

# TROY WAS CALM

**EQUANIMITY, PLANNING, AMBITION, COMPETENCE. PUT ALL THAT TOGETHER AND YOU HAVE THE INGREDIENTS FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL RECORD FLIGHT BY TROY BRADLEY OF ALBUQUERQUE.**

BY NICK SAUM

Remember Troy and Richard Abruzzo had successfully crossed the Atlantic in September of 1992 in the Chrysler Transatlantic Challenge race along with four other Rozier balloons and set an absolute duration record for balloons.

Then, earlier this year, Troy set a distance and duration record in the AM-1 Rozier which he had designed and built.

Troy had called me and asked if I would be his observer for an altitude record attempt in his AM-1 Rozier balloon. I had mixed emotions.

I've known him since he began flying in the Denver area and we were good friends. He helped me build my first Rozier balloon and I gave him as much help as I could in designing his balloon.

The fact that Troy might break my record (and I knew he was a very tough competitor) caused only a momentary hesitation on my part. It made me a credible official observer in the eyes of the NAA and FAI.

The morning of June 15th in Albuquerque was beautiful, chilly, and calm. A perfect day for a quick altitude flight. We left the house at 4:15 and headed for Polk Middle School on the south side of Albuquerque. There was the usual confused gathering of the clan, getting coffee, driving around, hopefully gassing cars. Troy was calm and we were prepared.

While we waited for the helium truck to arrive, Troy remained calm. He was talking to the press and predicted (not

without some later-confessed internal qualms) that he ought to fly about one and one-half hours, hoped to get to 17,000 feet, and should land somewhere near Moriarty, New Mexico (on the other side of the Monzano Mountains).

The helium truck arrived at the school. We laid out the balloon in preparation for the inflation. The helium truck driver began positioning the truck to back up to the balloon and sank it. I mean, it was there for the duration. We moved the balloon back to the truck. It didn't weigh much. Troy was calm.



It was now 5:10 a.m. and we were ready to begin the inflation. Troy had searched frantically the day or so before the flight for a diffuser, expecting there would not be one on the truck. However, the truck driver had not brought even brought an inflation hose. This resulted in a couple of phone calls—one for an inflation hose and one for a tow truck. Troy was calm.

The inflation hose arrived at about 6 a.m. and the inflation began at 6:21. If you have been around gas balloons, you know that there have been advances in the technique of filling a bal-

loon. The inflation was stopped at 6:40 (19 minutes) and it had not been a hurry-up job. A side-fill appendix on this white gas balloon (with a black skirt to hold the heat) made the inflation an easy and quick matter.

The ensuing equipment check was enlightening.

"Lightening" might be a more operative term. The basket is an old Solo Systems basket Troy bought a long time ago for just this purpose. It weighs nothing. It could have been made by Rubbermaid. Troy, of course, weighs nothing. But, for this flight, he had lost 12 pounds in a couple of weeks.

Oxygen? Of course. Troy had a mask and regulator but the source of the oxygen was different. He had enlisted a doctor who has worked with mountain climbers for years. Troy had a sack of oxygen hanging on the side of the basket. (Shades of Tracy Barnes who did the same thing on his world record flight years ago).

Radio? A hand-held. Barograph? A very small, light, electronic barograph. Slickest one I've seen. It served as an altimeter during the flight, but why bother? Troy was going as high as the system could possibly go. When you run out of ballast, you stop. Very simple flight plan.

The burner was light. The fuel system was light and probably no more than a pound over the absolute minimum needed to fly the balloon back to the ground from altitude.

Drag line? If you call a long load tape a drag line, you are in a



different league. The plan was to put his parachute (extremely light weight) in a sack and tie that to the "drag line". Ingenious and light.

Fifteen minutes after the inflation stopped, Troy was on the radio to ABQ Approach Control from 1,000 feet after an uneventful and perfect launch. I must say here that, "Troy was calm." This equanimity thing was a joy to behold.

Less than an hour after launch we were on the east side of the Sandia and Monzano Mountains and had the balloon in sight. The truck blew up. I was *not* calm. We changed vehicles, blazed down the interstate, balloon still in sight, and left all the other vehicles in the dust. I was sure from the radio communication that Troy was calm.

At 8:18, Troy was on the ground. We arrived to find—you guessed it—Troy was calm. The landing had been reasonably quick, the protection of the bas-

ket been reasonably minimal but adequate, and the balloon and Troy were both in fine shape.

As to his predictions? Well, he went 38 miles, just four miles southeast of Moriarty, New Mexico (he missed his estimate by four miles). He flew an hour and 24 minutes (six minutes shy of his estimate).

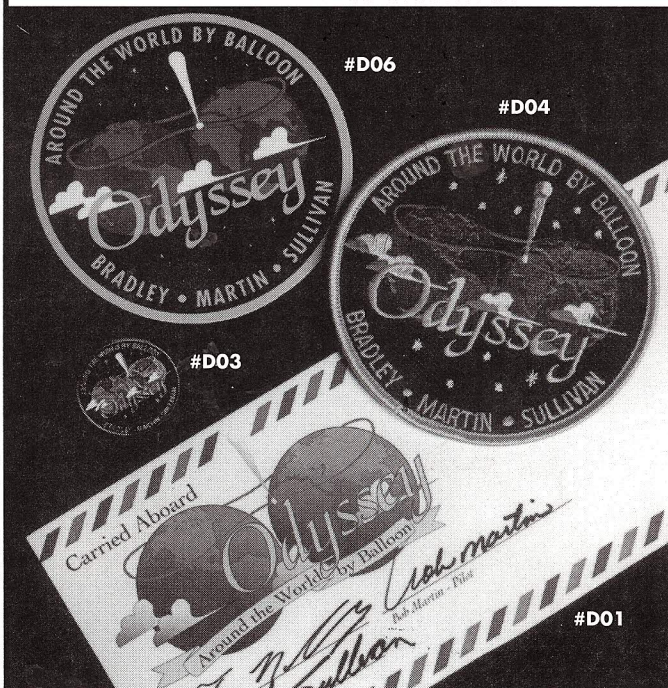
The most important part, he went to 5,200 meters which is an uncorrected 17,060 feet. That was enough to set the AM-1 world record. It also should set the AM-7 through AM-15 records if they have not been broken since Don Cameron set them in 1990.

What's next for this amazing aeronaut? Well, he has an around-the-world flight well past the planning stages with Bob Martin and Mark Sullivan. It is innovative and should work.

Then, of course, there's always the moon.



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