

# THE SCOOP

November 2012



Connecticut Lighter Than Air Society

Photo by Jack Perry, Summer 2012

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## CLAS Calendar

November 15—CLAS Meeting, 7:30 PM,  
Plainville Police Department

December 20—CLAS Holiday Party, 7:30 PM,  
Location TBD

February 9, 2013—CLAS Winter Dinner,  
Manor Inn, Plantsville

March 3, 2013—CLAS Safety Seminar

## About The Scoop

This newsletter is published by The Connecticut Lighter than Air Society for its members and interested parties. Portions of this publication may be reproduced of credit is given to the written and CLAS. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the organization or members of the organization. Submissions for the newsletter are welcome.

## Thanks to this month's newsletter contributors!

Libby Richardson      Garry Guertin  
Penny Christy      Ellen Dressel  
Jack Perry

Have something to share? Email  
[Libby\\_rich@yahoo.com](mailto:Libby_rich@yahoo.com). Thank you!

## Scoop Publishing Schedule Update

Beginning in 2013, The Scoop will be published quarterly. We encourage you to 'Like Us' on Facebook, keep an active email address on file with the club, and attend club meetings and events to stay up-to-date on club activities. News for The Scoop can be sent to the email address above for publication.

Thank you.

## **CLAS Photo Contest**

The CLAS Photo Contest was held on October 18, 2012. This year's winners include:

- 1st Place – Al Theodore – Two tickets to the 2013 CLAS Winter Dinner
- 2nd Place – Libby Richardson – One ticket to the 2013 CLAS Safety Seminar
- 3rd Place – Libby Richardson – One 2013 CLAS Membership

Calendars can be purchased at the November 15<sup>th</sup> CLAS meeting or by contacting Garry Guertin.



**3rd place photo by Libby Richardson**



**1st place photo by Al Theodore**



**2nd place photo by Libby Richardson**

## **Injured Passenger Testifies Against Pilot of Balloon**

Thomas Hurd was an active guy in his late 60s when he attended the 2009 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. But testifying Friday in a civil suit against the pilot of the balloon in which he was a passenger and the Balloon Fiesta organization, the 72-year-old had to alternate standing and sitting – each for no more than 20 minutes- because of injuries from a fall when the balloon dropped below the 75-foot height requirement and hit a vendor tent.

As the balloon neared the tent at about 15 feet during the competitive Hold ‘Em event, Hurd was holding onto a bolster with both hands, but he let go of one to turn and tell pilot Timmerly Eklund, “We need to go up,” he testified in state District Court in Albuquerque. The balloon began to ascend when the gondola bumped against the tent’s steel support and Hurd tumbled down. He broke his back, fractured his pelvis and broke his heel. He spent two months at the University of New Mexico Hospital, half of it in a coma from an adverse reaction to a prescription drug, before returning home to Florida. Since then, he has undergone multiple surgeries, including a hip replacement.

Hurd and his wife, Carolyn, had attended previous fiestas. In 2009, they volunteered to be crew members. Eklund gave Carolyn Hurd a balloon flight two days before the accident, which she said she had thoroughly enjoyed, despite a somewhat bumpy landing. Hurd testified that he had indeed signed a waiver of liability presented by Eklund’s crew chief and partner, Gary Smith, but he said he was given a clipboard in the early morning darkness and had no real opportunity to peruse it. Smith testified earlier in the week that Hurd had as much time as he wanted. Hurd acknowledged that he could have said “no” to signing and to the flight itself, which wasn’t something he’d particularly hankered after, but he didn’t.

Eklund’s attorney Ned Shepherd asked Hurd in cross-examination if he was under any obligation to take the flight. “No,” Hurd responded. “If she asked, ‘Do you want to go?’ I’d have said ‘no.’” Hurd also agreed he should have known what it was before signing.

Defense documents in the case note the Balloon Fiesta is “unquestionably the largest ballooning event in the world,” important to the economy of the city and the state, and Hurd’s accident was the most significant accident at Balloon Fiesta field during the 20-year period preceding it. District Judge Nan Nash made a ruling that permitted the case to go to the jury despite the waiver. Ruling in October 2011, Nash found the waiver valid with regard to negligence of the pilot, but unenforceable under New Mexico law if the jury finds reckless conduct – something Eklund expressly denies.

The plaintiffs allege the fiesta was negligent in going forward with the competition on the day of the event because of winds, for failing to establish adequate pilot qualifications, by not taking steps to prevent low flying and by having the tent placed too close to the competition area.

The Balloon Fiesta counters that the low rate of serious accidents at the balloon field show that it has taken the needed precautions to protect balloonists, passengers and spectators, and that the accident involving Hurd was “an outlier.” Eklund has said she does not believe any conduct by the fiesta has a role in the accident.



Like us at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Connecticut-Lighter-Than-Air-Society/193563443995591>

## Updates and Announcements

### Congratulations to Beverly Theodore who had two photos printed in *Ballooning*.

This magazine is for the BFA, under parting shots, Sept./Oct. issue.

### Liberty Balloon School will be conducting the Private & Commercial Pilot Ground School in Bethlehem, CT on December 1-2, 2012

New! After recent consultations with IMC and the Schantz Agency we can now offer safety seminar credit for attending either day of our Private Pilot class. We offer this to any certified pilot, alumni or not, at the \$50 alumni rate. You may attend both days for that one total fee or only one. Your choice.

If you know of a prospective student balloon pilot who needs this training to pursue their flying goal we would appreciate you passing this information on to them. If you are an Alumnus of a previous Liberty Balloon School class we invite you to come back as a refresher course, and our alumni are always welcome for only a \$50 registration fee.

More details available at our web site: [www.libertyballoonschool.com](http://www.libertyballoonschool.com) or call us at 845 831 6917 with your questions. We hope to see you there.

Bill Hughes

### **CONNECTICUT LIGHTER THAN AIR SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM**

The Connecticut Lighter Than Air Society is a club for anyone interested in learning about, participating in, and improving the sport of ballooning. Pilots, crew, and enthusiasts alike are welcome and ALL can contribute to the safety, enjoyment and education of the sport. Meetings are scheduled monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month at the Plainville Police Department, 19 Neal Court, Plainville, at 7:30 PM. For more information, contact any of the officers listed in this newsletter.

**CLAS DUES** \$20 include membership privileges

Extra voting family member add \$5

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**CLAS Membership Info:**

Single (\$20)\_\_\_ Family (\$20)\_\_\_ Extra Vote (\$5) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewing \_\_\_\_\_

Crew \_\_\_\_\_ Student Pilot \_\_\_\_\_ Private Pilot \_\_\_\_\_ Commercial Pilot \_\_\_\_\_ N# \_\_\_\_\_

BFA # \_\_\_\_\_ BFA CAAP Level \_\_\_\_\_ BFA PAAP Level \_\_\_\_\_

FAA Wings Level Completed \_\_\_\_\_

Pilot Certificate # \_\_\_\_\_ Type(s) of Certificate(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to CLAS and mail to: CLAS, PO Box 53, Southbury, CT 06488-0053**