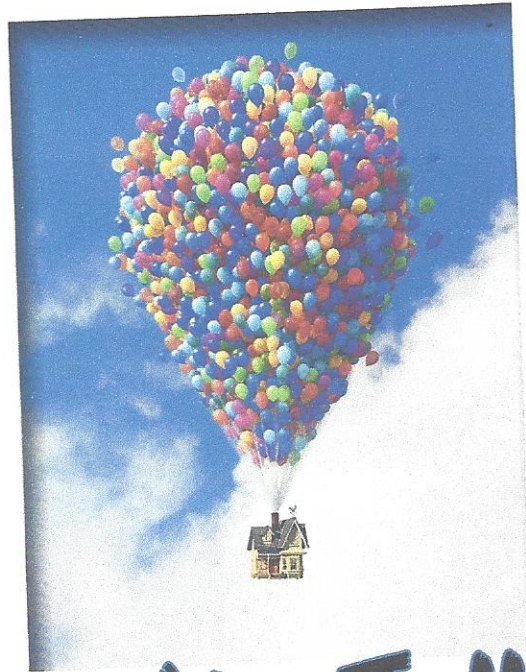
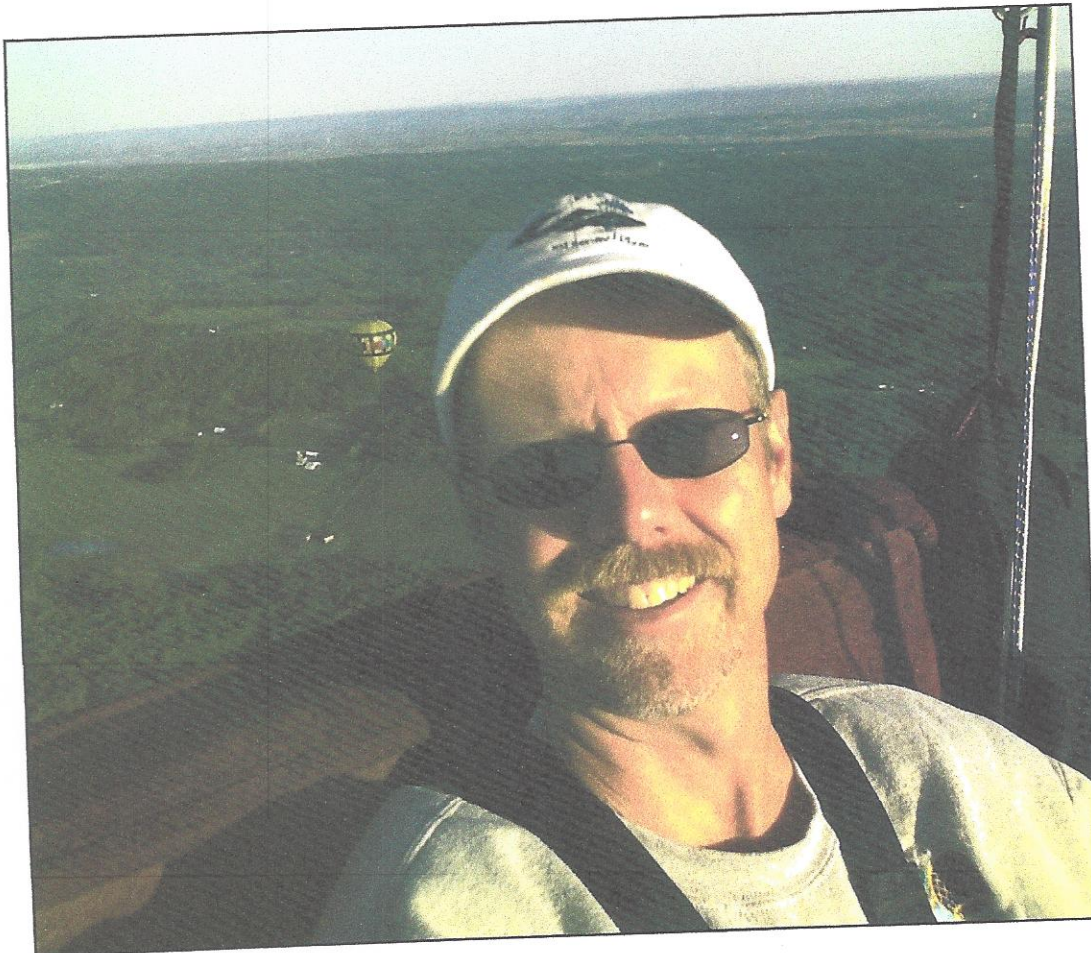


UP TAKE TWO



Which Way to Paradise Falls? A Cluster Ballooning Adventure

by Troy Bradley



World record setting balloonist Troy Bradley smiles from the Lay-Z-Boy pilot seat of Disney/Pixar's UP cluster balloon system. This was Bradley's first flight under a cluster.

