

**BALLOON FEDERATION OF AMERICA
HALL OF FAME COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION FOR INDUCTION IN 2020**



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

Candidate Information Form

Date Submitted: February 7, 2018

CANDIDATE NAME: Robert Rechs

Deceased

Alternate Contact: Eliana Rechs (wife)

Telephone: (619) 336-0255

Briefly describe the basis for the submission:

Rechs is most famous for the publication of *Who's Who of Ballooning* in 1983. In his twenty years of research devoted to this publication and the sport of ballooning, Robert Rechs has provided the name of virtually every balloonist and a biography of virtually every pioneer as well as those who all the significant one in the past including prize events, tragic accidents, use for intelligence in war and other remarkable stories.

1968 while employed by Lockheed, he was president of and founded, the Wind Drifters Balloon Club, the first successful hot air balloon club in the United States. He became a life member of the Balloon Federation of America in 1969. He served as assistant to Balloonmeister Steve angjahr for the 1971-1973 National Balloon Championships helping with balloon inspection and barograph testing. He was on the Balloon Federation of America Board of Directors from 1969 to 1972. In 1970 the Balloon Federation of America awarded him the very first Shields Trauger Award.

Reference: Provide names of individuals who can speak to the quality and significance of the achievement, and to the character of the candidate.

Reference Name: Bernie Rechs

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Telephone: (530) 742-5607 cell-(530) 632-3857

Jim Thompson

E-mail: jim@thompsonaire.com

PERSON MAKING THE SUBMISSION:

Name: Bill Clemons

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CANDIDATE HISTORY:

ROBERT JOSEPH RECHS "Rex"

Notable – Contributions/Accomplishments

Robert Rechs was born August 31, 1935 in South Gate, California and died June 9, 2013 in Auburn, California. After serving in the Army he attended Compton College and graduated from the University of Miami with a degree in aviation management. He flew over 75 different make and models of aircraft including airplanes, helicopters, gliders and gyroplanes and flew in more than 100 countries. He was introduced to the sport of ballooning in 1963 and had his first balloon flight with Don Piccard in December 1968. He soloed in a balloon in 1969 and received his check ride and license with Deke Sonnichsen on May 31, 1969.

In 1968 while employed by Lockheed, he was president of and founded, the Wind Drifters Balloon Club, the first successful hot air balloon club in the United States. The Wind Drifters was one of the many Lockheed Employees Recreational Clubs in Van Nuys, California. He was instrumental in acquiring the club's first balloon, a Raven AX-7 with an aluminum basket. In addition, with his assistance, the Club acquired a new AX-4 Piccard Balloon (Whirlwind). He led the effort to design and build the club's own experimental AX-7 envelope (N71RR) which was used over the earlier purchased Raven gondola. He served as a designated FAA balloon flight examiner from 1971-1975.

He became a life member of the Balloon Federation of America in 1969. He served as assistant to Balloonmeister Steve Langjahr for the 1971-1973 National Balloon Championships helping with balloon inspection and barograph testing. He was on the Balloon Federation of America Board of Directors from 1969 to 1972 and served on various BFA Committees.

In 1970 the Balloon Federation of America awarded him



Rech's Experimental Envelope

the very first Shields Trauger Award. The BFA records do not indicate the reason he was awarded this prestigious award, but it is likely because of his involvement in the establishing the Wind Drifters Balloon Club and his writing, what is believed to be, the first ever manuals for training balloon pilots.

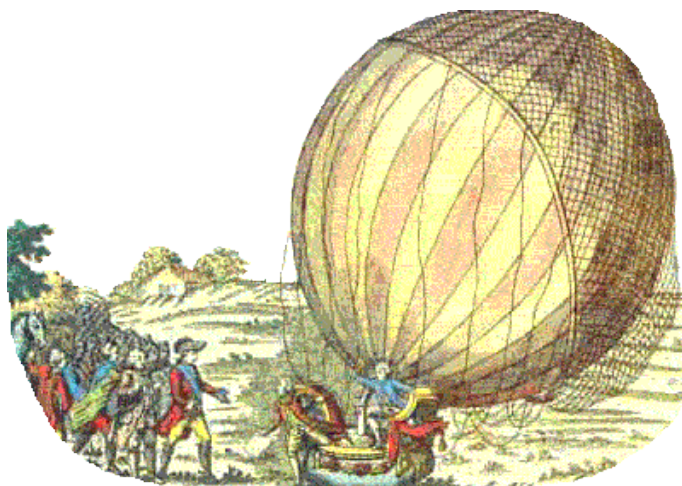
In 1970 Rechs became involved with ballooning in Brazil. A Sao Paulo businessman Victorio Truffi traveled to the United States to acquire their first hot air balloon. Even then hot air ballooning was a rage among the North American and European and seeing the possibility for this aero-sport in his country. Truffi parents invited an American balloonist, Robert Rechs, to accompany him as an instructor, the first flight of a modern hot air balloon in Brazil was carried out by Truffi and Rechs in São Paulo city of Araraquara, on October 20, 1970.

