



DOWNWIND CHASE

Official Newsletter of the Pacific Coast Aeronauts

◆ JULY 2024 ◆

View from the Board

by Melanee Scarborough

Hello PCA Members,

Can you believe that half of our year is now over? How much flying have you done so far?

As we enter the hottest months here in California, let's pause for a safety moment and remember to stay hydrated. I know I am guilty of it myself you get out on the launch field; you are busy trying to get the balloon in the sky and you are not drinking water. Please remember that it is important for you and your crew.

Summer is an incredible time in our ballooning community. Not only are there lots of festivals and flies happening all over the country but it is also Camp Time. The BFA youth camps are in full swing, inspiring the next generation of upcoming pilots and crew. If you get an opportunity to volunteer, instruct or participate in a BFA Youth Program camp, do so – it really is an amazing experience.

Be on the lookout for fun flies, small events, and some exciting things coming up to the Lincoln Airport, San Martin, Tracy and others. Wanna get together to fly – reach out to your fellow PCA'ers and let's get fly.

Board members will soon be reaching out to all club members doing a small survey. We want to hear from you, we want to hear your opinions, your thoughts and suggestions and we want you to get more involved. This of course is your club; what do you want to see? What would you like more of? How can we get you involved? Wanna write an article for the newsletter? Wanna learn something specific? Can you volunteer to run a PCA info booth?

As always please do not hesitate to reach out should you have a question, concern or an idea. Would love to hear from you.

Stay safe and have fun flying

Melanee Scarborough
PCA Club President 2024

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IMPORTANT INFO!

CLUB MEETINGS

HELD ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF ODD-NUMBERED MONTHS PLUS DECEMBER.

NEXT CLUB MEETING:

**4TH MEETING
OF 2024
Wed. July 3
@ 7PM PDT**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD) MEETINGS

HELD QUARTERLY, 3RD THURSDAY

@ 7:30PM (AND AS NEEDED)

NEXT ONE IS JULY 25, 2024

MEMBERS ARE INVITED

TO ATTEND ALL VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Current club members receive an email with a link to attend meetings for free. Dates are subject to change; in such rare cases, members are notified via email.

Please see last page for officers, committee chairs, contacts and additional club information.

CONTACT US

Email newsletter contributions to:

PCA:

pca@pcaballoons.org

PCA Mailing Address:
14938 Camden Ave., Suite 76
San Jose, CA 95124

**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:
20th of each month**

High Sierra Balloon Camp News!

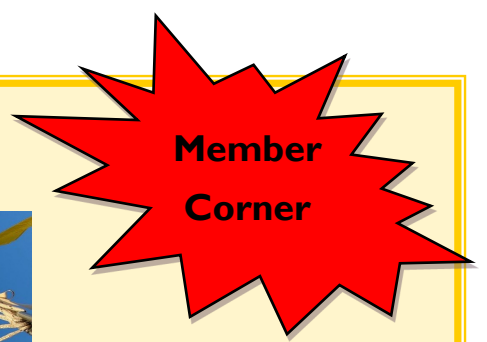
High Sierra Balloon Camp is just around the corner. This year going to be held July 13-18 at the 4H Camp in Lake Tahoe. This year we have 22 teens from all levels of ballooning experience to be emersed in ballooning for a week.

Cards, Pins, stickers and the like are still being welcomed to disperse to the campers so if you would like to donate, please reach out to me right away. Time is getting close to get them in our hands to be able to get them to campers.

Full story on 2024 Camp will come in next months issue.



