



Henry Homeyer Goes Ballooning

By HENRY HOMEYER

WHEN I was a grade-schooler back in the mid-1950's I read a lot during the summer. We had no TV, no electronic games, and obviously there was no e-mail or Facebook to suck up my time. I rode my bike, I swam, I played badminton with the next door neighbor, and I read books. Lots of books. My favorite series was about a pig named Freddy who was a detective and an adventurer.

The books were written by Walter R. Brooks who created a pig who could talk to the farmers who owned him, Mr. and Mrs. Bean, and to the other animals: Jinx the Cat, Charles the preening rooster, Hank the old white horse and Mrs. Wiggins, Wogus and Wurzburger the cows. Freddy could, somehow, type with his little trotters and was an accomplished poet. In my favorite of the series, Freddy and the Perilous Adventure, Freddy the Pig commandeered a hot air balloon and he and a few friends set off in it. I have wanted to do so ever since.

July 6th was the one-year anniversary of my sister Ruth Anne Mitchell's untimely death. I dreaded that the approach of that day, that memory. My friend and companion, Cindy Heath, asked me if we could do something to make that day something to look forward to, rather than dread. I thought of Freddy the Pig and decided we should sign up for a hot air balloon ride.

We took off from a tiny airstrip in Post Mills, Vermont with Brian Boland, a delightfully eccentric guy with a dark bushy beard and sunglasses that hide his eyes. Brian not only flies hot air balloons, he collects them and has a museum of all sorts of interesting stuff - cars, sidecars, balloon baskets and much more. He and friends built a life-sized brontosaurus out of scrap wood not long ago at the edge of the airstrip. Brian exudes confidence, and with good reason. He is in his 40th year of ballooning, and has flown 8,133 flights - in 24 nations.

A hot air balloon is a wondrous thing. Point a stream of hot air (created by a propane burner) into the mouth of a multi-colored, rip-stop nylon balloon that is 75 ft tall and 55 ft wide, and it will gently lift you up. There is no jerky motion, no jet-propelled angst as your body is slammed against an airplane seat. In fact, there are no seats. We stood in a wicker basket for the flight. There are no waiting lines, no

airport security, no tickets to lose. In fact, Brian forgot to ask me for the fare, and I had to remind him that we needed to pay after the chase car returned us to our car.

So there we were: Brian, Cindy and me. And Freddy the Pig, though only I could see him. My sister Ruth Anne, an American who adopted Ottawa as her home 40 years ago, might have been there in the balloon, too. She loved ballooning, and once had floated over the Serengeti Plain at dawn, hovering over wildebeest and eland and elephants.

I loved looking down on trees and farms and twisty dirt roads. On Lake Fairlee and little home-made ponds. From time to time Brian would squeeze the handle of the propane heater, producing a blast of hot air that would, a few moments later, bring us slowly, gently higher. There are no quick movements in a balloon, and never did I feel even the slightest bit nervous.

We watched kids from Camp Lochearn walking down the road to get their evening ice cream in Post Mills, a chase car following them in case a camper got tuckered out or developed a blister. (Are kids a bit overly tended-to these days?). One hundred kids waved and hollered and wished they were up there with Freddy and me. We flew over my favorite plant nursery in Thetford Center, Vermont, giving me a different perspective on a place I'd visited countless times to buy trees and shrubs. We floated over Interstate 91 and I felt a bit sorry for the folks hurrying along at 70 mph while we floated listlessly in the breeze.

The temperature on the ground that day was in the nineties - one of those hot days I generally dread. But up in the balloon we were comfortable, though the heat and humidity limited our long distance views of the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and made our photos less than distinct. Still, I felt like Zeus as I looked down on the world.

We approached the Connecticut River, but the winds were not right for a river crossing. Shortly before the sun disappeared Brian spotted a postage-stamp parking lot at a boat launch on the Pompanoosuc River. He gave directions to our chase car and Tina Foster, the driver, arrived and screeched to a halt. He threw down a wide nylon web line to her so she could guide us in. Brian called out to people at the boat launch, asking for help



Photo by Bill Croney, The Northfield News

This Plymouth state running back (in white) is about to get crunched by the Norwich defense. The Cadet "D" looked strong and was on it's game against Plymouth State in Last Friday's scrimmage at Sabine field. The scrimmage was played as a regular game except for posting points on the scoreboard. The NCAA won't let scores be kept in scrimmages. Nevertheless, spies told The Northfield News that the Cadets found the Plymouth State end zone more times than the Panthers crossed the Norwich goal line.

