

GREAT TEXAS BALLOON RACE:
600-800 words by around April 1

Bill Bussey (Sky Dancer) + Bruce Bussey Longview; [phone number redacted]

John Petrehn (family ballooning royalty) [phone number redacted]
2nd place here last yr; currently world champion...has come here many times

Gary Heavin (HAVEN)
Curves owner; from Waco; title sponsor for all three years for natl champ/GTBr
He and another store balloons in Longview; will come ea. month

1. Probably need to start by finding out if having the U.S. National Competitions here will change the event from the usual format. I found quite a bit of info about the 2011 event online, but nothing about the schedule/format of the 2012 event.

2. Lead is probably fact that Longview is hosting the competitions for three years, 2012-2014. If you've found out that this changes the complexion of the event, mention that. Establish Longview's prior history with the race.

3. Give readers the flavor of the event—what they can expect to see and enjoy. THIS ONE MOST IMPORTANT

4. Explain a little about the races, how they work. You might just have room to explain one, which would be OK. We're planning on having our intern write a Web Extra about Hot Air Ballooning Trivia or FAQ, so the Web Extra graphic will say something like "For details about the races or hot air ballooning in general, go to texashighways.com/webextra."

5. If possible, a quote or two from a pilot or crew member explaining what attracts them to the sport and/or this event in Longview.

6. A little about the entertainment, food, Kidsland, etc., but not much on this aspect since you only have 600-800 words.

via Bussey:

Simplest of a variety of targets is 50-foot "X" three feet in width legs....3-ft center with grommet with 12-inch spike nailed to ground.

Some targets are more complex...may have eg triangle shape as design pilots can see...done with butcher paper ...could be maximum distance task....throw marker on each of two separate triangles. Could have 25 to 30 more complex **tasks** during the event.

May not be target on ground, rather a goal.....could be 'window in the sky' as scored on the pilot's GPS device. All to test flying and decision-making skills.

Marker weighs only a few grams... 3-inches square with synthetic nylon beads weighs little has 36-in long tail (no guy advantage)...easy to find...on marker is pilot's identifying number....takes 19 sec to fall from 1,000 feet so there's an art to even dropping marker.

Gai (GAY) Bennett

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<http://www.greattexasballoonrace.com/>

[SPECIAL WEB ANNOUNCEMENT EARLY EACH DAY OF NATIONALS....](#)

Great Texas Balloon Race Festival and Competition July 27-29, 2012

U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship July 24-29, 2012..... beginning in 2012 and continuing through 2014.

East Texas Regional Airport

Considered by many of the pilots that compete at the Great Texas Balloon Race to be the best run event on the circuit.

Balloon Flights begin the event on Friday morning with a flight over the City of Longview. Launch and landing sites change each year as they are always determined by wind and the weather.

Balloon Glows on Friday and Saturday night entertain crowds with an awesome display of color and excitement. One of the most popular things to do at the event as the public is able to get up close and watch how balloons are inflated and operate.

Live Concerts in the afternoon and evening both Friday and Saturday always feature an entertaining band as the headliner. Local and regional bands play during the day.

Kids Land is a safe restricted area for children that requires a small separate entry fee. Activities and attractions differ from year to year but it is always a fun time.

Vendors display their arts, crafts and other merchandise in booths lined up along an improvised midway.

Food Vendors make sure there is always enough to eat and drink during the day and evening. --

U.S. Nationals July 24-29, 2012

<http://www.bfa.net/>

Longview, TX to Host 2012-2014 Nationals

WRITTEN BY GLEN MOYER

THURSDAY, 03 MARCH 2011 16:31

The Balloon Federation of America's Hot Air Competition Division is pleased to announce the selection of Longview, Texas and the Great Texas Balloon Race to host the U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship beginning in 2012 and continuing through 2014. Longview was selected from a field of four locales that had expressed interest in the host role of this prestigious event. The three-year agreement was ratified by both organizations earlier this week.

"The selection of Longview and the GTBR took a great deal of dedicated work by the staffs of both organizations," said Paul Petrehn, Chairman of the BFA HACD, "but we knew going in to expect an **excellent bid package from Dr. Bill Bussey and the people of Longview**. The GTBR enjoys an outstanding reputation as a top-flight competition event. The opportunity to couple these two events was not to be missed," added Petrehn. "Both pilots and spectators alike will be treated to an unprecedented showing of the very best competition our sport has to offer."

