

## **RUTH E WILSON NOMINATION FOR THE WILLIAM DEAN AWARD**

Ruth Wilson's dedicated involvement as a pilot, event organiser and promoter, balloon meister and balloon owner has seen her accumulated numerous firsts over the past 33 years. She has been a pioneer and a significant contributor to Australian Ballooning with both international and national achievements for the sport.

Ruth remains as one of only four balloonists who have maintained an active and committed role as a pilot and balloon owner since the pioneering days of ballooning in Australia. While being one of the first commercial rated pilots, Ruth has introduced many people to ballooning working with private pilots and students as well.

Her involvement with ballooning has covered national competition as Australia's first ballooning champion and finishing in the top 4 places. She has represented her country in world ballooning championships six times, been invited to fly at international ballooning events as set out below where her participation as an Australian pilot raised awareness of Australian ballooning in the '70s and '80s.

It was her concept and dedication to a dream to successfully pull together and manage the Trans Australian Balloon Challenge in 1988. The event attracted 78 teams; 52 from overseas for the 16 day fly drive challenge from Perth to Sydney with stopovers in Merredin, Kalgoorlie, Nullarbor, Kimba, Barossa Valley, Mildura, Broken Hill, Dubbo finishing at Bankstown Airport. The flying was set up on world championship rules with targets at each town with a total prize purse of \$40,000. Each town used this event to be their Bicentennial celebration.

She worked alone on all administrative aspects of this project for three years appointing an Assistant four months out. She sought and secured full sponsorship for the event, a mobile pan tech as a control centre, mobile repair station and medical support team plus a coach full of international media. Nine television documentary crews covered the event as well. The competition support team came on board for the event.

Interest in ballooning soared in Mildura after the Challenge passed through, eventually leading to Mildura securing the World Championships. Balloon sales rose and the event has gone down in our aviation history as a first.

In December 1989 together with Ron Llewlyen (parachutist) achieved a World First – Night parachute jump from Ruth's balloon, VH JLX with Ruth as pilot. This flight has been recorded on the Federation Aeronautique Internationale Ballooning web page under "Firsts"  
<http://www.ballong.org/peter/jesper/cia/report17.php>.

Ruth is one of only six gas rated balloon pilots in Australia. She was the first Female gas rated balloon pilot to represent her country to compete in the prestigious Gordon Bennet Gas Balloon Race in 1999. The Australian Womens Pilots' Association recognised this aviation achievement by awarding the Harry Bonney Trophy to Ruth and her co-pilot, Jenny Houghton.

She has held various executive positions with the sport's governing body, the Australian Ballooning Federation (ABF) - President, Vice-President, Australian Delegate for CIA Ballooning Commission; founding Executive member of the NSW/ACT Balloon Association, Committee member to establish Code of Conduct.

Ruth spent seven years representing the ABF with ASAC and held the position of Vice President of the National sport aviation's industry body, the Australian Sports Aviation Confederation (ASAC).

She was the ABF representative on the National Airspace Users Council for four years early 80's, to educate General Aviation Airspace users on the capability of balloons as safe aircraft in controlled airspace. She liaised with Civil Aviation Authority in early 80's for greater

freedom for balloons to fly in controlled airspace and contributed to preparation of Rules for Commercial Balloon Operations.

Ruth attended regular meetings with Civil Aviation Safety Authority personnel covering regulations for Experimental and Sport Aviation and was the Ballooning industry representative from 1996 to 1999 on Aviation Review Committees and was appointed Chairman of the Certification Committee.

During her ballooning career, Ruth has also contributed as a juror at ballooning competitions, been flight director at both international and national ballooning events and in her early days, was an Official Observer at World Competition in York UK.

At various times during her ballooning life, her activities have attracted media coverage - thereby raising the awareness of the sport. At another level, her media skills have achieved wide coverage and exposure of individual ballooning events and affiliated charities. As CEO 2002 Year of the Outback, Ruth started ballooning in Narromine which has become an annual event. She has made flights United Kingdom, Germany, France, Austria, Canada, Switzerland, U.S.A., Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

### **Brief Ballooning Highlights**

1975: New Zealand - First balloon flight October 28.  
1976: Gained balloon licence November 28.  
1977: United Kingdom – Official Observer at World Championships.  
1978: Austria - Pilot in Austrian Alps. Flew over Cologne, Germany.  
1979: Won Australian Championships.  
1980: U.S.A. – Official at USA Championships.  
1981: Australia - 2nd place Australian Championships.  
1981: U.S.A. – Represented Australia at World Championships.  
1981: U.S.A. – Pilot at Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta.  
1983: France – Represented Australia at World Championships.  
1984: Canada – Pilot at Calgary Stampede.  
1985: U.S.A. – Co Pilot at World Championships.  
1985: Canada – First balloon flight over Ottawa.  
1985: Switzerland – First gas balloon flight + gas licence.  
1986: Switzerland – Gas balloon flight 13 hours.  
1986: Austria – Competitor in European Championships  
1986: U.S.A. – Official at USA Championships.  
1986: Canada – Pilot at Calgary Stampede.  
1986: Germany – Pilot at Pforzheim Cup.  
1987: Austria – Represented Australia at World Championships.  
1988: Canada – Pilot at Winter Olympics, Calgary.  
1988: Australia – Challenge Director for Trans-Australia Balloon Challenge. A 16 day, 6000 kilometres Endurance Event from Perth to Sydney with 10 Stopover Locations. Concept developed by Ruth E Wilson and responsible for strategic planning, logistics, financing, publicity and operations team.  
1988: Australia - Pilot for French film “Flight of the Kangaroo”.  
1988: Canada - Pilot Calgary passenger rides.  
1988: Co-pilot in Canadian Championships. Runner up.  
1989: Canada - Pilot passenger rides over Calgary.  
1989: Juror at Alberta State Balloon Championships.  
1989: Japan - Co-pilot with son Mark Wilson at World Championships.  
1989: Australia – World First Night Parachute Jump from balloon.  
1990: Japan - Bronze Medal Winner in Ladies World Cup.  
1991: Australia - Pilot for French documentary for Moet Chandon.  
1992: Japan - Pilot in Saga International Balloon Fiesta.  
1993: Canada - Pilot at Calgary Fiesta.  
1993: U.S.A. - Pilot at Thunderbird Rally, Phoenix.  
1994: U.S.A. - Pilot at Denver, Boulder.  
1994: Gas Balloon Race at Greeley, Colorado.

1995: New Zealand - Race Director & Pilot at Hamilton International Balloon Fiesta.  
1996: U.S.A. - Pilot at Albuquerque International Fiesta.  
1996: Switzerland - Gas Balloon flight Swiss Alps.  
1997: Australia - President of Australian Ballooning Federation  
1997: Australia – Jury Member at National Ballooning Championships  
1998: U.S.A. - Pilot Denver, Boulder.  
1999: Switzerland - Australian Delegate CIA Ballooning Meetings  
1999: U.S.A. - Represented Australia in the prestigious Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race in Albuquerque, USA.  
2000: Greece – Attended FAI/CIA Meeting to lobby for Worlds in Australia.  
2000: Australia - Awarded the Australian Women's Pilot Assn Mrs. Harry Bonney Trophy for long distance gas ballooning from New Mexico to Oklahoma while representing Australia in the prestigious Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race.  
2002: Ballooning Hall of Fame  
2002: Australia – Flight Director at Narromine Air Show, NSW.  
2004: Australia - Fiesta Flight Director at 16th World Championships, Mildura.  
2006: Dubai – Pilot inaugural Dubai International Balloon Festival  
2007: Australia – Flight Director at Canberra International Balloon Fiesta.