

# IBM Flying Club Newsletter May 1997

## Clear Prop! - Jon Butts

### Gotcha!

I feel \*so\* guilty! At least one person (an instructor no less!) has been struggling since the last newsletter to locate Pastelford and Sandtest, (maybe Unoswellbeer, Potashmount and Shacklebub too) for future days out. Sorry Irv, these are anagrams for Stapleford, Stansted, Wellesbourne, Southampton and Blackbushe! Didn't mean to, but 'Gotcha!'

### More events!

There has been little changed in the events listing recently, but look out for a Talk on the 21st May organised by Danny Elliott - its at Hamble about the Beluga Airbus project. The following were rashly promised at the AGM, and are in the pipeline:

Safety Subsidy Day	Jeff Moreland
Bourne Park BBQ	Paul Goodman
Summer BBQ	Dennis Howe
Granville BBQ	Margaret Collins
Met Office, Bracknell	Irv Lee
AAIB, Farnborough	Dave Sawdon
Elvington Air Museum	Dave Thomas
Courcheval, france	Brian Mellor
Cranwell	Dave Ashford

No dates set as yet, Event Co-ordinator Jeff will let us know the details in good time. I know Dennis needs a couple more dedicated helpers with this years Summer BBQ - go on, lend a hand - plleeeaaaasse....

### 1997 Membership Renewal.

From what I can tell there has been a balbo of 1997 membership renewals, thanks everyone. Any stragglers please do get yourself sorted (call Dave Thomas or Clare Grange). The June Newsletter will go out on the 1997 Club distribution list. :h3. Retirees Since the AGM all retirees should be covered by a 'buddy' supplying the newsletter, or have internet access. Any problems, please let me know. BTW incomplete receipt of large newsletters over the internet has been traced to the internet service provider concerned, not the format of the newsletter itself. Thanks to Richard Valler for his contribution, he's keeping a lot of people in touch.

## Popham Concorde - Chris Thompson

I did ATC at Popham over the weekend for the Microlight Trade Fair. On the Saturday it was a brilliant day and was very very busy - I handled over 150 aircraft between 0900 and 1200 on the Saturday morning! At times there were around a dozen aircraft in the circuit and many joining.

On Sunday the WX was pretty awful with a low cloudbase, rain and strong winds. By late morning it had begun to lift but the wind was still averaging 230/15G25 varying between 190 and 260. This did not prevent the occasional microlight having a go and watching the flexwings operate in these conditions was exciting to say the least. Since few were flying, the radio was very quiet and with one flexwing "AP" on base leg to land I had call as follows:

(Aircraft): "Popham Radio - Speedbird One"  
 (Me): "Speedbird One this is Popham Radio - pass your message"  
 (S1): "Shortly to pass through your overhead, climbing through 26000ft, heading 290, destination JFK, your frequency for traffic information"  
 (Me): "Speedbird One - microlight shortly to turn finals for 21, not a factor, break, "AP" did you copy the traffic?"  
 (AP): "Affirm"  
 (S1): "Speedbird One - Just thought we would give you a call, how was the Microlight Trade Fair?"  
 (Me): "Very busy yesterday, but slow today due to the weather"  
 (S1): "Ok - have a good day - bye"  
 (Me): "Bye now, have a safe flight"  
 (AP): "AP finals 21"  
 (Me): "AP land at your discretion wind 240/20, occasional gusts 28"  
 (S1): "(obviously still on frequency), wind at FL280 is 230/80 from our INS"  
 (AP): "Thank you sir - that helps a lot"  
 (S1): "We are here to serve....."

Apparently the Concorde pilot was one of two guys who regularly fly out of Popham, one has an Auster (sensible chap), and the other one I know reasonably well because he owns G-LUSI which is based at Bourne Park. (Ed: Actually I suspect it was Neale 'you dont ask you dont get, including Concorde flightdeck' Fray calling from the jump seat. Neale, why DO you bother paying for your scheduled flights in the first place? Surely you just have to ask nicely at the travel agents?)

