



# The Crownlines

The Newsletter of the

National Capital Balloon Club  
Club de montgolfiers de la capitale nationale

Volume 11 Number 2

August 2001

## Tragedy in Canada More Follows in Europe



Julie Boileau, 1986-2001

Canada's early summer ballooning tragedy involving the sad accident in Ottawa left the NCBC and Canadian ballooning community in mourning for the loss to the Boileau family.

A funeral for the daughter of Jean Boileau, Communications Director of the City of Gatineau and Director General of the Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, and of Johanne Loiselle, was held on Wednesday, August 8, at the church of Saint-François-de-Sales, 1, Jacques-Cartier Street, in Gatineau. Julie Boileau died on July 14, 2001.

Even more tragedy struck recently in Europe

Six people perished after a hot air balloon caught fire after hitting a power line near Albertville in eastern France on Sunday, August 26, according to AVweb Newswire. After hitting the 20,000-volt power line 30 feet above the ground upon descent, the balloon caught fire and began climbing. Two passengers died when they jumped trying to avoid the flames.

Perhaps balloonists everywhere can best pay respect to those who have suffered such tragic losses by learning from the disasters and ensuring the greatest possible vigilance against risk factors, to avoid future accidents. Hot air ballooning can never be taken for granted as a safe sport; it can only be made relatively safer through our diligent action.

*The Editor*

### Contents

Ottawa <i>Citizen</i> reports on the tragedy . . . .	2
September-October Calendar . . . . .	4
News from the Board . . . . .	6
Is the Winterlude Balloon Fiesta Past Its Prime? . . . . .	7
Pictures from Festival de Montgolfieres de Bécancour . . . . .	7
Membership list . . . . .	8

## 'She had everything going for her'

Teen killed in balloon accident excelled in sports, academics

By Jean-François Bertrand

reprinted from *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 16, 2001

Julie Boileau, the 15-year-old Gatineau girl who died Saturday evening in a hot air balloon accident, was the kind of daughter every parent dreams about having, a close family friend said.

"She was good in sports, in the classroom. She had a great personality," said Jacques Forget, a Gatineau city councillor.

Mr. Forget is a friend and a neighbour of the Boileau family and a colleague of Jean Boileau, 40, who was piloting the balloon when it hit an electrical wire and burst into flames in a field north of Leitim Road east of Bank Street. Mr. Boileau, the organizer of the Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, has been piloting balloons since 1992. He is also the director of communications for the City of Gatineau.

Mr. Forget noted that the entire Boileau family was involved in the balloon festival, especially Julie.

"She had everything going for her," he said, adding that it was tough for Mr. Boileau's children to get up at 5 a.m. the morning of a flight, but they did it because they loved the sport. "It takes a lot of discipline," which Julie had, he said.

Mr. Forget and the Boileau family were part of a Gatineau team that visited Burnaby, B.C., last year to promote the Gatineau balloon festival. "His family was his crew," Mr. Forget said of his friend. "It couldn't have been worse."

Mr. Boileau's wife, Johanne Loiselle, was part of the ground crew chasing the balloon after it [sic] landed on Saturday night, before a gust of wind lifted it up towards the 26,000-volt hydro wires 15 metres up a pole.

Younger brother Alexandre, who usually joined his mother as part of the crew, was not with his family Saturday night.

Yesterday, the Transportation Safety Board began investigating the accident. Analysts will try to determine if anything was wrong with the balloon, an Aerostar RX7 sporting the colours of the Hull Casino.

Early reports by the investigator indicate that "this was an operational accident, not a technical problem," said Julie Hébert, a safety board spokeswoman.

The balloon had landed, the ground crew was dragging the basket—Mr. Boileau, his daughter and Julie's best friend, Marie-Pierre Langevin, still in it—toward the truck. But a strong gust of wind lifted the balloon upright and it moved laterally, toward the power line.

The pilot did everything he could to clear the wire, said Luc Madore, who was part of the ground crew. But it touched the third line, he said, causing sparks. The basket and the balloon's envelope then caught fire and touched the ground a minute later.

In that moment, Mr. Boileau and Marie-Pierre were able to escape from the balloon, while Julie remained at the bottom of the basket.

Marie-Pierre suffered serious burns and was taken to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Mr. Boileau was taken to the Ottawa Hospital's General campus with third-degree burns to his face and legs, which he sustained while trying to pull Julie from the burning basket, Mr. Forget said.

