

Docket No. SA-539

Exhibit No. 2-B

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C.

Attachment 1 – Interview Summaries

(13 Pages)

1.0 Interviewee: Alan Thomas Lirette

Date/Time: August 1, 2016/ 0910 CDT

Location: Marriott Hotel - AUS

Present: David Lawrence – National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB); Nathan Gordon - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Representative: Declined representation

His name was Alan Thomas “Bubba” Lirette, and he was 59 years old. He said he was aware that Skip had a “colorful” past, but was a good man that had turned things around.

He had been with Skip for about 3 years. He had no contract with Skip, and helped maintain the equipment and took care of the house where they lived together. He took care of van, radios, the GPS, refueled the tanks and washed the vehicles. He took care of everything so Skip could handle the vouchers, websites and paperwork. He would be outside taking care of the equipment while Skip was inside the house taking care of his prep work.

He did “cleanliness” maintenance, not any required maintenance. There was no required maintenance done at the house, it had to be sent out to a repair station. He was there to assist Skip, and was not required to hold a license. He also handled the other ground crew.

He said the company had other pilots in the past, but the only time you could fly two balloons was in the winter during the morning and afternoon, so Skip was the only pilot. In the summer, you could only fly during the morning.

He said Sarah was the “go-to girl” and had been doing it for a long time. He did not know the legal aspects of the business and if the St. Louis operation was a part of the Texas operation.

He said Skip would check the weather websites about 7:30 pm the night before a flight, and then call Sarah, who would call the passengers. After Skip called Sarah, he said he would call his ground crew. They would get up in the morning, and Skip would get some coffee and start checking websites. On the morning of the accident, they woke up at 3:30 in the morning, and he noted a clear sky that morning. He did not see Skip call for the weather, but knew he did it for every flight to see if anything had changed. Skip would call for weather when in the Walmart parking lot, but sometimes called from the house before leaving.

He said everything Skip did was on the iPad.

When he woke up, he let the dogs out and checked grass for dew. He prepped the champagne and orange juice in the van, including water. Skip would have his black bag that contained the FAA radio, iPad, itinerary, sign-in sheets, iPad, FAA radio and walky-talky.

Fueling occurred earlier at Guadalupe propane. All the propane tanks were filled to capacity, which was 4 20-gallon tanks and one 16-gallon inflation tank.

They went to Walmart, and Skip arrived there first, and he was 15 minutes behind. He drove to Walmart with the balloon trailer.

He remembered there was one person that was late arriving to Walmart, and Skip may have put the voucher in his black bag in his Suburban. As Skip checked the passengers in, he went to get ice at Walmart. When they got a good enough crowd to show up, he would brief them for the flight on how to get the balloon in the air and what to expect. On the day of the accident, none of the passengers had flown in a balloon before.

At Walmart, they set off a pibal, and Skip watched it fly. He did not watch it, but may have glimpsed at it. As it was going away from them in the parking lot, Skip picked the launch site to the east, and they then drove to San Marcus dive school and released another pibal at the launch site. On the way to the dive school between Martindale and the tollway on highway 80, they noticed a “surface layer” of fog there during the drive.

They typically did not launch right at sunrise since it took a while to get the balloon to stand-up at 200 degrees. I thought the max was 215, but there were “tattle-tale” ribbons on the inside of the balloon. He thought this balloon was made with the new material, and was not sure if it was polyester, but it was a little thicker material because of the mesquite in the area.

They released another pibal to check weather and it went to the same direction. He said the weather was crystal clear for the launch. There was a pole at the dive school they used to view if there was fog, and for that day they could see it clearly.

He said Skip would cancel in a heartbeat if required. He added around Martindale there was a little surface fog on the left side of the road while driving to the launch site. When they got to the dive school, it was completely clear. While setting up the balloon, he did notice a windshift of about 20 degrees, but that did not concern him.

Skip conducted the safety briefing, and talked about where to position themselves in the basket in case of an emergency or if they had to come down quickly for a “fast approach.” Skip would not brief the passengers with a checklist, it was just verbal from his own experience.