## AGM Awards - Irv Lee

One thing that didn't get a write up in the newsletter after the AGM was the annual award of our two trophies:

1. The Laurence Wright Trophy, which is a "Retiring Chairman's choice" award both in category and nomination, has in the past been held by Bob Elliott and Brian Mellor. This AGM I gave it to Jon Butts, not as some may imagine for taking over (the engraving had to be done well in advance of any nominations!), but really for having done all the other roles over the years and a succession of excellent ideas over the past 3 years or so, which benefit the whole club. To name but two, Jon invented the annual Safety Refresher idea and recently has arranged for a Club CAA Safety Evening next autumn.
2. The "Friend's of the Flying Club" Award, which in the past has been awarded to the Flint family and the Army Flying Association, went to Graham Sayles, a local flying instructor outside our club who has often stepped in to help us out in a variety of ways, and indeed many members have had lessons with him if Brian or myself were not available. In the past 12 months in particular he went out of his way on 2 separate occasions to 'retrieve' club members stranded in a couple of airfields around the country in poor weather, the most publicised being Jon's famous trip to (ed: NO! NO! Dont say it!) Caernarfon (Ed: AAARGGH!) when G-ZERO decided it was staying there for a few extra days! The latter 'retrieval' was at some inconvenience to Graham, but he wouldn't tell you that if he were telling the story.

So congratulations to the recipients, and over the next 12 months, keep your eyes open for any ideas for the "Friends" trophy - it is yours to nominate.

## Syndicate opportunity (Fell of the back of a Hercules Guv, honest)

There is a possibility of a 1/3 or 1/4 share available soon in a zero-timed Bulldog, to be based at Old Sarum. The Bulldog is a 2 seat, 200HP aerobatic ex-military trainer. This one is completely zero-timed and in RAF colours; currently with colour GPS, VOR, ADF, TXPDR, 2xVHF, DME. Recent

"public cat" C of A. Call Dave Sawdon 246120 for more details.

## Trip Reports - Martin(i) Talbot

Jon, my conscience has been disturbing me, as I so enjoy reading the newsletter, but have a small backlog of unmade contribution. Here it is, Martin.

(Ed: For those that have not met Martin yet, he is our IBM 'Man in Moscow', and you have obviously spent too much time on \*UK\* airfields. Martin flies just about anything, anytime, just as long as it is anywhere else!).

### Cyprus, Beirut, and an introduction to multi-engines.

November in Moscow is pretty grim (you can guess how grim if I tell you that December is similar and I chose to take a December R&R trip in central Birmingham, doing the bike test in the freezing rain- and found it very relaxing)... so last November I went to Cyprus for a week, drawn initially by the off-season prices, sun and wine, but soon enough became tempted by the chance of some local flying.

Since the publication of the Pilot article I used for reference everything had changed, especially the prices, and it has to be said that due to avgas costs this is not a country for cheap flying. We stayed in Larnaca and did a check flight in a Tomahawk (with Tomahawk Aviation). Even at this time of year the thermals made for uncomfortable cross-country cruising, but the views were spectacular. We did touch-and-gos at Paphos, interrupted by a King Air calibrating the ILS, and returned the way we came, along the south coast, passing north of Limassol. It became very clear to me that even after the check-flight there wouldn't be much incentive to fly solo; VFR flight is 'passively discouraged' due to the high level of militarisation on the island, so maps are poor, routing is highly restricted (basically there are only four routes, and two of those are reversals of the first two), and permissions liable to be denied mid-flight. The language can be a problem, with pronunciation (and identification) of way-points the hardest I have experienced outside Wales (Martin: I'm sure I typed that in as 'Russia').