For spectators in East Texas, the BFA U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship presented by Curves and the Great Texas Balloon Race **will mean more balloons flying overhead for longer than ever before. A total of 70 or more balloons will color the summer skies above Longview for an entire week, beginning on Monday morning and continuing through the following Sunday. Those pilots will be competing for a total prize purse of \$50,000 and the opportunity to go on to represent the U.S. in World Champion competition. The dates for the 2012 event are July 23 – 29th.**

Longview's first balloonist and founder of the Great Texas Balloon Race, Dr. Bill Bussey says he can't wait. "We're thrilled with the decision of the BFA on a number of levels," said Bussey. "It validates the many years of hard work of the countless volunteers who have strived to build the Great Texas Balloon Race into one of the best events in the country. This opportunity also allows us to bring to the citizens of Longview and East Texas an even bigger and better show than ever before," he said.

"Of course none of it would be possible without the unparalleled sponsorship of the many fine businesses and service organizations, like our **title sponsor Curves International**, that support ballooning and the Great Texas Balloon Race year in and year out. It's like the Mercury astronauts used to say, 'No bucks. No Buck Rogers,'" added Bussey. "This year marks the 33rd Annual Great Texas Balloon Race and that longevity is testament to the pride of community and quality of life that we enjoy here in Longview and throughout East Texas," Bussey said.

The selection of Longview as host city for the BFA U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship continues a tradition begun in 1989 wherein the National Championship event is moved around the country every few years. Previous host cities have included Baton Rouge, LA; Middletown, OH; Columbia, MO; Rantoul, IL; and Anderson, SC. This year, the National Championship is wrapping up an extremely successful 3-year run in Battle Creek, Michigan with the Holiday Balloon Fest. Building on that success, the HBF and the BFA were able to mount their own successful bid to host the **World Hot Air Balloon Championship in 2012, marking the first time the U.S. has hosted that event since 1995.**

WORLD CHAMPION. Make sure you come on out for a great time. August 17th-25th, 2012 on the campus of Kellogg Community College in Battle Creek, Michigan

FAI = **Fédération Aéronautique Internationale**

The Balloon Federation of America is the national aerosports club for balloon pilots, crew and enthusiasts. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the sport of ballooning. For more information on the BFA log on to www.bfa.net. And to learn more about this year's Great Texas Balloon Race and ongoing plans for the coming U.S. National Championship please visit www.greattexasballoonrace.com

web

East Texas Regional Airport will once again be the host venue

While **July is a very hot time of year to** have an outdoor festival, it has, for years, been the month for the Great Texas Balloon Race. After exhaustive research, July was determined to be the month with the very lowest risk of weather related issues. But organizers also have to be aware of other balloon events and competitions all over the world. According to Dr. Bill Bussey, the Race founder, "The Great Texas Balloon Race has, from the early days, been a world class event for balloon pilots. So it's always been important that we position our event in consideration of other big balloon events."

Known as **the longest running hot-air balloon event in Texas**, The Great Texas Balloon Race began in 1978. From its original venue at Longview Mall, the race moved to the former Stroh's Brewery site (1985-1986) and then to its current home at the East Texas Regional Airport.

Pilots are scored on their accuracy as they fly from launch point to one or two targets. As they pass over the target they toss markers as close to the center as possible.

The Balloon Glow is a spectator's delight created in Longview! the brainchild of Dr. Bill Bussey, D.D.S., a Balloon Glow is the art of firing a hot air balloon's burner to illuminate the balloon while the balloon itself is tethered. It is a breathtaking sight and a photographer's delight.

The first Balloon Glow was held in Longview in 1981, and it has been copied around the world since that time.

Hot air balloons vary in size from 14,000 cubic feet - with a payload of one person - to 500,000 cubic feet - enough to carry 32 people. These balloons range in height from five stories to 16 stories, and they can weigh from 300 to 600 pounds.