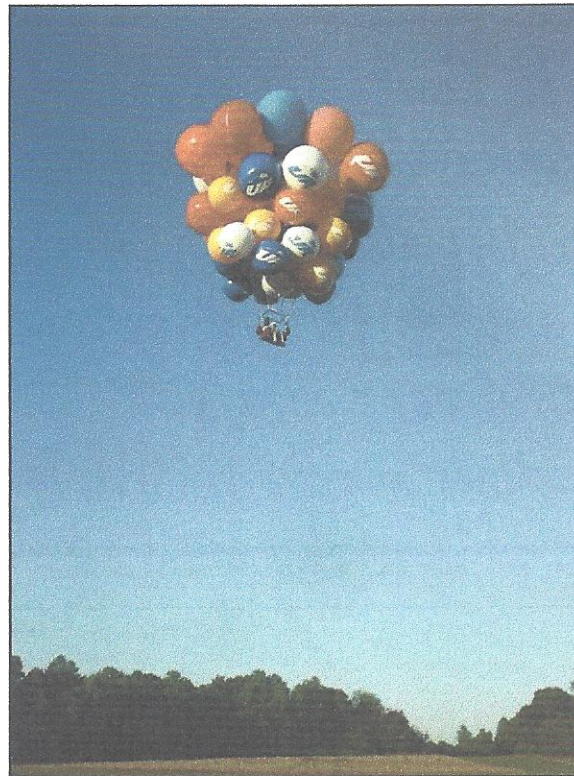
In Disney/Pixar's newest release UP the main character, Carl Fredricksen, attaches thousands of party balloons to his house creating enough lift to break free of the foundation; launching himself, the house, and a stowaway skyward. Flying through thunderstorms that would have made Fossett quiver, he arrives safely near his intended destination of Paradise Falls, South America. It is a wonderful adventure that will surely ignite many a child's imagination of floating effortlessly with nothing more than a cluster of brightly colored balloons.

Having flown gas balloons for nearly a quarter century I truly appreciate the beauty of silent flight. However, being more of a traditionalist, flying under a cluster balloon system wasn't something I ever gave much thought to. As a child my inspirations came from men like Ben Abruzzo and Maxi Anderson, not Lawnchair Larry! Still, having launched Jonathan Trappe on his two cluster flights, I must admit there is something magical about watching a cluster system drift free of any tethers to the earth.

Through our national tour to promote the movie's opening Whit Landvater, Beth Wright-Smith, Jonathan, and I; along with hundreds of amazing volunteers, got to play with cluster balloon systems on tether. Our gondola was a carbon fiber replica of Carl's La-Z-

Boy: lightweight, strong, and actually airworthy. Strapped into the chair; media representatives, VIPs, contest winners, and crew were all able to briefly share this childlike dream of silent flight under a colorful bouquet. We took our little traveling carnival ride to 19 major US cities and one very small town. The very small town, Landis Store, Pennsylvania, is where it got interesting for me. We went there to free fly the system.

Disney/Pixar decided to add a free flight to our contract of promotional tethers, and wanted to shoot video of the flight somewhere within 200 miles of NYC. I contacted Bert and Joanie Padelt, owners of Best Aviation, who graciously offered their flight area as the scenic backdrop for my flight. We assembled our team in Pennsylvania on May 14th and began to watch the weather. The weather looked as though it would cooperate provided we waited for a strong high pressure that was forecast to encase the area several days later. There is one thing I have learned through all of my record setting; if you wait long enough, Mother Nature will provide the right weather. However, unlike my record setting flights, we had less than a week to perform this flight. As the days passed and the forecasts were updated one day kept looking very promising; May 19th. The morning of the 19th proved to be absolutely ideal for flying! The whole