Next flight was a two-hour quick course in twin-flying. I don't intend to get the license, but wanted to be able to interpret those Pilot flight tests of twins, having only experienced multi-engines on the ground in a simulator. The rather dubious-looking Seneca-I proved to me the limits of my workload capacity, and it was one of the most enjoyable familiarisation flights I have done. I'd recommend it to anyone, just to see what twins are about.

Another peculiarity about the restrictions in Cyprus; after getting our clearance for flying in (part of) the training area, we were left with such a small box that it was impossible to go for more than two minutes in a straight line. I might not be able to synchronise the props but I can beat all comers at 180-degree turns in any configuration.

The last two days (big gap to fit in scuba diving- not to mix with flying) I went to Beirut, accompanied by an instructor primarily because of the paperwork hassles expected. In fact we had no trouble at all in Beirut, the difficulties were with Larnaca customs, who were convinced that the aircraft we had waiting outside on the tarmac had left the country, never to return... It's only just over an hour to Beirut, but the sight of the city coming through the haze on the nose, recognisable after many news bulletins, was spine-tingling. Turn onto final was low over the centre. We parked initially next to the Lebanon Aero Club, and were moved on from there to a stand next to a Ukraine Airlines 134, but the sight of the rotting 152s there was enough to confirm my correct decision not to choose a flying holiday based in Beirut. Never have I presented my luggage and passport so frequently in the space of a few metres as in the Arrivals area, but nevertheless there was no hitch of

any kind and a friendly man with an automatic rifle phoned my acquaintance for me- within 20 minutes we were touring the downtown area by Mercedes.

In the morning I swam in the warm sea, and according to my Lebanese friend who saw the photos later, the hotel over the road from that spot is the one Terry Waite was taken from, in very different times. We came back with a small allowance of excellent Lebanese wine and a weight-and-balance-challenging load of sticky sweets. Beirut is \*great\* fun, much easier to fly over than drive in, a top destination. The return flight was similarly uneventful, though there is for me something magical about flying in a blue bubble over the sea, if for a moment to banish the butterflies and constant engine checks- after all, this is what flying's all about.

## Long weekend in Helsinki

Well, I needed a new Russian visa, and had some business in Helsinki; I honestly didn't know it was International Women's Day (in Russia) (and at their Embassy) so the third day of the weekend was just a bonus. In all I did nearly 11 hours of flying. The check flight was the most spectacular yet (perhaps with the exception of mountain flying in the Rockies), (Ed: oh come on Martin, that last quip was quite uncalled for - we are trying \*so\* hard not to turn \*green\* as it is! :-)) with a ceiling of 600 feet and manoeuvring over the harbour area at the centre of the city.

The next flight was a cross-country to Mariehamn, on an island in the middle of the Baltic between the coasts of Finland and Sweden. (Ed: Oh oh! Here we go, what's next? Swedish blondes? Mermaids?) Weather was perfect, I bagged an extra airfield by doing a touch-and-go at Turku and the long stretch over the million islands on the way to Mariehamn was pure delight. The sea ice was breaking up so the scene below was a patchwork of white and blue speckled with skerries and islets. A sandwich and coke on the ground, a self-service top-up of the tanks, and I routed directly back to Helsinki, total for the day about 4 hours.

I did a couple of flights along the coast round Helsinki in the dying evening light (very peaceful, but \*curse\* my colour vision and lack of night rating), then on the last day I wanted another big cross-country and my eyes settled on Lappeenranta... asking around the club I was advised against this place. For me it looked attractive, being near the Russian border (I had my new visa, right?) and the route there should be pleasant, following the beautiful coastline East of Helsinki, and best of all being the gateway to the Finnish Lake District. The word against was that the entry corridor to the zone was \*right\* on the ADIZ with Russia, and that after Matthias Rust and a string of student-pilot navigation errors the Russians had issued a written warning that the next trespasser would be shot down \*without\* warning.

