

Fiesta 2017

[If the reader is interested in just seeing pictures please click here](#)

Here we are attending the 20th Fiesta. I always look forward to the event and always look forward to it ending as it is a very exhausting schedule.

The first day is called the "Balloons over Albuquerque". At this event which is the day before Fiesta we fly from various schools that are selected at random. There is a method to pick the school that a pilot wants and I will use it next year as the school we were selected for this year was Arroyo Del Oso Elementary. The principal Ms. Deb Henley was great. She offered to get in the basket but was adamant that we not take off with her in the basket. I promised not to takeoff.

We were to arrive at 6:15 AM and as we had visited the school a few days before we knew how to get onto the school's grass field. The children begin to arrive at 6:45. When I went to grade school at St Mary's school started at 8 AM.



With help with some of the students we pulled out the tarp and laid it on the wet grass. This was to keep the balloon wet in case we did not fly.



We assembled the balloon, lite the burners and brought it upright. The kids loved it. We did some glow burns and the kids were very happy. We passed out many cards and hopefully we gave a Balloon card to every student.



Sam and I discussed the weather and he pointed out that the fog was rolling down the mountain side to the East of us and the ground winds were increasing. I figured I could outrun the fog bank and find a place to land. But then my very words started playing in my head. "What is the weather 30 minutes from now?" As my students must be tired of hearing that statement. I elected to pull out with the advice of Sam and my weather expert Diana. I call Diana the weather expert and a few weeks ago we were flying in Pagosa Springs and our briefing was optimistic and just before we pulled the balloon out of the trailer Diana said, "Tom, come over to my radar view on her phone". There were three storm systems converging on our location. Not more than 5 minutes later it hit and some balloons were in the air. They had a tough time getting down.

