



Submitted photo
Bolstad Avenue beach approach is full of crowds and vendor tents during the Washington State International Kite Festival.



Photo by Lynette Rae McAdams
The wonder of kites appeals to all ages during the Washington State International Kite Festival.



Photo by Natalie St. John
Father and son John Stefan, left, and Doug Stefan worked together to launch a huge – and very stubborn – kite during the kite festival. Even a tiny bit of sand can upset the balance if it gets inside the kite.



Aerial battles, mystery ballets, mass ascensions, and teddy bears parachuting from the sky. It must be the Washington State International Kite Festival, and it packs a lot of fun and color into a few days. One of the area's most popular gatherings, the kite festival is in its 35th year, with events, sights, competitions, and workshops for young and old.

Story by DWIGHT CASWELL

The festival is free; the only charge is \$2 for parking close to the beach, if you don't want to walk or take the trolley from downtown. There are plenty of opportunities for the public to participate, and if you want to fly your kite (or buy one there and fly it) simply sign up for free at the registration tent.

The festival started Monday and continues

through Sunday. Thursday's festivities begins at 9:30 a.m. with the handcrafted kite competition. Categories of kites include arches, trains and centipedes, multi-line or novelty kites, fighter kites, and other designs more numerous than a non-kiter can imagine. Next up is the "mega fly" of cellular kites. These are traditional and not-so-traditional box kites, as well as star kites and a variety of other designs. Anybody who registers can enter this one.

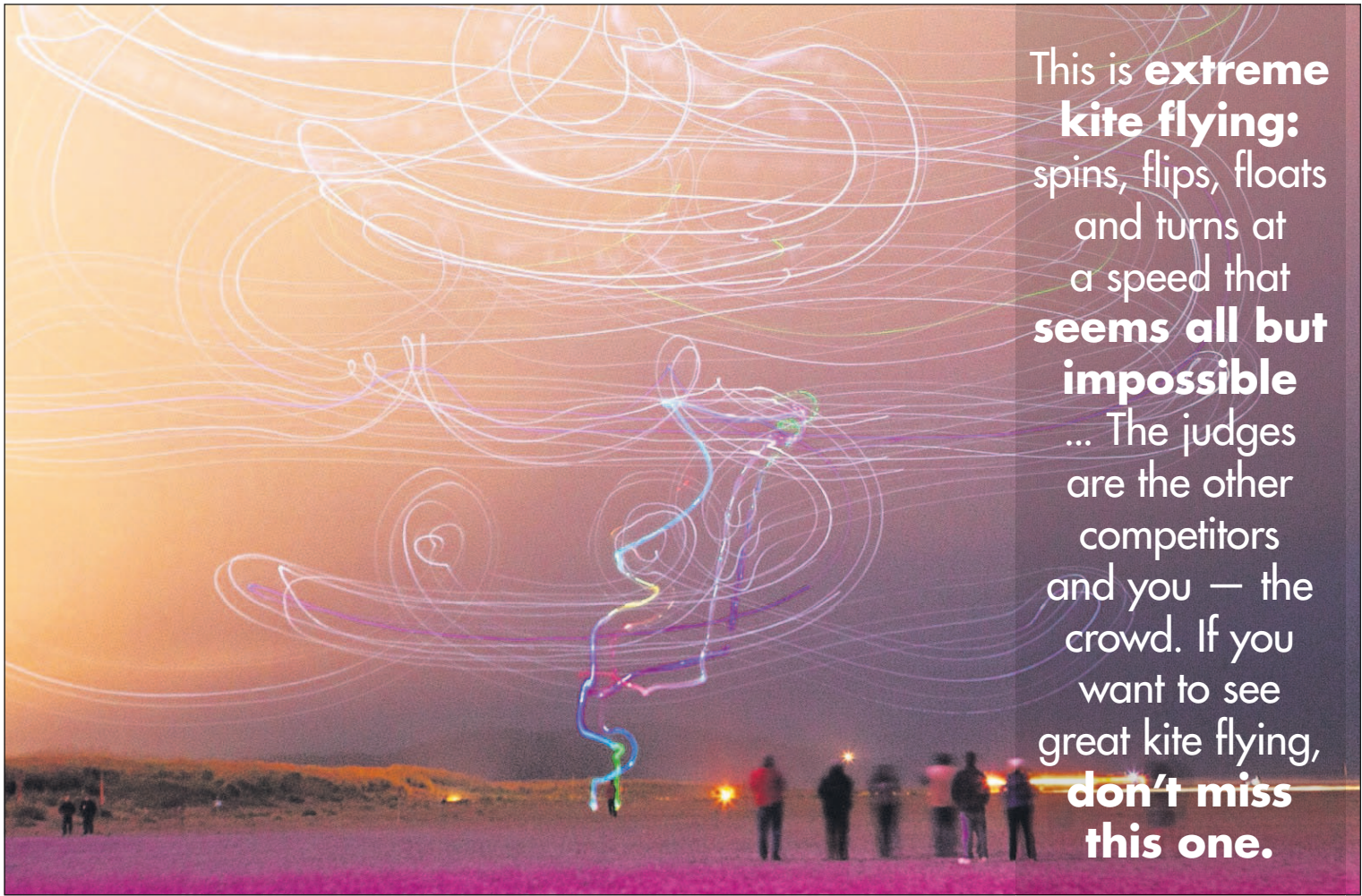
On both Friday and Saturday you can see a variety of sport kite events for individuals and teams. A sport kite, also known as a stunt kite, is a kite maneuvered by two or more lines so that it can perform a variety of compulsory figures, as in ice skating competitions, with names like Pair Square Cuts and Land, Arch de Triomphe, and Cascade. These events are not for beginners; competitors from all over the Northwest have qualified in other