Anyway, the weather was perfect again, so with full tanks in a long-range 152 I set out with a 40-knot tailwind, and soon arrived, following railways in the local area without (I think) clipping the ADIZ. The locals showed me the currently-approved VFR route to Pulkovo (St Petersburg) but with a landing fee at 200 dollars it doesn't appeal to GA and with 10 turning points in 50 miles it doesn't appeal to Finnair either. From Lappeenranta I spent an hour sightseeing over the frozen lakes beyond (some nice 'abstract' photographs of the marble-like surfaces), and returned to base (\*very\* slowly across the ground) in time to catch the afternoon Aeroflot flight back to Moscow.

The cost of the flying was reasonable, no more than renting in the UK, and the quality and availability of aircraft were fine. I logged VFR Flight Plans for the cross-country routes. Landing fees were included in the rental, and briefing facilities were as in the US. I was told that the interior of Finland is even more stunningly beautiful in Summer, and in a small plane you do have the advantage of being well above the mosquitos. I was exceptionally lucky with the weather, but the local people are friendly year-round and if you get stuck I hear that the Finnair Pilots' Big Jazz Band makes a great evening out. (Ed: Only joshing Martin, thanks a lot for writing us some exotica! Your turn Bob)

## Jodel D92 Bebe Plans

(Ed: this came into us via our Web site, so people are finding out about us through it! It would be nice if someone could point this guy in the right direction - any of our PFA members got any info?).

Hello. I am engaged in an attempt to locate and obtain a complete set of plans for the Jodel D92 Bebe aeroplane. I have used the internet as my primary tool in this search, and have had no success thus far. Could you tell me, do you or any of your club associates know where I could find a set of these plans? They do not have to be originals, but reproductions would need to be complete. Any assistance that you could render would be truly appreciated.

Kind regards Wes Patrick [wbpatrik@worldnet.att.net](mailto:wbpatrik@worldnet.att.net)

## Safety Slot

### Isn't it Quiet Up here? - Irv "7600" Lee

Just a few words about a recent 'incident' I had in case it proves useful information for anyone else. These generic stories are rumoured to start "There I was, upside down, nothing on the clock..", whereas this one goes "There I was, right way up, 3000 feet on the clock" so if stories which start off that way are too boring for you, skip it!

I was giving an IMC lesson out of Southampton, (Class 'D' airspace) to train over the Goodwood VOR and then track into Bembridge, Isle of Wight (in what was once called 'Open FIR'), as we wanted a (non-alcoholic) a pub lunch. If you want to go somewhere, it NEEDS visitors to justify itself (the airfield, not the pub). The cliffs and 'beach' are only 15 minutes walk away, and the pub on the airfield has been renovated. We booked out at Southampton IFR, and I'd promised my pupil, "Punya", a lot of radio work as he'd identified this as a weakness. We even had his friend Jackie along for the ride in the back.

Things went well and Radar were working us until the top of the climb, 3000' feet still well inside Controlled Airspace, when Punya reported level. No Answer. I told him to get on with his checks as the controller was no doubt on the phone to someone and would come back in a minute. About 30 seconds later, Punya tried again - no answer. I tried - no answer - checked all plugs, switches, squelches, settings, swapped radios, etc etc - no answer. Tried Southampton Tower - no answer - Back to Radar - no answer. Well, Punya said he hadn't had much radio practice in his flying career, and it suddenly became obvious he wasn't going to get any more on this flight!

SO, what do'y'do? Well, we weren't in any danger, and we'd booked out to the Goodwood VOR and then track down to Bembridge and land, so Decision 1 was to do as we'd said we would when booking out. Anything else would mean no one would have a clue what we were doing, and there was no obvious problem to cause us to deviate from what we'd said. 2nd was a blind transmission declaring both a radio failure and 'the plan', and the 3rd was a 7600 squawk, which probably woke a few people up in radar rooms around the Southern England as their screens lit up. As we'd had a trip to the West Drayton "Distress and Diversion" cell last year, I could imagine what was happening in West London. The main point was to make sure no-one else would be over the Goodwood VOR at our level by the time we got there.