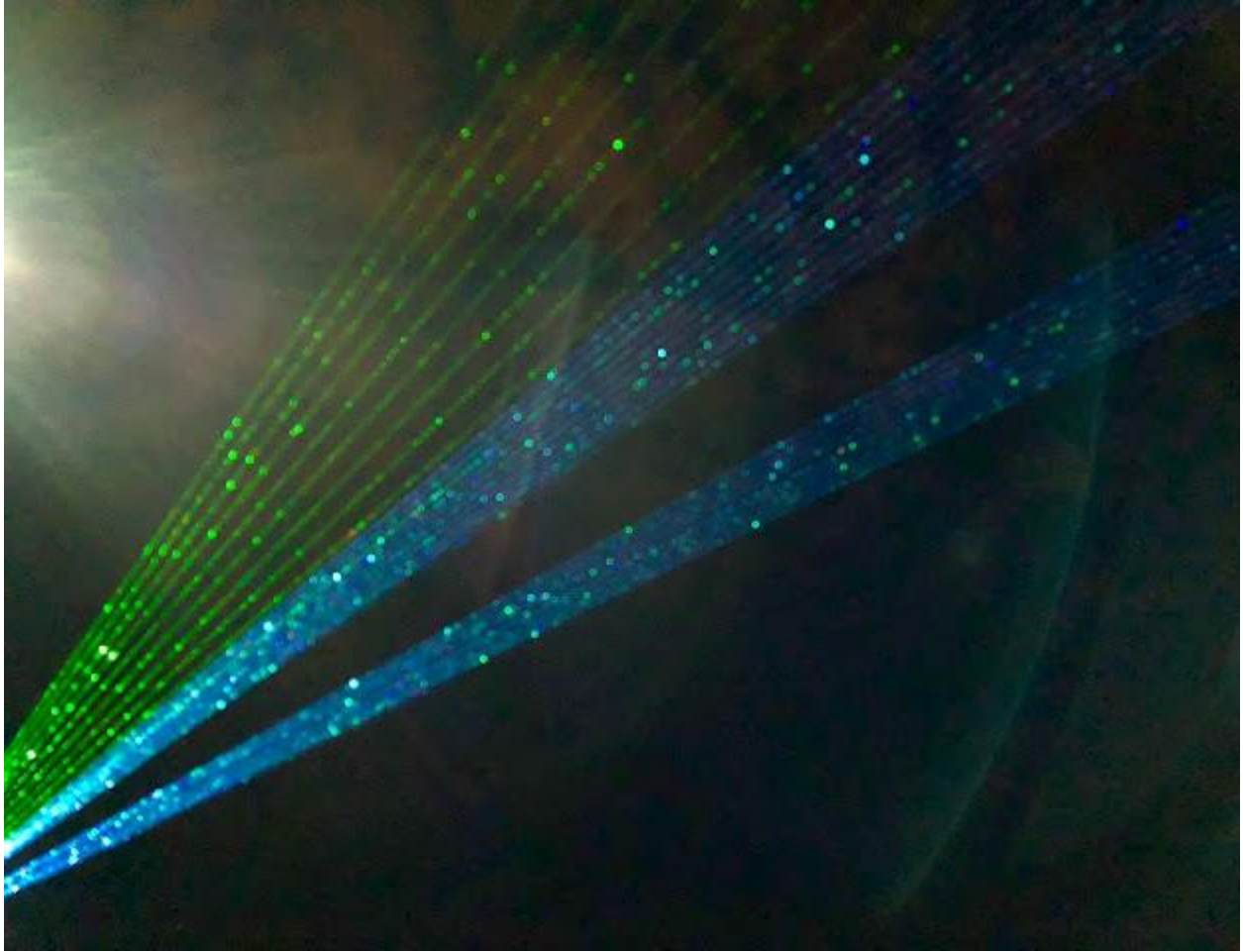


We pulled the balloon down which was more exciting to the kids than flying away from the school from their reaction. In the meantime Diana had gone off to purchase Burritos and coffee for the crew in support of the school. We then refueled the balloon and are ready for Saturday morning.

Saturday Oct 7th - Day 1 of Fiesta

Here we Go !!! We have our alarm set for 4 AM and we give ourselves 30 minutes to suck coffee and clear our heads and then get dressed and plan to leave the house at 5 AM. Keven, our newest crew member will meet at our house and ride with us.

By leaving at 5 AM we will get on the field around 5:40 or so depending on traffic. The laser light show begins at 5:45 and the mandatory pilot briefing begins at 6 AM. The dawn patrol will launch at 6:00 and the balloons will start to launch at 7 AM.



Laser Light Show

Dawn Patrol began at Balloon Fiesta in 1978 when two California balloonists developed position lighting systems that allowed them to fly at night. Dawn Patrol pilots take off in the dark and fly until it is light enough to find a place to land. Fellow balloonists appreciate the Dawn Patrol because they can watch the balloons and get an early idea of wind speeds and directions at different altitudes. On mass ascension days, about a dozen Dawn Patrol balloons perform the Dawn Patrol Show, a choreographed inflation and launch set to music.

Before we launched we attached a banner streamer with Roy Scalco name on it in his honor...



We are in the second wave and while we wait we are attacked by a giant frog. Its massive great skin surrounds us.



It is ugly and nasty looking its head is as big as Breezy Rider.



Its foot is looming over us and keeping us on the ground like flat as a pancake.

Sam is riding with his wife Kathy in her balloon and I am piloting Breezy Rider with my passenger

Kevin. Sam takes off first and heads south. I am launched by the Zebras soon after Sam.



Kevin and I are off and flying,

I see Sam making a nice right turn towards the South West and heading for a wide open field 2 miles south of our launch site. He landed in the field and I am heading along the same path but then the winds begin to change and I am pushed towards the Southeast and begin running out of landing spaces. I tell my passenger we are going to land in the RV park between two rows of RV's. His comment is not repeatable but it was a tight landing.

Diana as usual make a hot breakfast Potato Sausage breakfast. She spoils us so much.

[A NEWS video from the local TV](#)

Sunday Oct 8th - Day 2 of Fiesta

We are on the field in time to see the Laser Light show.