He said the balloon was 9.5 stories tall, and once it gained a little bit of speed it was hard to slow it down in a descent. That was why they never flew in winds above 9 miles an hour.

He said in his opinion Skip likely hit the power line between the burners and the basket.

For the preflight routine, they did not reference the manual, and used their experience. He was not sure if there was a copy of the balloon manual in the balloon and did not see a reason to have it in the balloon in flight.

He checked the weather on iPad at Walmart for a final call on whether to fly, and typically used about 3 different websites. He did not know who Skip was calling for the weather.

The launch was smooth, and it was a “beautiful” setup for launch. There was no indication of any problems.

The ground crew used a van to pull the trailer, and also used a Suburban to help pick up the passengers.

He was not sure if Skip had the Glympse on his iPad or iPhone. They communicated by cell phone when they needed to talk, but did not speak to each other by phone during the accident flight. Skip would send a Glympse message to his and Jonathan's (other ground crewmember) phone. He did not know what navigation app Skip used on his iPad.

The launch was a relatively "low, slow takeoff" which meant they were not rushed. After the launch, they put away the equipment and loaded up, but stayed maybe 10 minutes to drink water and have a smoke before leaving. They watched them fly off with no problem, no high winds, and no problems indicated with the tether line, which they had attached to the truck prior to launch.

He said he had a low left tire so after the launch they went to Valero to fill it up. That took only about 3-4 minutes and then he picked up the chase about 2 miles, driving under the toll road toward Dickerson road.

He said when the balloon got over the tollway, he could see he was entering "a little bit of fog." The fog then started getting a little thicker while he was following him over the tollway. The fog got a little thicker, and he saw him come down to treetop levels. He only observed the basket underneath the low clouds and could not see the envelope. They lost all visual contact with the balloon about 10-15 minutes after the launch. They then got onto Glympse to track the balloon and sent a signal to Skip.

When he went up in the clouds, he thought Skip was going to try and climb up above the clouds. He sent a glympse signal to him, continued down toward Martindale road and then to Dickerson road, which was a dirt covered road. The balloon then flew over Dickerson road. Skip sent out a Glympse at 0726, and shortly after that the Glympse "went off." They tried sending Glympse messages to Skip but it would not receive. He tried to also call Skip, but it went straight to voice mail.

He started calling passenger from the list of contacts, and all the calls went to voice mail. That was about 35 minutes after he went off Glympse. They were very busy trying "to get a visual" through the fog.

The typical flight time was about 1 hour, and with the propane full they could fly for about 1 hour 20 minutes. However, once you are in the air for 50 minutes, you start looking for a good place to land.

He said they could only fly during the day, which was why they waited until sunrise to launch. The delay was because it took a long time to inflate and stand the balloon up. He could not remember exactly what time the launch was.

He never got a cell phone call from Skip during the flight, but that was not necessarily unusual.

The basket had a Flitec instrumentation to give him the rate of climb, envelope temperature and altimeter. He said the tanks were loaded in the basket with 2 on one side and 2 on the other. The pilot stood in the center compartment.

When they saw the basket come down out of the fog, he thought it was a pretty sight with the basket sticking out of the clouds and thought that would be a good picture. When they lost sight of the balloon they were not quite to highway 142. When they couldn't reach Skip, they entered "panic mode", and he looked at the clouds and drove to the last place he saw them. They finally started driving toward San Marcus when they saw the field with cars next to it. They had been there an hour-hour and a half, troopers blocking road by the time I got there.

There were no cameras mounted on the balloon.

He said in his 3 years with Skip, he never had any incidents, accidents or power line hits.

Skip had been flying the -300 for a while. He said you would have to grab "all three burners" on the balloon to get it to go up, and even then there was a pause.

The capacity of the basket was 16, but their typical load was 13 or 14, sometimes less for no-shows. Every third time they might see 16 passengers.

He never actually saw Skip go in and calculate the weight of the balloon from the manual. He thought the website had their weights. He thought the weights were obtained from the passengers when they checked and Skip got that information from the website. He was not aware of any maximum weight for the basket, but that was Skip's job.

Skip did not make any comment about the standup temperature at the launch site, but it was dewy at the launch site.