Jackie in the back was now rifling through my flight bag where I was sure I had a hand-held radio, and sure enough, there it was, so 3 miles from Goodwood we amused the controller there with a radio call reporting a radio failure! (Ed: The zeroboys had a similar hard time reporting an 'intermittent' flashing beacon to the engineers: 'Isn't it supposed to be?' No, it's not supposed to be an intermittent intermittent beacon!). Again we passed on 'the plan' and got confirmation that it would be

phoned through to both Southampton and Bembridge. It turned out later that that we only had receiver failure, and the original blind transmission to Solent Radar had already 'done the business' with everyone necessary.

So, we landed at Bembridge using the hand-held to communicate when 3 miles out, although 'non-radio' would have been fine there. Taxi-ing in, we were told to "Phone Southampton immediately". This usually means "bullet", but this time it was "bouquet". They seemed quite pleased at having something different to do, and the conversation almost got to the "we must do that again sometime" stage. They even offered a re-entry ("once you've had lunch") which would involve a phone call to them as we got airborne from the Bembridge controller, and an agreed route with reserved squawk and "idents" at certain stages for us to define what was going on, and they would fit other traffic around us as they watched our progress.

So that's what we did, after a pleasant lunch and walk by the cliffs, and as it turned out, when airborne we realised that as it was only the receiver that was u/s, we could set up the hand-held as a receiver (the receive range is much greater than transmit range) and use it like a loudspeaker, transmitting on the main box, receiving on the hand-held. This worked very well, and got us back in, supplementing the agreed route.

### **Circuits to maintain 'currency' since last flight.**

(Ed: I've had this 'I Learned about Flying' related to me from someone outside the IBM flying club, but it is published here with their consent, such that we can share the lessons learned.)

The night before been out with friends and had a few drinks so I had a \*slight\* hangover on Friday morning. Then when reversing down the drive I was convinced the gates were open, and because I thought I was late I went down the drive quickly, and reversed into the gates damaging my car. This event subsequently bothered me for the rest of the day.

So having to take half a day, and smashing my car I just did not want to fly. I decided to tell Jill this when I arrived at the club, but somehow didn't. Lesson number 1; never go flying unless you are in the mood no matter who you upset. Lesson number 2; the night before have a relaxing night.

At the club, Jill said to me 'As soon as Mike lands the aeroplane is yours', I had been unable to say I didn't want to fly really; I had trapped myself into going up. Oh well, I would do a couple of circuits and that would be that, after all circuits were easy. No instructors were present when I booked out and Liz was busy in another room, so I asked a new woman, called Sally, I think, to give me the keys and the headset; not thinking anymore about it.

While doing my 'Power checks' I realised I had not selected the fuel tank with the lowest contents for taxing; another example of how I should not have gone flying because my mind was not on the job. As soon as I had climbed to around 500 feet and commenced my climbing turn up to 1000feet I realised how bad the conditions were. I should explain that it was a cold January day and it had been snowing off and on over the past few week so that the ground had a covering of white flaky snow. The cloud was misty and low and all together it was marginal weather, however I was sure that it was OK for circuits; but it was not! I decided to come back and land straight away because of the bad visibility and deteriorating conditions.

I estimated that even at circuit height (1000feet) I was unsure I would not be in cloud. Stupidly when calling 'downwind' I called 'downwind for a touch and go' What was the matter with me ? When I came to my senses I called the tower and changed my instructions from 'touch and go' 'to land'. When the controller said number 2 I began to panic. Not only was I loosing sight of the runway but I could not even see another aircraft let alone two. As I extended my downwind to look for the aircraft ahead I lost the runway altogether. Suddenly I saw a flashing red light of a Cassia 152 ahead and

decided to follow him around. I figured that he was flying with an instructor and therefore was correctly oriented within the circuit pattern. I had lost it! I remember thinking I wish I was down on the ground. By now I was too close to follow him in and complete a landing after him so I decided to do a 'go-around'.

