

## A TRUE BALLOON ADDICT

by *Debbi Waltman*



**Damon Lockwood**



If you want to be a true balloon addict, follow these (not so easy) steps:

- 1 - Fall in love with ballooning the first time you ever set eyes upon one. (It helps to have the first time be in a great place like Albuquerque)
- 2 - Spend lots of time finding out where these balloonists hide when they're not flying.
- 3 - Spend even more time trying to figure out where they launch their balloons.
- 4 - When you finally find out where they launch the balloons, go there, hang out, and hope fervently that somebody will ask you to help them. (It also helps if you get yourself a pair of leather gloves, and keep them with you at all times. Balloonists think these are important, so if you have a pair of gloves, they will assume you know why!)
- 5 - When you actually succeed in finding a balloonist who will allow you to help, do everything you can to learn what is needed to be done. It will help to join a local balloon club, where you can volunteer for a ton of stuff (board member, committees, competition director, safety seminar, event staff, etc), and meet even more balloon people.
- 6 - Somewhere along the line, you will decide you want a balloon. Even if that is not possible right away, go ahead and plan for it anyway. You can even go ahead and buy your first chase vehicle, come up with a name for the balloon, and start meeting more pilots.
- 7 - Of course, you don't want people to think you are totally nuts -- so you should throw in a few distractions along the way. You should also pursue other interests, like big trucks, Nascar, playing practical jokes and driving all over the country. Who knows, you might even meet a beautiful girl, fall in love, and get married.
- 8 - Once you have your beautiful bride hooked on ballooning too, you can begin learning how to fly. If things work out, you can even buy your first balloon!
- 9 - Keep on making friends with these people, you might need them for crew someday! It helps to have an amazing attitude of giving, so you are always available to help anyone with whatever they need to do. ('We can do that' is a good phrase to repeat often when folks ask you to do things.) That makes them willing to help you, too - instant crew!
- 10 - Once you finally have your balloon, your pilot certificate, your spouse, and your crew, you are ready to go into this thing whole hog. You can fly in beautiful places like Walden, Couer d'Alene Idaho, Chatfield, and other fun spots like Erie, Sterling, Brush, Bentonville AR, and Greeley. One day you might even get burner time on a giant cow balloon!
- 11 - To honor your lovely wife, you can also draw up plans to design a balloon that looks like an outhouse, take her on outhouse tours all over the country, and have your bathroom completely redone to look like an outhouse, too! Make sure you also buy two of everything - shirts, jackets, sweatshirts, all decorated with your balloon, so you and your wife can be spotted instantly as a pair. Of course, by now your home will also be decorated in 'balloon chic', including a huge stained glass window with your balloon on it.
- 12 - Last of all—never ever ever give up. The rewards of flying your own balloon are many, and the friends you will make are some of the most sincere people on earth.

If this all sounds familiar to you, then count yourself among the lucky folks who were friends of Damon Lockwood. Damon will be missed, but we will all remember fondly the 'big guy' who never gave up on his goal of flying a balloon.

May the winds ever welcome you with softness, dear friend, and we look forward to seeing you fly again in Heaven!