The licensed pilot will use an altimeter, a rate-of-climb indicator, a thermometer for inside the envelope, a compass and a map. Also, a radio is on board to contact the ground crew and other aircraft, as well as the local airport control tower if necessary....plus computer/iPad/GPS device....

Balloons are a lot tougher than they look. The envelope is made of reinforced nylon fabric called rip-stop nylon or Dacron. This very light --but strong-- fabric is used because it retains its strength so tears will not "run."

Balloons can range in price from \$15,000 and up. It depends on the shape, size and equipment. The more artwork on a balloon, the higher the cost. Add to that the cost of an inflator fan, a trailer or vehicle to carry the balloon in, lessons, insurance, FAA inspections, etc. and the costs can quickly skyrocket

Balloons fly best in cool weather with wind speeds less than seven knots. The best time for **flights are up to three hours after sunrise and up to three hours before sunset.**

Thermals, created when direct sunlight heats the ground causes the heat to rise quickly. During this condition, it creates tremendous turbulence, and is very dangerous. During "thermals" the balloonist cannot control the balloon

The envelope of the balloon is laid out downwind and flat on the ground. Air is blown into the balloon with a gas-powered fan. In 15 minutes, the balloon is inflated to the size of a small house. The burner is used to heat the temperature inside, causing it to rise. The flight burner is ignited when the balloon begins to reach full inflation.

Made of stainless steel, the burner uses propane to produce 21 billion BTUs per hour. It is mounted atop the gondola and used to heat the air inside to a temperature higher than the outside, causing the envelope to rise.

As the balloon inflates and its underside begins to leave the ground, the pilot, handling the burners puts one leg inside the basket. The crew members let go of their control lines and the envelope rises, tilting the basket upright with the pilot inside. The balloon now stands approximately 70 feet high and 55 feet wide. Still it is not sufficiently buoyant to lift the basket so passengers are able to climb aboard.

Ready to lift off, the pilot opens the burner valve and gradually builds enough buoyancy for the flight to begin.

With the wind determining the direction of flight, the pilot uses different air currents at different altitudes to maneuver the balloon. Balloon speed is determined by the wind speed at different locations

The pilot controls the balloon's descent by opening small vents near the top of the balloon and occasionally giving the burner a blast to keep the descent slow and gradual. As the air inside the envelope cools, the balloon descends.

The pilot may drop a safety line for crew members to slow down the lateral movement of the balloon and "walk" it to a safe landing area. Upon landing the balloon is deflated by pulling a valve line which opens the parachute valve atop the balloon. The hot air escapes rapidly

Behind every balloon pilot in the Great Texas Balloon Race stands a good balloon crew. Ballooning is a team sport and every pilot needs the help of four to six well-trained crew members in the launch and landing of his balloon. Some special shape balloons need up to 15 on their crew.

Before inflation and launch each crew member is assigned a job by the pilot or crew chief.

One person operates the fan and two others work the "throat." One or two are at the "crown," maintaining a constant pull on the line to control the speed of the envelope as it rises. An efficient crew can inflate a balloon in less than 10 minutes.

After lift-off, the launch crew becomes the recovery crew. Because the craft lacks directional control, the crew must follow the craft in the direction the wind takes it. The crew attempts to stay as close as roads permit to anticipate the pilot's landing site. When a site is selected, one person asks permission to go on the landowners property. Crew members are also responsible for crowd control.

Crew members may use a rope dropped by the pilot to "walk" the balloon to an area where a safe landing can take place. During deflation, crew members "milk" the balloon, squeezing out air through the vent on the top. Then the envelope and all other parts of the balloon are packed away in the recovery vehicle

Who flew the first hot air balloon?

The first hot air balloon was designed and launched in 1783 by two French paper makers, Joseph and Etienne Montgolfier. Observing how pieces of paper went up a chimney when there was a fire in the hearth, they decided to fill a small silk bag with smoke and watched it float to the ceiling. They thought that the smoke rather than the heat caused the lift.

They then tested various paper and fabrics and upon the royal command of Louis XVI, the first flight took place in Paris. The passengers for that first flight were a duck, a rooster and a sheep. It rose to 1,500 feet and flew eight miles.