I kept the circuit in full view all the time after the go-around and completed a landing and full stop. Although I called finals, the 'RT' was so busy that the controller did not clear me to land in the normal manner but I assumed he had seen me land because he then asked me to 'expedite' to the end of the runway. (i.e. he did not say 'clear to land runway 16')

The Cessna had also for some reason decided to do a go-around but I was ahead of him and had priority to land. While all this was happening I heard the controller say to Mike a club instructor who was also flying at the time 'message from the club, is it safe for PPL's'? he replied not really only just about OK for circuits, if that' or something along those lines.

When I brought the aircraft to a stop the CFI was taxiing another one to the hanger. He looked at me in a strange way as if to say 'You did something wrong then'.

When I walked into the club I said to Jill that it was 'rubbish up there' and I had decided to come straight down and land. She never acknowledged me or said anything to me, she gave me a very indifferent icy look.

I was left with a feeling of poor airmanship. The memory of this flight stayed with me for days and I can still recall Jill's look and the CFI's expression after what was a very distressing flight for me. The whole experience made me want to give up flying altogether!

### **A few thoughts from Ed...**

Well, I am so glad this didnt turn out TOO badly (!), and that my friend has not given up flying.

I'm sure a lot of 'low hour' or 'infrequent flyer' pilots scare or embarrass themselves out of private flying like this. One reason for relaying this experience is to let the rest of us who have had \*silly\* days know that we are not alone; dont give up, learn from it and resolve to be a better pilot for it. Those multi thousand hour experienced pilots must surely also be \*'experienced'\* pilots?

The second reason is that there are a lot of interesting aspects here, if you re-read the story. I'm not an instructor but I do analyse stories like this; some of my interpretations may be wrong, and may prompt some (welcome) discussion, , but this is what I get out of it:

a) "...driving to the airfield intending not to go flying..." Human factors: Could we recognise \*at the time\* that we just are not thinking straight!? I guess if we just asked ourselves on the way to the airport, or pre-flying the aircraft, "Am I really with it today?" we might just avoid the occasional confidence-busting trip?

b) "never go flying unless you are in the mood no matter who you upset" No matter who you upset?!" Does 'not wanting to upset someone' count as one of the worst possible reasons to fly in circumstances you are not happy with? No club should be upset if a pilot, having made a command decision about a proposed flight, elects not to use a booked slot - most CFI's I am familiar with would be \*impressed\* - it demonstrates real command responsibility.

c) " 'the aeroplane is yours', I had been unable to say I didn't want to fly really; I had trapped myself into going up. " This is not what I was taught. Rather it was emphasised that being a Pilot in Command is more about being \*IN COMMAND\* than piloting skills - the ultimate responsibility and all command decisions related to a flight rest only with the PIC - including for every flight - the

go/no-go decision. If you are not happy to go make sure the club knows why - if it is related to your ability to cope with the conditions or similar. They should fully understand your position, maybe even respect you for it!

I'll leave it there, but encourage you to read the tale again another time - there are lots of other lines to 'read between'! A good one for 'Pilot' magazine I think.

## Comedy Corner

Ok, time to lighten up! Funny story time! This month it is re-cycled Internet material via Dave Sawdon and Dave Ashford. Thanks guys. Appeal for members original stories for next time please!

### Free-fall Cow Sinks Trawler

According to Reuters, the dazed crew of a Japanese trawler was plucked out of the Sea of Japan earlier this year clinging to the wreckage of their sunken ship. Their rescue was followed by immediate imprisonment. The authorities suspected fraud having questioned the sailors on their ship's loss. To a man they claimed that a cow, falling out of a clear blue sky, had struck the trawler amidships, shattering its hull and sinking the vessel within minutes. They remained in prison for several weeks...

