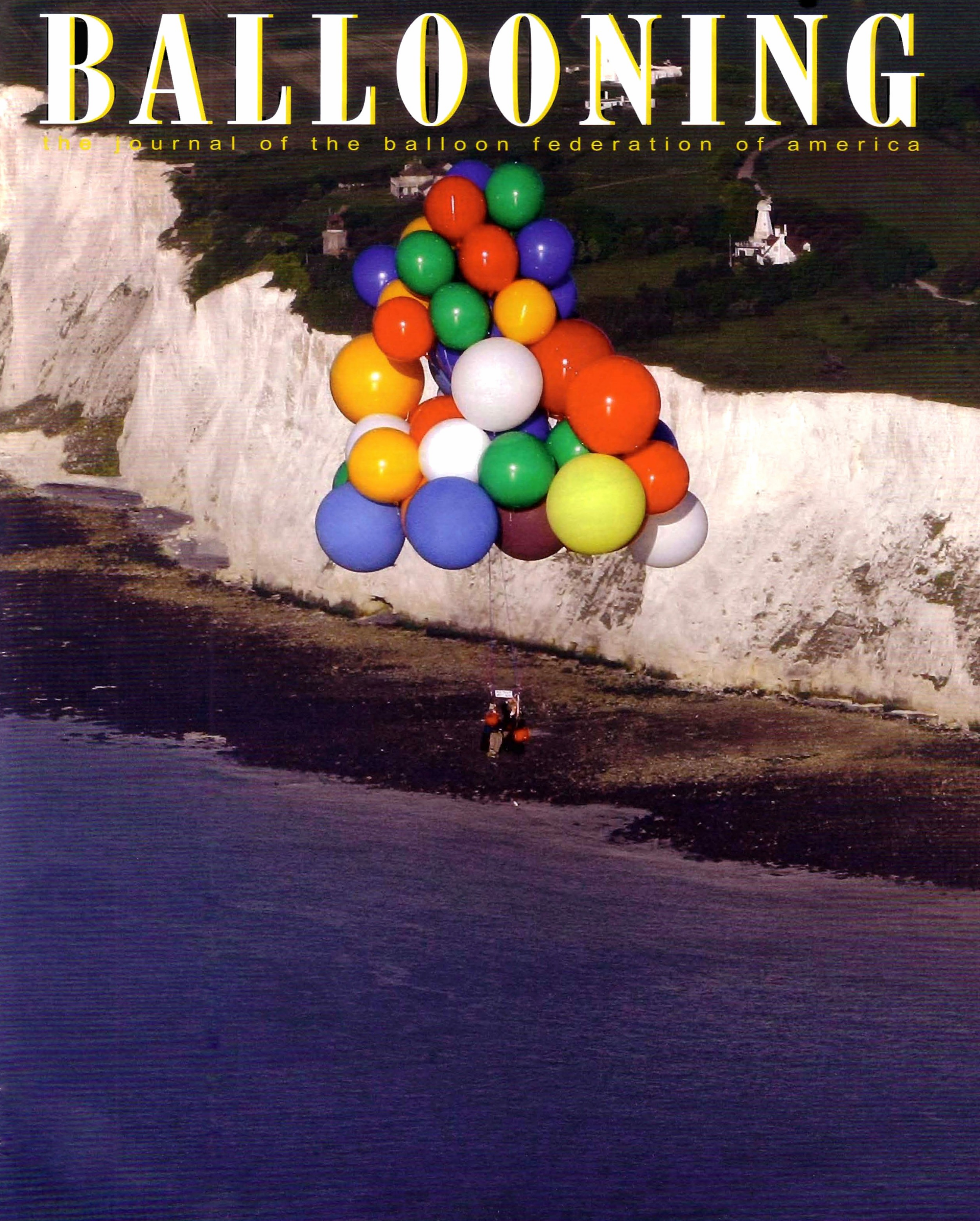


BALLOONING

the journal of the balloon federation of america





"It's ALL About Dreams"

by Glen Moyer

Wasn't it your fantasy? To grab hold to a bunch of toy balloons and fly silently off into space?

With that single inquiry, cluster balloonist, pilot and BFA member Jonathanan Trappe answered the same question for the umpteenth-millionth time, "Why?"

