

**BALLOON FEDERATION OF AMERICA
HALL OF FAME COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION FOR INDUCTION IN 2022**



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

Candidate Information Form

Date Submitted: 6/11/2021

CANDIDATE NAME: Lou Billones

Contact Information:

Address: S 184th St

City: Omaha **State:** NE **ZIP:** 68135-1737

Telephone: (402) 896-6744 **E-mail:** lrbneb@cox.net

Briefly describe the basis for the submission:

Lou is a professional meteorologist, retired college professor, Air Force Colonel, past contributing editor to the Balloon Federation of America's Ballooning Journal, and commercial hot air balloon pilot. He has been a balloon pilot for over 35 years, flying experimental balloons, and has been forecasting for balloon events and races, record setting adventures, national (US and Canadian) and world competitions, and numerous winning BFA Long Jumps.

His notable support to adventures include Chief Meteorologist for five around-the-world by balloon attempts (four launches and one non-launch), a successful solo crossing of the Pacific Ocean, three successful crossings of the Atlantic by balloons, first non-stop across Africa by balloon, and exclusive weather forecasting support to over 65 promulgated (FAI and NAA) record breaking hot air and gas balloon distance, altitude, and duration flights, many of which are still standing today.

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: Rich Jaworski **E-Mail:** rjlaworski@abbnebraska.com

Reference Name: Debbie Spaeth **E-Mail:** dasdeb@sbcglobal.net

See letters of recommendation at end of this document.

PERSON MAKING THE SUBMISSION:

Name: Debbie Spaeth

Address: PO Box 674 **City:** West Bend **State:** WI **ZIP:** 53095

Telephone: (262) 338-2300 **E-mail:** dasdeb@sbcglobal.net



CANDIDATE HISTORY:

Louis R. Billones

Notable – Accomplishments/Contributions, Shields Trauger Award

lrbneb@cox.net

Lou is a professional meteorologist, retired college professor, Air Force Colonel, past contributing editor to the Balloon Federation of America's (BFA) Ballooning Journal, and commercial hot air balloon pilot. He has been a balloon pilot for over 45 years, flying experimental balloons, and has been weather forecasting for balloon events and races, record setting adventures, national (US and Canadian) championships, world-class competitions, and numerous winning BFA Long Jumps.

In some years, over 400 hot air and gas balloon pilots and 1500 air crew received specialized forecasts from Lou. His notable support to adventures includes:

- Chief Meteorologist for five around-the-world by balloon attempts (four launches and one non-launch)
- A successful solo balloon crossing of the Pacific Ocean

- Three successful crossings of the Atlantic by balloons
- First non-stop across Africa by balloon
- And exclusive weather forecasting support to over 65 homologated (FAI and NAA) record breaking hot air and gas balloon distance, altitude, and duration flights, many of which are still standing.

Type balloons supported include AM-1 through AM-15 (gas-Roziere), AX-2 through AX-9 (hot-air); and AA-3 through AA-6 (non-pressurized gas). In addition to balloon meteorology, Lou has provided the weather support to the winning team in the Shreveport 300 Air Race and to still standing record times in cross country ski races.

Lou received a MS in Systems Management from USC, and a MS in Meteorology from St Louis University. He has been cited as a consultant on balloon and sport meteorology by the National Geographic, ABC's Night Line, and the Discovery Channel.

- Personal Ballooning History - Became interested in ballooning in 1976. FAA Private Rating in 1981. Presently Licensed FAA Commercial Balloon Pilot.
- Pioneered meteorological forecasting for hot air and gas balloons through the application of numerical analysis and modeling methodology
- Provided exclusive weather forecasting support to over 25 record setting flights that have resulted in over 65 international aviation records homologated by the Federation Aeronautic International (FAI) and National Aeronautic Association (NAA).
- Record setting flights directly supported with total and customized weather support include:
 - Absolute distance, non-stop in manned balloon, 13,246 miles, Feb 2000, USA to Burma (Pilot- Kevin Uliassi)
 - Absolute duration, non-stop in manned balloon, 10.5 days, Feb 2000, USA to Burma (Pilot-Kevin Uliassi)
 - Absolute altitude in type-balloon, 27,485 ft (other non-record flights to over 35,000 ft) (Pilots include Steven Fossett, Troy Bradley, Kevin Uliassi, and Bruce Comstock)
 - Feminine, absolute distance 288km, and duration 9 hours, Feb 2001, AX 5 balloon (Pilot-Deborah Young)
 - First balloon, non-stop, across Africa (Pilot-Kevin Uliassi)
 - First solo balloon flight across the Pacific Ocean; Seoul, Korea to Mendham, Canada, Feb 1995 (Pilot-Steven Fossett)
 - First balloon across South Atlantic, USA to Africa (Pilot-Kevin Uliassi)

