

Paul E. (Ed) Yost

Ed Yost Inducted into The U. S. Ballooning Hall of Fame Sunday August 1, 2004 At The National Balloon Museum Indianola, Iowa



Ed in the 1950's



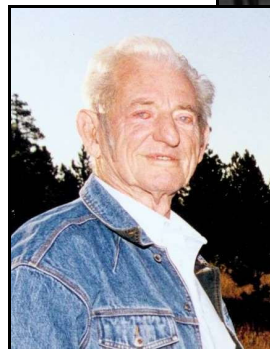
Ed preparing to launch the Silver Fox in his 1976 attempt to cross the Atlantic

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First flight of the modern hot-air balloon October 22, 1960

**An Open House Honoring
PAUL E. (ED) YOST
FATHER OF THE
MODERN HOT-AIR BALLOON**



Ed at Stratobowl in 2003

**Ed spoke about his
experience in developing
the modern hot-air balloon
and his ballooning adventures.**

ABOUT PAUL E. (ED) YOST

Paul Edward Yost was born in Bristow, Iowa, about 130 miles from Indianola in 1919. In 1934, when he was 15 years old, Ed and his father set out to watch the first Explorer flight from the Stratobowl in Rapid City, South Dakota. He has been interested in balloons a long time.

Yost was employed by the US Army Air Corps from 1943 to 1945; he flew airplanes in Alaska from 1946 to 1948.

Ed Yost is best known as the inventor of the modern hot-air balloon, however in his long and fruitful life he has done many things using and creating balloons. In 1949 Yost started work as Senior Engineer and Tracking Pilot for the High Altitude Research Division of General Mills in Minneapolis, where he worked on many scientific high altitude balloon projects. In 1952 they sent a 3.2 million cubic foot balloon, carrying US Navy instruments, into the stratosphere to study cosmic rays, as part of a scientific project that spanned many years. (Compare that to the first Yost hot-air balloon which had a volume of 30,000 cubic feet!)

If it weren't for Ed Yost, we wouldn't have hot air balloons to fly, and we wouldn't be flying them in Indianola, Iowa.

Yost and 3 others from General Mills formed Raven Industries in 1956. They received a contract from the Office of Naval Research to create an aircraft that would carry one man and enough fuel to fly for three hours, carry a load to 10,000 feet, and be reusable. Thus the modern hot air balloon was born.

In 1960 Yost made the first free flight of a modern hot-air balloon. In 1962 the first balloon was sold to an individual, and the sport of ballooning was created. In late 1969, Yost started looking for a site to hold a national championship. He wanted a central US location, plenty of space for inflations and landings, in an area of friendly folks. Yost's neighbors were graduates of Simpson College... they thought it would be a good place. Yost and Don Kersten from Fort Dodge, Iowa, who was president of the Balloon Federation of America, talked to the president of Simpson College who thought it was a great idea. And that's how balloons first came to Indianola.

During the cold war, Yost invented a small, lightweight, disposable, cheap balloon that was used to send US leaflets behind the Iron Curtain. He also developed a balloon that carried a camera to take photographs from hostile territory.

For the Vietnam conflict, Yost developed and constructed thousands of fast deploying parachutes to deliver supplies to the troops.

In 1963, Ed Yost made the first hot-air balloon crossing of the English Channel, flying from Rye, Sussex, England to Gravelines Nord, France, in 3 hours and 17 minutes in a 56,000 cubic foot Raven balloon named "Channel Champ". This flight gained worldwide attention and generated a great deal of interest in this new sport of hot-air ballooning.

On October 6, 1976, with no fanfare and little media attendance, Ed Yost departed Milbridge, Maine to attempt a crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in a helium balloon named *Silver Fox* that he designed and built. On October 10, after a flight of 107 hours and 37 minutes, covering a distance of 2,740 miles, the balloon touched down in the Atlantic 200 miles east of the Azores and only 700 miles from the coast of Portugal. In that flight Yost set distance and duration records that still stand. In 1978 Ben Abruzzo, Maxie Anderson, and Larry Newman made the first complete crossing of the Atlantic in a balloon designed, built, and launched by Ed Yost.

In 1979, Dr. Thomas Heinsheimer almost single-handedly revived the first and greatest of balloon races, the Gordon Bennett Balloon Race. When the first postwar contest was held in Long Beach, California on May 26, 1979, three of the 18 gas balloons were designed by Ed Yost and built by his newly-formed gas balloon manufacturing company, Skypower. By 1985 Skypower had built and sold 16 balloons, in the American-driven re-birth of gas balloon competition.

Ed Yost holds 21 patents on balloons and lighter-than-air mechanisms, and has received many awards from organizations such as the Balloon Federation of America, The Federation Aeronautique Internationale, the Wingfoot Lighter Than-Air Society, the National Aeronautic Association and the Aero Club of New England.

This biographical statement prepared by Christine Kalakuka 8/11/2004