Air Force reluctantly informed Japanese authorities that the crew of one of its cargo planes had apparently stolen a cow wandering at the edge of a Siberian airfield, forced the cow into the plane's hold and hastily taken off. Unprepared for live cargo, the Russian crew was ill-equipped to manage a frightened cow rampaging within the hold. To save the aircraft and themselves, they shoved the animal out of the cargo hold as they crossed the Sea of Japan.

(Ed: Well, didnt I just say it was time to lighten up! Groan...)

### 1997 Darwin Award

Do you all know about the Darwin Awards? (Surely yes!) It's an annual honor given to the person (Ed: always an American it seems, dont they just have to do \*everything\* so much better?) who did the gene pool the biggest service by killing themselves in the most extraordinarily stupid way.

The 1995 winner was the fellow who was crushed to death by a Coke machine which toppled over on top of him as he was attempting to tip a free can of diet coke out of it.

In 1996 the winner was finally identified by an air-crash investigation team. Their skills untangled the unlikely, but true, tale of an airforce sergeant who had attached a JATO (jet rocket pod that helps heavy aircraft take off in a short space) to his pick-up, and very shortly afterwards (despite having applied the brakes) crashed into a mountainside several hundred feet above, and some distance from, the nearest road.

And now, the 1997 winner: Larry Waters of Los Angeles - the only Darwin winners to \*survive\* his award winning accomplishment.

Larry's boyhood dream was to fly. When he graduated from high school, he joined the Air Force in hopes of becoming a pilot. Unfortunately, poor eyesight disqualified him. When he was finally discharged, he had to satisfy himself with watching jets fly over his backyard.

One day, Larry, had a bright idea. He decided to fly. He went to the local Army-Navy surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. The weather balloons, when fully

inflated, would measure more than four feet across.

Back home, Larry securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair. He anchored the chair to the bumper of his jeep and inflated the balloons with the helium. He climbed on for a test while it was still only a few feet above the ground.

Satisfied it would work, Larry packed several sandwiches and a six-pack of Miller Lite, loaded his pellet gun-- figuring he could pop a few balloons when it was time to descend-- and went back to the floating lawn chair. He tied himself in along with his pellet gun and provisions. Larry's plan was to lazily float up to a height of about 30 feet above his back yard after severing the anchor and in a few hours come back down.

Things didn't quite work out that way.

When he cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to his jeep, he didn't float lazily up to 30 or so feet. Instead he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon.

He didn't level off at 30 feet, nor did he level off at 100 feet. After climbing and climbing, he levelled off at 11,000 feet. At that height he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons, lest he unbalance the load and really find himself in trouble. So he stayed there, drifting, cold and frightened, for more than 14 hours.

Then he really got in trouble.

He found himself drifting into the the primary approach corridor of Los Angeles International Airport.

A United pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair with a gun. Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating 11,000 feet above the airport.

LAX emergency procedures swung into full alert and a helicopter was dispatched to investigate.

LAX is right on the ocean. Night was falling and the offshore breeze began to flow. It carried Larry out to sea with the helicopter in hot pursuit.

Several miles out, the helicopter caught up with Larry. Once the crew determined that Larry was not dangerous, they attempted to close in for a rescue but the draft from the blades would push Larry away whenever they neared.

Finally, the helicopter ascended to a position several hundred feet above Larry and lowered a rescue line. Larry snagged the line and was hauled back to shore. The difficult maneuver was flawlessly executed by the helicopter crew.

As soon as Larry was hauled to earth, he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD for violating LAX airspace.

As he was led away in handcuffs, a reporter dispatched to cover the daring rescue asked why he had done it. Larry stopped, turned and replied nonchalantly, "A man can't just sit around."

Let hear it for Larry Walters, the 1997 Darwin Award Winner!

(Ed: Please, no weather balloons at the Summer BBQ, you know that Irv always wants to inflate something and embarrass our guests, but No!).