When asked if Skip did a "walk-around" on the balloon prior to flight, he said that was primarily his job to check everything, including the carabiners. Skip would also check the carabiners, but it was his job to check them once the balloon was stood up.

He said the crown-line was connected to one of the buckles inside the basket during flight, using a regular size carabiner. It had a T-handle on the end. It was never hanging off basket or below the basket during flight.

When asked if the FAA had ever done an inspection of the balloon or operation prior to a launch, he said not that he ever saw.

One week prior to accident, they flew for 5 days in Katy, Texas and then came back and maybe flew Monday then cancelled on Tuesday, but he was not sure.

He went to bed the night before the accident at about 1030pm, and Skip had gone to bed about 9 pm. Skip was a recovering alcoholic, and did not drink the night before the accident. He said Skip had a colorful life, and was a great man.

Interview concluded at 1100.

2.0 Interviewee: Julian Silguero and Jonathan Silguero; Ground Crew Members

Date/Time: August 1, 2016/ 1115 CDT

Location: Marriott Hotel - AUS

Present: David Lawrence – National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB); Nathan Gordon - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Representative: Both declined representation

Their names were Julian Silguero (20 years old) and Jonathan Silguero (21 years old), and they both worked as ground crew for Skip Nichols. They worked for Skip, but were not employees of his company, and received cash payment and tips for each flight.

Both had been working for Skip for about 2 years. Skip used to have another pilot that he worked with, but had fired him about a year ago. His name was Mike.

They worked monthly, maybe once a week. They had primarily worked with Skip and Bubba. Neither held a balloon license, and did not have a contract with Skip.

They learned they would crew the flight the night before when Skip checked weather. Skip usually would check the weather around 1900 – 1930 the night before, and would then let them know if they would be working the next morning. They were not sure what weather site Skip would use, but they thought it was a weather balloon weather website that he paid for. He checked the weather using his iPad.

On the morning of the accident, they got to Walmart at about 0545, and then left for the Skydive place. At Walmart, Skip set off a pibal to check winds. Skip typically chose between two different launch sites; Fentress, and another one right off I35 and Yarrington. Those were the only two he had used with them recently.

They said the weather was “a little foggy on the way there” to Fentress. They could see the white telephone poles at skydive hanger when they were at the launch site, and Skip used that to determine the visibility. If Skip did not see the poles, he would cancel, but that morning he could see the poles and decided to launch. There was fog around at the launch site, but they could still see the stars and about 2 miles around. They could see upwards fine.

There were no problems with setup and loading. Skip set off another pibal at the launch site, and went the direction the balloon eventually traveled after the launch. Skip would usually call on his phone to get the weather from the Walmart, but they did not observe it on that morning since they showed up a little late at Walmart and Skip and Bubba were already putting things away and loading up. They did not see him call for weather at Walmart or the launch site.

The setup and launch of the balloon went fine. Julian was on the crown line. They stayed behind the basket for the launch, but did not do a “clear above.” They did not see Skip use a checklist,

but he did have his iPad out. They did not know what app he used for navigation. They saw him launch, and then go into the fog. During the chase, they lost him several times in the clouds.

They saw him a few more times, and then lost him a 3rd time when he went into the fog as they drove down a back road. He looked a “little high,” not low, when they lost sight of Skip. Skip then sent a Glympse to Bubba at 7:26. That was the last time they heard from Skip.

When asked what time they launched they said “6:30 or 6:40.”

There were no phone calls from Skip after the launch. Typically, Bubba would call Skip, and sometimes Skip would call Bubba. Skip sent the Glympse message at 7:26. That was normal for Skip to send a Glympse message, and that usually meant Skip was looking for a spot to land, about 10 minutes or so out. He had been out of sight for about 5 minutes before they got the Glympse message. They never saw a Glympse track from the ping Skip had sent. Bubba could see Skip's position from the Glympse, and they were expecting the ping based on the time that Skip had been in the air.

Skip's flights typically lasted an hour. They had worked 16 passengers before, but usually they flew with 14-15 passengers. They thought there were two no-shows that morning. They were not aware of any passengers showing up late since they were late arriving to Walmart themselves and all the passengers were already there.