DANA THORNTON...AKA....BOOMERANG



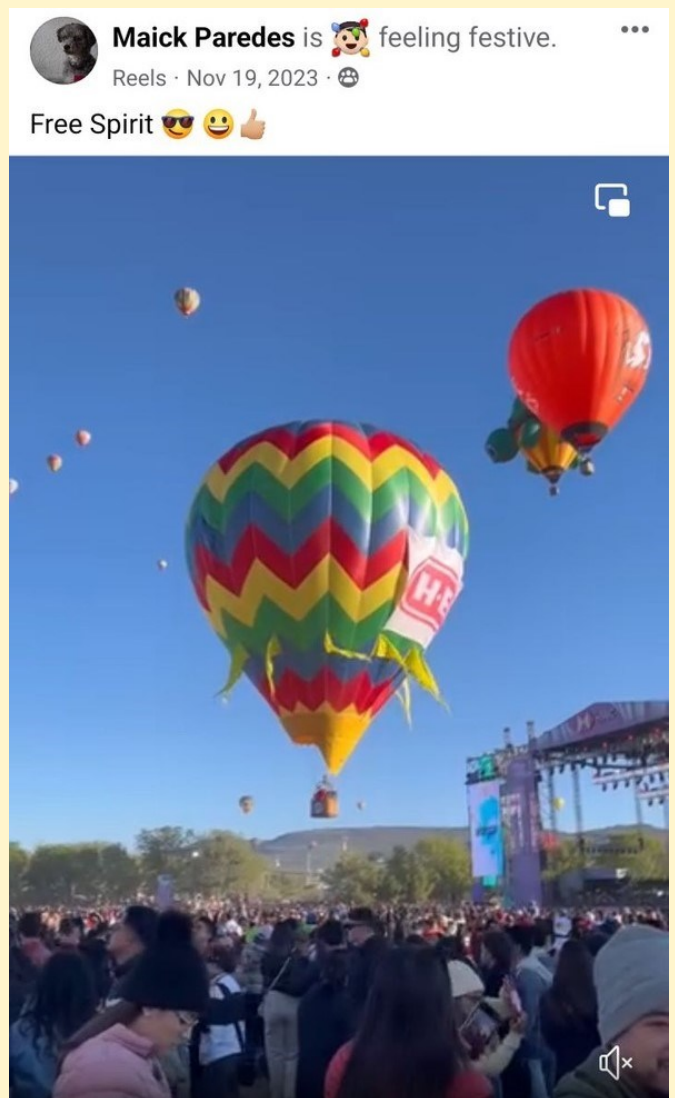
When Dana Thornton's name is mentioned in the LTA community it is synonymous with an approach, attitude and set of skills to which many pilots aspire. An achievement that is well deserved and respected. These are skills Dana has honed over the course of 40+ years. And the stories he and others have to tell would fill the pages of a book.

Dana was born in California, lived in Colorado Springs, Detroit, and Connecticut,

before moving back to California. His interest in aviation began in 1977 while still in high school choosing flying lessons over a car. He flew a 182 Turbo RG, Grumman Cheetah and Experimental Biplane before turning his full attention to ballooning. He crewed, participated in events, and did some training with his brother Ron in California before obtaining his commercial LTA license in 1980. Getting his license was "a license to learn" he told me. Not only was ballooning less expensive but it required a different mindset than flying an aircraft, challenging and quiet with beautiful 360-degree views. "In fixed wing flying you take off and go from point A to point B . . . In ballooning you never know where you are going to land, and conditions are always different. "

With 44 years of flying, Dana is still challenging himself. He has flown as far as 56 statute miles away from his take-off point, he has flown as high as 24,000 ft. He has experienced flying 500 ft below a C130 aircraft at 12,500 feet and experienced an aircraft circling with him as he descended from 6,000 to 1,000 ft. He has flown to greater than 18,000 feet five times, flown speeds of 46 mph and flown over the Diablo Mountain Range from the Morgan Hill area to the Central Valley four times. He has flown the International Balloon Festival in Leon Mexico for 4 years now with pilots from all over the world. And he is well known for attempting to land back at his launch sites, hence the name Boomerang, coined by his crew. He has been a speaker at 12 balloon safety seminars and is a BFA level 6 Master Aeronaut.

Dana has flown "Free Spirit" since 1986 and he has this to say about her: "This is the fourth Free Spirit. The first was a 1981 FF-7/AX-7, 77000 cubic ft envelope designed by and built for a local dealer. He sold it to someone who was



not a pilot in the area. She was originally being trained by Brent Stockwell but transitioned to me around 1985. She never got her certificate and sold the balloon to me in 1986. I liked the name, and so I kept it Free Spirit. The next 2 replacements were FF-8B, 90000 cubic ft envelopes. The same basic zig-zag design with a slight change at the very top. The first did not have the yellow pennants, but all the others have. The smiley face was added on the third envelope, and a replacement parachute top near the end of life got the yellow and pink ribbons on the glasses. Pink for breast cancer awareness and yellow for support our troops. The fourth envelope ended up being a Kubicek BB30D, 106000 cubic ft envelope with turning vents and their rapid deflation system. But, it is the same zig-zag pattern with the yellow pennants and the same smiley face on the parachute top. “

