

Full of hot air? Then roadtrip to Statesville

By **KELLY RHODES**
Arts Editor

Statesville, N.C., is finally being put on the map.

No, no, not literally. It's been there for many, many years, at the intersection of interstates 77 and 40, just 40 miles north of Charlotte, 45 miles west of Winston-Salem and 30 miles east of Hickory.

What's putting Statesville on the map is this little party we have there every year called the National Balloon Rally. This weekend 120 balloonists from all over

the country will be taking off and landing at the Statesville Municipal Airport.

Statesville is home to The Balloon Works, one of very few places in the United States that makes hot-air balloons. The rally began 15 years ago with only a few balloons for a single lift-off and a tour of the factory. Now, corporate sponsorship has stepped in to create the Piedmont Airlines National Balloon Rally sponsored by Coca-Cola.

This year, the rally begins this Friday at 3 p.m. when the gates open. The first ascension will be at 5:30 p.m. after the U.S. Navy Leapfrogs jump. Other ascensions will be both Saturday and Sunday

at 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Most of the ascensions are "fly-in's and fly-out's," which means half of the balloons will be launching from the airport and others will be flying in from all over Iredell County.

Not only are there balloons to see — including the beautiful new North Carolina balloon — there are more than 60 arts, crafts and food booths. Souvenirs range from official Balloon Rally T-shirts from the Statesville Chamber of Commerce to balloon pins from collectors from all over to drinks sold by the Statesville Greyhound Grenadier Band.

Tethered balloon rides, helicopter rides, dunking booths, a cheer-leading exhibition, major military

aircraft and equipment displays and a "Scouting for a Natural" pitching booth to find America's fastest amateur pitcher will also be available all weekend.

Scheduled events are a 5K run, the Holiday Inn Air Show, the Leapfrogs, The Hollanders, the Johnny Cash Show (yes, the real Johnny Cash, with June Carter and John Carter Cash), Shagtime, the Spontanes and the Showmen.

If you want to "go up," you can purchase rides from balloonists for around \$100. The balloonists also will be competing for more than \$10,000 in prizes and money for various balloon-related contests.

Of course, all this fun crammed into one weekend will cost you. On Friday, admission is by carload

at \$5 per car. On Saturday and Sunday, admission is \$5 per person. Kids can get in two for \$5. The Johnny Cash concert, which is the only thing that isn't free once you're inside, is \$8 per person.

Statesville is about two hours away from Chapel Hill. The easiest route is to take N.C. 54 west to I-85 south. In Greensboro, get on I-40 west until you get to the Stamey Farm exit. Big signs should lead directly to the front gate.

The Balloon Rally is a road trip that will be fun making. I've been going to the rally for more than five years, and I'm sure not going to miss this one. If you've never seen a balloon ascend, or if you've never seen many ascend at the same time, you'll enjoy the trip.

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Violins just don't belong in devils' hands

By **ELIZABETH ELLEN**
Staff Columnist

Farm machinery in the fields is a good thing. Farm machinery on a highway is a pain in the butt.

There is an appropriate place for nearly everything, and a time to every purpose under heaven. (This last part is a quote. I didn't make it up.) On the road is not a proper place for harvesters, and I cannot come up with a decent time for their snail's pace passage down highways, either. Why can't modern technology devise tractors that are truly portable, i.e. can be folded up and carried on a truck or something? Or just left in the fields all the time eventually to biodegrade?

Speaking of appropriate times and places, what about this business of saying the Pledge of Allegiance in school? It's a mystery to me why many of the same people who feel school is a great

place for prayer and symbolic acts of patriotism do not feel that a public school is a legitimate avenue for addressing real and pressing issues like teenage sexuality. These same people want parents to have more control over their children's moral upbringing.

That is all fine and well, but patriotism and religion are moral issues, too. If parents can teach sexuality in the homes so well, why can they not hang an American flag in the kitchen and say the pledge every morning while the toast is toasting?

In Nepal, hanging a national flag in one's kitchen would produce quite a different visual image. And heaven only knows what they toast. Of all the national flags pictured in the 1988 World Almanac, Nepal's is the only one which is neither rectangular nor square. Just for fun, the Official Nepal Flag Committee devised a

national emblem that looks like two triangles stacked.

Geographically, Nepal is about the same size as North Carolina, and its capital is Katmandu. If Bob Seeger ever gets out of here, that's where he's going. Even if it's the last thing he ever does.

Things in Nepal are looking up. Polygamy, child marriage and the caste system have been officially abolished since 1963. The next step is outlawing harvesters on the roads.

In fact, things are looking up all over the world today, or at least they should be. Today Mercury reaches longest elongation — 27 (count 'em) degrees east of the sun. Let's have a party!

While folks are busy planning the religious curricula for the public schools and recovering from Mercury Elongation Party hangovers, I wish someone would consider the issue of just what musical instrument the devil plays. The fact that Beelzebub is so often portrayed as a violinist is something I find mystifying and disturbing. The tradition spans time and cultures, even from Tartini to Charlie Daniels.

Tartini was an 18th-century Italian composer whose Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor is subtitled "Devil's Trill." Supposedly, Tartini was living in Assisi in a monastery, of all places, when the devil came to him in a vision. The sonata Tartini wrote is a rough approximation of the piece Satan played for him on that fateful evening.

I do not know if the devil visited Charlie Daniels in Georgia, but "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" likewise depicts the Evil One's instrumental preference as the smallest member of the string family.

Why a violin? Granted, it is a difficult instrument to play, and a rank amateur can sound like evil incarnate. And yes, rubbing horsehair over cat gut does sound slightly sadistic. But the devil is not only depicted as a violinist, but as a fantastic violinist. Tartini claimed that "Devil's Trill" was his finest sonata, but still infinitely inferior to what he heard in his vision. The competition between the devil and Johnny in "Georgia" is supposedly stiff. We're not talking about a "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" violinist here.

Most instruments sound horrible in incapable hands, anyway. Violinists have no monopoly on ugly sounds. Why doesn't the devil play the French horn? This instrument is overqualified to produce ungodly sounds, and there are plenty of bad horn players around. Why do violinists take all the flak?

Let's put blame where blame is due. What probably drove both Tartini and Daniels to put a violin in the devil's hand was driving behind farm machinery (or its cultural equivalent in Tartini's case) while on the way to celebrate a planetary elongation, possibly Mercury's. Seems to me to be a reasonable reaction to an unreasonable situation. Some things are, after all, more important even than agriculture.

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