

By Mary Anne Donovan

“One thing in this world unites us: ballooning. It brings us together into a world about which other people can only dream. Not only do we glide gracefully through the sky and over land, we see the beauty of intricate inner worlds: their secrets and their mysteries.”

This is the opening text of the mission statement for *Balloon EZINE* - the first international ezine devoted to our favorite sport: hot air ballooning! The mission of *Balloon* is to celebrate every aspect of ballooning, from pleasure to competition, on an international basis.

Published monthly, each issue features a major, cover story about a current issue in ballooning or story of interest; a listing of upcoming ballooning events from all over the world, complete with links to related websites; a news section with notes of interest to all balloonists; and a column that captures humorous items.

The goal of this digital gem is to propel you up and into this magical world, as well as allow you to be in daily communication with balloonists from around the globe. *Balloon* also welcomes all contributions having to do with ballooning in any corner of the globe.

Balloon EZINE was born at the 13th European Balloon Championships of Hot Air Ballooning, held in Vilnius, Lithuania in August, 2003. According to publisher owner Cornelis van Helden: “More important, it was born out of a real and dire need for competitors, officials, spotters, manufacturers and all interested parties to be able to communicate on a daily basis with balloonists around the world. Indeed, after an exhaustive search, we discovered that no such communication device existed: there were no email communities, no worldwide e-zines, no chat rooms: nothing that enabled communication at a much-needed worldwide scope. Enter *Balloon EZINE!*”

A look at the cover stories for recent issues will give you a flavor for ballooning in cyber space. From the May 3rd issue of *Balloon* where the lead story focused on cloud hopping and cluster ballooning:

“Imagine flying in France on an early morning flight, inches above a field of sunflowers, with your feet barely clearing the top of them, the dew in the air, and that clean freshness that you only sense after daybreak. Or how about using the anabatic/catabatic

Balloon Ezine takes global focus

Moves to subscription basis after one-year introductory period

winds to take you gracefully across a snow covered valley high in the Alps, where the sense of being at one with nature is only broken by rhythmic burner inputs.”

From April 5th, a story looking at observers versus loggers:

“Nowadays, one of the most pressing problems in the observers’ community is the future of observers. Are observers still needed? The answer to this question is important to competition directors, pilots, organizers, and observers.” This article goes on to look at the advantages and disadvantages of both as seen through the eyes of hot air balloon pilots and observers from around the world.

The March 3rd cover story examined the past and present of competition ballooning, including the origins of competing, types of competition, and the role of the pilot. “Building His Own Balloon in the Dining Room” was the title of the February 3rd cover story.

For all those who seek home-grown balloons, this article gave soup to nuts coverage, including why build your own balloon, selecting the supplies and buying the materials, designing the envelope, cutting the fabric, sewing the envelope, building the basket, building the burner, and getting somebody to make or buying the cylinders.

The overall goal of *Balloon EZINE* is to deliver informative, up-to-the-minute, global information and current events that affect our world of ballooning.

A 12-month subscriptions for *Balloon Ezine* is \$23.95 with the first, 13th issue for free. To subscribe, visit <http://www.balloon-e-zine.com/subscribe/>

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