

BERTRAND PICCARD, THE SCIENTIST-ADVENTURER

Born 1st March 1958 in Lausanne, Switzerland, married and father of three children
Medical doctor, specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy for adults and children
Lecturer and supervisor for the Swiss Medical Hypnosis Society
Honorary Professor at Guatemala's Francisco Marroquin University
Honorary Doctor of Science and of Letters
European pioneer of hang-gliding and microlight flying ; European champion in hang-glider aerobatics
Winner of the first transatlantic balloon race (Chrysler Challenge 1992)
Captain of the Breitling Orbiter 3, first non-stop round-the-world balloon flight
President of the Winds of Hope Foundation, destined to use the impact of the round-the-world balloon flight both in the media and the financial world to fight against forgotten sufferings, especially those affecting children.
United Nations Goodwill Ambassador (UNFPA)
Official Decorations : Légion d'Honneur,; The Olympic Order ; Gold Medal of the French Ministry of Youth and Sport
Awarded the highest distinctions of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, the National Geographic Society, the Explorer's Club and numerous other aeronautical, scientific and sporting associations
Lecturer : (several hundred public and private lectures since 1992)
Author of "Quand le vent souffle dans le sens de ton chemin" (out of print) 1993
"Une Trace dans le ciel" (Robert Laffont, Paris) 1999
"The Greatest Adventure" (Headline, London) 1999 or "Around the world in 20 Days" (Wiley, New York) 1999

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Bertrand Piccard was born on March 1st 1958 in Lausanne (Switzerland) into a family of explorers and scientists. He seemed to be predestined to perpetuate one of the greatest family adventures of the 20th century. Married, and father of three children, this scientist-adventurer, psychiatrist and aeronaut combines science and adventure to explore the human soul.

A FAMILY CONTEXT

His grandfather, Auguste (1884-1962), friend of Albert Einstein and Marie Curie, was professor of physics at the universities of Zurich and then Brussels. He paved the way for modern aviation and the conquest of space by inventing the principle of the pressurised cockpit and the stratospheric balloon. In making the first exploration of the stratosphere at 16,000 metres in 1931, he studied cosmic rays and became the first man to see the curvature of the earth's surface with his own eyes. Applying the principle of his stratospheric balloon to oceanographic research, he invented and constructed the bathyscaphe which made him the man of extremes – having flown higher and dived deeper than anyone ever before. It is not

surprising then that Hergé, the creator of Tintin, described him as the epitome of a scientist, and used him as inspiration for his Professor Calculus.

His father, Jacques, continued the work of Auguste with whom he dived several times before himself becoming the man to execute the world's deepest dive (-10916 metres in the Marianas Trench, the greatest known ocean depth). He then invented submersible mesoscaphes for descending to average depths, built the world's first submarine for tourists and explored 3,000 km of the Gulf Stream during a month-long drift-dive. President of the Foundation for the Study and the Protection of the Sea and Lakes, he executed several thousand scientific dives aboard his miniature mesoscaphe.

This family context profoundly marked Bertrand's early years. Thanks to his father he was able to meet his childhood heroes : Herman Geiger, with whom he made his maiden flight in the Alps, Jacques Mayol with whom he went diving in Florida, and above all, Werner von Braun who took him to visit Cape Kennedy, invited him to all the launches of Apollos 7 to 12, introduced him to Charles Lindbergh and most of the NASA astronauts.

HANG-GLIDING

Returning to Switzerland after 2 years spent in Florida where his father had built a mesoscaphe, Bertrand, aged 16, experienced his first adventure in the air when he discovered hang-gliding and microlighting, of which he was to become one of the European pioneers. Founder member of the Swiss Federation of Hang-gliding, founder member and president of honour of the Swiss Microlight Aviation Association, a hang-gliding and microlight instructor, he has explored hang-gliding in all its forms: distance, altitude, aerobatics, launching from a hot-air balloon, powered flight, paragliding, and parachuting. European hang-glider aerobatics champion, sometime holder of the world record for altitude and the man responsible for several world "firsts", he participated in the first microlight Tour de France in 1983 and succeeded in becoming the first person to cross the Swiss-Italian Alps in a microlight. He founded Piccard Aviation and participated in the development of a microlight prototype and attempted to promote microlighting as an alternative to general aviation - a more costly and less ecological leisure activity.

In total Bertrand has carried out over 250 demonstrations at air shows in Europe and the USA and has participated in numerous films and TV programmes. He has even become a comic strip hero (Dan Cooper, La Vrille).

BEYOND RECORD-BREAKING

But, more than the exploits and the record-breaking, what fascinates him about hang-gliding is the study of human behaviour and the observation of the emergence of different levels of awareness in extreme situations. Hang-gliding has become for him, a psychological laboratory, just as the hot-air balloon was, for his grandfather, a physics laboratory. Wishing to acquire a deeper understanding of the "inner world", he became a doctor, then a specialist in adult, child and adolescent psychiatry and psychotherapy. His doctoral thesis entitled "Ordeal : A Learning Experience" was awarded a prize by the Faculty of Medicine at Lausanne in 1996. He trained himself in hypnosis techniques in Europe and in the USA and

became a lecturer and supervisor for the Swiss Medical Hypnosis Society. After a period as senior consultant in a psychiatric hospital, he opened a psychotherapy practice where he also organises hypnosis training seminars. However, his interest in medicine goes beyond western frontiers, and has pushed him to seek answers to certain questions in several Asian countries. It is in this way that he has encountered the different approaches which stem from oriental traditions, particularly Taoist, which he endeavours to use complementarily in his practise of medicine.

