



**FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE
Ballooning Commission**

Hall of Fame

**Ben L. Abruzzo &
Maxie L. Anderson
Inducted 1995**



BEN ABRUZZO

USA

Inducted 1995

Sport balloonist, Aeronaut Extraordinaire

9 June 1930, Rockford, IL – 11 Feb. 1985

Albuquerque, NM

Ben Abruzzo was Captain in Charge of the first manned flight to cross the Atlantic Ocean by balloon. He also was Captain on the Double Eagle V, the first successful manned Pacific crossing by balloon. In 1981, Abruzzo took first place in the "revival" Gordon Bennett Balloon Race, flying from Fountain Valley, California to Montpelier, North Dakota. He had many other first-place finishes in gas balloon races in the 1980s.

MAXIE LEROY ANDERSON

USA

Inducted 1995

Sport balloonist

September 1, 1934 Sayre, OK – June 27, 1983

Germany

Maxie Anderson made the Atlantic Ocean crossing in Double Eagle II along with teammates Ben Abruzzo and Larry Newman. He also set a record by making the first nonstop balloon crossing of the North American by balloon (with his son Kris). With Don Ida, Anderson made three attempts at circling the globe by balloon (1981 and 1983).

Both Anderson and Abruzzo were recipients of many awards for their epic balloon flights.

Image: AAAIBM / Soukup & Thomas Collection

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Mr. Abruzzo was born in Rockford, Illinois on June 9, 1930. He received his BS Degree in Business Administration in 1952 from the University of Illinois and was commissioned a Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force assigned to Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Mr. Abruzzo served as squadron officer for a period of two years.

Upon discharge he joined Sandia Corporation, a subsidiary of Bell Laboratories, as a staff assistant. Subsequently he became associated with Sandia Peak Ski area in Albuquerque, New Mexico and serves as Chairman and President of Alvarado Realty Company a real estate conglomerate specializing in development and management of real estate, shopping centers and subdivisions. He is Chairman and President of Sandia Peak Ski Company, Sandia Peak Tram Company and Sandia Peak Utility Company. Mr. Abruzzo was the developer of Sandia Heights a prestige subdivision of 1,500 acres at the base of Sandia Peak Tram in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

He and his wife Patricia, and their four children are active in skiing, boating, sailing, tennis, flying and ballooning.

Mr. Abruzzo and Mr. Maxie Anderson on September 12, 1977 landed near Iceland after completing the longest balloon flight ever made. The journey covered 2,950 miles; departed Marshfield, Mass. and landed in the sea near Iceland. The original target was continental Europe and if the flight had been a relatively straight line rather than one that included a 500-mile circle; the balloonists would have made it to Europe.

Mr. Abruzzo, Mr. Maxie Anderson with an additional crewmember, Mr. Larry Newman on August 11, 1978 took off from Presque Isle, Maine in the Double Eagle II to attempt another crossing of the Atlantic. The crossing took 137 hours 6 minutes and covered 3,120 miles landing in a barley field just outside of Evreux, France. The landing in France marked the first successful Transatlantic crossing by a manned balloon.

The Double Eagle III, piloted by Mr. Abruzzo and Mr. Anderson was the winner of the 1979 International Gordon Bennett Race. Double Eagle IV piloted by Mr. Abruzzo and Mr. Newman set a New World Endurance Record. The next year Mr. Abruzzo and Mr. Rocky Aoki set a new race and world record.

Since the successful flights of the Double Eagle, Mr. Abruzzo has been highly decorated with medals and awards from across the world. Some of these include:

1. A special gold medal struck by the United States of America and authorized by the Congress of the United State. This medal has previously been awarded on only three occasions for accomplishment in aviation. Prior recipients are the Wright Brothers, Charles Lindbergh and Neil Armstrong and Crew.

The Congress also passed a resolution declaring the Double Eagle crew members as Modern Day Explorers.

2. The highest aviation medal from the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States.
3. The highest civilian aviation medal. The Grande Medal was awarded to Mr. Abruzzo for accomplishment in aviation – France.
4. National Geographic Society, John Oliver LaGorce gold medal which has been presented only a few times in the history of the society.
5. The Montgolfier Diploma for “Best Performance in Gas Ballooning in 1978.
6. The FAI (Federation Aeronautique Internationale) Gold Air Medal for the highest individual accomplishment in aviation.
7. Absolute world records for Distance and Time Aloft and De La Vaulx medal for pilot in command of Absolute World Record flight.
8. The French Sports Medal, highest award in France for sports.

The Double Eagle II crew has been featured in countless newspaper articles and on magazine covers throughout the world. There have been numerous TV documentaries made about the flight and its crew.

On November 12, 1981, Mr. Abruzzo, Flight Captain, along with teammates Larry Newman, Ron Clark and Rocky Aoki completed the first crossing of the Pacific Ocean in a manned balloon. The Double Eagle V was aloft for 84 hours and 31 minutes and traveled a straight-line distance of 5,768 miles setting a new Absolute World Record for balloons of all classes.

Of great public interest is a book entitled Double Eagle, containing the adventures of both the Double Eagle I and II flights published by Little Brown and Company of New York. Additionally, the book, Flight of the Pacific Eagle, chronicles the record-breaking Double Eagle V flight.

On February 11, 1985 Mr. Abruzzo, his wife Pat and friends Marcia Martin, Cynthia Miller, Beverly Mullins and Barbara Quant lost their lives in tragic small plane crash in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Additional photos and information can be found on the Balloon Federation of America’s National Balloon Museum Website: <http://www.nationalballoonmuseum.com/HallofFame>