

Memory of Peter Krieg

By Jim Ryan

I met Peter shortly after taking my first hot air balloon lesson at the Balloon Ranch in Del Norte, Colorado in the spring of 1977. You could take a ride for \$35 and a lesson for \$75. Easy choice for me. I met David Levin there and my lesson was with Frank Rider.

On my way home I saw a balloon high up and followed it to its safe landing. The pilot was Don Conner who would eventually become my instructor. Don suggested that I contact Peter Krieg as Don did not have the time to teach then. So, it was off to find and meet Pete. I knocked on his front door and we talked for a while where I learned Pete was not taking on new pilots. Time flies and I eventually get my private license in 1978.

Even though ballooning was far less expensive back then, I needed to create a way to pay for my new hobby. So I became a promoter and rally Balloon organizer with my chief event being the May Balloon Classic during Indy 500 weekend. After about two years of NOT attending Pete finally said yes and began competing with the other Hoosier balloonists.

The event ran for 17 years. It was toward the end of the 17-year history that I finally talked to my (now) good friend Pete Krieg to perform his famous smoke balloon ascension taught to him by Captain Eddie Allen.

It was a sight to behold. Smoke jumping required a custom-made fabric balloon inflated much the way we do today but in this case it was closer to the inflation of 1783's Montgolfier balloon. That is to say, it was inflated very slowly near a smoky open fire. Peter had not done the jump in quite some time so everything was alien to even the balloonists attending.

Pete (by accident)did not allow the envelope to fully inflate when suddenly he used a small axe to cut the single rope holding him down. Due to leaving mother earth a bit too early, the smoke balloon broke free with Peter attached.

His plan was to parachute back to near the takeoff site but that was not to be. The planned ascension of 1,000 AGL turned into a 200 ft. maximum altitude. At this time Pete cut away from the balloon and deployed his parachute landing harder than anticipated.

The envelope was heading toward a landing in the crowd estimated at 10,000. Luckily for me, as I used my public address system to request the patrons move rather urgently and quickly away from the expected landing site. Bear in mind this envelope was HOT, OILY and possibly dangerous. Well, Peter landed like the pro he was and he used what little control he had to send the envelope safely out of harm's way.

I flew many competitions with Peter and he was known to be a risk taker.

Somewhere in West Virginia Peter faced his final adventure canoeing the Ohio River solo in West Virginia where his life and journey came to an end. It seems to me all trail blazers come to a similar end stretching their considerable skills and good fortune a bit too far. R. I. P. Peter Krieg.

Author: Jim Ryan

Commercial pilot with about 2,000 hours of "Special Shapes" experience.

Albuquerque record:

Flying Ray-o-Vac battery. 7th place overall in a field of over 700 balloons'

1995 & 1996 1st Place special shapes rodeo in "Big Foot the shoe"

1995 25th place overall in the Shoe among all competitors.

1997 2nd place Shapes Rodeo in the TBS birthday cake

Other notable flights:

1994- Shoe Balloon Over Niagara Falls

1993- 1994 Santa Claus balloon @ Chateau d' Oex, Switzerland.

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