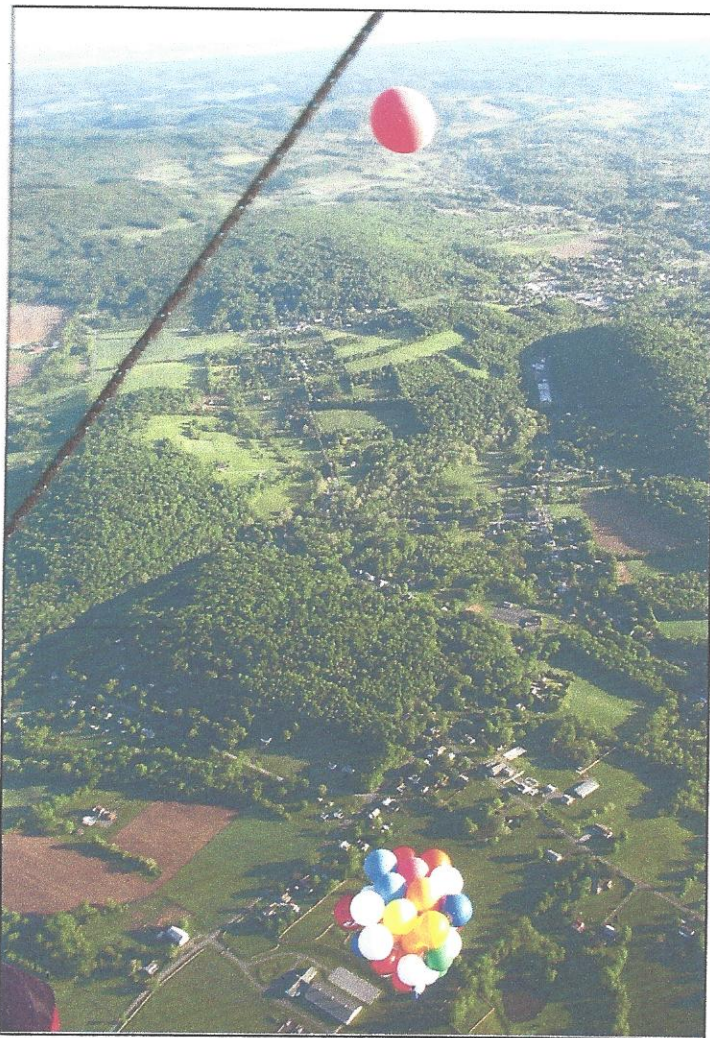


Above: Troy Bradley takes Carl Fredricksen's Lay-Z-Boy for its first and only true freeflight above the Pennsylvania countryside.

Center: The view from the pilot's seat - literally!

Below: The cluster balloon has an unmistakable shadow.

I still believe cluster balloons are just a stunt... [but] it was still a thrill to fly a different gas system with a very comfy gondola...



A rare view. This shot, taken from Bert Padelt's hot air 'chase' balloon from above Bradley's cluster, captures the release of one of the gas cell balloons just as Bradley begins his descent to land.

This free flight of the UP cluster system was filmed by Disney/Pixar though we're not sure how they intend to use it. Who knows? Perhaps when the movie is released on Blu-ray and DVD this video vignette will be one of the many "extras?"

area was forecasting surface winds variable at 2 knots until noon.