Rechs was author/publisher of more than 15 balloon publications including the following:

- Balloon Construction: Design Criteria – June, 1987
- Balloon Construction: Materials and Suppliers – June, 1987
- Ballooning stamp history album - 1982
- Building gas blimps : a practical guide to building small gas blimps - 1997
- An introduction to muscle powered ultra-light gas blimps : in all their glory - 1997
- Some technical notes on thermal blimps – 1998
- Balloon Construction: Plans and Construction Paperback – June, 1987
- Sport balloon construction – 1987
- He is most famous for the publication of ***Who's Who of Ballooning*** in 1983. In his twenty years of research devoted to this publication and the sport of ballooning, Robert Rechs has provided the name of virtually every balloonist and a biography of virtually every pioneer as well as those who all the significant one in the past including prize events, tragic accidents, use for intelligence in war and other remarkable stories. There is a guide to the major organizations, records, and every piece of obscure information on the sport of ballooning. The initial publication sold out quickly and copies have become scarce.

The following is taken directly from Rechs' publication, *Who's Who of Ballooning*.

Welcome to "Who's Who of Ballooning," a compilation of data on historically-significant aeronauts amassed over decades of research by American balloonist, balloon-builder and general aviator Robert Rechs (n/k/a Robert Recks). This material has previously been published in book and electronic form, and is now made available, for the first time, via the Internet. While this information has been formatted for electronic delivery by Dave Wesner, in (loose) conjunction with [The Early Years of Sport Ballooning](#), the content itself is presented in its original form as created by Mr. Rechs.



PREFACE

by Robert Rechs

Since my introduction to the sport of ballooning in 1963, I have scoured the world for information on the subject. This compilation, originally published in book form, is the result of reading and collecting data from some 2000 works, in five languages. So many "nooks and crannies" of archives were explored, it boggles the mind in retrospect. When I finally realized the volume of data to be assimilated, I had to discard my typewriter for a "word processing" computer. Even then, it took one full year of input.

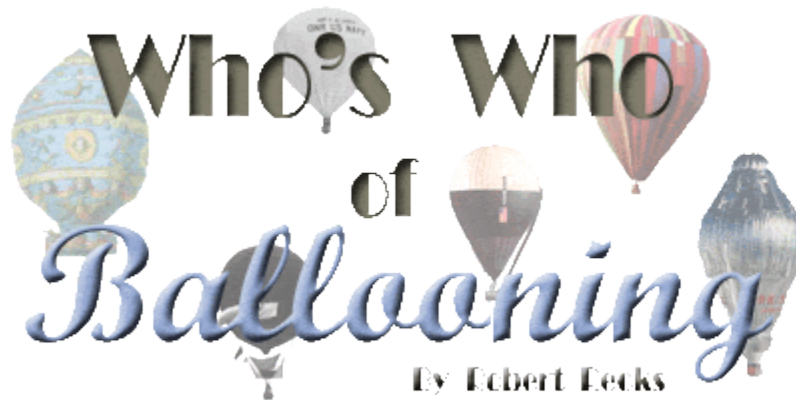
The finished assimilation of data as you see it here is strictly a "labor of love," and was not intended for personal gain. Indeed, it may have such a limited appeal; it may only be of interest to serious historians. But at least I will have the satisfaction of knowing that the data are available to future generations. I personally want to thank all of the individuals and agencies that allowed my elbows into their resource material. To the many not listed in the SOURCES, no slight was intended. Please accept my heartfelt thanks. One thing I have learned from this endeavor is that "there is no substitute for good historical record-keeping." If it had not been for a very few historically-minded aeronauts, little data would be available to the world. Some of the names that come to mind are: Coutelle, Coxwell, Green, Nadar, Fonville, Tissander, Jones, Gimble, Boesman, and Charles Dollfus.

