Big Easy Wing

Volume 10-Issue 7 July 3, 2026

Unit Leader—Bill Triay

Happy 4th of July

It looks like we have finally sold our Stuka the broker is preparing the paperwork, and CAF Headquarters has okayed the price. Harvey handled all the contacts with the broker and the buyer. Thanks Harvey! Maybe with the extra room in the hanger we can get another full-time renter, I am working on getting us a Baron to hangar.

We are preparing for our next event after a successful Father's Day celebration where we hosted the British car club and gave five rides. Thanks to all the members and wives who came out to help at this event. The food prepared was a real treat. We may also have acquired a new member after we give him his ride on July 11 at Slidell airport. Unfortunately, he was one of the last two rides that we couldn't complete due to the Father's Day afternoon weather.

Our next event will be **Flight of the Flag Day** at Slidell Airport on July 11. I have verbal commitments for two more Stearman to come to our event and CAF Hammond is sending over their helicopter and will be giving rides. Slidell Airport will be giving us a tent as well as tables and chairs and they are very excited about hosting us. I have given flyers to numerous fire stations in Slidell as well as the police department. Shirley has reached out to several organizations and Pat Quikley has been instrumental in getting the civil air patrol (CAP) and EAA on board. CAP have been asked to participate in the event with their color guard and with flag folding demonstrations. Some of the EAA members are already looking forward to taking a ride in our Stearman. A food truck has been ordered by Slidell Airport so no one should go hungry. If you know anyone with a flag that wants it to be flown, bring them out to the airport on July 11. The Slidell newspaper has agreed to run an ad for us to advertise flag day.

If anyone needs flyers or posters advertising our flag Day at Slidell Airport July 11 call me and I will print some for you. We need to get the word out to make this a successful event. Please see Shirley's tentative schedule of events on the event page.

Our next general meeting will take place on August 8 with a board meeting starting at 8:30. If you have any topic that we need to address, please email with your thoughts and ideas. We would like to set our calendar up with upcoming events. Hope to see you there!

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July 11
Flight of the Flag
Slidell – 9:30 am
August 8 BD Meeting
Membership Meeting
10 am

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

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New Orleans, LA 70126
Next to FAA tower

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Crtl Click on icon

Assistant Operation Officer - Jared Spencer

Hello Stearman Fans!

Father's Day weekend brought another great day of Stearman rides at the Big Easy Wing hangar, even if the weather kept us guessing. With weather coming the winds constantly shifted, and we ended up changing runways three times during the event. Even so, we managed to get five rides in, and all of our passengers seemed to have a great time.

One thing I enjoy about flying rides out of Lakefront is seeing what each passenger is interested in. Heading south from the airport, some people can't take their eyes off the New Orleans skyline off the right wing, while others are drawn to the marshes and waterways stretching off to the left. It usually doesn't take long to figure out which one has their attention, and from there I can adjust the flight a little to give them more of what they came to see.

We got five rides completed before weather finally caught up with us. Calling it a day wasn't an easy decision with people still waiting for their turn, but it ended up being the right one. About ten minutes later the rain came through hard enough that there was no doubt we had made the correct call. The two passengers whose rides were canceled won't have to wait long, though—they're already set to fly at our next event in Slidell on July 11, with Kris at the controls.

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Karl Shearer- Assistant Safety Officer

Happy Birthday, USA!

Are you cooking out this month? Maybe cooking in? In both cases, fire safety becomes more important. In fact, it becomes paramount.

Fighting an incipient fire, or a small fire in its early stage can prevent serious injury, damage and huge financial loss. Portable, handheld extinguishers are an excellent idea in your indoor or outdoor kitchen. What do you really know about them?
Fire needs heat, oxygen, fuel and a chemical chain reaction to continue burning. This concept is known as the fire tetrahedron. Eliminate one part and the fire goes out.
Extinguishers are classified by their application. Here's an easy way to remember them:

Class A are for wood, paper, cloth and other solid materials. The fire leaves Ashes.
Class B is for grease, oil, gases and flammable liquids. Barrels, Bottles, and it Boils.
Class C are electrical fire extinguishers. Circuits, Conduits and Current. Pull the plug, too.
Class D is for burning metal, like magnesium. If you ever saw a magnesium fire, you would say "Darn, that's hot." Or something like that. Class D extinguishers are not very common.

