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## Ben Abruzzo



Ben Abruzzo, 1981

Born	<div>Ben Abruzzo</div> <div>June 9, 1930</div> <div>Rockford, Illinois,</div> <div>United States</div>
Died	<div>February 11, 1985 (aged 54)</div> <div>Albuquerque, New Mexico,</div> <div>United States</div>
Cause of death	Aircraft accident
Resting place	Gate of Heaven Cemetery Albuquerque, New Mexico[1]
Nationality	Italian
Education	University of Illinois
Occupation	balloonist
Known for	Hot air balloonist
Home town	Rockford, IL
Spouse(s)	Patty Abruzzo

**Benjamin L. Abruzzo** (June 9, 1930 – February 11, 1985) was an American hot air [balloonist](#) and businessman. He helped increase the reputation of [Albuquerque](#) as a center of lighter-than-air and hot-air ballooning.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Biography

Abruzzo was born in [Rockford, Illinois](#). He graduated from the [University of Illinois](#) in 1952, and then entered the [United States Air Force](#). After graduation, Abruzzo was stationed at [Kirtland Air Force Base](#) in [New Mexico](#). He would adopt New Mexico as his home state after leaving military service in 1954.

Abruzzo took an interest in hot air ballooning in the early 1970s. Through the efforts of Abruzzo and other Albuquerque balloon pilots the first Albuquerque balloon fiesta was held in 1972, with just thirteen balloons launching from a shopping mall parking lot. The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is now the largest event of its kind in the world, with over 600 balloons participating each October. In 1977 Abruzzo and fellow balloonist [Maxie Anderson](#) decided to attempt a crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in a helium filled gas balloon named the *Double Eagle I*. The balloon was named in honor of Charles Lindbergh, who in 1927 was the first person to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a small single engine aircraft alone. The flight of the *Double Eagle I* occurred fifty years after Lindbergh's feat, and was the eleventh recorded attempt to make the crossing, which had been an open challenge in ballooning for more than a century. The balloon launched from Marshfield, Massachusetts on September 9. After being blown off course by stormy weather, the team was forced to ditch three miles off the coast of Iceland on September 12, 65½ hours after taking off.[2] Abruzzo suffered [exposure](#) and [frostbite](#) during the flight and was forced to abandon the attempt. The team, this time with [Maxie Anderson](#) and Larry Newman, made a second attempt in the *Double Eagle II* in 1978. The team took off from [Presque Isle, Maine](#) on August 11 and made a successful landing in [Miserey, France](#) six days later. For their efforts, the team was awarded the [Congressional Gold Medal](#) in 1979.

Abruzzo was also on the *Double Eagle V* team. The *Double Eagle V* was the first team to cross the [Pacific Ocean](#) in a gas balloon in November 1981. This flight also set a record for longest trip by a team in a balloon.

Abruzzo died on 11 February 1985 when the [Cessna 421](#) he was piloting crashed near Albuquerque.<sup>[6]</sup> Abruzzo's wife and four others also died in the crash.

The [Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum](#) is named after Abruzzo. Abruzzo's son, [Richard Abruzzo](#), was also a noted balloonist. He too died in an aviation accident.