I turned to Jeanne Anson, a current board member, PCA founder, and longtime friend of Dana's for her input. She had this to share: “Dana and I have known each other since he moved West in 1978. His adventurous spirit and tendency to push limits a bit, are qualities that have shaped his ballooning career. He is the guy who flies the furthest, highest and record# of return flights back then and now. He's patient with questions about ballooning that he's answered hundreds of times and generous with his knowledge for newcomers. He knows his skill level and knows when to fly and when not to. While flying from Gilroy to Newman in the central valley, we were concerned that the ground wind was high, since we were still moving quite quickly. Tom Sharpee was chasing and kept reassuring us that the wind was calm on the ground. And at 300' it was. We landed in a housing development and tethered until we ran out of fuel. . . . All the kids and adults in the area got rides. A 40 mile flight and tether! Fun Times. Thanks for all the adventures, Dana!”

I asked Dana what advice he would give aspiring or current pilots? “You need to feel comfortable in the balloon. I always tell students and even passengers you can't rush things. Be patient. Some pilots can't grasp that they aren't in control and are at the mercy of the wind. Some pilots tend to abandon an approach when it isn't going well or is different than what they expected. You didn't take it far enough.” More recently in Ceres, Ca, after descending, it took him 30 minutes to find a good landing site. “Don't give up on other possibilities, always have a plan for alternate landing sites and think ahead.”

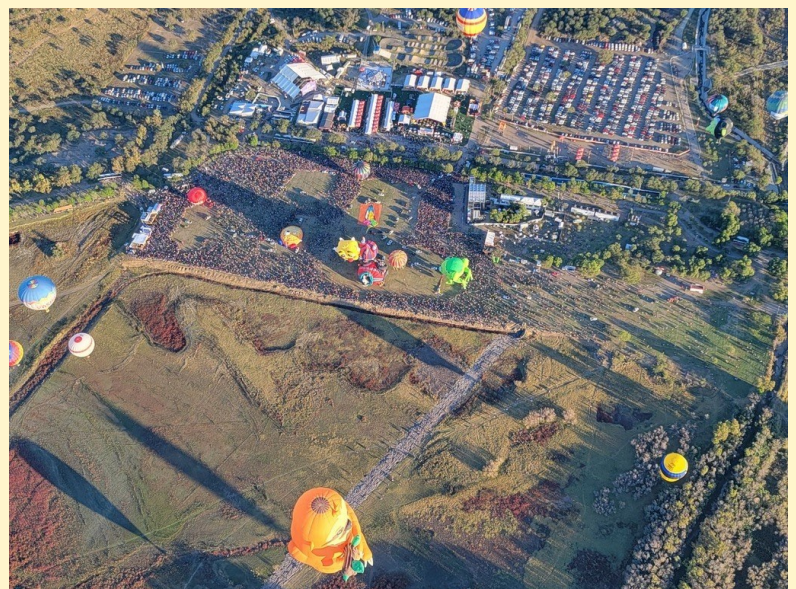
It's not just the challenge or uniqueness of each flight and launch that has kept Dana coming back year after year. It is the friendships old and new he has developed over a lifetime. The festivals where there is always a familiar face and memories to share and create.

When asked about his most memorable flight, Dana mentions his high -altitude flight to 20,000 ft with Bob Locklin in Bayliss, CA back in the 90's. His passion for the sport of LTA is most evident when he speaks of his enjoyment of each early morning Dawn Patrol flight at GRBR. "This year will mark his 41st Dawn Patrol at the 43rd Great Reno Balloon Race" "They have been magical, some more than others". Dana is always up for the next challenge. He tells me he has his sights set on hitting the fifty- year mark with Dawn Patrol if body and balloon allow. I have no doubt that he will make this happen.

*Best to you Dana and thanks for sharing your story.
Interview by Jana Couch*



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Skies the Limit: Ceres Hot Air Balloon Festival



The second annual Skies the Limit: Ceres Hot Air Balloon Festival managed to take shape and happen Father's Day Saturday, in Ceres, California. Last year launching with the City of Ceres, was challenging to bring something brand new to the area and start an event from scratch. This year was even more challenging deal with funding issues, change in management, several other hurdles. But I am very grateful to the PCA members and friends who came together to help me bring

balloons to Ceres again.