ABC extinguishers work on everything. But the chemical powder they use is hard on electrical equipment. It is corrosive. It is difficult to clean up. If you have a small (or large) dry chemical extinguisher, pick it up every month, invert it and shake it. The powder tends to settle and gets caked. It may not work when needed. Not good.
Class BC CO2 extinguishers displace oxygen and extinguish flames. They leave no corrosive residue. They can also extinguish the life of anyone trapped in a confined space. Do not use them inside without adequate ventilation.
Class B Foam extinguishers are excellent for fuel fires. They create a foam barrier between the fuel and the air. They cool the fuel and prevent re-flashing if the foam barrier stays intact.

Recently, I added a tool to my fire suppression inventory in the kitchen: A fire blanket has no moving parts, it deploys amazingly fast and it will put out that grease fire on your stove in no time flat. And clean-up is not like dry chemicals. Bonus: Not expensive! Get one. Hang it inside your pantry door. Thank me later.
If you need to use a handheld, Pull the pin, aim at the base of the fire, Squeeze the trigger and sweep back and forth. Just remember P A S S. More good fire stuff here: nfpa.org

Enjoy your 4th and let's be careful out there and see on the 11th of July.

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Executive Officer – Harvey Burns

Hello CAF BEW,

The Stuka Aircraft Update - Great News! the sale has been approved by the CAF. The broker has been notified and the process has started. Jim Lache of the CAF will be handling the sale at that level. See you all soon!

Educational Officer -Roger Jeffrey

Good day, BEW!

Saturday June 20th, we had a Father's Day weekend visit from the British Motoring Club New Orleans members. This year there was a threat from the weather, so the turnout was much less that previous years (only 6 British cars). Shirley Colomb presented each driver with a flag commemorating America's 250th Birthday.

Two members of the British Motoring Club purchased rides that day, but one was cancelled due to the rain that moved in around 2:00pm. Jared managed to get in five flights that day. There was a delicious variety of lunch, including hot dogs, pulled pork, potato salad and baked beans.
We have two Aviation Merit Badge classes scheduled for July… the 18th and the 25th.
See you at the next meeting!

Andrew Doran's 1953 Jaguar XK120

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Jared Spencer - Last Month Madison Show

The club's Stearman had a busy weekend recently as we headed to Mississippi for Airport Day at Bruce Campbell Field (KMBO). The trip nearly didn't happen, as a stretch of bad weather settled over southern Louisiana shortly after departure. Fortunately, I was able to get out of Lakefront Airport (KNEW) on Friday before conditions deteriorated and remained poor for the next two days. Upon arrival, the members of the Commemorative Air Force Mississippi Wing proved to be outstanding hosts. Their large hangar provided a great home base for the weekend and was filled with interesting aircraft, including an L-5 Sentinel, an O-2 Skymaster, and a PT-19. Their hospitality and willingness to help made the entire event enjoyable from the moment we arrived.

Saturday brought excellent conditions for flying. High overcast skies kept temperatures comfortable and provided beautiful lighting that made the landscape below look especially vivid. Throughout the day we gave biplane rides alongside a Bell 47 helicopter from Hammond and a T-6 Texan, both of which were also carrying eager passengers. The airport's location next to the reservoir made for a particularly scenic route. Many flights followed the shoreline past the yacht club, over the marshy inlets, and along the tree-lined water's edge. On several occasions we circled pontoon boats enjoying the day on the lake, exchanging waves with the people below. Back on the ground, Dom kept everything running smoothly. He handled passengers, collected ride fees, and had the next rider ready to go every time I taxied back to our grass parking spot. Thanks to his efforts, we were able to keep the rides moving efficiently and completed nine flights before afternoon rain arrived around 3:00 p.m. The Mississippi Wing once again came to the rescue by making hangar space available so the Stearman could be protected from the weather. It was a successful and rewarding event making new connections with fellow aviation enthusiasts but also introducing the exhilarating and historic experience of open cockpit biplane flying to a few young passengers having their first flight in a small plane. My family was also able to attend and enjoy the event, but the constant stream of eager passengers hosted by Dom meant they mostly had to do so without me. However, I was proud to give them a wave and see their smiles every time I pulled in for a passenger swap.

The weather improved enough for the trip home on Sunday. I stopped in Picayune to pick up Dom since I needed an extra hand putting the airplane away once we returned, but it also provided a good excuse to give him a ride in the Stearman. We spent part of the flight following the winding Pearl River before climbing higher over Slidell and continuing to New Orleans. The members of the Mississippi Wing gave and warm reception and hosted a great event. They were genuinely grateful that we attended and extended an invitation for us to return for their next event in September.

