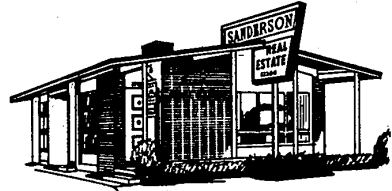


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Balloon Launching; New Festival Feature

A mysterious, unformed band of zealots known as the Balloon Platoon will launch the 1968 Farmington Founders Festival in eye-opening fashion. This colorful group of hot-air balloon enthusiasts will send the club's flagship, the S.S. Charlie Brown, lurking 80 feet above ground in a dazzling display of precision and courage. The action will begin at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 25 in front of Showboat in Downtown Farmington Center.

Organized in April, 1968, the Balloon Platoon now has a membership of 30 Detroit area residents.

"BALLOONING is the next fun thing after snowmobiles," according to Brooks Stover of Farmington, president of the Balloon Platoon. "There are already balloon clubs on the West Coast, and the Federal Aviation Authority has registered over 100 balloons as aircraft."

The 30-foot diameter balloon sewn out of five-and-a-half-inch nylon parachutes, gets its lift from hot air heated by a propane gas burner. The burner, adjusted by the pilot, directs a white-hot flame straight up into the innards of the balloon from a nozzle perched above the pilot's head.

"The wild orange and white striped color scheme of the balloon is no whim," contends Stover, "the FAA requires that balloons be colorful." The balloon's gondola is made of aluminum tubing welded into a "cage." A fiberglass bucket seat--retrieved from a sports

car--and a tiny instrument panel with an altimeter, pyrometer, variometer and compass help give an earthy feel to the lighter-than-air craft.

The fuel for the burner is propane, housed in an aluminum container tucked under the pilot's bucket seat. Fuel lasts an hour's flight time. Construction of the balloon took approximately a month, with three weeks devoted entirely to sewing the parachutes together.

CLUB MEMBERS serve as ground crew for the balloon's mysterious designer, owner, and pilot, who calls himself "Commodore" Lindoon and who doubles as an assistant chief designer at General Motors. Dressed in ritualistic attire, complete with moustache and beard, the Commodore is almost as exciting as the launch itself.

While raving about the sport's rapid growth, Commodore Lindoon also warns of its unusual dangers.

"During our last flight, I had just left ground when a local constable arrived and warned us to stop immediately," he recalls.

"I was having trouble landing when the constable took out his revolver and said he would shoot me down if I couldn't land by myself. Needless to say, I didn't waste any time reaching the ground."

Most of the dangers are more mechanical, according to Commodore Lindoon. "The main problem is landing," he says. "There is al-

ways the danger of hitting a high tension wire or drowning in a lake."

"Our club tries to promote the spectator aspects of ballooning," says Stover. "THE HISTORY of hot-air ballooning goes back to 1783 when the Montgolfier brothers bobbed across Paris, after having the air heated with a bonfire," reports Bob Paddison, the club historian.

"The recent rebirth of the sport," explains Paddison, "is due to the availability of surplus parachutes plus the development of a small portable propane burner."

Balloon racing is a future planned activity for the club, with the annual balloon race preceding the Indy 500 a major goal.

The club members, who all wear sweatshirts with an emblem entitled the Balloon Platoon, also are working on a balloon design which will carry two people.



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CRAZY BABY — Even the tots enjoy the Founders Festival parade which will begin at the Grand River Drive-In Theatre at 10 a.m. on Saturday, July 27.

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You're Invited to Join Us for Founders Day Festivities
 23309 Farmington Road at Alta Loma and
 33200 Twelve Mile Road at Farmington Rd.
 THURSDAY, JULY 25 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 FRIDAY, JULY 26 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
 Join us for refreshments. Take home a free souvenir parchment replica of a map showing the Farmington Area as it was in 1872.
 A hearty welcome awaits you.

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