



# NW Trek Balloon Rally

Sept. 21-24, 2017;

4 nights, Thurs, Fri, Sat. & Sun.

Wine Country RV Park, Prosser, WA

## Rally Attendees:

**Wagonmasters:** Ed & Jeanette Block; Rodger & Colleen Wright  
R&L Piispanen; G&I Cooper; K&J Schindler; D&N Harris;  
D&S Pierce; D&S Bjornson; J&M Turner; B&P Shull; Bob Beers;  
D. Burton & M. Schreiber; J&J Lindhorst; B&L Fitzgerald;  
R. Mahugh & M Burchett; J&J Van den Broek; T&D Schramm;  
A&V Zimmerman; Penny Paschall; K&H Anderson; B&S Pinney

**Thurs, Sept. 21** -- Attendees arrived throughout the afternoon and into the social hour. Rodger ingeniously 'hung' our club banner/stand and Ed readied the coffee pot for Friday's breakfast. In the meeting room, all received a red folder of rally & event information and their ticket for Friday's catered BBQ. Jeanette had decorated the tables with hot air balloon decals and clouds in a blue sky and the Wrights had a colorful collection of latte mugs created for our attendees. These were hand-painted with a bright hot air balloon, "NW Trek Balloon Rally" and '2017 Prosser Balloon Rally' on the back. Rodger called couples to approach to choose their rally mugs based on years married (to the same spouse!). Quite a few were together 40 & 50+ yrs. but the Pinney's, 68! Rally info was shared and then we all enjoyed our customary hearty appetizer potluck. We missed the few who couldn't attend the rally, mostly due to health reasons.

Prosser wine-tasting came to us that evening! Many enjoyed the resort's nightly wine-tasting parties – conveniently adjacent to our meeting room! That 1<sup>st</sup> night, Milbrandt Vineyards shared their wines. Those who purchased Wine Country RV's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary wine glass had free tasting during our rally through Sunday. Friday's focus would be wines from Barrel Springs Winery and Saturday's, Chandler Reach.

**Our first full day** - Close to dawn, a growing crowd of families had assembled on the airfield for the 1<sup>st</sup> morning's launch. A couple balloon owners with their trailers, balloon baskets and propane equipment were there, but most hadn't showed. A questionable bank of clouds was soon visible in an otherwise clear, early morning sky – and official word was announced, "the *launch was cancelled due to unsafe weather conditions.*"

We then had plenty of time to set up the good continental breakfast Colleen & Rodger had planned for our first morning together. Coffee was freshly brewed and breakfast choices were

plentiful. Some of us stayed close to camp and others headed for Prosser for the opening day of Harvest Fair -- celebrating the region's agricultural heritage featuring booths of quality, hand-crafted Arts & Crafts, fine art, photography as well as live entertainment and food vendors.

We were all back at the meeting room for happy hour and ready by 5 pm to enjoy the campground's catered BBQ! We joined a growing line for the outdoor buffet -- tender beef brisket and BBQ chicken, yummy potato salad and baked beans, green salad, rolls, & cookie -- prepared by 'C.G. Catering' (Country Gentlemen) of Kennewick, WA. Chase Craig entertained on his keyboard, singing many of our favorites from the 60's & 70's. Barrel Springs Winery was set up outdoors as well for wine-tasting! -- and we came prepared with our RV park wine glasses. Their chardonnay mustard dip was excellent with pretzels. After our meeting room was readied for the morning, all wandered back to their coaches. Some may have partied on or headed into Prosser for the street dance, but good conditions were forecast for an *early* morning launch! Coopers had fortunately been in the right place at the right time when one of the balloon owners was assembling a ground crew and chase team for the weekend! They were eager for this new experience -- even knowing they had to be there promptly at 6:15 a.m.!