Events– Shirley Colomb

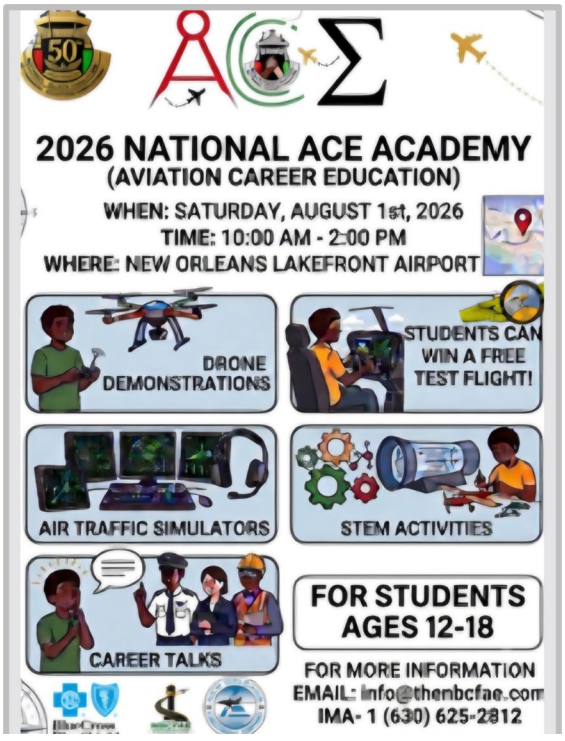
Hello Ms. Shirley Calomb,

How are you? It was a pleasure speaking with you and I so appreciate your willingness to partner with National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees (NBCFAE) on the Aviation Career Education (ACE) Camp on August 1, 2026.

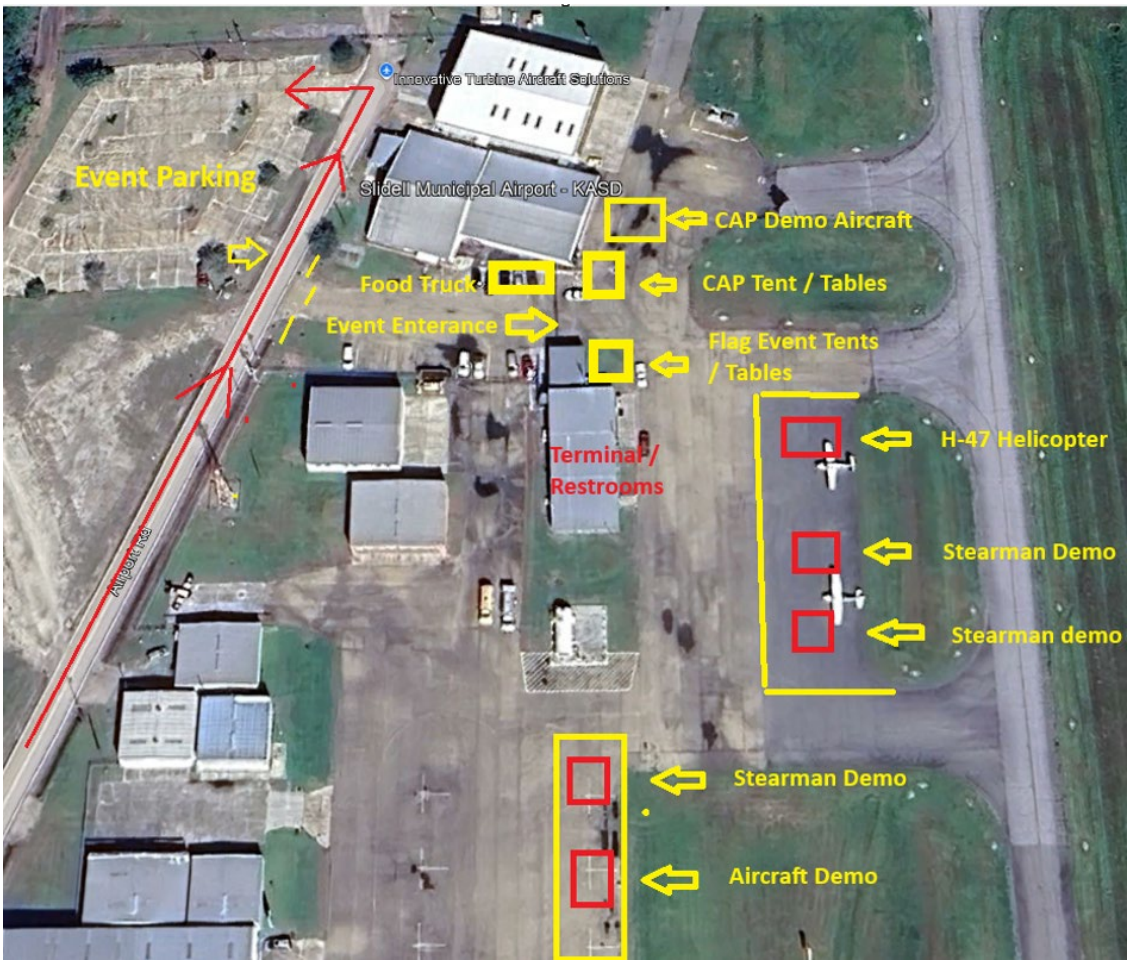
As we discussed, we are hosting an ACE Camp so I am attaching the flyer and forms for your information and you can share with prospective student participants. Our plan is to start the camp at 10am and have students over at your Hangar by 11am divided in groups of 7 students (by age) as you suggested. We are anticipating on hosting up to 30 students.