Sam is flying Breezy Rider and I am the driver of the chase vehicle. The winds will take us over the river so the chase is on. The goal is as usual to land next to our good friend Carl's house. On board where A O and Holly. Sam came close to our goal but a few blocks away. We drove by Carl's house and said Hi and

promised we would come again, we hoped.

One of the assignments of the person on board are to watch the moving map on the hand held device to assure we stayed at the proper altitude over Prohibitive Zones (PZ) and do not land in such zones. PZ are predefined and loaded into the map. These zones have animals that might be frightened by the noise of the balloon burner or land owners who have special crops or a few land owners who do not like balloons. It's their property so we understand and avoid such locations.





Diana provided Sloppy Joes as a Hot Breakfast...

Sunday Afternoon - Roads Scholar

Diana and I are guest speakers at the Roads Scholar traveling group at a local hotel. These presentations about balloons and the Balloon Fiesta are always fun. The projector systems at this event was not the best.

Sunday Evening - The Balloon Glow







Breezy Rider Glowing

Flicker Glow



Fireworks



Fireworks



Fireworks

Monday Oct 9th - Day 3 of Fiesta

It did not look like a very nice day to fly so after Pilot briefing we were asked to hold and wait out the weather. After an hour or so after that most balloonists gave up and went off to do other things. A few balloons flew. We went home for a nap...

It was a rare occurrence that my two sons were in the same place at the same time with their father.



Steve, Tom & Mike

Walking as a spectator from yesterday

Monday Afternoon - Roads Scholar

Diana and I are guest speakers at the another Roads Scholar traveling group at a local hotel. These presentations about balloons and the Balloon Fiesta are always fun. The projector systems at this event was perfect.

Tuesday Oct 10th - Day 4 of Fiesta

Its another great day and Tom is flying Breezy Rider and has as passengers Ron and Pat Brown. Really cool folks and are the nephew of my sister Margie's husband Larry.

This day looks like we are heading south over the launch field.. As we fly over the field Diana, who is my ground controller, is on the radio telling me about balloons overhead Breezy Rider as we fly. Balloon pilots can't see other balloons overhead so she is providing status. She mentions many balloons but the moment that stands out is she says "White balloon overhead hold your altitude and then says Green Green Green and at that moment a green balloons slides past us going up at a way to fast rate and we make envelope to envelop contact. No big deal other than that balloon was coming up way to fast. A rule of Fiesta is that we can't climb more that 200 feet per minute. I lost momentary concentration and then decided to keep heading south.



Just after launch



South of the field



As I looked South I saw a few places to land but they were filled with balloons so I took the south parking lot of the Balloon Museum. I like this landing spot as I am on the board at the museum. I saw folks on the ground and as we were landing and asked them to help as I had to miss a pole, miss two parked cars and then gently land on pavement. Nice perfectly executed landing. All was well other than the folks I thought might help were more interested in taking pictures. One gentleman had lived in Albuquerque for 35 years and just south of the balloon museum was so happy to help and feel a real balloon. Kind of a cool way to end the flight.

[As we are flying](#)

After the flight we have a New Passengers ceremony. We ask the passengers to kneel and listen to the history of ballooning and depending on who they are the story has many different versions. As a final comment we recite the Balloonists pray we reads as follows:

The winds have welcomed you with softness. The sun has blessed you with his warm hands. You have flown so high and so well that God has joined you in your laughter, and set you gently back into the loving arms of Mother Earth.



Ron and Pat listen to the story of ballooning by Sam



Sam explains how to drink the champagne



We pour water of the new assigners as we are to cheap to pour champagne





They were able to drink it...



Rom & Pat with Pilot Tom

Tuesday Afternoon - AAAA Safety Seminar

As a member of the Albuquerque Aerostat Ascension Association Education committee and I am participating in the Safety seminar . It is for hour plus session plus our time to setup and then tear down afterwards. It was well attended by over 200 people and for a review of the survey forms it was well accepted.

Wednesday Oct 11th - Day 5 of Fiesta

The winds are good and we have the opportunity to fly west over the river. Sam is the pilot and is taking Mike and Barb on a nice flight. After the flight we will be treated to Chile by Diana.





