

Lucy Luck Stefan
Inducted into the U. S. Ballooning Hall of Fame
August 2, 2009
By the Balloon Federation of America at the
National Balloon Museum, Indianola, Iowa



Lucy by a gas balloon



Lucy with Don Piccard and three other members of the U. S. National Ballooning Hall of Fame
 Pictured L to R are: Ed Yost, Jim Winker, Lucy Stefan, Deke Sonnichsen & Don Piccard.



Carolyn McNeill, Tracy Barnes & Lucy flying in
 Boulder Colorado in 1968



Lucy flying over the Swiss Alps



Lucy Stefan, Kate Arnsen &
 Tony Fairbanks



Balloonists Terry Wright, Karl Stefan, Lucy Stefan, Tracy Barnes & Bill Meadows



Lucy is a fixed wing pilot and one of the first
 women to get a degree in aeronautical
 engineering

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Born March 15, 1923 in St. Paul Minnesota

Lucy's interest, love and enthusiasm for flying probably began when she was eight years old when her oldest brother bought her a ride on an airplane at World Chamberlain Airport in Minneapolis. At an early age, her Dad described Lucy as a "Sparkplug". To her siblings she was "Sparky" and she still is!!! And she is definitely a "Sparkplug" in the history of ballooning.

As one of the early women aeronautical engineering students at the university in Minnesota, she met Professor Jean Piccard and his balloonist wife Jeanette Piccard. Professor Piccard became one of her college professors. During her ballooning activities she flew with Tony Fairbanks in Philadelphia and met Tracy Barnes in Minneapolis and got to know such notable balloonists as Malcolm Forbes, Dewey Reinhart, Bertrand Piccard and Eddie Allen.

Her Commercial Pilot, Lighter-Than-Air, Free Balloon License (limited to hot air balloons, with or without airborne heaters) is dated October 31, 1973. She received this in the early days of ballooning when all you had to do was sign your name on the license.

She received her fixed wing aircraft pilot's license when she was 40 years old, and has been around ballooning for fifty years. She was never actually a balloon pilot, but was a crew member and an observer for many years.

Lucy has flown in both gas and hot air balloons.

Her most spectacular flights were three that she had in Switzerland flying over the Swiss Alps and landing twice in Germany and once in Italy.

She was the first chairperson of the gas balloon committee for the BFA. She also was responsible for promoting state of the art gas ballooning and developed a ranking system for balloonists.

Lucy Luck Stefan, awarded the Amelia Earhart Fellowship in 1948, has always gone head first into whatever her insatiable curiosity has aroused. Lucy describes herself as absolutely fearless and has proven it with the many accomplishments in her life. Whether being the first woman in the Aeronautics Club at St. Paul Central High School in 1938 or flying over the Alps with Horst Hassold of Augsburg, Germany in balloon, her curiosity has given her the courage to take risks.

Lucy was honored by the Balloon Federation of America-Gas Balloon Events for the many years of support, encouragement, love and enthusiasm she has given the adventuresome sport of gas ballooning. Her friends and acquaintances joined together to honor the many achievements Lucy has made during her lifetime including the following:

- One of the first women admitted to the Aeronautical Engineering Department at the University of Minnesota

- President of the University of Minnesota Flying Club

- Aided in organizing an Aerostat Society in the Twin Cities to encourage the sport of ballooning

- First Chairperson of the Gas Balloon Committee of the Balloon Federation of America where she was responsible for promoting state-of-the-arts gas ballooning and develop a ranking system for balloonists. This committee evolved into the Gas Balloon Events Committee

- Member of the Lighter-Than-Air Technical Committee of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

- Organizer of the first Balloon Federation of America sanctioned gas balloon race in Indianola, Iowa on August, 1980

Lucy felt especially honored that famed balloonist Malcolm Forbes took the time to write a congratulatory letter. Forbes said, "Her [Lucy] interest and hard work in furthering the sport of both gas and hot air ballooning is to be commended and I join in saluting this wonderful woman and friend."

In addition to Forbes, Lucy has been influenced by a number of aviators and balloonists in her travels and education including Jean Piccard - famous for his balloon flight into the Stratosphere to study cosmic rays; Ralph Upson - designer of the first metal-clad airship; John D. Ackerman - who designed and built cellophane balloons for meteorological research. Lucy later became vice president of his company, Strato Equipment which built a pressurized flying suit; and Don Piccard who signed her Balloon Club of America card in 1952. Lucy met Tracy Barnes in the 1960's. Barnes took her on some exciting rides in the early prototypes of the Barnes Balloon he was developing. During the 1970's she was associated with Tracy Barnes' The Balloon Works in Statesville, North Carolina where her husband was a partner.

Highlights in her life include being at the first earth-bound meeting of a NASA astronaut and a Soviet Cosmonaut in Prague Czechoslovakia; witnessing the landing of the Voyager and helping to push the glider into the hanger after its historic flight; having an excellent view of at least 4 space shuttle launches; Lucy was part of the chase crew of Nick Piantaneda's fatal attempt to set a new balloon high altitude record; and in the 1950's Lucy flew in surplus gas balloons from the 1920's powered by gas from street gas mains with balloonists Tony Fairbanks, Connie Wolfe and Peter Pellegrino.

This remarkable woman has been well-educated. Besides learning from the experiences in her life she went to the University of Minnesota, graduating in 1945 with a degree in aeronautics. Lucy worked one summer at Honeywell in Minneapolis and flew in a B-17 to record autopilot data. After graduation Lucy worked briefly for TACA Airlines in San Jose, Costa Rica as a weight and balance engineer.

After being awarded the Amelia Earhart fellowship Lucy went back to school and studied supersonic aerodynamics and worked at the Rosemount Research Center testing models in the supersonic wind tunnels as part of the quest to break the sound barrier. Later, in the 1950's she was employed by the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia with Captain Ralph S. Barnaby. Captain Barnaby was known for flying a Pruffling glider from the airship "Los Angeles" in 1930, proving the capability of an airship to carry an external aircraft.

Besides her many accomplishments in the world of aeronautics, Lucy has raised 5 children, proudly proclaiming them all college graduates. Her son was the only one to follow in her career path, and is an airline pilot.

Lucy loves to travel and has been around the world on geological and archaeological as well as aeronautic related expeditions. She has white-water rafted through the Grand Canyon, seen the Great Wall in China, and has been a goodwill ambassador for America in every country she's visited.