We will be hosting our National Training Conference as well so I will share information on that as well.

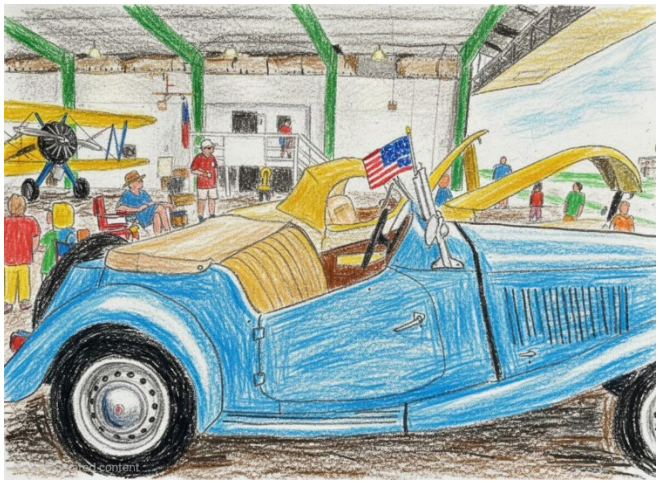
Please advise if you need additional information from me



Slidell Airport- July 11- Flight of the Flag
Airport Diagram



Father's Day Photos



Plane Impressions—Kris Caldwell

Kubíček BB34Z + K17 Basket

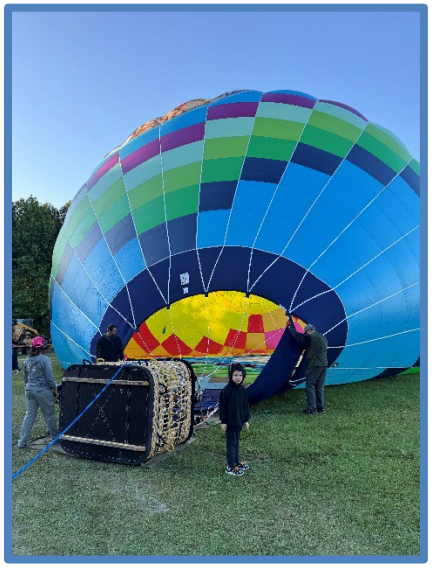
First Impressions: Although this twin-engine afterburning aircraft is a bit different than aircraft I've been privileged to fly, it certainly has some advantages over supersonic fighters. Not knowing what to expect … other than a unique experience … my first balloon flight gave me new admiration for the science behind ballooning, as well as a sincere appreciation for "aeronauts" (olde term for "balloonists"). Floating is distinct from powered flight and even from soaring flight. It is an ethereal way to experience the beauty of silent flight (except for the occasional sound of burners). I've already been dreaming about my next balloon flight.

