



# 1999 - 2009



## TEN YEARS AGO : THE FIRST EVER NON-STOP ROUND-THE-WORLD BALLOON FLIGHT.

Ten years ago, on 21 March 1999, after 19 days, 21 hours and 47 minutes in the air, Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones's *Rozière* balloon landed in the Egyptian desert, so ending the first non-stop circumnavigation of the earth in a balloon. News desks from New York to Beijing and from London to Singapore raved over this exploit, which made the front headline in the *New York Times*.

This "Jules Verne dream", considered as the last great adventure of the 20th century, was initiated in the 1980s, with contestants including Richard Branson, Steve Fossett and Bertrand Piccard. 21 attempts in all were made before the challenge was finally met.

Aeronautic experts deemed this challenge impossible. Bertrand and Brian showed them they were wrong. Their flight, which broke 7 world records, remains the longest in effective distance (45,633 km) and duration (19 days, 21 hours and 47 minutes) in the entire history of aviation.

On landing, just 40 kg remained of the 3.7 tons of the liquid propane with which the two had taken off from Château d'Oex. Realizing that a

lack of fuel could have doomed the adventure, Bertrand Piccard promised to himself to repeat his circumnavigation of the world, but this time without fuel or polluting emissions. From this promise the Solar Impulse project was born.

With hindsight, Bertrand Piccard measures even better the significance of this round-the-world victory: "At the time the circumnavigation was an end in itself. It was simply a means of going further, a step allowing me to commit myself more actively to humanitarian actions and the environment. The outcome is the Solar Impulse solar aircraft project and the fight against malaria via the Winds of Hope foundation, which is helping children afflicted with this atrocious sickness associated with poverty and malnutrition."

This year Brian Jones will be taking to the air on board a replica of the Breitling Orbiter 3 in a global awareness campaign to raise funds for this cause.

**For both aeronauts the adventure continues.**