

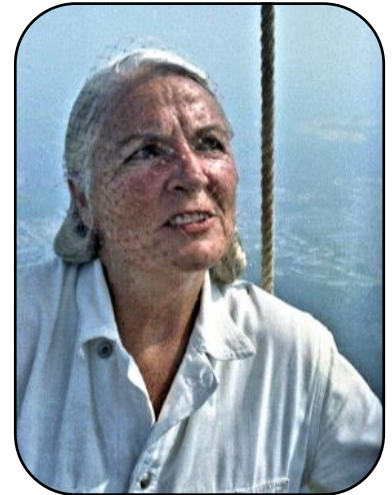
Constance C. (Connie) Wolf
Inducted into the U. S. Ballooning Hall of Fame on July 26, 2015
By the Balloon Federation of America at the
National Balloon Museum, Indianola, Iowa



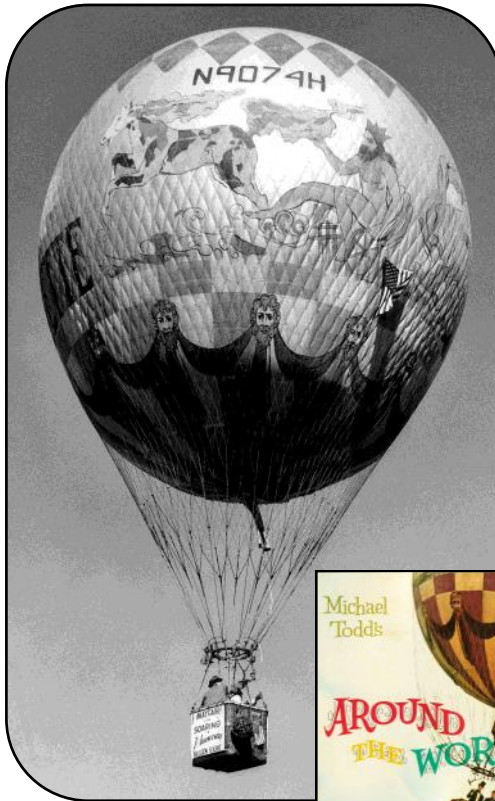
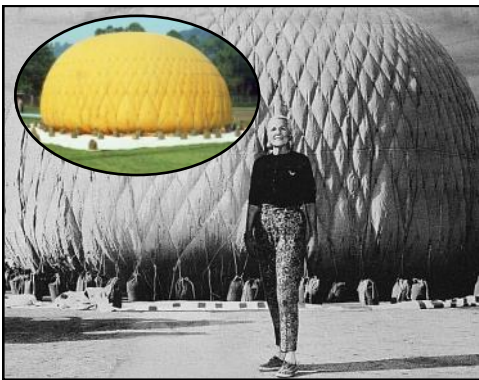
“Blue Bell” balloon that flew only once.



Constance Wolf at the controls of a balloon



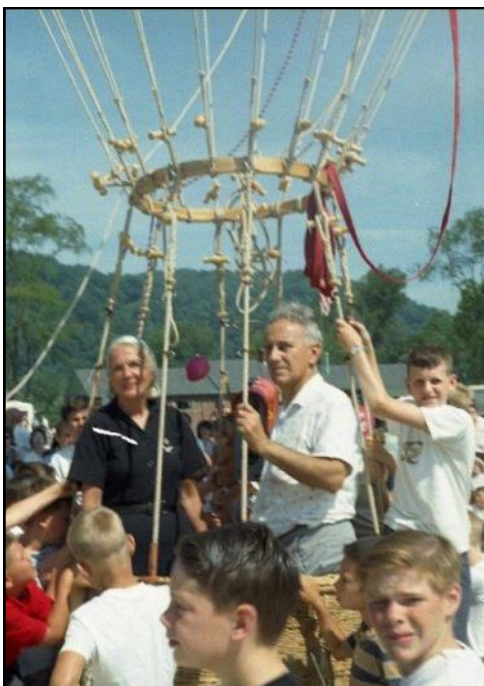
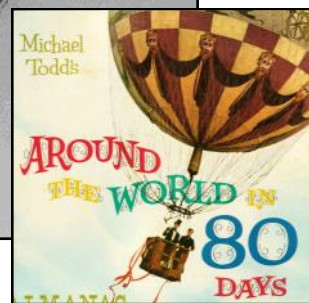
“Connie in 1965



