

Charles (Bill) Cunningham

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[REDACTED]
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This statement was not written by the individual but was written by this office while interviewing him on a phone call.

08/08/2023 @1000 – The pilot informed us that at about 1600 on both days (Saturday & Sunday) there was a briefing of events for the volunteers on the procedures that would be utilized throughout the event for loading/unloading passengers as well as their individual responsibilities. The pilot stated that between 1800-1900, before the event started, the balloons are assembled, and the tethers were attached and secured. During the event, the volunteers assisted with loading/unloading of passengers from both the front of the basket and the rear of the basket. The intention is for a 1 for 1 swapping to maintain a balanced state. As the pilot recalled, Mr. Danvers was their volunteering both Saturday and Sunday so had a good amount of experience with the process. At the time of the accident the Pilot did not recall how many people were onboard the balloon exactly but as per other witness statements that number was 6. The pilot stated that when the balloon reached the ground the passengers started to unboard without new passengers taking their place. Once the 4th passenger got off, the pilot felt the balloon start rise and called out "Clear, Watch the Ropes". He stated that he did not see or hear anyone hanging from the basket and calmly notified the remaining two passenger to stay calm and they will be back to the ground momentarily. Seconds later the pilot recalls feeling a slight "jerk" of the basket and when he leaned over to see what had happened that was when he noticed Mr. Danvers on the ground.