With Mr. Boileau in hospital, Paul Morin, president of the Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, has called a press conference for this morning, to discuss whether the festival will go ahead as planned. Held each year on Labour Day weekend, the festival is considered the largest in Quebec.

## Ballooning community shocked by death

The 'biggest enemy is electrical wires' girl's father said in 1997

By Patt Edgar

reprinted from *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 16, 2001

Ottawa's tight-knit ballooning community is shaken by the "freak" death of a teenage girl killed when a balloon collided with a power line.

"My phone has been ringing off the hook today," said a tearful Stephanie Glover, president of the National Capital Balloon Club. "We are all shocked by the accident."

Julie Boileau, 15, died Saturday when a gust of wind carried the balloon her father was piloting into hydro wires causing it to burst into flames. Her father, Jean Boileau, and her best friend, Marie-Pierre Langevin, escaped the flames with serious burns. Ottawa's balloon pilots said Mr. Boileau is an experienced, skilled pilot, who knows that the greatest risk for hot air balloonists is power lines.

"I suspect Jean Boileau did everything as a responsible pilot that he could. That was his daughter in the basket," said Dave Roberts, owner of High Time Balloon Co. Inc.

Mary Anne Stevens, president of the Canadian Balloon Association, said ballooning deaths are rare. "With balloons you get bumps, scrapes and broken bones maybe if it's a rough landing, but definitely not this," she said.

"I know it sounds flippant, but the basic rule is to stay away from them. Show them the respect that they deserve."

Mr. Boileau, executive director of the Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, knows the risk. In 1994, he told the *Citizen* that the balloonist's "biggest enemy is electrical wires."

"Ballooning isn't dangerous," he said at the time. "Balloons fly in good weather and when there's not a lot of wind."

Saturday's collision was a freak accident, said John Davidson, owner of Skyview Ballooning and one of Canada's most experienced pilots. "All the wrong things had to have happened for this accident to occur."

Last night, members of the National Capital Balloon Club gathered at Carleton University for a moment of silence, said Ms. Glover. Afterwards, they planned to launch their balloons from Jacques Cartier Park. "We want to get back on the horse before we lose our nerve," she said.

## Horror of balloon fire brought rescuers to tears

Father tried in vain to rescue daughter from burning basket

By Aaron Sands and Gary Dimmock

reprinted from *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 17, 2001

The haunting memory brings Wade Briscoe, a hardened mill worker, to tears.

A father, standing in the gondola of a crashed hot air balloon, covered head to toe in flames, screaming: "My daughter! My daughter! Please help me save her!"

The man's daughter, 15-year-old Julie Boileau of Gatineau, lay dead at his feet in the burning basket, tangled in wires and hoses.

Badly burned but out of danger, Julie's best friend, Marie-Pierre Langeving, 14, could only watch helplessly, repeatedly screaming out Julie's name before attempting to jump into the fire to save her.

Mr. Briscoe, the first person on the scene, stopped her. "It was

too late," he said. "All hell was breaking loose. The girl was already in heaven. Her pain was over. She was not suffering."

Marie-Pierre was released from hospital Sunday. Her first hot air balloon flight ended in disaster Saturday night when the balloon collided with hydro wires and burst into flames in a south-Ottawa field.

"She was excited about going up," said her mother, Joanne St-Armour. "It was her first trip."

Jean Boileau, the experienced pilot and director of the annual Gatineau Hot Air Balloon Festival, suffered severe burns and remained in the intensive care unit at the Ottawa Hospital's General campus yesterday.

With first- and second-degree burns, Marie-Pierre spent yesterday at home with her family, trying to forget the doomed flight. "It is something she would like to erase from her mind," Ms. St-Armour said. "But it's impossible and she will live with this for the rest of her life."

As will the Briscoe brothers. Mr. Briscoe was driving along Baseline Road with his brother Todd and two friends when he saw trouble in the twilight.

"As we got towards the old army base there, I noticed it right away," Mr. Briscoe said. "I said, 'Look, this guy's in trouble. We've got to help,' and I stepped on the gas. He hit the ground and the balloon had made a bounce. He was on a 35-degree angle heading straight for the wires. You could see him trying to fire it, we were that close. He had both arms on his igniters and he was trying to make it over the wires."

The Briscoes and their friends jumped out of the car, hurdled a 1.2-metre high fence and raced to the burning balloon.

