

# NEW RECORDS FOR A NEW AIRSHIP

THUNDER & COLT LTD'S GA42 SHATTERS 24 WORLD BLIMP RECORDS, EVEN SOME HELD BY GOODYEAR!



Randy Hahn photo

For one man it was a first, for the other, the latest in a series of world records. Paul Woessner (shown at left) and Dr. Coy Foster (right) together set 24 world records in the Miller Lite Thunder & Colt Ltd. GA-42 airship, shattering records in every class of gas blimp except for the zeppelin. In two flights, Woessner and Foster set records for speed, altitude and distance for BA-3 through BA-10 classes.

The speed record is measured over a three-kilometer course. This is the first speed record for the blimp, and was achieved in nearly calm winds. The GA-42 attained an average speed of 48.21 mph., or Mach 0.06.

On October 24, 1990, in the same flight during which the speed record was set, the two flew to an altitude of 6,750 feet. "That's a long way up in a little blimpette," notes Woessner. The distance record flight took place the next day, when the two pilots flew from Redbird Airport in Dallas to the old Randolph WWII air base grass strip in San Antonio, a distance of 230 miles.

Woessner, a former world champion hot air balloonist, achieved his first world records in the event. The Michigan man works for Thunder & Colt full time, and has just completed a three-month contract flying the ship.

"I've been doing 120 hours a month," he says, "flying the airship as a promotion for the Texas State Fair and Texas Special Olympics." He says the blimp handles pretty well, and isn't all that difficult to fly. "You really need a crew though," he emphasizes, "especially for the landing. The pilot makes sure the nose and tail of the airship are in position, then the crew actually does the landing."

Foster is an old hand at the record business. "This makes 49 records in 49 years," he laughs, although not all of them were set in such a concentrated fashion. The Texas surgeon had broken a total of 25 records (some his own) before the airship flights, and still holds 17 of them. Only one has been broken by anyone else.

Foster's other records have been mostly in lightweight, small hot-air balloons. "I'm really not into airships," he explained, "I'm into records."

Thunder & Colt now has five GA-42 airships in the skies over Europe and the US. Managing Director Per Lindstrand says the company is looking for a production rate of four per year. Currently all the airships are flying in an advertising role, but there is also a strong interest from various drug enforcement agencies and from the police, to use the aircraft in a surveillance role.

The company is now training five pilots to obtain their U.S. gas airship license. The requirements are stiff, including 40 IFR hours, 40 cross-country hours, 10 hours of night flight and 50 hours of airship time. For more information on GA-42 flight training, contact: Mats Bäcklin, Thunder & Colt, Ltd., Maesbury Road, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY108HA, England. Telephone (0691)652216, fax 656540.

