



# **David Levin**

David Levin is the only balloon pilot to have won both the Hot Air and Gas Balloon World Championships and completed the "Triple Crown" of ballooning by winning the prestigious Coupe Aeronautique Gordon Bennett in 1992.

David Norman Levin was born on June 10, 1948, in Newark. His father, Martin, was a successful real estate developer. His mother, the former Jean Berman, was a homemaker. He passed away May 13, 2017 at the age of 68.

David grew up in South Orange, N.J., and took flying lessons before he passed his driving test, pedaling his bicycle to a nearby airport. After graduating from Columbia High School, he enrolled at Boston University, where he earned a

degree in business administration in 1971, a law degree in 1975 and a master's in tax law in 1976. He was a private investor living in Boulder, Colorado with his wife Roberta and their twins, Matthew and Rebecca.

In 1975, for a diversion from his law studies at Boston University, David Levin hopped aboard a hot-air balloon and took a little ride. "It was fun, but I had no great aspirations as a balloonist," he told The Christian Science Monitor in 1985. That would change. In the 10 years after stepping into a balloon basket for the first time, he became the first balloonist to soar over Pikes Peak in Colorado, reaching a height of more than 14,000 feet, and won the 1985 World Hot Air Balloon Championship in Battle Creek, Mich.

An avid sky diver, skier and hiker, he was less than enthusiastic about a legal career, so he offered a receptive ear when a childhood friend and ballooning enthusiast approached him with a proposition: Why not open a ballooning resort? His friend had a spot in mind, a former sheep ranch in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The Balloon Ranch opened a year later and Mr. Levin caught the fever. David started ballooning in 1976 as co-owner of The Balloon Ranch in Colorado. He now has almost 5,000 hours logged in balloons including more than 1,200 hours in gas balloons. David is the only balloon pilot to have won both the Hot Air and Gas Balloon World Championships and he completed the "triple crown" of ballooning by winning the prestigious Coupe Aeronautique Gordon Bennett in 1992. He has also won the U.S. National Championships in both Gas and Hot Air.



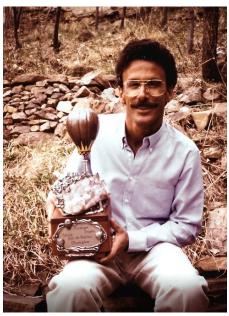
Mr. Levin in his balloon: BIG DOG. Photo Credit Roberta Levin

Other wins include the 1988 Trans-Australia Balloon Challenge, 1990 Canadian Open National Championship, 1994 Alpine Balloon Trophy in Austria and the 1996 America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race in Albuquerque. His last win was the 2000 America's Challenge with a flight of 1,998 miles, flying from Albuquerque to Gorham, Maine in 66 hours where he set a distance record for the national Gas Balloon Championship with his brother Alan. David retired from balloon competition after the World Air Games in Seville, Spain in 2001. Mr. Levin retired from competition and began directing many of the races in which he once flew.





The Levin Family



1985 World Hot Air Balloon Championship in Battle Creek, Mich.



Ignite Adaptive Sports

David served as Chairman of the BFA Gas Division and member of the Board of Directors of the BFA Hot Air Competition Division. Until 2015 he was alternate delegate to the CIA (FAI Balloon Commission). In 1992 he received the FAI Montgolfier Diploma for achievement in Gas Ballooning and again in 2010 for Major Contributions to the Sport. David received the BFA Shields-Trauger Memorial Award in 2009 for Outstanding Contributions to the BFA.

David served as U.S. National Championship Event Director from 2002 to 2008 and 2011. He directed the 2008 World Championship in Hofkirchen, Austria, the 2009 World Air Games in Mondovi, Italy and the 2012 World Championship in Battle Creek, Michigan. In addition to his work in the balloon world, David serves on the Boards of Ignite Adaptive Sports in Boulder, Colorado and the Boulder Jewish Community Center. In winter, David teaches adaptive skiing to people with various disabilities in the Ignite Program at Eldora Mountain Resort. David enjoys Skiing, Paragliding, Golf, Hiking and Scuba Diving. His favorite past times are ballooning and paragliding in the Alps with friends and spending time with his family.