On June 21, 1783, Pilatre deRozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes made the first truly manned flight. It is estimated that the entire population of Paris (400,000) turned out to watch this balloon. The balloon flew 25 minutes and went up to 3,000 feet.

The "Key Grab" competition got its name when the prize was a brand new automobile and its key was placed on a ring atop a 20 foot pole. Now the prize is a large amount of cash.

For this prestigious prize, pilots must launch two to three miles from the target site and attempt to fly to the target which has traditionally been a ring on top of a pole in the middle of the GTBR grounds.

Visitors station themselves a few feet from the 20 foot pole. Pilots fly over them in a one-time-only attempt to retrieve the ring from the top of the pole. The pilot that grabs and retains the ring (or key) also grabs and retains the prize money.

In 2001, a "slight modification" was made where the pilot is required to drop the ring over the pole rather than grab the ring.

Only once in the first 30 years of the Great Texas Balloon Race was the event cancelled due to weather. Excessive rain fall in the weeks and days PRIOR to the event rendered the ground at the East Texas Regional Airport un safe for vehicles. The Airport Administration closed the grounds one week prior to the event. Without an alternate location and due to the huge logistic

challenge of moving if a new location could be found, the event was cancelled in 2007.

No event is ever cancelled based on a weather forecast. Forecasts cover a vastly wider area than the location of the Great Texas Balloon Race at the East Texas Regional Airport. If a specific flight or balloon glow during the event is cancelled due to the immediate weather conditions, every effort is made to provide some form of entertainment for those attending the event. In 2002, when fog rolled in unexpectedly Saturday morning, prohibiting the balloons from flying, (a balloon is not allowed to fly in the clouds or where there is no visibility) more than half of the pilots rolled out on to the field and inflated for those in attendance.

If an specific flight or glow is cancelled, it may be due to one or more FAA regulation, lack of clearance from the airport tower, conditions deemed unsafe for the pilots and/or the spectators by the Balloonmeister. Most often, when a balloon event must be cancelled, the other attractions and scheduled events are not affected.

Ballooning Jargon

To listen to a balloonist speak it may seem that they have their own dictionaries. After all, ballooning has a very specialized vocabulary that includes such terms as:

- **Apex** - The top center point of the balloon envelope, this feature is also known as the crown.
- **Blast valve** - A flight burner control that sends full tank pressure through the burner system and gives the balloon instant hot air.
- **Burner** - A device for mixing propane with air to produce a hot flame. It is the primary heat source in hot air balloons. Burners are normally made of a metal tube coiled around a venturi at the mouth of which is placed a jet or nozzle. The burner has two basic controls - a regulator, which controls the pilot light and a blast valve.
- **Ceiling** - The height above ground at which cloud cover begins and visibility ends.
- **Loadtapes** - Special load bearing tapes which are sewn over the seams of the balloon and run from the apex to the mouth where they connect with the suspension cables. The tapes help distribute the load evenly over the surface of the balloon.
- **Maneuvering vent** - A self sealing aperture that permits the discrete outlet of hot air to check an ascent or to initiate a descent. It is controlled by a line to the basket.
- **Suspension cables** - Flexible heat-resisting cables which are usually composed of stainless steel or Kevlar. These cables suspend the basket beneath the envelope and connect with the loadtapes.
- **Telltale** - Special pieces of heat sensitive material placed inside the top of a hot air balloon to monitor the balloon's temperature. Excessive heat can cause damage to the envelope material.
- **Thermistor** - An instrument used to measure the temperature of the hot air in the upper section of a hot air balloon. There is usually a "redline" temperature that must not be exceeded. Normally this "redline" temperature is 250-300 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Variometer** - A sensitive vertical speed indicator that measures the relative up-and-down movement of the balloon in the air

6:30 a.m.

Due to variations in weather, launch Site, direction of flight, and area over the city where the balloons will be most visible is not determined or announced until just minutes before the the pilots leave their early morning briefing to fly.

Gates Open at the East Texas Regional Airport

**Kid's Land (activities), Arts and Craft Vendors, Food and Drinks, Carnival rides; Fri & Sat
nite concerts (country-western)**

8:45 Balloon Glow Fri & Sat...

8:15

Opening Ceremonies and Sport Balloon Glow

Special Shapes Balloon Glow