The balloon “La Coquette” (above) owned by the balloon club Connie belonged to was used by Tony Fairbanks in the filming of the film, “Around the World in 80 Days”.



Liberty Bell shaped balloon
Connie flew in 1976



Connie and Tony Fairbanks in the basket of “La Coquette”

Constance C. (Connie) Wolf

July 16, 1905 - April 14, 1994

New Britain, Connecticut

Connie was born in Canada in 1905. She attended Toronto University. She was a theatrical agent until in 1931 when she met and married General Alfred (Abbey) Wolf. He taught her how to fly airplanes on their honeymoon and she fell in love with flying. Abbey had become a fixed wing aircraft pilot just 2 years before they were married. She fell in love with flying on their honeymoon. Her husband liked GOING somewhere with an airplane with wings and engines. After her first flight in a gas balloon while Alfred was stationed in Europe she immediately liked BEING somewhere in a silent balloon. Together they were significant figures in promoting general aviation in the United States. She maintained her airplane pilot's license for over half a century, and was still flying at age 85. However it was ballooning that she liked the most. *(Connie & Abbey at right and by her plane at left)*



Ballooning Career: In 1951 Connie fell in love with ballooning when she took her first ride over Zurich, Switzerland with Fred Forrer when her husband was stationed in Europe with the Air Force. The thrill of that ride inspired a life-long passion for Connie.

Very quickly Connie became active in gas ballooning and was a founding member of The Balloon Club of America (BCA) working with Tony Fairbanks, Jerry Burns, Don Piccard, Francis Shields, Pete Wood, and Eleanor Vadals. The club's first balloon flight was held in Brookhaven, Pennsylvania in November of 1952 when Don Piccard and Tony Fairbanks flew 4 hours to Hammonton, NJ. These balloons were part of a large supply of surplus material which Mr. Leigh's company had purchased from the Government at the end of WWII.



The balloon club flew from the Valley Forge Airport for many years until it was turned into a golf course. The club relocated to the Wings Field next to the Wolf Home "Wingover", in Blue Bell near Ambler, Pennsylvania which was the Wolf's landing strip. *(See picture of their home and airfield at left.)*

Someone once described Constance as "A fearless woman who was once reported to have "a boy's zest for physical activity and taking a chance." For over 50 years she and her husband Abbey enjoyed and shared a passion for aviation. Abbey was also one of the five founding members of Aircraft Pilot Association and held membership card number five. Connie once flew across the Atlantic Ocean in an airplane, but never realized her dream of flying a balloon across the Atlantic.

October 24, 1954 Connie had a close call with death when a passenger on a gas balloon piloted by Don Piccard crashed due to the rip panel opening when it shouldn't have. It seems the early BCA club members had failed to allow the non-stick glue to set for the required 3 days. Luckily they both received only minor injuries.

"It's a fabulous sensation knowing you're part of the wind," she said in a 1957 interview. "You can't feel any sensation at all in a basket. It's very quiet up there. No rude noises from Earth. You can hear children's laughter and cocks crowing."

On November 20, 1961, she climbed into the gondola of a hydrogen-filled balloon at Hamilton Field, Big Spring, Texas. For the next 40 hours and 18 minutes, she huddled in her dangling basket and shivered against the cold as the big yellow balloon with the Stars and Stripes on the side headed to Roswell, N.M., then to Oklahoma. At 4:45 p.m. the next day, after logging 1,500 miles and reaching an altitude of 13,597 feet, she touched down in east central Oklahoma establishing 15 world records for women balloonists.



