

Paul J. Petrehn

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History

Paul Petrehn was born into a ballooning family in 1974. As the youngest of eleven siblings, six are licensed hot air balloon pilots. Paul's father, John Richard (1934-1990), previously held FAI distance and duration records for balloon sizes AX-6 to AX-9. His 1988 attempt to fly around the world from Mendoza, Argentina never got off the ground as the balloon was damaged during the inflation process.

Paul crewed competitively for many years before receiving his private pilot certificate in 1993 and his commercial rating in 1995. He started flying competitive events in 1995 and organizing competitive flights in 2004. Paul has served as Balloonmeister, Event Director or Juror at state, regional, national and international events since 2010.

Education and Training

- 1992 to 1994 Johnson County Community College (JCCC) Overland Park, Kansas
- 1994 Commercial hot air balloon crew chief
- 1994 to 1995 Kansas University (KU) Lawrence, Kansas
- 2000 to present FAA certified repairman
- 2003 to 2015 Employed by USA hot air balloon manufacturers
- 2,500+ hours PIC including large special shapes and large ride balloons

Competition Pilot Experience

- 2004, 2005 & 2013 Balloon Federation of America (BFA) US National Champion
- 2006 FAI World Championship (Motegi, Japan): 11th Place
- 2008 FAI World Championship (Hofkirchen, Austria): 4th Place
- 2010 FAI World Championship (Debrecen, Hungary): 19th Place
- 2012 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta Champion
- 2014 FAI World Championship (Rio Claro, Brazil): 13th Place
- 2016 FAI World Championship (Saga, Japan): 17th Place
- Countries Flown: Dubai UAE, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Japan, Austria, Mexico and Hungary

Competition Official Experience

- 2010 to 2014 Event Director BFA North Central Championship (Brookfield, MO)
- 2012 to 2015 Event Director Frontier Days Balloon Shoot-Out (Carson City, MI)
- 2015 to 2017 Event Director Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (ABQ, NM)
- 2018 to 2019 Event Director Canowindra Challenge (Canowindra NSW, Australia)
- 2021 Jury President BFA US Women's National Championship (Brookfield, MO)
- 2021 to 2022 Event Director BFA US National Championship (Scottsbluff, NE)
- 2023 to present Event Director BFA Women's US National Championship (Jackson, MI)
- 2023 to present Balloonmeister Labor Day Lift Off Balloon Festival (CO Springs, CO)
- 2026 Event Director AUS National Championship (Benalla, VIC, AUS)
- 2026 Event Director Balloons Over Mildura (Mildura, VIC, AUS)

Professional Ballooning Experience

- 1997 to 2003 Pilot for Renaissance Balloons, Inc. (Brighton, MI)
- 2003 to 2004 Production Inspector for Lindstrand Balloons US (Galena, IL)
- 2004 to 2015 Account Representative for Cameron Balloons US (Dexter, MI)
- 2018 to present Pilot for Rainbow Ryders, Inc. (Albuquerque, NM)
- 2022 to present Owner of Aerial Enigma LLC
- 2023 to present Balloonmeister Labor Day Lift Off Balloon Festival (CO Springs, CO)

Skills

- National and international competition management and staff assembly
- Experience as event organizer, competition event director and juror
- Ability to flight plan and make decisions in high pressure and time critical situations
- Passion for safety
- Respect of the rules and weather
- Knowledge of acceptable/unacceptable allowable damage of aircraft

Accomplishments

- 2009-'11 and 2024 BFA Hot Air Competition Division (HACD) Chairman
- FAI listed event director and jury member
- WatchMeFly certified scorer
- Continental Divide by hot air balloon (3x)
- Lake Michigan by hot air balloon (2x)
- 2024 Wes Dickerson Dickerson Ambassador Award (US Women's National Championship)