

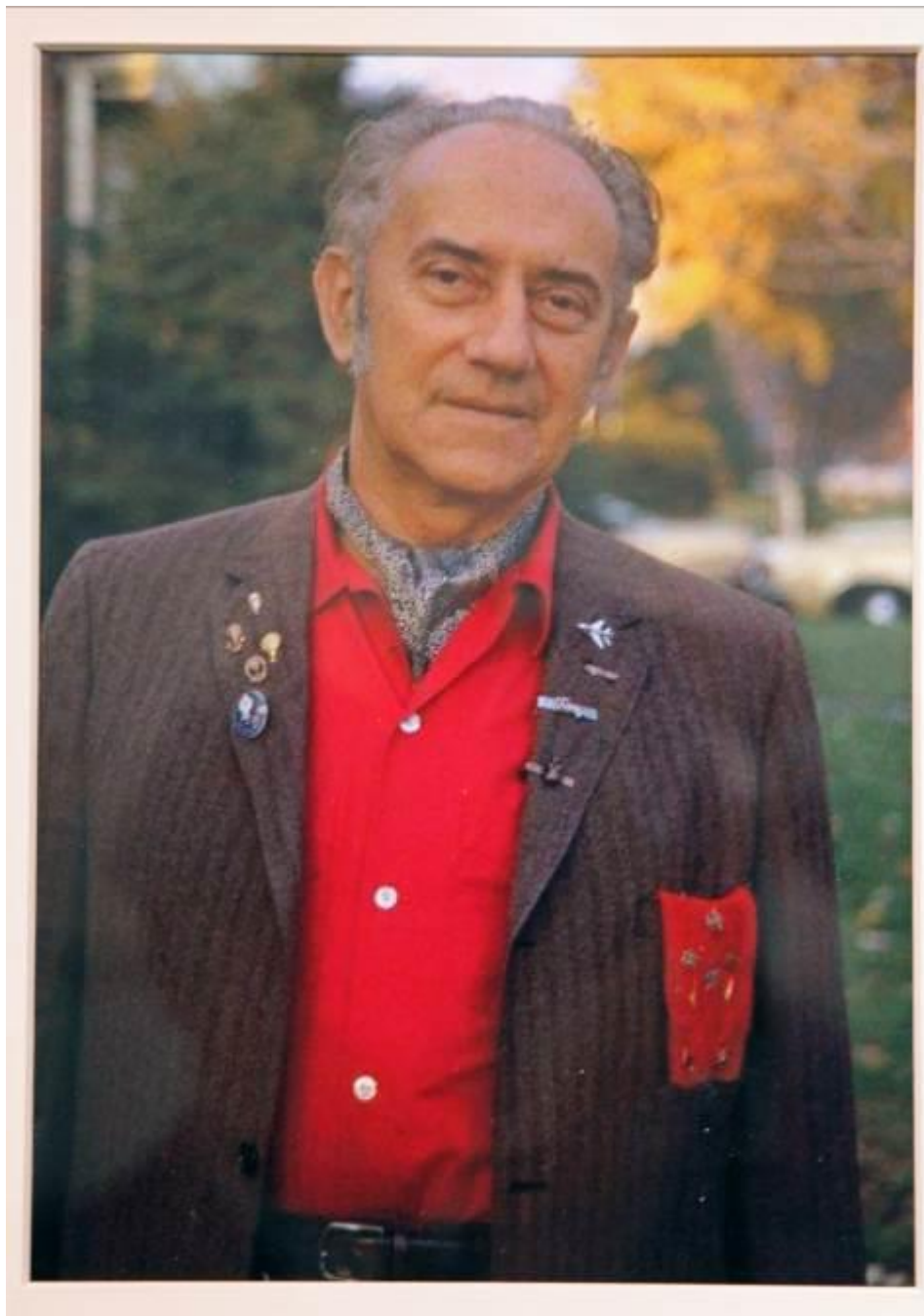


**FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE
Ballooning Commission**

Hall of Fame

Anthony M. "Tony" Fairbanks

Inducted 2012



Anthony M. "Tony" Fairbanks
USA
Inducted 2012
Sport Balloonist
19 April 1906, NJ – 15 Oct. 1998

Tony Fairbanks had a professional career in the aviation industry. He worked as a weights engineer for Vertol Helicopters, as a Consulting Engineer for Piasecki Aircraft, and as an aeronautical engineer for Boeing Aircraft Corporation. During WWII, he worked for Curtiss-Wright Aircraft producing P-40 fighters, C-46 transports and SB2C Helldivers.