BACK TO BALLOONING

Paradoxically, it was through his work as a doctor that he was brought back to the family tradition of hot-air ballooning when, in 1992, the Belgian Wim Verstraeten suggested that he participate with him in the Chrysler Challenge, the first transatlantic balloon race. Convinced that hypnosis techniques would be a major advantage for the management of a long-distance flight, Wim wanted to have a psychiatrist as co-pilot. This was, as it turned out, a shrewd choice, for the Verstraeten-Piccard crew won this historic race, landing in Spain after a 5-day 5,000 km flight.

For Bertrand Piccard this flight was a revelation. After 18 years of hang-gliding with the wind in his face, this transatlantic flight showed him a new way of communing with nature : allowing himself to be propelled into the unknown by the wind. A dream was born : to fly around the world non-stop, without motor or rudder, simply transported by the wind.

ROUND THE WORLD BY HOT-AIR BALLOON

This was enough to make Bertrand bring together the advantages of his family background and his interest in aeronautics and philosophy, and propose to the Swiss watch-maker Breitling that it embark with him in what was to become the last great adventure of the 20th century. On 12 January 1997, after three years of preparation, the Breitling Orbiter, took off from Château d'Oex, sponsored by the International Olympic Committee, with the aim of delivering a message of peace to all the countries of the world. A kerosene leak put a premature end to this first attempt after only six hours.

On the 8th February 1998 the Breitling Orbiter 2 was obliged to land in Burma when permission to overfly China was refused. But its flight was still the longest on record by any category of aircraft at 9 days, 17 hours and 51 minutes.

It was not until the following year that Bertrand Piccard, accompanied by the Englishman Brian Jones, at last achieved aviation's ultimate challenge. The Breitling Orbiter 3, a superb example of modern technology, took off from Château d'Oex in Switzerland on 1 March 1999 and landed in Egypt after a 45,755 kilometre flight. In 19 days, 21 hours and 47 minutes, it completed the first non-stop round the world voyage and, by the same token, the longest flight in terms of both duration and distance in the annals of aviation, capturing a total of 7 world records.

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

The Breitling Orbiter 3's ultimate resting place was to become the grand entrance hall of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington alongside Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis, the Wright Brothers' aeroplane and the Apollo 11 capsule.

The pilots' success was celebrated worldwide and they were received by several Kings and Heads of State. They were awarded the Olympic Order and the gold medal of the French Ministry of Youth and Sport and received high distinctions from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, the National Geographic Society, the Explorer's Club, the American Academy of Achievement and numerous aeronautical, scientific and sporting associations in Europe and the United States of America.

An Honorary Professor, Bertrand Piccard also received Honorary Doctorates in Science and Letters, Bertrand Piccard also received the Légion d'Honneur, the Grand Prix of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l'Institut de France and was named as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). His name appears alongside that of his grandfather and his father in the Larousse encyclopaedia for 2000.

THE HUMANITARIAN FOUNDATION "WINDS OF HOPE"

Aware of the extraordinary opportunity they had had to realise their dream, when the two pilots returned to Switzerland they made a promise: to dedicate this victory to the children of the world and to use the impact of their fame in both the media and the financial world to fight for neglected or forgotten sufferings.

Hence the birth of the Foundation "Winds of Hope". Its aim is to bring into the limelight the work being done by particular humanitarian organisations, all too often against a background of general indifference, to combat the little-known causes of suffering, and to support them with an annual grant. By informing the media about the existence of intolerable situations around the world, Winds of Hope hopes to be able to help the political authorities become aware of the urgent measures that need to be taken and appeal to the public and companies to assist in financing particular humanitarian projects.

For its first venture, the Winds of Hope Foundation chose to support the associations fighting against NOMA, an illness that hideously mutilates the faces of thousands of children in the poorest areas of Asia, Africa and South America.

The foundation, a recognised charity officially registered and overseen by the Swiss Confederation, has its internet site at: www.windsofhope.org

BOOKS AND LECTURES ON A "METAPHOR FOR LIFE"

His three books "Quand le vent souffle dans le sens de ton chemin.." (out of print), "Une Trace dans le ciel" (Robert Laffont), and "Around the world in 20 Days" (USA) or "The Greatest Adventure"(UK) (written with Brian Jones, translated into 9 languages, best seller in France (Robert Laffont) and Germany (Piper Verlag) have contributed to Bertrand becoming

known as “Le Savanturier” - a combination of the French “savant”, meaning scientist, and “aventurier” meaning adventurer - someone who is endeavouring to combine the scientific background inherited from his family with his desire to explore the great adventure of human life.

In this context he has become a highly sought-after speaker for the general public and the business world. Aware that his audience is not there to prepare a round-the-world balloon flight but rather to draw from his experience a source of inspiration for their personal and professional lives, he uses his flights to develop his concept of the psychology of life, of human communication as well as the management of stress and crises of existence. The lectures he gives and the seminars that he chairs consider motivation and the spirit of adventure, the psychology of communication and teamwork, stress management, the unknown and crisis situations and sometimes also more medical subjects like the use of hypnosis or self-hypnosis. Under the popular title: “Adventure, a state of mind: a metaphor for the round-the-world balloon flight”, Bertrand Piccard explains among other things how a balloon flight symbolises the new relationship between a human being, technology and nature. In this metaphor of life, the balloon is a captive of the winds that propel it just as man is a prisoner of his certitudes, his problems or his destiny; but, in the same way that a balloon can change altitude to find currents which will change its direction, the human being can rise up psychologically or spiritually to reassume responsibility for the direction of his existence. Since 1992 he has made several hundred appearances, both public and private, in the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe. More often than not these are lectures or seminars organised by large companies who invite their own management, employees or clients.

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