

We rose higher and higher. Up we went until we could go no farther. We had reached the end of the rope. The Hot Air Balloon was tethered to the ground 60 feet below. However, we were in the air, standing in a balloon, splashed with reds, blues, yellows and some green, too. Exhilarating!

Actually, sixty feet up was just fine with me. I had always rejoiced when my feet touched the solid green, brown and sometimes white ground. A solid splash of color works fine mingled with dirt, cement, and even weeds.

The year of the take-off was mid-1985 when our offspring were running toward Middle School. Their feet were not firmly planted on the ground. They were flying high with hormones one hour and crashing to terra firma the next. This day, though, was a high flying, grab your hands and run for it, kind of day. Our ticket to ride fluttered in the breeze as fingers held on to it tightly. My stomach tightened as the three children and my husband and I literally climbed aboard. We were not on our own in this little cabin without a roof...unless you counted the swirl of color overhead. A lady pilot manned the gas controls sending us higher by increasing the volume of gas or by easing us down to earth by releasing the amount of gas when we were to "Land".

The balloon was kept afloat by that power of the blast of hot air shooting from the middle of the basket cabin toward the top of the cavity. The people below us looked like large ants, since we were not too high off the ground. Each person there was counting the minutes of our ride as if it would hurry our encounter with the elements. They wanted their ride before the winds started and blew us up and down and sideways with every down draft. With wind comes no ride.

Our ten minutes was over too quickly. In no time we hovered a foot above ground waiting the next time the basket turned toward the ladder so that the assistants could stop the turning and help us each out of confinement. Before my stomach joined my heartbeat, the next ticket holders were dashing toward us for their ride in the HOT AIR BALLOON.

I stood with shaky legs and watched as they, too, rose up into the air. I was sure that we had gained more height than they did, however the rope was the same length. It must have been my imagination. I wanted "do-overs" but that was not going to happen. "That was great," says our son. "Let's do it again." The girls agreed as we made our way to the car where we could only gain speed and distance on the ground. Airborne was a no-no.

Watching hot air balloons spread eagle and fill with the hot air is as colorful as watching quilts being hung for a show. Splashes of color are readied. They first cover the ground and then fill the otherwise blue sky or the gray ceiling of an auditorium. Patterns rise out of the ground as the balloons take shape. These high event rides are mostly achieved early mornings. Then color overrides the sky with jewel tone bright patterns, squares, stripes, bold messages of courage conquering the great outdoors.

Quilting, like riding in hot air balloons, instills in us power to reach new heights. Have fun with your ticket to ride. Let the possibilities surface and the passions swirl.

Lana Russ