On May 28th the 36-year old Trappe flew silently into the history books becoming the first to fly a cluster balloon across the English Channel. The flight could not have been more poignant. Departing the English countryside from a glider field, he went 'feet wet' over the

famed white cliffs of Dover; 'feet dry' came shortly after as he crossed the historic beaches of Dunquerque (Dunkirk) before a final landing in a French farmer's field (a cabbage patch) just like the Montgolfiers of more than two centuries ago.

In making this flight Trappe followed in the footsteps of other now famous aviators:

- Frenchman Jean-Pierre Blanchard and Englishman Dr. John Jeffries were first to make the crossing in 1785.

- Louis Bleriot was first to cross the channel in a heavier-than-air craft (airplane) in 1909.

- Ed Yost and Don Piccard proved the concept of

the modern hot air balloon crossing the Channel in 1963.

- In 1979 Bryan Allen pedaled his way across in the human powered Gossamer Albatross.

- In 2008 Yvess Rossy crossed the channel in 10 minutes using a jet pack strapped to his back.

But Jonathan Trappe is the first, and only person to cross the channel via cluster balloon. He was asked by a reporter upon landing, "Why the English Channel?"

"Only the media asks that," replied Trappe, "everyone else *gets* it. It's the English Channel. It's Iconic. We crossed the English

Channel because aviators for generations have wanted and dared to cross it."

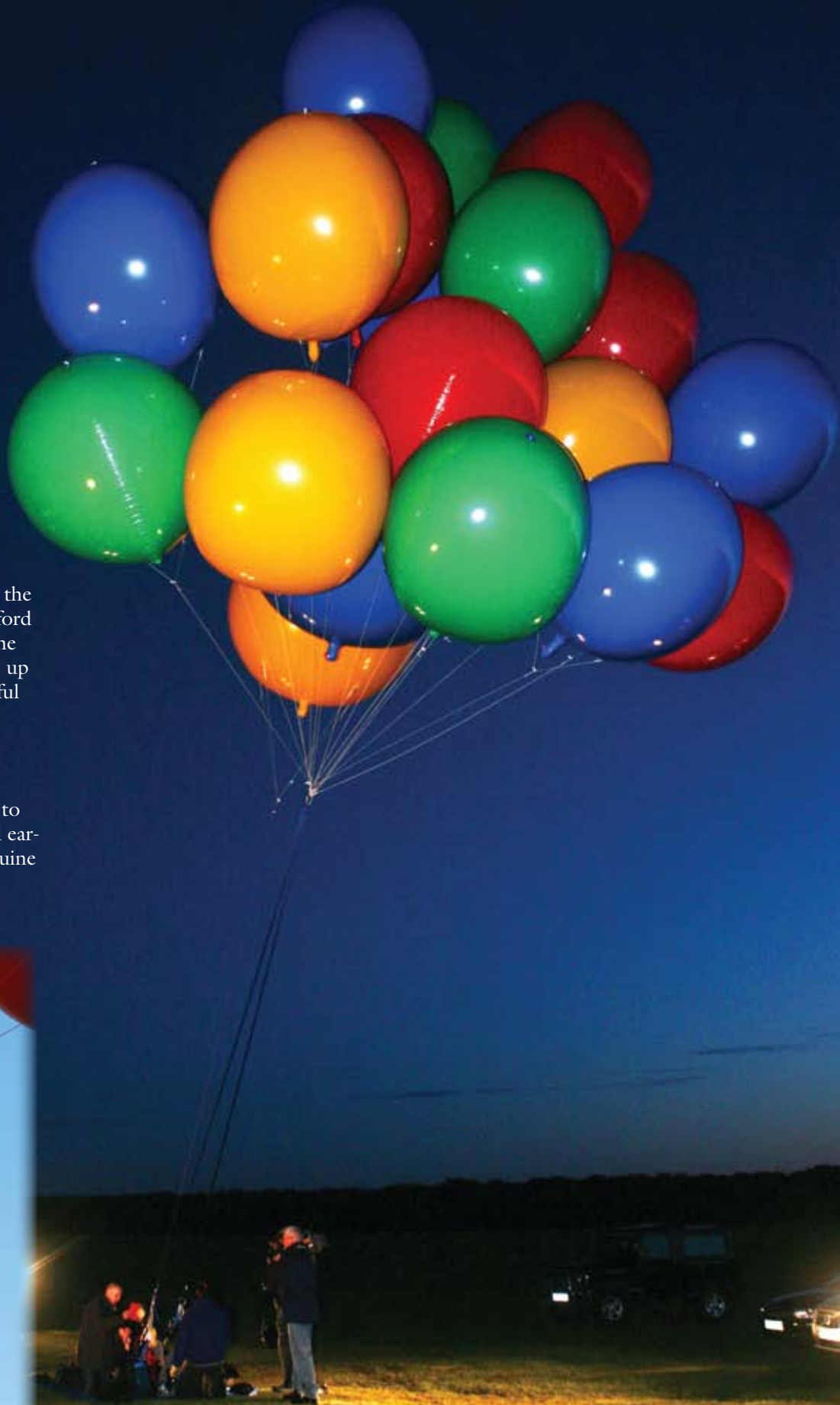
His flight reached a maximum altitude of almost 7,000 feet and a minimum of just more than 300 feet above the waves. So how was the experience?