Tony Fairbanks was an avid pilot and promoter of gas balloons. His first balloon flight was in 1931 – a ten-hour flight from Cleveland, OH to Buffalo, NY. He made his first solo flight in 1935. He received his balloon license in 1936. Fairbanks was charter member of the Cleveland Balloon Club (1932). It was the only civilian Balloon Club in the United States at the time. With other gas ballooning enthusiasts, Tony was also a founding member of the Balloon Club of America (1952). In 1956 Fairbanks was designated by the Civil Aeronautics Administration as the first Lighter-than-air Free Balloon Designated Pilot Examiner in the United States.

Fairbanks flew competitively in the early US National Balloon Races. He and Milford Vanik placed second in the 1936 US Nationals. The win qualified them to represent the U.S. in the Gordon Bennett Race in Poland in 1939 but the competition was called off due to the start of World War II. Tony participated in many ballooning competitions and events in the throughout Europe. Fairbanks piloted a gas balloon over the Alps seven times.

Tony Fairbanks served as technical consultant for the balloon sequences of Michael Todd's epic film "Around the World in 80 Days." In 2010 "La Coquette," the balloon used in the film, was donated to the Balloon Museum by the Fairbanks family to honor their father.

Photo and plaque published with permission of the Anderson/Abruzzo International Balloon Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Anthony (Tony) Fairbanks was born April 19, 1906 Newark, New Jersey. Tony grew up in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania where he graduated from Swarthmore College in 1928 with a degree in engineering. He and his wife Mary Louise had four children: Joan, Antonica (Nica), Michael, and Jean. He enjoyed balloon flights at every opportunity, Magic Club, HAM Radio Club, the American Radio Relay League, and was a past president and a very active member of the Swarthmore Lions Club. He also spent many summers with his family at his house in Ocean City, NJ., where the family enjoyed being by the beach and sailing.

During his career Tony worked as a weights engineer for Vertol Helicopters, a Consulting Engineer for Piasecki Aircraft and as an aeronautical engineer for Boeing Aircraft

Corporation where he worked when he retired.

The remembrance of a man's life is often measured by a single achievement; a record held, an award, a mountain climbed. Tony's life must be measured by his total contributions. How else could you explain a 60 year love affair with flight, and more specifically, ballooning.

Only 20 years after the Wright Brothers flew the first plane, Tony found employment in Cleveland, Ohio, and quickly became a licensed glider and fixed wing pilot, with his own airplane, a "Buhl Pup". During World War I, the U.S. government trained blimp pilots, by flying free balloons, manufactured by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. In Cleveland Tony met Milford Vanik and George Hineman. Both men had purchased WW 1 surplus balloons and Tony quickly joined them for flights.

Tony's log book documents his first balloon flight on September 13, 1931. After work, on a Friday evening, the young engineers would inflate the "35" (35,000 cubic foot balloon) with coke oven gas, and fly all night. They would land the next day, only when their ballast was exhausted and most of the gas had leaked out of the surplus balloon. In 1932, with the purchase of a 1920 Navy surplus, 80 000 cubic foot balloon, the Cleveland Balloon Club was created, with Tony as a charter member. This was the only civilian Balloon Club in the United States. Tony had his first solo 35,000 cubic foot gas balloon flight in 1935.

Vanik and Fairbanks won second place in the U.S. National Balloon Championship in 1936, where Amelia Earhart was the honorary referee, making them eligible to represent the U.S. in the Gordon Bennett Race, in Lvov, Poland in 1939. Tony's family still has in the archives the telegram from the National Aeronautic Association, dated August of 1939, telling him that War Department stated "that their balloon team should not venture to Poland". Indeed this was the time and place of the beginning of WW II, as the Nazi Airforce bombed the city of Lvov. It would also be the end of the Cleveland Balloon Club. There would be no more ballooning in the United States until 1951.