History: For thousands of years, mankind looked toward the skies, contemplating how to make human flight feasible. In 1783 France's Montgolfier brothers' ornately designed hot air balloon made the first recorded successful manned flight. However, just like the first primate "test pilots" to go to space, the first balloon occupants were a sheep, a duck and a chicken. After a successful landing, those brave farm animals had satisfactorily proved that ground-dwelling creatures could survive in the "upper air".

Originally, ballooning was a high-society novelty; a form of elite entertainment. In 1794, the newly formed French Aerostatic Corps adapted it for warfare, using it mainly for real-time battlefield intelligence on troop movements during the Battle of Fleurus. In 1797, André-Jacques Garnerin (an aeronaut) made the first parachute jump from a balloon. Proving himself far braver than even the sheep, duck and chicken, Garnerin's parachute was more akin to a folding umbrella with a suspended basket than a modern parachute.

Today, ballooning is almost entirely about the joy of the journey and soaking in stunning, awe-inspiring views. Balloon festivals are especially popular, not only for the scenic flights, but also for spectators to enjoy the beauty of the balloons themselves, which float gracefully like giant Chinese lanterns in the sky.

All that said, it is not a solo sport; it requires a lot of effort from the pilot and ground crew alike. A lot of preflight preparation is necessary to ensure safety and determine direction of flight. The work is worth it and, once untethered, you become "one with the wind". The balloonist's single influence is to locate different wind by changing altitude.



Mark Meyer, owner of "Balloons Over America", is a retired U.S. Army aviator with 37 years of service and thousands of rotary and fixed wing hours. Almost as impressive, he has been ballooning over 30 years and has more than 1,300 balloon hours. He and his wife Missy, the ground team boss, headquarter their business in Vass, NC, where their passengers enjoy flights over scenic lakes and the green countryside of the Piedmont region in their Kubíček (pronounced Ku-BEE-check) balloon they christened "*Horizon*". Besides their normal category "*Horizon*" balloon, they also own a "special shape" balloon shaped like a Volkswagen bus! Because the majority of "special shape" balloons are certified Experimental by the FAA, these balloons cannot be used to sell rides. Mark and Missy use their VW bus/balloon for their own enjoyment and of course, the delight of everyone looking up!

Hot Air Balloon Components: The main component of a hot air balloon is the envelope. It is considered the airframe and appropriately has the "N" number on it. Kubíček envelopes' nomenclature is based on the size of the envelope, and the BB34Z means that the air volume capacity correlates to 3,400 m^3 (120,000 ft^3). This particular envelope is a patented ripstop polyester blend fabric, and the BB34Z uses 24 gores (a vertical section panel) sewn together with vertical and horizontal load tapes. The skirt at the bottom of the balloon is Nomex (fire-resistant), as it is closest to the burners.

Mark and Missy's "*Horizon*" uses a K17 basket that is suspended beneath the envelope by 12 Kevlon cables attached to the basket through four leather sheaths. The basket also uses four framelike poles to suspend the burners. The K17 basket can accommodate up to four passengers besides the pilot. It is constructed primarily of rattan with some synthetic poly strands in a wicker weave. Besides its strength and light weight, wicker serves an equally important purpose in ballooning. Because propane is heavier than air, a leak in the system would result in the propane sinking to the bottom of the basket. The wicker construction allows any leaked propane to escape safely rather than dangerously accumulating inside. While many balloon baskets do not have a door (requiring a bit of dexterity to climb in and out), the K17basket conveniently has one that is secured by a large stainless steel "sabre" pin.

The "powerplant" of a hot air balloon differs from other aircraft categories in that it directly generates the lift, which subsequently is captured by the airframe. Horizon uses two *Ignus Plus* propane burners with a gyro centering mounting option that always returns the burners to a centered position; mitigating the chances of scorching things that should not be scorched. Each burner has its own dedicated 19-gallon propane tank and passes liquid propane through a vaporizing coil prior to combustion. Each burner also has a secondary "whisper burner" (aka "liquid fire" or "cow burner") which is less efficient but quieter when you pass over a noise sensitive area (like a cow pasture).

Preflight: Before each flight, passengers and crew meet in a central location to receive a preflight briefing from Mark that includes expectations and safety considerations. The pilot uses multiple tools and apps to determine both the current and forecast weather, winds, TFRs, and NOTAMS. While most aircraft pilots aren't overly concerned with light winds, to balloonists, every knot (at every altitude) and especially its direction is critical. The pilot will also release a small helium-filled party balloon (called a "PiBal" for "Pilot's Balloon") and, while holding a compass, watches it until it is out of sight. As the balloon ascends, it will change direction as it encounters different winds. This visually collected data will help the pilot make some adjustments to the direction of travel by changing altitude to "capture" a favorable wind. Interestingly, it is the wind at the balloon's altitude (which acts as a sail) that matters most; not the wind at the pilot's altitude in the basket.