Norwich Looks Good In Scrimmage

CADETS SELECTED TO REPEAT AS ECFC CHAMPIONS

Norwich Sports Information

The Norwich University football team, the 2009 Eastern Collegiate Football Conference (ECFC) champions, were picked to defend its crown in 2010 according to the league's preseason coaches' poll, which was released last Wednesday.

The Cadets, who picked up seven of the eight first-place votes in the poll, compiled an 8-3 overall record last season and completed their inaugural ECFC slate with a perfect 6-0 mark. NU excelled in all three phases of the game a year ago, outscoring its conference opponents by a whopping 167-64 margin.

Norwich, which enters the 2010 campaign riding an eight-game win streak, returns 17 starters and 42 letterwinners

from last season's championship squad. The Cadets, who averaged 277.7 rushing yards per game in league contests, return their entire offensive line and their top four rushers from a year ago.

NU's defense, which yielded a mere 10.7 points per game against conference foes, brings back seven starters, including all four starting linebackers from last season's unit. The Cadets figure to be strong in the kicking game once again with the return of all-conference punter Brian Segit and kicker Ryan Kelly.

Mount Ida, last season's runner-up to Norwich in the ECFC, was picked second in the preseason listing. The Mustangs, who picked up the last remaining first-place vote, were defeated twice by Norwich a season ago, including a 49-14 setback in the ECFC Championship Game.

New York Maritime, Husson and Gallaudet were picked third, fourth and fifth, respectively. Castleton State, Becker and Anna Maria rounded out the poll,

listing sixth, seventh and eighth, respectively.

Norwich kicks off its 2010 campaign on Saturday, Sept. 4, when the Cadets host Western New England College in a non-league contest at Sabine Field. The game, which will be a rematch of last season's 28-27 WNEC victory, is slated to kick off at 1:30 p.m.

Last Friday afternoon, the Cadets took on the highly regarded Panthers of Plymouth State in a football scrimmage at Sabine Field.

The scrimmage was played as if were a game, with the exception that no score was kept. NCAA rules tell us we can not keep score of a scrimmage. So I can not tell you the final score, but I can tell you that the Cadets scored more points than Plymouth.

To give you a flavor for how the game went, the Cadets rushed for 337 yards compared to 164 for the Panthers. In the air the Cadets passed for 153 yards and two touchdowns. The Panthers

managed just 65 yards in the air and no touchdowns.

The Norwich defensive corp was just outstanding stuffing the Panther ground game. Sophomore Brendan Carroll made two outstanding plays, one a quarterback sack on the 5 yard line.

Jean-Giles and Mitchell Przybocki each threw excellent touchdown passes. Freshman Long Ding kicked a 40 yard field goal into the wind.

The Cadets were sharp in every aspect of the game. Next week the Cadets will open the season at home against Western New England, game time 13:30 (1.30).

As most of you know we had technical problems beyond our control that made it impossible to stream the game. The problem was identified as a crashed computer that controls the steam. I have been promised that the tape of the game will be available to watch sometime tomorrow. I will send you all the link as soon as it is up.

pulling us toward the designated stopping point. They did. Brian pulled a cord to release hot air from the balloon, and we gently descended. We landed spot on.

Even when we landed the adventure was not over. Half a dozen people helped us fold up the balloon, including Sophie, who appeared to be about 7 years old. We chatted and drank champagne and soft drinks with some of those who helped us - and found points of connection spanning decades and continents. It was a wonderful evening. I just wish my sister could have been there with us - but who knows? Maybe she was.

If You Go:

Where: Post Mills, Vermont, 20 minutes from Hanover, NH and Dartmouth College

Who to contact: Brian Boland, Balloon Vermont, 802-333-9254

Cost: \$260 /person for a 60-90 minute flight

Lodging: The Silver Maples Lodge and Cabins offers a package including lodging for 2 nights, Continental breakfast and the balloon ride for 2 adults for \$725. <http://www.ballooninnvermont.com/> or 803-333-4326. Silver Maple Lodge is one of Vermont's oldest continuously operating country inns, with the main building dating back to the late 1700's. Located in Fairlee, VT, just a few miles from Post Mills. (802) 333-4326 (802) 333-4326 (802) 333-4326



Photo by Bill Croney, The Northfield News

Northfield-Williamstown Boys Soccer Scrimmage

Northfield's Gabe Drown (Left) hustles the ball toward the Williamstown goal with the Blue Devils' Devon Duff in hot pursuit. Last Friday afternoon the Marauders and the Blue Devils met in a three- thirty minute periods scrimmage that allowed the coaches

to get all their players on the field and allowed the respective mentors to evaluate their teams under game conditions even though no official score was recorded. Both Northfield and Williamstown will open their regular seasons next week.

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