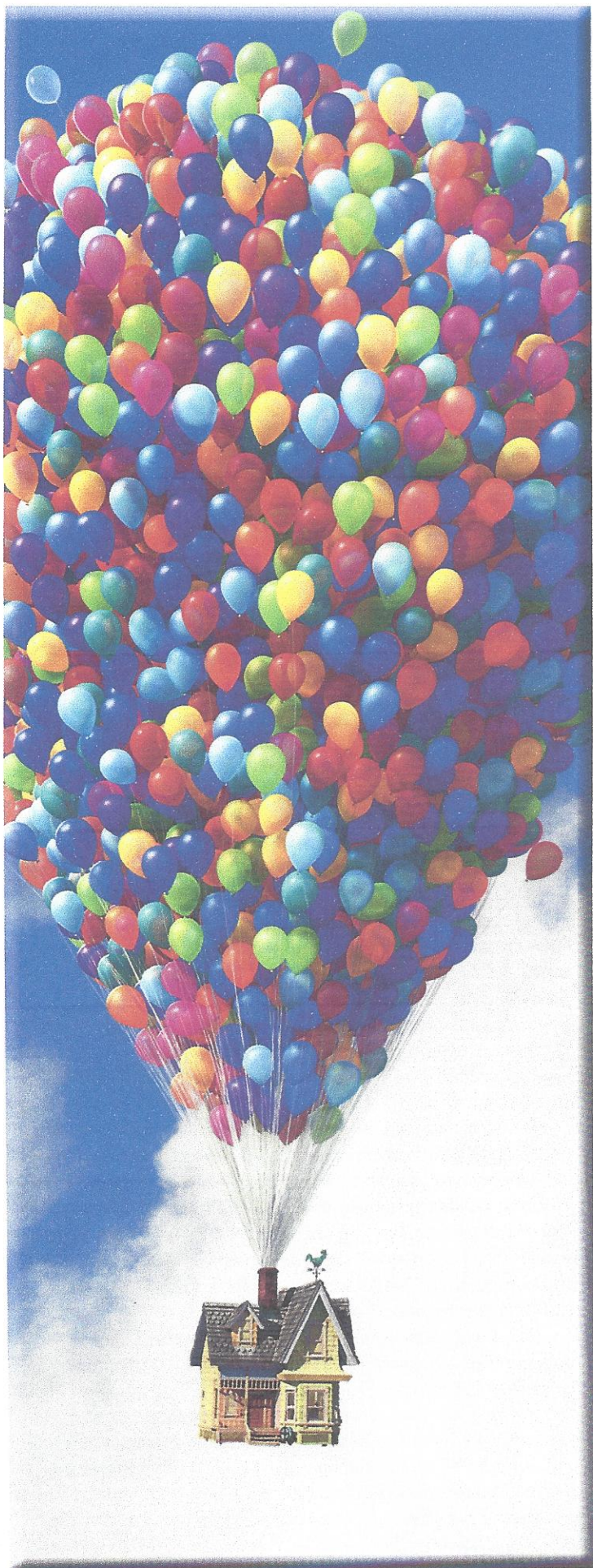
Days before, we had positioned all of our helium cylinders at Wilhem Roscher's farm/airstrip. Wilhem is an 80 year old retired airline captain and was very enthusiastic about our novel form of flight. Given the opportunity, much like Carl Fredricksen, I am sure he would have flown off with our balloons, leaving me to chase rather than pilot. In the early predawn hours all of the crew arrived to begin the time consuming process of filling the cluster balloons and assembling the system. With an enthusiastic group of volunteers everything went very smoothly and we were inflated prior to sunrise.

After a few tether rides and many practice shots for the cameraman, I ascended in the chair for its maiden free flight. A nice gentle ascent allowed for Bert to easily follow in his hot air balloon with Nidia Ramirez and Wilhem aboard. Quite comfortable in my La-Z-Boy perch, I kept a gentle ascent rate of 60 – 150 fpm. Bert expertly used the winds to play hare and hound with me never straying more than a quarter mile from my position. With the superheating of the cells and their natural tendency to climb I was left to taking pictures and talking to the crew. All I needed was a remote control and a beer and I could have been just as easily kicking back in my living room. With the increase in altitude, the speeds increased as well. I hit 22 knots and Bert, who went higher, hit 26 knots. At around 3,500 feet MSL I opened the bottom of three of the cells to slow my ascent. Shortly thereafter at 4,200 feet MSL, as Bert crossed over the top of me, I cut loose one of

the top cells. In the basket above they got a great view of the liberated balloon and I began a nice descent. My top descent rate was 340 fpm and I controlled the descent by the use of water ballast. I leveled out above the tree tops near Pottstown Airport. It would have been great to have landed at the airport but the surface winds being extremely light and variable wouldn't allow that. Instead I flew into a beautiful tree lined field with no crops or livestock. Being a truly picture perfect landing spot, about three feet above ground I cut loose another balloon from the cluster and came to rest in an extremely soft landing. I wish I could repeat that on all of my gas landings! Within 5 minutes the crew arrived and we were able to do tethered crew rides for almost 2 hours before deflating the system. The flight lasted an hour and I traveled about 12 miles. I didn't make it to Paradise Falls, but I still think Carl would be proud.

I still believe cluster balloons are just a stunt. It was a lot of work for an hour flight that I could have performed easily in a hot air balloon. Still it was a thrill to fly a different gas system with a very comfy gondola, and I would be UP for it again.





Thank You!

Without the support,
dedication and help
of local balloonists all
across America, the
Disney/Pixar

UP

tour could never have
soared to such
successful heights!

*Troy Bradley
Jonathan Trappe
Beth Wright-Smith
Whit Landwater*