- Numerous distance, altitude, and duration flights in AM-1 through AM-15, AX-4 through AX-9, and AA-3 through AA-6 type-balloons
- Numerous winning BFA Long Jumps
- Shreveport 300 Air Race, first place
- A partial listing of pilots directly supported in these record-breaking adventures include the following: Kevin Uliassi, Troy Bradley, Steven Fossett, Bruce Comstock, David Levin, Bill Bussey, Deborah Young, Richard Jaworski, Bill Cloninger, Michel Emich, and John Kugler. Many have been inducted into the BFA's Ballooning Hall of Fame (highest level of performance recognition)
 - Other Notable Accomplishments
 - Exclusive Meteorological support to three separate successful Atlantic Ocean Crossings by balloons (Pilots-Steven Fossett and Kevin Uliassi)
 - Over 3,000 aircraft and balloon sortie specific weather briefings prepared and delivered at competitive events, US and Canada
 - Chief Meteorologist for weather team in 5 around-the-world attempts. (Teams led by Steve Fossett, Kevin Uliassi, and Jacques Soukup)
 - Provided precise timing and detailed course adjustments to Steve Fossett gas balloon to avoid real-time hostile Libyan airspace incursion. Detailed and illustrated in National Geographic, Sept 1997, pgs. 62-63
- Chief Metrological Officer for the following ballooning events:
 - U.S. National Championships –ten BFA Championships beginning in 1980 at events held in Indianola, Iowa; Columbia, Missouri and Rantoul, Illinois.
 - Albuquerque America Challenge and Gordon Bennett Event for gas balloons - four events starting in 1995
 - World Hot Air Balloon Championship - Battle Creek, Michigan 1985
 - Battle Creek International Championships, Team Championships- ten events 1984-1994
 - Canton, Ohio Balloon Classic Invitational – over 15 events through 2010
 - Omaha River City Roundup – 10 events, 1990's
 - Other Midwest balloon rallies, i.e., Monroe, WI, Wisconsin Dells Rally - 1980 through 2005

- World HONDA Grand Prix Round1, 1998-2005
- Hot Air Balloon Festival - Gatineau, Quebec, Canada – four events

Letters of Recommendation



TDS Aviation, Ltd.
PO Box 674
West Bend WI 53095
414-870-7120

July 24, 2021

To: Balloon Federation of America Hall of Fame Committee

RE: Letter of Recommendation for Louis R. Billones

I am very pleased to offer this recommendation of Louis (Lou) Billones as a candidate for induction into the US Ballooning Hall of Fame.

Lou is a modest man who has provided and presented world class weather and meteorological data that has contributed to the success of events from weekend balloon events to international & World championships to record setting balloon flights for both Hot Air & Gas flights.

My interaction with Lou began when he became the Weather officer for events including Wisconsin Dells, Battle Creek events including the 1985 World Hot Air Balloon Championship and the World HONDA Grand Prix – Round 1-in Monroe, Wisconsin. We knew that we could depend on the accuracy of the local forecast provided by Lou for the competition slot.

Lou Billones became an integral part of flight planning for an impressive array of record setting flights. He brought *computer weather modeling to point locations at a "micro-scale" over a short period of time to support hot air balloon flights*. He transitioned to working for gas balloon flights. Those flights are listed with more details in his bio, but record holder names include Steve Fossett, Troy Bradley and Bruce Comstock. A noteworthy list of Hall of Fame inductees that were successfully supported by Lou's forecasting.

