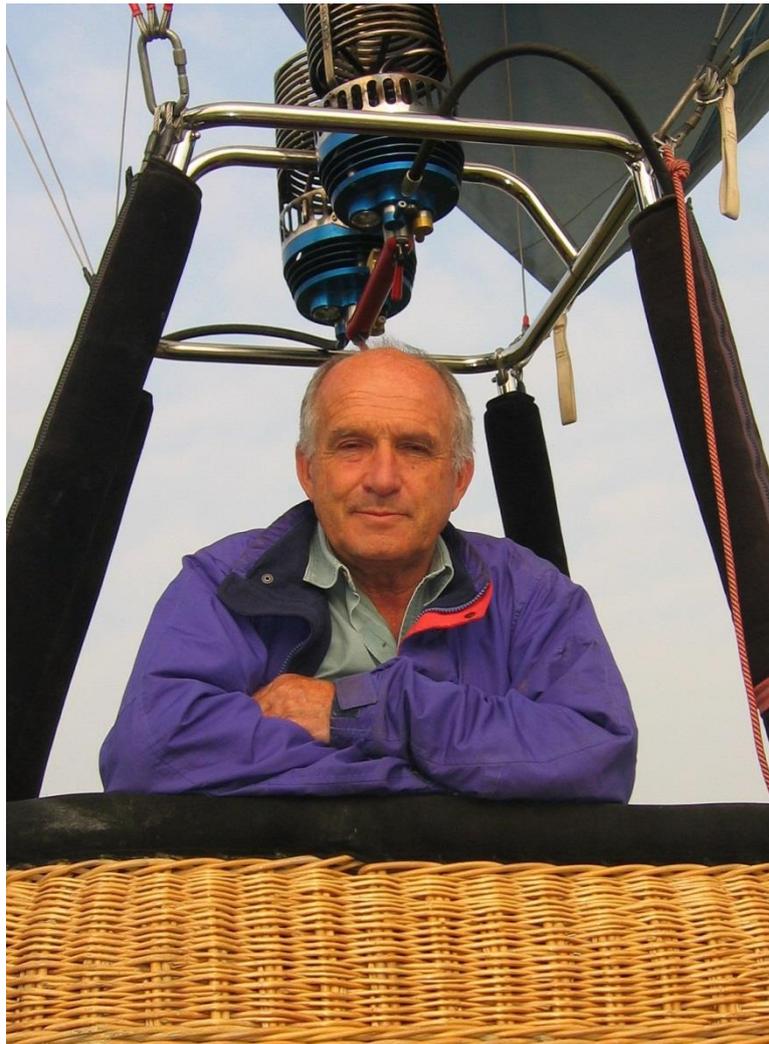




**FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE
Ballooning Commission**

Hall of Fame Nomination

Tom Sage



Tom's working life began as a photographer started at the bottom of the ladder working as a "tank room" boy for a developing and printing business. This meant working in total darkness all day long developing rolls of film in 250 litre vertical tanks; he nearly gave if up as it was such a bad life. After some months working in the dark he graduated to printing photographs, manually and on automatic machines, and of course it was all in black and white in the 1950's.

The 1950's was also a time when every young man had to spend 2 years doing Military Service and it wasn't long before Tom had a letter from the Queen telling him to report to

army barracks. After about 8 weeks of “square bashing”, which is slang for drill parades, he was posted to a Military Survey Unit; at that time map making was shared between the Royal Engineers and a civilian map making establishment called the Ordnance Survey. Tom’s job was as a lithographic cameraman using glass plates 1 metre x 1.5 metres. After serving in Germany and Cyprus he won a scholarship from Kodak who paid for him to study photography in London and then another to study colour photography with Eastman Kodak in America. The time in America was a great experience with unlimited equipment, models and film. At the end of the scholarship he and 4 others put on an exhibition of photographs in Grand Central Station, New York.

On returning to England, Tom went to work for the Press Association which was part of the famous Reuters New Agency. At that time he was made an Associate of the Royal Photographic Society, which allowed him to put A.R.P.S after his name. As a photographer for the Press Association he had a wide variety of assignments which included press, fashion, architectural and industrial photojournalism. It was the industrial photography that took him to many different parts of the world for the oil industry, including to the North Slope in Alaska which BP were the first to find oil there.

It was during a rock climbing trip in 1967 that Tom was told of a film about ballooning and on returning to London made arrangements to photograph a gas balloon flight from the RAF hangers that had once housed the R100 and R101 airships. Having taken lots of photographs he then persuaded the RAF to give him a balloon flight.

After the experience of having a balloon flight Tom managed to contact 4 other people interested in building a hot air balloon. The balloon was built by a parachute company, the basket made by a company making laundry baskets, and the burner came from BP. Wing Commander Gerry Turnbull, an RAF gas balloon pilot, taught them to fly. The British Balloon and Airship Club (BBAC) was formed and Tom was member number 1.

Tom left the photographic world and joined Dom Cameron in Bristol, who had formed Cameron Balloons. He left Cameron Balloons after 40 years of service to spend more time lecturing on cruise ships – on ballooning of course. Tom had been involved in the manufacture of over 5000 balloons. He is also an airship pilot and won the Santos Dumont Gold Medal from the Royal Aeronautical Society for his contribution to the development of hot air airships.