**Day 3 - Saturday** - an amazing morning! By 7:15, we were at the airfield. We drove -- as did others -- but many walked the .7 mi. distance, biked or took the park shuttle. A mass of spectators watched as balloons inflated all over the airfield grass where they stood! We were walking our dog, so watched from the fence line until six or so had launched, and then we headed for the Yakima River Bridge and watched dozens of balloons float across the city streets & traffic! A crowd formed along the bridge on both sides of the road, hoping - but with no assurance - that any balloons would approach and dip their baskets in the river! Two balloons came down to actually touch the water -- unfortunately in bright sun, making photography a challenge. The river and surrounding hills were beautiful though -- as were the balloons floating overhead in an ultra-blue sky heavily dotted with *Alto cumulus floccus* (puffy) clouds.

While it was still morning, our gang gathered to enjoy fresh bakery at the meeting room. Many of us packed our picnics and were on our way to nearby Grandview for *Yakima Valley Community College's Vineyard & Winery Technology's "Tour & Taste."* It was a free, 1-1/2 hr. 'grape to glass' education! We all met afterwards at Barrel Springs Winery for our lunch and wine tasting on their lovely vineyard grounds. They had a fine picnic area set up with tables/chairs at the edge of their vineyard where clusters of purple grapes hung among lush green leaves. We had such a good time! Jim & Annette were marvelous hosts and their wines excellent. White wines were served outside and red, in their tasting room -- where there were lots of cute or practical, wine-related items available as well. Ed Block & David Pierce took advantage of their half price case sale -- each happy with 6 bottles of *2010 Cab Franc* at a cost of just \$10 each!

By midday, we were all back to the RV park with time to enjoy Prosser's Farmer's Market, Harvest Fair or the Street Painting Festival -- with an option of having dinner in town as well. Some of our rally group enjoyed the 'pre-glow' event at the Art Fiker Stadium while a steel drum band played -- followed by the Balloon Night Glow. Only three balloons were there for the glow, but they were beautiful! For those who chose to stay at the park, there was a Chandler Reach Winery party to enjoy.

**Day 4 - Sunday** – Those who hadn't seen a launch had one last morning to take it all in! From our campground, a dozen balloons were silhouetted as they floated across the field nearby and RV rooftops, slowly climbing into a dimly lit sky. Their colors gradually brightened, but the winds soon took them beyond the trees and out of sight. Skies cleared for those who had headed for the airfield, watching several land there. By 9:30 we were back at the meeting room for another fine continental breakfast – which included some of Saturday's pastries as well.

Again, everyone had free time to relax, walk the dog, head back to Harvest Fair or check out nearby wine-tasting rooms. Some of our members traveled further for other experiences – and Coopers had truly amazing photos to share from their balloon crewing adventure. Some of us set up 'coach-side' sale tables hoping to part with useful items at little or no profit : ) Our general business meeting followed outdoors in the gazebo area. A quorum of members was present and VP Paula Shull presided. Al Z, David Pierce, and Ron Mahugh, among others, shared reports and comments.

This evening's potluck had use of the park's gas BBQs as well as Ed's charcoal grill as all had been encouraged to bring their entrée to BBQ. Meat & veggie lasagnas were provided and everyone brought a variety of good salads to share. Anderson's treated us to fresh, buttery, corn-on-the-cob! Dessert for all was cheesecake! – Yum! -- even better with cherries or Jeanette's warm blueberry topping.

We all signed a card for Jess & Vicky Wright who had lost their log home (& family dog) to a devastating fire in Washington's Okanogan . . . as well as a 8"x 8" 'NWTFC logo' card thanking Wine Country RV Park for their amazing support of our rally.

The teamwork that followed was marvelous!! All food & fruit remaining from breakfasts found takers among us -- and table decorations were neatly rolled up and happily received by the RV park manager who had future use of them! There was no lack of helping hands! Before we called it a night, the room/kitchen had been neatly returned to the way we found it. Many of us said our thankyou's & goodbyes then, as half of us were on our way home or on to other adventures early in the morning.

Report by Jeanette Block