Submitted photo
There are tons of events at the kite festival to enjoy, including sport kite competitions, mass ascensions, a kite ballet, a lighted kite night fly, kids' activities, the parade of colors and more.

kite events for this competition.

There are also mass ascensions of kites on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. These colorful flies are also open to the public, and if your kite is still in the air after an hour, you are awarded a pin and the boasting rights that go with it. Friday sees ascensions of cellular kites and triangular "Deltas and Delta Derivatives." On Saturday it's flat and bowed kites. Flat kites come in many shapes; bowed kites are the ones that look like an inverted "U." Sunday's mass ascension is of sparless soft kites.

Friday is one highlight after another. Following the sport kite events and mass ascension is the junior competition for fliers 14 and under with kites controlled by two lines. Next is a ballet.



A 25-second exposure shows the path of four lighted kites that dipped and swooped in time to music during a synchronized performance during last year's lighted kite night fly.

Ballet? you ask. At a kite festival? Holli Fridle-Kemmer, director of the World Kite Museum, explains, "This event is improvisational. Each competitor must perform certain maneuvers, but doesn't know the music or compulsory figures until the competition starts." It's the jazz of kite flying and it's not an official competition. It's all for fun, and a real crowd pleaser.

The last Friday event is a lighted kite night fly (participants must register by 4 p.m.), followed by fireworks at 9:45 p.m.

Saturday ramps up with more sport kite events and, at 12:30 p.m., a spectacular performance by the Long Beach Bears. Skilled skydivers, these bears train for months to perfect their routines. The 15 daring bears who graduate from this rigorous schooling will parachute earthward looking forward to a long retirement in the arms of a child 9 or younger. Children wishing to do their part by catching the bears must register between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. for a drawing to decide the lucky teddy bear catchers.

The parade of colors — the first 100 registrants with a banner or kite — takes place along the boardwalk immediately after the bears have secured their new buddies. Kids will meet the Fairy Godmother of the Parade, and afterwards they can join the children's kite-making class. Or not. They may choose the Rokkaku Challenge instead, which starts at 1:30 p.m.

In 13th century Japan there was a Rokkaku clan

More info

The entrance to the Washington State International Kite Festival is at the Bolstad Avenue beach approach in Long Beach, Washington. You can download a program at kitefestival.com or pick one up at the World Kite Museum, 303 Sid Snyder Drive in Long Beach, or call 360-642-4020.



of Samurai, and the traditional "Rokkaku dako" is a six-sided fighter kite made with bamboo spars and washi paper, often decorated with the face of a famous Samurai. The Rokkaku Challenge features teams of at least three members flying traditional hexagonal kites. Customarily these kites are flown with strings coated with ground glass or sharp objects to cut the lines of opponents' kites. Rather than having a lot of dangerous debris on a beach full of people, fliers win by snaring opponent kites and bringing them to the ground — the kite-flying equivalent of bringing your enemy to his knees. Not "enemy," though. The emphasis, the Kite Festival program says, "Is on fun more than winning." So all those guys and gals out there with the Samurai fight-

This is **extreme kite flying:** spins, flips, floats and turns at a speed that **seems all but impossible** ... The judges are the other competitors and you — the crowd. If you want to see great kite flying, **don't miss this one.**

Photo by Natalie St. John

ing kites? Just having a good time.

Saturday concludes with an Auction and Tribute, an important fundraiser for the World Kite Museum and the festival itself. Keep the kites flying by purchasing your \$25 ticket at the museum (only 200 sold), and if you're feeling inspired, join the others at the Elks Lodge who are wearing the suggested "cellular kite theme outfit." Later watch more fireworks over the beach.

Sunday starts with more sport kite events. The big one is the "Hot Tricks" competition from 1:30 to 3 p.m. This is extreme kite flying: spins, flips, floats and turns at a speed that seems all but impossible. Two flyers go head-to-head, flying a brief timed flight to music. The winner of each round goes on to the next in this fast-paced event, and the judges are the other competitors and you — the crowd. If you want to see great kite flying, don't miss this one.

For those of you who miss beach bugging, it's back. These buggies and "blokarts" are wind-powered vehicles towed by large cellular "power kites." Much like the chutes used for paragliding, these kites hold enough air to pull a small vehicle and rider down the beach at a pretty good clip. After years of discussion, the Washington State Parks Commission has decided to allow beach buggies on Long Beach north of Cranberry Road. This is three miles north of the kite flying action, but worth the drive to see the blokarts blow by.