## **EDUCATION:**

B.S. in Business Administration, Boston University, 1971 J.D. in Law, Boston University 1975

L.L.M. in Taxation, Boston University 1976

## **BALLOONING:**

Started ballooning in 1976 as co-owner of The Balloon Ranch in Colorado. (a full service resort featuring hot air ballooning)

Flight Experience: approx. 4,800 hours (1,100 in gas). 2,400 flights (62 in gas)

Attended all Gas and Hot Air Balloon World Championships since 1985.

Attended U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championships since 1978 – 2011

Attended sixteen Coupe Aeronautique Gordon Bennetts since 1985

#### AWARDS:

1992 F.A.I. Diplome Montgolfier for Gas Ballooning.

1996 C.I.A. Gold Sporting Badge with three diamonds.

2009 BFA Shields Trauger Award for service to the BFA

2010 F.A.I. Diplome Montgolfier for major contribution to the sport of ballooning.

#### **EVENTS WON:**

\*1985 World Hot Air Balloon Championship, Battle Creek, MI USA

1988 Trans-Australia Bicentennial Balloon Challenge

1989 U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship, Baton Rouge

1990 Canadian Open Championship (pre-Worlds) St. Jean sur Richelieu

\* 1992 World Gas Balloon Championship, Obertraun, Austria

\*\* 1992 Coupe Aeronautique Gordon Bennett, Stuttgart, Germany

1994 BP Alpine Balloon Trophy, Zell am See, Austria

1996 & 2000 America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race, Albuquerque, NM

1987, 1989 & 1993 U.S. National Gas Balloon Championship

\* Only competitor to win both Gas and Hot Air Balloon World Championship

\*\* Completed "triple crown" of ballooning with Gordon Bennett win.

# **NOTABLE FLIGHTS:**

1977 First Balloon over Pikes Peak (14.400 ft) Colorado

1995 Flight to 33,425 ft in standard Balloon Works AX-8

2000 Gas Flight of 1,998 miles. Albuquerque to Coast of Maine

#### **OFFICAL POSITIONS:**

2003 – 2008 Event Director, U.S. National Hot Air Balloon Championships

2003 Steward, European Hot Air Balloon Championship, Vilnius, Lithuania

2004 Deputy Director, Mol Cup (Pre-Europeans), Hungary Steward, World Hot Air Balloon Championship. Mildura, Australia

2005 Deputy Director, European Hot Air Balloon Championship, Hungary Event Director, Dutch National Hot Air Balloon Championship

2006 Steward, World Hot Air Balloon Championship, Motegi, Japan

2007 Steward, European Hot Air Balloon Championship, Magdeburg, Germany

2008 Event Director, World Hot Air Balloon Championship, Hofkirchen, Austria

2009 Event Director, World Air Games, Mondovi, Italy

2010 Deputy Director, World Hot Air Balloon Championship, Debrecen, Hungary

2011 Event Director, U.S. National Championship and Pre-Worlds, Battle Creek, MI

2012 Event Director, World Hot Air Balloon Championship, Battle Creek, MI

2013 Event Director, Australian National Hot Air Balloon Championship, Canowindra, NSW, Australia







Some of David's many activities outside of ballooning













David, Roberta, Leny and Mathijs Rocky Mountains in Boulder, CO. Photo Credit: Mathijs DeBruijn

Mr. Levin was inducted into the hall of fame of the <u>Fédération Aéronautique Internationale</u> in 2015. This year, the <u>National Balloon Museum</u> in Indianola, Iowa, announced that Mr. Levin would be inducted into the Ballooning Hall of Fame in July.

"From May to October, I flew almost every day," he told <u>Sports Illustrated</u> in 1993. "It was magical — I felt like the Wizard of Oz and Phileas Fogg and Babar the Elephant all rolled into one."

Note: Credit for the information included in the brochure should be given to either Google or Wikipedia.