If I can leave any legacy for future generations, it is to admonish all aeronauts "To make a special effort to collect and preserve historical information on ballooning." Not just antique books and artifacts, but this present era too. Don't hoard your collection of data or knowledge; preserve it, and make sure that, when you expire, your efforts go to your NATIONAL BALLOON MUSEUM for preservation, assimilation, and availability to future generations.

It must be noted that, if you don't find your name in here, it was not an oversight. Persons still living who are included in this edition were selected carefully, on the basis of their number of historical references in the appendices, or the magnitude of their contributions to sport. Basically, one has to be dead first, born before 1918, or have participated in some epic event. Your niche in the annals of history will come, but it will be recorded by someone in a generation younger than I.

The computer storage tapes of the data contained herein are on deposit in the BFA archives, in Indianola, Iowa. Hopefully, they can be used for ease in updating future editions at regular intervals. All rights to the first edition are held by the founding author. Successive rights

to editorial content are reserved by the BFA Publications Committee. Successive publication and distribution rights are reserved by the NATIONAL BALLOON MUSEUM, which it is hoped, will keep the editorial content intact.



RECHS, Robert J. (pronounced Recks) USA (1935 - (GB/HB)
Nickname: Rex. Author of the original Who's Who of Ballooning, published in 1982; from which this material was collected world wide over a period of 30 years.
b: 31 Aug. 1935 So.Gate, CA; U.S.Army 1957-59 (mechanic);
e: Minor-Engineering, Major-Avia. Management 1960.
p: Airline pilot (PanAm) ret.; All aviation ratings. Flew in more than 100 countries (licensed in six)
f: First B-flight 26 Dec.1969 w/Don Piccard; FAA-CFI, DPE, DER, A&PIA, DAI. Pioneer of Ultralite aircraft. Engineering & flight. Consultant & Inspector on many balloon & blimp projects; Author of many aviation publications. Founder of the Lockheed Balloon Club (over 100 members); Introduced balloon construction, sport ballooning, and B-pilot standards to Brazil in 1971.
h: Recipient of the first Shields-Trauger award for contributions to the sport of ballooning.
m: Shrine 1968, BFA-Life 1970, E.Clampus Vitus 1985, AIAA-LTA 1990, S.D. Air Museum 1995.
r: 1148 Third Ave. Chula Vista, CA. (2005)

See letter of recommendation on following page

September 19, 2019

To: BFA Board of Directors

Re: Hall of Fame Nomination
Robert Rechs

It is my privilege to recommend Robert Rechs for induction into the United States National Ballooning Hall of Fame. Although he is not readily identifiable to today's balloonist, he was important in the early days of modern ballooning and was instrumental in documenting the history of our sport. Rechs had an extensive background in aviation with a college minor degree in engineering and a major degree in aviation management. He retired as a Pan American Airlines pilot, having been licensed in six countries and flown in more than 100.

His first balloon flight was in 1969 with Hall of Fame Member Don Piccard. He was the founder of the Lockheed Balloon Club in California with over 100 members. He also authored many aviation books including more than 15 balloon publications. The subject matter of the books related to balloon design, materials, method of construction and other technical matters. Rechs served on the Balloon Federation America Board of Directors from 1969 to 1972 and served on various BFA Committees. He received the very first Shields Trauger Award, the most prestigious award, presented by the organization.

He is most famous for the publication of *Who's Who of Ballooning* in 1983. He devoted over 20 years of research to this publication and the sport of ballooning. It contains biographical information on over 2000 worldwide balloonist who have had significant impact on the sport. This work was done without the benefit of more recent information available electronically on the internet. The book includes a guide to the major organizations, records, and every piece of obscure information on the sport of ballooning. These records were donated to and are archived by the Balloon Federation of America.

Having collected biographical information on over 150 notable balloonists for the Balloon Federation of America Hall of Fame Committee, I can only imagine the time, research and effort spent in writing this book. Rech's work should be recognized and rewarded by inducting him into the United States National Ballooning Hall of Fame.

Jim Thompson, Member
Ballooning Federation of America
Hall of Fame Committee