

2021 America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race

Team Bio

Team 1

Crew Nationality: USA

Balloon Name: *Foxtrot Charlie*

Balloon Registration: N505HY

Pilots:

Name	Barbara Fricke	Peter Cuneo
Hometown	Albuquerque	Albuquerque
Occupation	Retired professor, UNM School of Medicine	Retired electro-optical engineer, Lockheed-Martin Corp.
Aircraft ratings/flight hours	Licensed in hot air balloons in 1989 and gas balloons in 1996. Has more than 2,200 hours in hot air and gas balloons, including more than 1,200 hours in gas balloons and 300+ hours in airplanes.	Licensed in hot air balloons in 1989 and in gas balloons in 1995. Has more than 2,000 hours in hot air and gas balloons, including more than 1,000 hours in gas balloons.
America's Challenge race history	20 (1997-98, 2000-07, 2009-17, 2019); flew as a non-competitor in 2002. Won in 2001, 2010, 2013, and 2016	20 (1996-98, 2000-01, 2003-07, 2009-17, 2019). Won in 2001, 2010, 2013, and 2016
Gordon Bennett history	8 (2004, 2006, 2008-09, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) – Best finish: 3 rd (2008). Scheduled to compete in 2021 but cancelled due to COVID situation.	8 (2004, 2006, 2008-09, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) – Best finish: 3 rd (2008). Scheduled to compete in 2021 but cancelled due to COVID situation.
Other notable flights/records		Flew with the late British balloonist Julian Nott for 19 hours and up to 18,000 ft MSL in an experimental, clear plastic poly balloon to test a liquid hydrogen mid-air refueling system. (Only flight he's done wearing a parachute!)
Awards:	Albuquerque Aerostat Ascension Association (AAAA) Bob Ruppenthal Education Award, 1994, AAAA Sid Cutter Award, 2006, former president of AAAA (1995-6); a member of the AIBF Board of Directors and current chair of the Balloon Federation of America Gas Division Board of Directors.	Past Chair and secretary, Balloon Federation of America Gas Balloon Division and Vice-President of the Albuquerque Aerostat Ascension Association (AAAA). AAAA Sid Cutter Award recipient. Co-authored the most recent edition of the gas ballooning text <i>Gone with the Wind</i> with renowned German balloonists Astrid Gerhardt, Walter Muller, and Gerhard Hurck.

Comments: Barbara and Peter are the only team to achieve four America's Challenge wins *as* a team (the late Richard Abruzzo had five wins, but with four different co-pilots). They've also been runners-up four times (2003, 2005, 2007, 2011). They have flown balloons in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, and Switzerland, and throughout the United States. They have a growing reputation as balloon builders, having built the gondola of their gas balloon and three hot air balloon envelopes; their latest balloon is a small two-person "hopper" which can be flown with a chair or a regular basket. They also recently built a radio-controlled balloon system.

Peter assisted fellow America's Challenge competitor Bert Padelt in developing an American-built hydrogen balloon system. He was one of the technical advisors – along with John Kugler and Mark Sullivan – on the Two Eagles transpacific balloon flight and was slated to be Troy's co-pilot on an earlier transpacific mission, *Celestial Eagle*, which was unable to launch due to weather conditions.

Peter and Barbara have some unusual ballooning experiences. In 2001, they participated in an experimental migration study by carrying ten squawking geese in their gas balloon, which they say has to be some kind of record for the number of geese flown in a balloon. The study was featured on ABC's "20/20." In November 2002, Peter flew on a smoke balloon flight that was a re-enactment of a 1975 flight over the Nazca Lines in Peru (Barbara also participated in the flight, but on the ground.)

In addition to their own ballooning accomplishments, Barbara and Peter are highly respected as flight instructors and educators who freely and often without recognition help fellow balloonists with knowledge and technical expertise, donations, and equipment. Barbara, for many years, has played a key role on the AAAA Education Committee, teaching and helping to coordinate ground schools and safety seminars.