As he ran "I saw (Julie) hit the wires," he said. "As the gondola fell to the ground, we were right there. The balloon was tangled in the wires. You could see the wire breaking off the pole. It dawned on me what was going on with the wire, but my concern was the screaming that was going on in the gondola. "(Mr. Boileau) was literally on fire. He was standing in the gondola screaming, 'My daughter! My daughter! Please help me save her!'"

Then, Mr. Briscoe said, Marie-Pierre appeared beside him. "I don't know how she got out. She kept trying to get close. I grabbed her three times and moved her to the side but she kept coming. I had to hold her down for a minute," he said.

"Mr. Boileau wouldn't get out of the balloon. He kept reaching back into the flames. The basket was totally engulfed and he was in the flames." On their fourth try, the Briscoe brothers were able to pull Mr. Boileau out of the gondola, Mr. Briscoe said.

He said Mr. Boileau, then stood in the field, still on fire, waving his arms, screaming to his wife, Joanne, who was at the road: "I couldn't do it. I'm sorry."

"That guy did everything he could to avoid hitting those wires," Mr. Briscoe said. "A wind burst is a wind burst. What the hell can you do? He did everything he possibly could."

In his hospital bed yesterday, Mr. Boileau said the festival, his festival, must go on. Gatineau city council announced at a news conference yesterday that the 14<sup>th</sup> annual festival will go ahead, as always, on Labour Day weekend.

"For Jean, the show will go on," said Paul Morin, president of the festival. "That is his wish. He loves balloons. They've taken him all over the world."

A Transportation Safety Board investigation is continuing.



This is the balloon that the Boileaus were in Sunday, when it hit a power line and burst into flames. Jean Boileau is next to the basket, preparing the balloon last August for the Gatineau festival.

# September 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					31	1 Festival de Montgolfieres de Gatineau Canadian/American Friendship Race (1 <sup>st</sup> leg) Gatineau, Québec →
2 Festival de Montgolfieres (ends)	3 6:27 / 19:37	4	5	6	7 6:32 / 19:29	8 Atlantic Balloon Festival Sussex, New Brunswick →
9 Atlantic Balloon Festival (ends)	10	11 6:37 / 19:22	12	13	14	15 6:42 / 19:14 NCBC Fly Day Fly the Gorge Storyland
16	17	18	19 6:46 / 19:06	20	21	22 NCBC Fly Day Fly the Gorge Storyland (rain date)
				29 <sup>th</sup> Annual Adirondack Balloon Festival Canadian/American Friendship Race (2 <sup>nd</sup> leg, Saturday) →		
23 6:51 / 18:59 Adirondack Balloon Festival (ends)	23	25	26	27 6:46 / 18:51	28 deadline for articles for third edition of The Crownlines	29

30

Sunrise / Sunset times (EDT or EST) provided for selected dates for Ottawa.

\*Note: Due to a difference in height between the observer and the actual horizon, the observed time may differ by several minutes from the predicted time. Source: Observer's Handbook 2001, Royal Astronomical Society of Canada.

# October 2001

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7:01 / 18:44	2	3	4	5 7:06 / 18:36	6 Albuquerque International Balloon Festival →
7	8	9 7:11 / 18:29	10	11	12	13 7:16 / 18:22
Albuquerque International Balloon Festival →						
14 Albuquerque International Balloon Festival (ends)	15	16	17 7:21 / 18:15	18	19	20 NCBC Fly Day (afternoon) Stephanie's and Todd's in Navan
21 7:27 / 18:08	22	23	24	25 7:32 / 18:02	26	27
28 daylight savings time ends	29 6:37 / 16:56	30	December 7, 2001: deadline for articles for fourth edition of The Crownlines			

## News from the Board

### Social at Festival de montgolfier de Gatineau

There will be a Meet & Greet Social for pilots & crew at the Festival de montgolfier de Gatineau on Friday, August 31.

The party will take place after the evening flight, or, in the event of inclement weather, after the cancellation call.

Volunteers are needed to help staff the tent. Please call Leslie Manion [REDACTED] if you are able to assist.

Leslie Manion

### NCBC Fly Days—"Fly the Gorge"

The next Fly Day is on September 15 in the afternoon at Story Land, to fly the Gorge. Usually when we go out of town we meet somewhere. The last time we met at 3:00 PM sharp at the Westgate Mall.

