



Our Old Bookcase, June 15, 2017 Hot Air Balloon Ascension at Ft. Recovery, 1941

Photo caption: The Hot Air Balloon Ascension by famous Col. Frank L. Hiestand was the highlight of the Jubilee at Fort Recovery, July 10-14, 1941.

OUR OLD BOOK CASE

By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society

Since Fort Recovery is hosting its annual “Fort Recovery Jubilee,” on June 14 – 18, 2017, I thought it would be a good time to share this 1941 Poster with you. If you are old enough to remember the Hot Air Balloon ascensions at Fort Recovery, at 7:00 P.M., each evening, the week of the Jubilee, then you just might be a Septuagenarian. Those were good times for neighbors of all ages.

As soon as I saw this poster about the Fort Recovery Balloon Ascension, I knew it held a great story. Col. Frank L. Hiestand was the Hot Air Balloon Specialist. In quest of more information about Col. Hiestand, I found advertisements in “Billboard” magazine. There were advertisements about his Balloon Ascensions and Parachute Jumps in Greencastle, Indiana on September 23, 1950 and April 26 1952. An advertisement in May 19-20, 1951 “Billboard” Magazine, told of his “Free Act” of the Balloon Ascension and Parachute Jump at Ramona Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The poster above, states “*Balloon Ascensions and Parachute Drop, Fort Recovery, Ohio, July 10-14, by Col. Frank L. Hiestand.*” With further research, I learned that the year was 1941. That was one week before I was born. I wonder if my parents, Luther and Marie Brumm watched the balloon ascension from their front lawn. When I grew up at Fort Recovery, the week of the Jubilee, we had to be finished with dinner (which we called supper), in order to be ready at 7:00 P.M. to watch the Balloon Ascensions from our front lawn. My husband Alvin told that his family lived on the Ohio-Indiana State Line, north of Fort Recovery, and they could see the Balloon Ascension from their farm.

When Col. Hiestand was riding his air-borne vehicle, he had little control over that flying vehicle. His balloon was filled with hot air before he left the ground; when the balloon was filled with hot air, the ropes tying the balloon down, were released. He coasted with the wind, until he saw the balloon was starting to drop, and he jumped off of his bar seat, to parachute to the ground. Local citizens were following, in their cars or trucks, the direction of Col Hiestand, and the balloon, to pick them up to return to town.

Today’s Hot Air Balloons have their gas containers beneath the balloon, while people stand in the basket below the balloon. The pilot can control the rise or drop of the balloon. Albuquerque, New Mexico is known for their annual Hot Air Balloon Festival; see their website. This is one exciting Festival!

The most exiting Hot Air Balloon ride which I ever had, was with my brother Noel’s wife Karen, when we were in Kenya, Africa. We had to leave the hotel and board the bus, at 3:30 A.M., to reach the wilderness where a dozen Hot Air Balloons were being filled. The sky was black and the stars were so vivid, while the glowing fires were red hot, blowing up the balloons. We were with a half dozen others, standing in the basket, when we took flight with the dozen balloons at dawn. The pilot would send a charge of roaring gas, and the balloon would lift, and then we would coast a few miles in the silence, above the wild animals in the Great Migration. When we drifted closer to the animals and could almost reach out and touch the giraffes, the pilot fired up the balloon again. At the roar of the gas, the wild animals scattered across the Serengeti, through the Great Rift Valley of Tanzania and Kenya. Seeing the other Hot Air Balloons and their passengers in the baskets drifting above the earth as the sun rose, was a scene I have never forgotten. At noon we landed, and enjoyed a feast of a picnic on the Serengeti.

When Alvin and I were with Jim and Mary Jutte, at the Antique Tractor Show at Penfield, Illinois, Hot Air Balloon rides were advertised. Mary said she would like to ride up with the Balloon, so we did. Alvin and Jim were looking at old tractors and missed all of the fun! As if riding an old tractor is fun!

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