Unfortunately Mother Nature wanted to have issues with putting balloons in the air. Early morning weather reports indicated speeds of 10-12 MPH with gusts over 23, even in that wind candlesticking was going to be dangerous. Following our pilot brief I left it in the hands of all the pilots to try to help me make something out of nothing.



Dave Wakefield and several volunteers worked to stand "baby Remax" the small 42k Remax branded balloon. Kylee Reeder and Chuck Weiscopf did a cold inflate and Gay and Russ James "burned some propane." The wild card was Dana Thornton who was kicking rocks around the launch field when peer pressure got the better of him.

Moving his vehicle on the far side of the field pretty soon he was cold inflating and asking for the 3 teen-

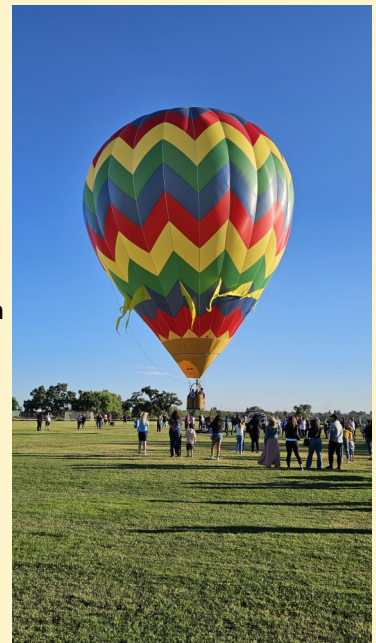
agers that were supposed to be his passengers. They were the winners of the design contact for the promotion materials the event T-shirt. The goal was to get his envelope standing and get the teens in the basket for a photo op.

Before long I was being called to this basket and when I arrived he looked me in the face and said "I can do this." Not quite sure what was meant I asked for clarification to which Dana responded the landing may be a little rough but "I can fly this if you are okay with it." If anyone can do it, it would be "boomerang" himself so I granted him permission to launch.

With only one balloon launching the quick decision on which sponsor gets the right plays quickly through your head, but ultimately decided to let the teens take their flight. With a swing on the tie off to one direction, and then swing back the other direction – a pull and away he went. Quickly ascending into the air at fast speeds – with a crowd of eager and excited folks oohing and ahhhing and clapping as he exited the local airspace and went off.

Together they traveled 28 miles from launch site – at a rate at times of 28plus MPH and an one point elevation of 8k – Freespirit landed safely in the town of Winton, CA. All came away with smiles on their faces.

We thank JS West Propane who stayed on the launch field to refuel Dana upon his return and then as the ever popular celebrity Dana is – he stood around signing autographs for spectators and staff.





PACIFIC COAST AERONAUTS CLUB CONTACTS

2024 PCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CLUB OFFICERS

Names & Email Addresses	Board Term Expires at End of Year	2024 Officers
Patrick Moore pcamoore587@gmail.com	2024	Chair of BoD
Melanee Scarborough pcamelanee@gmail.com	2024	President
Tom Sharpee tomsharpee@gmail.com	Volunteer	Vice President
Linda Walton pca.lindaw@gmail.com	2024	Treasurer
Suzanne Seiler pca.suzseiler@gmail.com	2025	
Jeanne Anson ansonlta2@gmail.com	2025	
April Turner pca.april@gmail.com	2024	
Dave Wakefield pca.dwake@gmail.com	2025	

2024 PCA COMMITTEES

Committee	Chairperson	Members
Newsletter	Jeanne Anson	<i>And All Members!</i>
Membership Dev. Outreach	Melanee Scarborough	Jeanne Anson
Membership Dev. Communications	Dave Wakefield	TBD
Education & Training	Pat Moore April Turner	Jeanne Anson Tom Sharpee
Calendar Based Events	Not Committees	Start Dates
BFA Youth Program	Melanee Scarborough	February
Awards	Linda W April	Undetermined—July?
WHAMOBASS	Melanee Scarborough	June
Christmas Party	Jana Couch	October



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Balloon Aircraft and Equipment

Right-click on picture captions for more details



Raven S-55A



2001 Cameron 'Shoe 90



TBW AX-8B—Racer