In 1992, Connie decided to recognize the 300th anniversary of the founding of Philadelphia with a balloon flight. She contracted with Piccard Balloons to build a 75,000 cu. ft. hot air balloon. The balloon's fabric color was specified to be a dark sky blue. On opposite sides of this beautiful balloon would be twenty foot tall depictions of William Penn, the man who received a Land Grant from the King of England. The name of this tract of land became known as Pennsylvania or "Penns Woods". On January 9, 1982, the *William Penn* balloon was inflated, appropriately, at Penns Landing, Philadelphia. (See picture on page 1)

Abby and Connie Wolf's life-long love of aviation, adventure, and public service was the guiding inspiration for the establishment of the Wolf Aviation Fund. The Alfred L. and Constance Wolf Aviation Fund was established in 1986 "to support scientific research and educational programs in matters relating to the use of aircraft as a means of transportation". To promote ideas that make general aviation safer, less expensive, more fun and more useful, the Wolf Fund awards a \$10,000 annual prize. The Balloon Federation of America was awarded a partial WOLF Grant to support and grow the balloon camps. Their marvelous pioneering spirit, love of aviation, and concern for the flying rights of the individual will be preserved and reflected in the people and works supported by the Wolf Aviation Fund. Connie is shown at right flying a gas balloon and below flying a hot air balloon. Her smile says how happy she is flying balloons.



Michael Fairbanks, Connie Wolf & Joe Rihl in 1960

Timeline of Constance Wolf Ballooning Accomplishments, Honors and Awards

- 1951 - Connie's first balloon flight was done with Fred Forrer in Switzerland
- 1952 - Founding Member of Balloon Club of America along with Don Piccard, and others, in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. It was a club of ballooning enthusiasts who used surplus gas balloons and equipment from the end of World War II.
- 1952 - Participant in US National Gas Balloon Race
- 1952 - Connie became a founding member of the Balloon Club of America
- 1954 - Connie took epic flight with Don Piccard in Eastern Pennsylvania October 24. The balloon ruptured in flight, but they received only minor injuries in a rough landing
- 1955 - Connie served as a Technical Advisor for the film "Around the World in 80 Days"
- 1956 - First Solo flight: FAA B-License Certificate Number: 1360463 issued November 26, 1956
- 1956 - Connie flew her balloon, "La Coquette" over Paris and London to advertise the production of the film "Around the World in 80 Days".
- 1959 - Connie soared out of Philadelphia to duplicate the historic flight of Jean Pierre Blanchard, who made the first balloon flight in America in 1793
- 1960 - Connie had a Nixon-Lodge campaign balloon which Nixon once made a speech from her gondola while it was on the ground.
- 1961 - Established women's endurance record in a hydrogen filled balloon called "Yellow Wolf" (40 hours, 8 minutes from Big Springs, Texas). She held that record until 1995.
- 1962 - Received the Achievement Award from the Wingfoot Lighter Than Air Society for her 40 hour, 8 minute balloon flight of November 19-20, 1961, which set 15 world records.
- 1962 - Was the first woman to fly across the Swiss Alps by balloon on August 20th (Brissago to Lake Maggiore)
- 1962 - Was awarded the Montgolfier Diploma
- 1962 - Presented with Honorary Lifetime Membership in LTA Society.
- 1963 - Honorary Member Wings of ASMA, to honor distinguished woman in the field of aviation.
- 1968 - On January 9th she participated in a re-enactment of the Nation's First Air Voyage, in "La Coquette."
- 1976 - Connie flew a balloon she had made in the shape of the Liberty Bell from downtown Philadelphia.
- 1982 - Connie commissioned Piccard Balloons to build a hot air balloon which she flew in Philadelphia to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the founding of the city. (See picture on page 1.)
- 1987 - Flew the balloon "Liberty Bell" over Philadelphia (see picture on page 1.)