If you have any questions or comments or would like to RSVP for the event you can do so by contacting Paul Porter at [REDACTED], by calling the NCBC Telephone hotline at [REDACTED] and leaving a message, or e-mailing Gary Moreau [REDACTED]

Paul Porter

### Board of Directors of the NCBC

**President:** Stephanie Glover

**Vice-President:** Leslie Manion

**Secretary:** Diane Casault

**Treasurer:** King Glover

**Directors:** Tina Daniels, Alexis Hum, Dave Johns, Paul Porter, Bill Whelan, Debbie Wright

### Leadership by Board Members

**Fly-Days:** Diane Casault and Paul Porter

**Socials:** Alexis Hum and Tina Daniels

**Landowner Relations:** Bill Whelan

**Membership:** Debbie Wright

**Web Site:** Diane Casault and Tina Daniels

n.b.: NCBC members are welcome to contribute to Club activities and organization whether or not they are on the Board... contact a Board member for details!

## Successful Fundraising Raffle

As the Winterlude Committee (a.k.a. the board) was going through the Winterlude motions, we thought it would be a good idea to have a fundraising raffle for, what else, but a balloon ride. Since we wanted to avoid dealing with the lottery commission, we knew that if the cost was under one dollar we didn't require a license. Hence tickets for \$0.99. Leslie got ballots and a ballot box from her former employer, Festival Network, and drew up some flyers. Both Skyview and Sundance provided the flights. Off we went to Winterlude with great hopes of raising money for a club balloon.

But Winterlude turned to "Windylude". So much for selling to the public. Instead of giving up the idea completely, entry forms were distributed to the various board members. We did manage to sell some to the few non-board members who attended the Winterlude social. As well at the brunch, Joclyne Moreau agreed to take a bunch to work, and Debbie Wright took stacks to sell to her unsuspecting students.

We are pleased to report that a total of \$406 was raised. The winners were Janet Wilczyński and Helene Riendeau.

Special thanks to Joclyne for raising \$102 and to Debbie for the bulk of the earnings at \$270.

We are looking for more fund raising ideas which could include raffles of balloon memorabilia or other things. If you have any ideas or have seen some good fund raisers in action, please give President Stephanie a call.

Leslie Manion

## Submissions to The Crownlines

The deadlines for submissions to The Crownlines for 2001 are Fridays as follows:

September 28, 2001

December 7, 2001

Items can be submitted to Les Welsh by mail (18 Clarey Avenue, Ottawa, K1S 2R7), by facsimile (953-[REDACTED]) or by e-mail in virtually any format

It's easier to write your articles now, while you're thinking about it! Write about a Fly Day or social (with pictures that'd be great!). Or an old "memorable flight". Or anything you'd like to write or photograph to do with ballooning? (I'll scan photographs or take stills from videos if you'll loan me an original.)

Editor of The Crownlines  
Les Welsh

**Is the Winterlude Balloon Fiesta past its prime?**

Editorial

How depressing was Winterlude this year? Pretty darn if you ask me. No sponsor, no balloons and lousy weather. The good news is that the NCC was much more cooperative than its been in the past, but the bad news is that the NCBC membership doesn't seem to give a rat's ass.

This year we got involved in a major way with the Opening Ceremonies when the NCC asked if it was possible for balloon burners to be placed on the snow blocks at Parliament Hill and ignited at special times. The answer was "yes," and Bill Whelan was the prime reason it did. He worked long and hard to obtain the burners and oversee their installation. It was a spectacular sight to see the burners lighting up the snowy night sky at intervals in the ceremonies. Unfortunately, there was no special recognition of the event or the NCBC. As an aside it was rather fun to be a Winterlude volunteer for an evening and of special note was the fact we wandered around the halls of Parliament Hill looking for an exit with no one seeming to notice. Only in Canada!

Of course, the bitterly cold temperatures accompanied by brutal winds grounded the balloons -what few had actually signed up. The out-of-towners cancelled when they heard the weather forecasts, but the local pilots were conspicuously absent even at the outset. Despite the fact that the registration fee was eliminated for local pilots, and hotel rates absorbed by the club to allow for cheap overnight stay, no one took advantage to participate.

We had hoped that members would at least come out for the socials. Friday night at Rideau Carleton Raceway and Slots had 16 people braving the rather inclement weather. Saturday's Pizza/Karaoke night was rather dismal. Good pizza but lousy karaoke as our machine provider was sick and out of commission. Darts was also on the agenda, but who knew you had to provide your own darts at a Legion? So, since the evening was more of a cosy gathering (another 16 people) that could have been happy in someone's basement, a rip roaring game of Charades occurred. By Sunday brunch, the group had disintegrated into seven people.