In 2010, Lou was awarded the highest recognition from the Balloon Federation of America, the Shields-Trauger Award for his contribution to the science of Aviation and the BFA. It would be fitting to see Louis Billones as a Hall of Fame inductee.

I encourage the BFA Board to select Lou Billones for induction into the US Ballooning Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

Debbie Spaeth

Debbie Spaeth
BFA Life Member

September 5, 2021
1633 Lafayette Street
Blair, NE 68008

To: BFA Board of Directors

Subject: Information Supporting Nomination of Lou Billones to the BFA National Hall of Fame

This information includes:

- A) Jaworski's Observations of Lou's Contributions To Ballooning,
- B) Chronology of Lou's Ballooning Involvement and Activities in The Omaha Area, and
- C) Lou's Mentoring and Involvement in Jaworski's Flights and World Record Project.

This document's information should be integrated with information detailing his many non-Omaha involvements and contributions.

A. Jaworski's Observations of Lou's Contribution To Ballooning

- Lou pioneered the development and application of digital weather forecasting methods for ballooning
- Lou's weather expertise moved ballooning weather forecasting from the generalized daily surface prog charts on a national scale to forecasting of the timing wind conditions for localized micro-meteorology in support of balloon competition events.
- Lou was instrumental in bridging atmospheric dispersion theory and models developed for tracking fallout from atmospheric nuclear weapons testing to real time metrological forecasting and modeling for local and round-the-world flight trajectories as published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website

B. Chronology of Lou's Ballooning Involvement and Activities in The Omaha Area

Lou Billones became active in ballooning in the late 1970's as a crewperson for hot air balloon (HAB) pilot Charles Cook, Lou's, Supervisor of Global Weather Services at the Strategic Air Command in Omaha, Nebraska. In the early 1980s Lou purchased his own balloon and was Federal Aviation Administration certified as a HAB Pilot - Commercial. As Lou's ballooning skills developed, he applied his technical meteorological knowledge and expertise to develop forecasting techniques and emerge as a premier ballooning weather forecaster, weather

officer, and weather information resource for Mid-West balloon events. His consistent and demonstrated forecasting successes lead him to be sought to be weather officer for national ballooning events and international ballooning events and Round-The-World (RTW) flights. Lou was appreciated by Mid-West pilots for his dedication, cheerful attitude, and accuracy in his forecasting. When engaged in supporting flights. He was a tireless and trusted resource. Lou was 100 percent dedicated to making everyone's flight(s) successful. His sleeping, home life, and enhancement of his own piloting skills were put on hold to support others.

Lou served as President of the Nebraska Balloon Club for one year, where he organized and coordinated the Club's annual program of meetings and local Club flight events. Since 1990, Lou has volunteered the "carte blanche" use of his large front yard of his home for balloon flights. He was a frequent presenter at Club and regional safety seminars and programs on metrological technology.

Lou has served as weather officer for many balloon competition events, i.e. the National Balloon Classic, as well as the Battle Creek Ballooning Championships, and BFA competitions in several other states. In 2003, Lou sold his balloon to two young, aspiring balloonist (Steve and Elaine Lacroix) who now serve as Club officers and together are the operators of the primary commercial balloon ride business in the Omaha area.

After retiring from ballooning, Lou developed expert skills in long-distance rifle marksman and served as the Omaha range manager/coordinator.

C. Lou's Mentoring and Involvement In Jaworski's Flights and World Record Project

Over several years in the early 1990s, Lou provided instruction to Rich on the use of current meteorological models and codes which enabled Rich to apply the codes and plan his flights.

Lou provided Rich with weather consultation, advice, and direction for Rich's several successful BFA long jump flights. Lou provided Rich with an overview, encouragement, and direction for contacting active world record aspirants, i.e., Troy Bradley, Bill Cloninger, Andy Cayton, and John Kolba. This guidance streamlined Rich's net-working and relationships needed for the preparation of world record equipment and flight planning. Lou provided Rich with weather advice and direction for planning and executing three successful world record duration flights, one successful world record distance flight, and two unsuccessful record attempt flights.

Buoyant Regards,
Rich Jaworski