During WW II, Tony worked for Curtiss-Wright Aircraft, in Buffalo, New York producing P-40 fighters, C-46 transports and SB2C Helldivers. As the War ended, Tony was drawn to the early vertical flight pioneers and worked with Igor Sikorsky and Frank Piasecki , both legendary helicopter manufacturers. Frank Piasecki was a balloon enthusiast and flew in balloons with Tony. Tony's professional career as an aeronautical engineer included Vertol , the helicopter division of Boeing.

A small group of balloon enthusiasts met in 1952 and created the Balloon Club of America, signing the articles of Incorporation in July of 1952 in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania . This group represented the entire ballooning community in the United States. The first flight of the newly organized Club was in November, with Don Piccard, Tony, John Dura and Jerry Burns. Balloons, pieces of balloons and equipment were donated surplus material from the end of WW II. It had been more than 22 years, without a single balloon flight in the United States.

The Balloon Club of America remained a small group of dedicated "balloonatics". During the decade of the 50's and 60's, gas ballooning was expensive, work intensive, and without any sponsorship. The available gas was "cooking gas", which was highly

flammable and dangerous.

In 1953, Mike Todd contacted the Club, to borrow a balloon for his filming of "Around the World in 80 Days". The balloon, N9074H, was shipped to Hollywood, painted and named "La Coquette". In 1955 Tony piloted La Coquette over Disneyland, London and Paris to promote the movie. La Coquette became the symbol of the movie and started its own unique history, to become the icon of American balloons. In 1956 Tony became the first Balloon Pilot Examiner in the United States. This was the beginning of licensing examinations for pilots. (The F.A.A. had not yet been created).

In 1956 the National Lighter Than Air Society of Akron, Ohio (NLTA) was formed. This was the only other balloon club in America. Its distinguished member was Augie O'Neil who held an airship's pilot license authenticated by the signature of Orville Wright. These two clubs joined for the first and last time, creating the 1960 National Balloon Race, which consisted of 3 balloons. Tony was the Race Judge and Command Pilot and decreed that all of the pilots came in First Place. In 1960, there were less than 15 licensed balloon pilots in the U.S. In 1961 the Balloon Club of America and the N.L.T.A. formed the Balloon Federation of America (B.F.A.). When the B.F.A. published its first journal, "Ballooning", volume 1, number 1, in 1968, La Coquette was on the cover.

During the decade of the 60's and 70's, gas ballooning was more organized and popular in Europe. Beginning in 1957, Tony would often return to Europe and flew in over 20 balloon events. He was a pilot in the 1960 International Balloon Race, in Holland. In 1968 Tony was invited to fly across the Swiss Alps, in the High Alpine Dolder Balloon Week. Beginning in 1968, Tony would return to fly in this event seven times, the most of any American pilot. In 1976 Tony and his son Michael represented the U.S. in the First World Gas Ballooning Championship, in Germany. Shown at right is Tony flying over the Alps in June of 1969.

By the beginning of 1970 in the U.S., cooking gas was no longer available and hydrogen was very expensive. The Club's surplus balloons were beginning to show their age and few new pilots were interested in this labor intensive sport. The Club continued to fly their gas balloons until 1977, but in 1973 Tony returned from England with a Western Hot Air Balloon System. Tony liked hot air and flew in the 1973 First World Hot Air Balloon Championship, in Albuquerque. He was a pilot in the 1974 Nationals in Indianola, Iowa. In 1979, Tony was the subject of the book "Down One Diamond", written by his son Michael.

In 2010 Tony was inducted into the U. S. Ballooning Hall of Fame, in the National Balloon Museum in Indianola, Iowa. The same year, his beloved La Coquette was given to the International Balloon Museum in Albuquerque, along with his scrapbooks and original photos. His contribution will be his life-long love of flight, and the silent impact he has had on ballooning. Tony was also a photographer and he recorded gas ballooning from 1931-1977. No other historic archives exist. His legacy has been preserved by his loving family, in the Fairbanks Family Archives of Ballooning.

Tony's son Michael Fairbanks became a distinguished gas and hot air balloon pilot. Michael was an F.A.A. Balloon Pilot Examiner, and flew in the First World Gas Ballooning Championship of 1976. Although Tony's ambition to fly in the Gordon Bennett was averted because of World War II, Michael completed his father's dream by flying in the Gordon

Bennett Balloon Race in 1990.

This biography was submitted by Tony's daughters, Antonica and Lillian Jean. Photos courtesy of the Fairbanks family and GasBallooning..net.

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

|