Did encounter a unhappy land owner as I took a short dirt road which I thought was a public road and a gentleman came up and raised unholy hell. After a tough lashing where he wanted me to be arrested he said "This is not my land". OK, I apologized and went on the pack up the balloon.

Thursday Oct 12th - Day 6

Tom day to fly and his passengers is his lady Diana.



Showing the American Flag





Watching the wind pattern before launch...





Pictures as we left the field





As we made the turn from heading South to Northwest we could see Kathy getting ready to launch



Balloons everywhere







The balloon museum





Crossing the river

The flight was an hour with a heading of 343 degrees. Needed 355 degrees to make our target which is always our dear friend Carl's house. We were almost there but the lower winds pushed us south for landing. Max speed 16.9 MPH distance 7 miles...

Thursday evening

Met up with some long ago friends from the DC area. Jay and Elaine and their 2 friends Steve & Maurine at El Pinto. It was good to refresh old memories and get up to date with what is happening with everyone.

Friday Oct 13th - Day 7 of Fiesta

Its Sam's day to fly Breezy Rider and he took Mike's good friend Arron. They had a nice course and actually went East of the launch field. This only happens a few times during the many Fiestas I have attended.





Sunrise (looking East)





Tom on the crown line





Arron







Sam tells the history of ballooning



How to drink champagne without your hands



Pilot Sam & Arron

Diana provided the Hash Brown casserole.

Friday evening

Met Ron and Pat and a local mini brewery. Wow a neat place Diana and I are not familiar with micro brewers. Great conversation and a really good time.

Saturday Oct 14th - Day 8 of Fiesta

One of those days. I was to take Michelle on her fist flight. The day was warm. We pulled out the balloon and tried to inflate it. Somehow the top popped out and we terminated the inflation so I would not burn the balloon. Later the Zebras let me bring it up as a static display.



Inflation of Breezy Rider



Breezy Rider - Static Display



Tom and his youngest son Mike running the burners

Sunday Oct 15th - Day 9 of Fiesta

It was a pleasure to turn off the 4 AM alarm for the last and final time. 10 days of getting up at 4 AM is now behind us.

We are up and sipping that wonderful cup of coffee and Mike is up to say goodbye. It was enjoyable to have him around during Fiesta. His friend Arron arrived on Wednesday night and they are driving non stop back to Salt Lake City today.

As I have done for the last 10 days I look at the computer to see the weather. Checking the weather on the Wind Profile Detect system (A detection system that looks straight up into the air to measure wind speed and direction) and the following table was displayed. These speeds (fast) and the fact the direction is mostly the same all the way up means that I would travel very quickly and in generally the same direction making it a "Not So Enjoyable flight".

Wind

Height [ft]	Speed [kn]	Direction, from North [deg]
254.3	14.3	19.7
448.9	15.5	20.3
643.5	18.6	18.7
838.0	20.3	18.9
1032.6	19.9	33.2
1227.2	17.8	39.3
1421.7	16.8	43.0
1616.3	16.6	44.1
1810.9	16.2	45.0
2005.4	14.9	46.7
2200.0	11.0	68.1

We are obliged to go to the field to check in. I contacted the passenger of the day and told them to stay home as we would not fly.

We got to the field and there were less visitors than I thought there would be as the weather was predicted to be much cooler than yesterday and the winds were going to be high. We were put on hold and asked to wait for the sun as that might change the winds. It didn't so most crew went shopping for the balloons and goodies that have been on display all week. Diana returned from shopping with a new balloon for her collection that is on the kitchen wall.



Newest balloon for the kitchen

Balloon Fiesta in the Kitchen

Many Thanks to the folks who crewed and visited with us this week:

Tom, Diana, Sam, Kevin, Mike Seabroke, Barb, Mike Fisher, Steve Fisher, Leanne, Ron, Pat, Holly, AO, Mike Ford, Donnette, Sabrina, Sally, Garey, Jay, Elaine, Steve and Maurine..

We are truly blessed to know such wonderful people.

****** The End ******