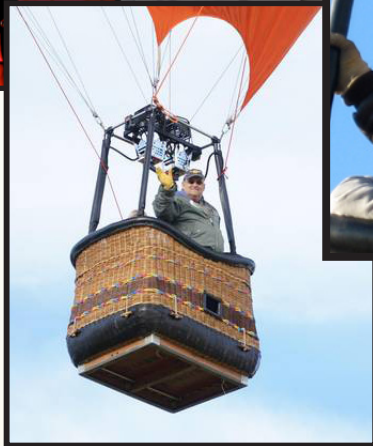


# IFEA PRESIDENT'S LETTER

BY STEVEN WOOD SCHMADER, CFEF

“The greatest ride that you will ever take, is the one you were least expecting.”

- Scott Spencer  
1954 - 2020



In the hot-air ballooning community, when a beloved pilot passes away, a tribute flight is launched, with a single balloon floating slowly into the sky, silhouetted against the breaking rays of the morning sunrise, and trailing below it three long black banners to express both the sorrow and grieving of those left behind, but also the joy and special memories that they have shared with so many and left behind for all of us to continue building upon, in honor of their lifetime of dedication to friends, family and community.

On Friday, January 31st, I lost my best friend and the hot-air ballooning community, as well as the Boise, Idaho community, lost perhaps the most remarkable and talented aerial ambassador in our global industry. After a cumulative career of nearly 50-years of flying, including as the lead corporate pilot for Walt Disney, Coca-Cola, Kellogg and many other leading, family-targeted organizations, as well as the founder of the Spirit of Boise Balloon Classic (which began 30 years ago as part of the original Boise River Festival) Scott left us peacefully, after a long and hard-fought battle with Stage 4 colon cancer. He leaves behind an enviable entourage – by any measure – of loving family, friends and professional colleagues, who were all fortunate to be touched by his life and time with us, and who have all been changed for the better, because of him.

Scott liked to say that ‘the greatest ride that you will ever take, is the one you were least expecting’. If that is true, then he is now on the forever flight that he so deserves and I thank him for letting me be a part of the grand launch that he provided to us all.

Thank you for letting me share a brief tribute with all of you, who help to make possible the same remarkable and lasting impacts in your own lives and communities around the world.