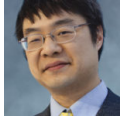


What happens when a hot air balloon lands in your yard?

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Some time ago, one of my colleagues shared a photo of a balloon in his neighbor's front yard. But not just a regular party balloon. A hot air balloon.

At around sunset of a pleasant summer day, you can occasionally spot a hot air balloon floating above the Sammamish Valley between Redmond and Woodinville. But what goes up must come down, and since hot air balloons are at the mercy of the winds, they sometimes need to improvise a landing site.

If a hot air balloon lands on your property, tradition dictates that you receive a bottle of champagne as a gesture of apology and goodwill. This tradition dates back to the first manned untethered hot air balloon flight.

On November 21, 1783, Jean Franoise Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis Franoise-Laurent D'Arlandes packed champagne for the first manned untethered hot air balloon flight, and it came in handy, for according to legend, when they landed in a vineyard, the local farmers were rather suspicious of this fire-breathing dragon that descended from the sky and were prepared to attack it, as well as the two demons who rode it down from the heavens. To defuse a volatile situation, the two pilots shared their champagne with the farmers.

Thus began the hot air ballooning tradition of celebrating a successful voyage with champagne, as well as offering a bottle of champagne to the owner of the property your balloon lands in.

Another of my colleague's neighbors (not the one whose property the balloon landed in) had young children, who were so excited by the balloon in the neighbor's yard that it was impossible to get them to bed.

I do not know whether anybody excitedly shouted, "I can see my house from here!"

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