

BERTRAND PICCARD, THE SCIENTIST-ADVENTURER

(short version CV)

Bertrand Piccard was born on March 1st 1958 in Lausanne (Switzerland) into a family of explorers and scientists. His grandfather was the first person to explore the stratosphere and he invented the bathyscaphe with which his father dived to the deepest point in the oceans. Bertrand 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.

After a classical education (latin/greek), he studied medicine, became a senior consultant in a psychiatric hospital, and specialised jointly in psychiatry and psychotherapy for adults and children. His doctoral thesis entitled “La Pédagogie de l’Epreuve” was awarded a prize by the Faculty of Medicine at Lausanne in 1996. An expert in hypnotherapy, he is a lecturer and supervisor for the Swiss Medical Hypnosis Society.

Always interested in the study of human behaviour in extreme situations, he was one of the pioneers of hang gliding and microlight flying in the 1970s and became European champion in hang-glider aerobatics (1985).

After qualifying as a balloon pilot, he won, with Wim Verstraeten, the first transatlantic balloon race (Chrysler Challenge, 1992) and then initiated the “Breitling Orbiter” project. Captain of the three attempts, he succeeded with the Englishman, Brian Jones, the first non-stop round-the-world balloon flight, achieving the longest flight in terms of both duration and distance in the history of aviation : 45,755 kilometres in 19 days, 21 hours and 47 minutes (capturing a total of 7 world records)

After this circumnavigation, considered the last great adventure of the 20th century, Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones were decorated with the Olympic Order and the gold medal of the French Ministry of Youth and Sport and received among others the highest distinctions of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, the National Geographic Society, the Explorer’s Club, 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, the Légion d’Honneur, the Grand Prix of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l’Institut de France and was appointed goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). His name figures in the 2000 edition of the Larousse encyclopaedia alongside those of his father and grandfather.

Together with his co-pilot and their sponsor, Breitling, he created the « Winds of Hope » humanitarian foundation destined to use the financial and media impact of the round-the-world flight to fight forgotten and neglected sufferings on our earth. The first action, implemented in conjunction with the WHO, concerns the fight against Noma, a little known illness which hideously disfigures the faces of thousands of children in very poor countries.

His two books "Une Trace dans le ciel", 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 (Malik Verlag) have contributed to Bertrand becoming know as "Le Savanturier", 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 both with the general public and the business world. He deals with his ballooning experience from the point of view of motivation and adventurous spirit, the psychology of communication and team-working, management of stress and the unknown. Entitled "Adventure, a state of mind: a metaphor for the round-the-world balloon flight", Bertrand Piccard explains, amongst other things, how balloon flight can be seen as a symbol of a new relationship between human beings, technology and nature. In this vision 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 life. Since 1992 he has made several hundred appearances, both public and private, in the United States, Asia, Africa, Arabia and Europe. More often than not these are lectures or seminars organised by large companies who invite their own management, employees or clients.

Betrand Piccard has decided to launch into a new futuristic enterprise: to fly round the world in a solar-powered aeroplane. Also contributing as the scientific consultants to the project, the Swiss Federal Institute for Technology (EPFL) will have an opportunity for a demanding new technical challenge. The objective is to re-enact the history of powered flight using only solar energy, in an aircraft capable of remaining airborne without producing any polluting emissions. The first test flights are planned for June 2006. With this project, entitled "Solar Impulse", the Swiss explorer wishes above all to demonstrate the key role played by high technology in sustainable development.

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