"It was just an exceptionally quiet, peaceful experience," says Trappe. "Iconic. Right out over the white cliffs of Dover in complete silence all the way to a landing in France. It was tremendously peaceful, tremendously beautiful."



▶ An army of volunteers arrived at the Kent Gliding Club Airfield near Ashford as early as 2 a.m. to begin inflating the 54 helium balloons that would make up Trappe's cluster, all under the watchful eyes of the media.

▼ At 5:21 British Standard Time Trappe was away with a simple wave to his supporters below on what he had earlier called, "a classic challenge, a genuine





photos by Jonathan Trappe



▲ Trappe's choice of the Kent Gliding Club airfield near Ashford for launch was not made on a whim. Among other considerations, launching from there gave him about an hour over land to completely check his cluster system while in flight, yet retaining the option of executing an emergency landing on terra firma.

Above, Trappe's last views of England were the picturesque patchwork fields of Dover, including the famed Dover Castle.

◀ Trappe's flight was the first successful crossing of a significant body of water by cluster balloon. Three others have died in similar attempts. Trappe acknowledged there were risks associated with the flight but said he and his team worked methodically to reduce those risks in order to achieve fun, safe flight.

Among other things, unlike the original "Lawn Chair Larry", this flight was no stunt. Trappe had the aircraft certified, he had previously obtained proper training and licensing to fly both hot air and gas balloons and he obtained all the necessary permits from the US, UK and French authorities to carry out such a flight. Though he crossed the channel sitting in a chair, he was also outfitted with a transponder, emergency locator beacon, oxygen, aviation/navigation lights, a flotation vest and a parachute.

▶ Like many a balloon flight, Trappe had to avoid a powerline at the last minute before setting down in a French farmer's cabbage patch. Contrary to early reports he was not arrested upon landing; French gendarmes merely checked his documentation and then pointed him to a nearby cafe.



N878UP
BOC



FLIGHT STATS:

- Launch: 5:21:17am BST
- Cross the White Cliffs of Dover, at St. Margaret's Bay: 6:30:25am
- Landfall, Lighthouse at Dunkirk: 8:12:05am
- Landing Full stop, near Les Moeres, France: 8:43:16am
- Time from launch to the coast: ~1 hour 9 minutes (5:21:17am - 6:30:25am)
- Time across water: ~1 hour 42 minutes (6:30:25am - 8:12:05am)
- Total flight time: 3hours 22 minutes (5:21:17am - 8:43:16am)
- Peak altitude: ~7,000 feet
- Minimum altitude over water: 321 feet above the waves
- Distance over water: 41 miles
- Total Distance: 76.2 miles

Jonathan,

Congratulations on a fun job well done.

*On behalf of the late Ed Yost and myself,
welcome to the Channel Club.*

*On behalf of my father and myself,
welcome to the Pleiades Club.*

*On behalf of all aeronauts,
congratulations on your magnificent performance
and demeanor.*

You do credit to the sport.

Don Piccard