Setup: Moving the 220 lb. basket requires at least two strong people, though more are always welcome. You'll want to position it in an open area at least 100-foot long to allow for the entire length of the envelope (64 feet), plus another 20 feet for the crown line (which a crewmember holds while the envelope is inflated). After laying the envelope on the ground, attach it to the basket, then use a gas-powered fan to partially inflate and expand the envelope. The basket is anchored to a secure ground point, such as a vehicle's trailer hitch, before the gas valves are opened and the pilot ignites the burners. With a crewmember stabilizing the envelope (to keep it from swaying) by holding the crown line (at the top of the envelope), the pilot alternates hitting both throttles (burners), thereby shooting approximately 20 million BTUs of hot air into the envelope. The balloon will soon inflate and rise, and the pilot will then permit the passengers to board. It's important for the passengers to know that once they have stepped into the basket, they are not to step back out! Why? Because the sudden loss of weight can result in the balloon taking flight prematurely.

The basket starts getting light and rises from the ground as soon as lift becomes greater than weight. Once the pilot untethers the balloon, you become "one with the wind". It is fascinating to find that there is no wind sensation because you are floating with it. Only a change in wind will give a brief "wind sensation", which is gone once the balloon assumes the new speed and direction.

Flight Characteristics: A good balloon pilot must understand "micro meteorology," as Mark describes the science. I thought my training as a glider pilot helped understand some of the finer points of weather, but ballooning elevates that knowledge to an even more detailed and minute level. Even when the local METAR reads 00000KT, there are likely small air movements at 100 feet above the surface. Hot air balloons have a lot of mass to move around. The air alone in "*Horizon's*" 120,000 ft³ envelope weighs 9,686 lbs. Such mass means a lot of momentum, and the addition of lift from the burners takes 7 to 10 seconds until a change in momentum *begins* to take place. It is important in a balloon (perhaps even more than in other types of aircraft) not to rely on "last second" reactions to make big corrections.

An experienced balloon pilot knows that passing over an open field and entering a forested area will generally cause some sink. Thus, with a preemptive 2 to 3-second shot of burners, the balloon will maintain altitude as the transition is made.

Landing: While picking an exact landing spot is not part of preflight planning, balloon pilots will engage in a thorough geographic area study long before the flight. Typically, satellite imagery helps determine the location of good landing areas, as well as areas to avoid (i.e., restricted areas, Class B airspace, etc.) The pilot can control where they fly (and subsequently land) by studying the forecasted winds and controlling the launch point. Choosing the actual landing spot requires understanding the "micro meteorology" of the final approach, the touchdown terrain, obstacles, and access to roads (for the chase vehicle). The only method for slowing down on final is to drag the basket through treetops and yes, that's ok! A go-around is always an option if something doesn't look right.

At the top of the envelope is a deflation valve, (also called a "parachute valve"), which is a means of releasing hot air out of the top in order to descend quicker than at a normal cooling rate of descent. This valve is how the pilot manages the "glideslope" (really more of a stair step approach) during the final descent for landing and how hot air is released once the balloon is on the ground. To prevent smaller passengers from being squished (in the event of a tip over), larger passengers are to go to the front of the basket (sheep to the front, chickens to the back).

The custom of a champagne toast following a successful balloon landing began in the 1780s to placate farmers, who, armed with pitchforks and unfamiliar with hot air balloons, might have been ready to protect their fields from what they perceived as a fire-breathing, flying beast. To appease the alarmed locals and avoid pitchfork-wielding confrontations, balloonists diplomatically began carrying bottles of champagne to offer as a de-escalatory gesture of goodwill, turning potential conflicts into cork-popping celebrations.

Wrap-Up: Taking flight in a hot air balloon, both elevates the spirit and humbles the soul. It is as much about artistry and beauty as it is about science and physics. It should be on everyone's "bucket list"- especially those of us who love to fly. It is guaranteed to be an experience you will never forget; one everyone living prior to 1783 could only dream was possible! Reinvigorate your inner child and take a balloon ride whenever the opportunity a-rises!