordon Bennett	Litchfield Trophy
1919		Co-pilot	1925		Pilot
1920		Co-pilot	1926	Pilot	Pilot
1921		Pilot	1927		Pilot
1922		Pilot	1928		Pilot
1923		Pilot	1929	Pilot	Pilot
1924		Pilot	1930	Pilot	



vanORMAN, Ward Tinte USA #392 (1894-1978) (GB)

See APPENDIX-H/AH/AI/AR. Sport balloonist. Aeronaut Extraordinaire.

b: 2 Sep.1894 Lorain, OH.

d: 11 Mar.1978 Akron, OH.

e: Case Institute of Technology, 1917-Engineering.

p: Engineer for Goodyear, 1917-62; B-Instructor for the Navy; Navy B-Instructor 1918-19; Headed the Goodyear Balloon & Airship training program; Made many successful LTA inventions.

f: First B-Flight 1918 with PRESTON; FAI licensed in balloons & Airships; Certified by the Navy to instruct in both.; Active balloonist 1918-33 era; Retired from competitive flying 1933.

l: Flew in 11 U.S. Nat. B-Races, Won 5, 2nd or 3rd in most of rest; Flew in 10 G-Bennett B-Races, Won 4, 2nd in two others; First pilot to land a free-balloon on a moving ship, 1925. ***Epic flight 7 June 1925 (w/C. WOLLAM) from Brussels, Belgium (G-Bennett B-Race). After flying out over the open ocean for four hours, and giving up all hope of survival, he landed on the deck of a ship. He was disqualified as winner, however, due to a controversial interpretation of a technicality. ***Epic flight 31 May 1928 (w/MORTON) from Pittsburgh, PA. Flying in the U.S. Nat.B-Races, the balloon was struck by lightning in flight. Morton was killed outright, the balloon burst into flames and crashed. Ward survived with a broken leg.

r: Wizard of the Winds.

r: Pers.interview.

Following is additional information regarding Ward Van Orman

5-6-2017

Jim Thompson
9004 Murano Mews Ct.
Kissimmee, FL 34747

Subject: Ward T. VanOrman Nominee for Ballooning Hall of Fame

Dear Jim;

It has been a pleasure speaking with you recently about the possibility of my Grandfather, Ward T VanOrman being inducted into your Ballooning Hall of Fame.

As you might imagine, our families are very proud of our Grandfather and would love for his memory to live on in a Hall of Fame setting. It goes without saying that we believe he would be a significant addition to your Hall of Fame.

As we discussed, I have enclosed a copy of "The Wizard of the Wind's, an autobiography about my Grandfather and co-wrote by Robert Hull. Sadly, my Grandfather did not live long enough to see his book published. This book is considered a rare and valuable resource on gas ballooning. It also discusses many of his exploits during ballooning competitions. He remains and is considered by many in this field to be the greatest gas balloonist in history.

Along with his ballooning adventures this book discusses many of his life changing inventions. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy was one of his proudest moments. Today you can find Hyperbaric Chambers in most hospitals. He is considered the first to perfect the first space suit and the life raft was also one of his great discoveries. I am proud to be in the position of the original patents from the U.S. Patent office detailing each of these inventions. One thing few people know is that the rubber life raft was a direct result of his ballooning days. Just look at his well know pictures of the Goodyear Balloon and at the bottom is two large pontoons. This is the first of his rubber life rafts.

I think my favorite stories that Grandpa told to me many years ago always revolved around the National and International James Gordon Bennett races. What stories they were! And the people he knew is a who's who of history. One of his best friends and frequent visitor was Orville Wright. Always loved hearing about these early aviation pioneers.

Enjoy the book and let me know if you have any questions. Please note that I would like this to be part of your museum but would like to retain official ownership. If for some crazy reason he was not to be inducted I would like this book returned to me.

I would also appreciate more details about the museum and would like to visit one day when he is inducted.

Best Regards
Richard J Dunn



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