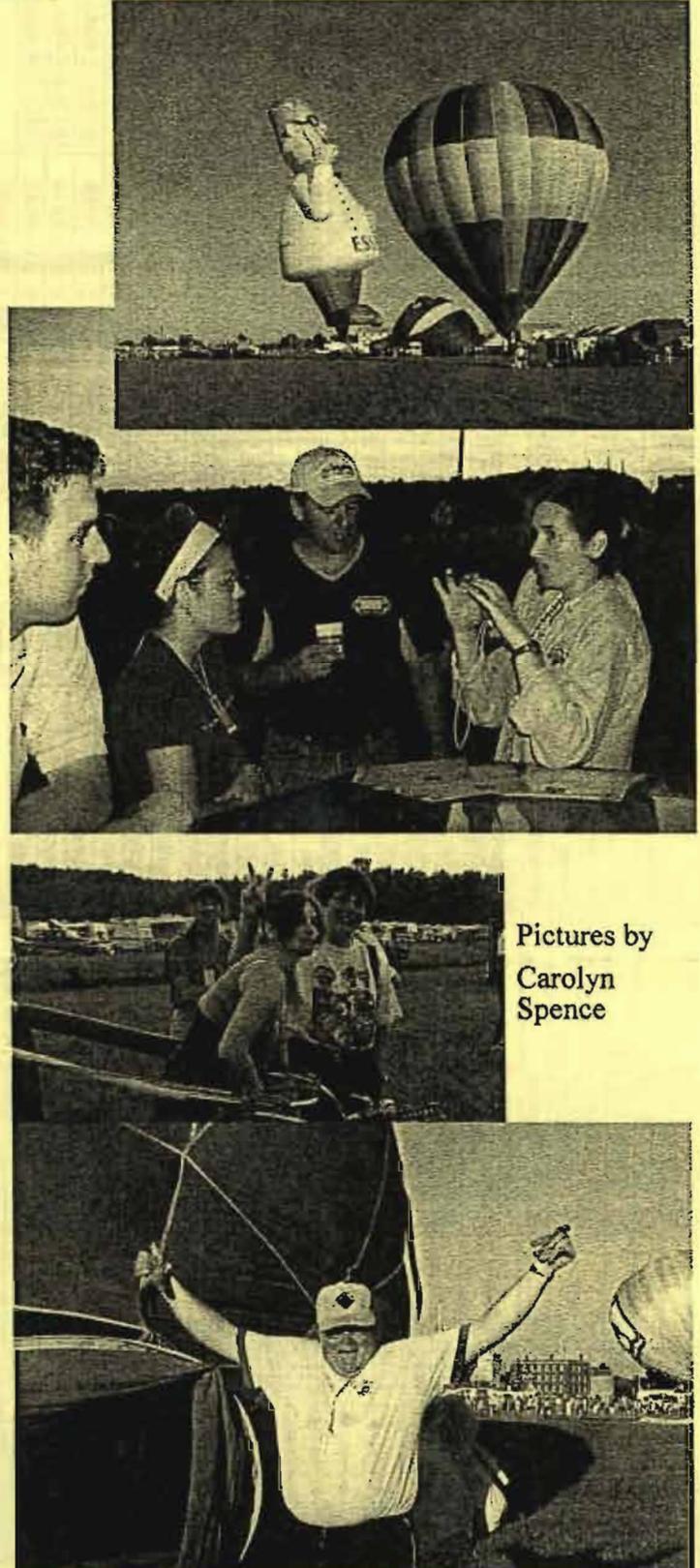
Considering a membership of over 40 in the Ottawa area, and Winterlude is the major and only NCBC winter event, it seems that no one, apart from the board, is interested. Why is no one interested? Why do people not attend the socials? What can be done to renew interest and support? Should we even try?

With planning required to begin now for Winterlude 2002, should we even bother? After awhile hitting your head against a brick wall gets painful. Any thoughts?

Leslie Manion

**Festival de Montgolfieres de Bécancour, Québec**

Carolyn Spence reports that the Festival was successful this year, with three flights going ahead. The third flight was quite windy, with only 8 of 27 balloons lifting off (not even including Bill!)



Pictures by Carolyn Spence