



WILLIAM G. ARMSTRONG JR.

Notable – Shields Trauger Award

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Bill Armstrong has been involved in ballooning since he was a boy in suburban Cleveland, Ohio. As a teenager, he would hitch-hike to “work parties” at the Goodyear blimp hangars near Akron to help the National Lighter-Than-Air club prepare its gas balloons for flight. He earned his commercial hot air balloon pilot license in 1974 and has owned five different hot air balloons. Earning a gas balloon rating in 1983, he has made many gas balloon ascents, including one in 1985 when he and Mike Emich flew a 19,000 cubic-foot Navy surplus hydrogen gas balloon (Class AA4) from Akron, Ohio to Northboro, Massachusetts-, setting a U.S. distance record of 515-miles on the 17-hour overnight flight.

Armstrong served ballooning organizations such as the Balloon Federation of America, of which he was vice president and director (1978-81); the Lighter-Than-Air Society, of which he was president (1981-83); the Balloon Flyers of Akron (the nation’s largest gas balloon club) as president (1983-86), the Northeast Ohio Balloon Pilots Association as a founder and director, and as a member of the Experimental Balloon & Airship Builders Association.

He directed media operations for two high-profile stratospheric ballooning expeditions: the *Earthwinds* circumnavigation attempt (1991-93), and *Light Heart*, Thomas L. Gatch’s super-pressure cluster balloon attempted crossing of the Atlantic Ocean (1974), both described in his 2003 book “*JUST WIND: Tales of Two Pilots Under Pressure.*”

Awards include the Balloon Federation of America Shields-Trauger Memorial Award, (1986); The Lighter-Than-Air Society Achievement Award, (1986); the National Aeronautic Association Certificate of Record, and the BFA President's Award, for editorship of monthly *Pilot News* (1978).

Bill served as an Official Observer for several world distance and duration records for hot air balloons (AX1 and AX3), a world endurance record for airships, and at the World Hot Air Balloon Championship (York, 1977). He has organized and managed balloon festivals, instructed students in gas and hot air balloons, and has made commemorative flights for the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force.

He led a multi-year effort to persuade the U.S. Postal Service to commemorate the 200th anniversary of manned flight in 1983 with a set of four stamps.

From 2001-2003, he served as vice president for communications of Airship Management Services, operator of large airships (Skyship 600s) such as the FujiFilm blimp and others. The firm managed contracts for homeland security, commercial advertising and passenger excursions. Armstrong was the keynote speaker at the 4th International Airship Association Convention in Cambridge, England, in 2003, and chaired “Sensors in the Sky,” an airship industry symposium at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

He has written dozens of articles about airship development, sport and scientific ballooning. He has contributed to the BFA’s *Ballooning* Magazine and for two years served as editor and publisher of the independent *Balloon Life* magazine. In professional life, Armstrong has served as a newspaper reporter, a public relations executive and a professor of public relations. He completed an award-winning career in the U.S. Navy Reserve with the rank of Captain; one assignment included a tour in Albuquerque providing flight instruction for the Navy Hot Air Balloon team.



Armstrong (r) logging some airship time



Armstrong in his experimental homebuilt balloon



Bill Armstrong and Mike Emich setting a distance world record



Armstrong's favorite perch – flying a gas balloon