Skip usually asked the passengers in a combined section what their weight was, not individually. They were not sure if he did that on the morning of the accident, but it was usually done at the launch site. Skip did brief the passengers on things like where to stand and sit, and where to place themselves in the basket for an emergency.

They were not sure what manuals or documents Skip had in the basket. Skip had a little blue bag that contained his iPad that he carried in the basket.

They said Skip never mentioned any concerns about the flight that morning, and did not make any comments to them about the weather. There were no phone calls once they were at the launch site, but believe he may have called the skydive place from the car on the drive out to let them know they would be launching from Fentress.

They had been with Skip for about two years, and said Skip had never had any close calls that they were aware of.

Interview concluded at 1205.

3.0 Record of Conversation: Sarah Nichols (mother of accident pilot Skip Nichols)

Date/Time: August 3, 2016/ 1700 CDT

Location: Kyle, Texas home of accident pilot

Present: David Lawrence – National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB); Sarah Nichols, Alan “Bubba” Lirette – Heart of Texas Hot Air Balloon Rides.

Notes from the conversation with Sarah Nichols:

- Skip owned the company and she administered the scheduling and payments. She did this from her home near Melbourne, FL. She was not an employee of the company, and other than Skip (as owner), there were no employees of the company. She and the ground crew received cash payments for their assistance to Skip.
- Passengers could book the trips by calling her directly so she could put them on the schedule, or they could buy through Groupon for their payment, but still had to call her to book the flights.
- Liability release forms were completed prior to the flight. She did not know where the missing release form was.
- She would obtain each passenger's weight during the call, and enter that into the manifest that was created within the program she used for the scheduling.
- Skip would have access to their online account, and could access the manifest with the passenger's names and weights on his iPad prior to a flight.
- Typically, Skip would operate one week out of the month in Houston, and the rest of the month locally around Kyle. The week before the accident, Skip had flown on July 18-19, Jul7 21-23 in Houston, and July 24-25 locally in Kyle.
- She did not know where Skip's personal logbook was, or the logbook to N2469L. She did not know the password to Skip's iPad. She did not know what navigation programs or weather apps he used during flight on his iPad, only that he used Glympse for tracking the balloon with the ground crew.
- Skip started his balloon business in St. Louis, MO, and then moved to Texas 3 years ago. He still owned the business in St. Louis, and kept it and the Texas operation separate. She did not know how he had arranged the business in St. Louis, but it was separate from Heart of Texas Hot Air Balloon Rides. She was not sure if Skip had registered the Texas business with the state, but thought it may have been formed under an LLC. She said local balloon companies were not happy with Skip when he opened the business in Texas since it increased competition for local business.
- She did not know specifically what medications Skip took, but would provide a list to the NTSB.
- She said she would provide a list of Skip's previous 90-day flights (to verify currency), including a schedule for N2469L going back to September 2015.
- She said she would provide the manifest for the accident flight, including the weights provided by the passengers.
- She said she had never seen or heard of the FAA observing their operation.

Conversation concluded at 1900 CDT.

4.0 Interviewee: Mike McGrath, Former Heart of Texas balloon pilot

Date/Time: September 1, 2016/1003 CDT

Location: via telephone

Present: David Lawrence – National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

Representative: Declined representation

During the interview, Mr. McGrath stated the following:¹

His name was Michael Dennis McGrath, he was 58 years old and residing in Illinois. He held an FAA commercial balloon pilot license, lighter than air. He also was a balloon repairman, but did not do that anymore. He started in the balloon industry in 1979 as a ground crew, got his private balloon license in 1981, and his commercial in 1983. He estimated he had over 4,500 hours in balloons, having also flown in Kenya places in Africa where they began flying the bigger balloons. He last flew in Albuquerque about 4 to 5 months ago. He had not flown balloons commercially since he last worked in Texas for Skip.

His back ground included being a union brick layer in Chicago, and then became full time balloonist in sport and to make a living. He had flown in 17 different countries, and had a British license. He said in Kenya, balloon pilots needed to obtain a medical certificate twice a year when the pilot was over 40 years of age.

He said his background with Skip Nichols started when he heard through the grapevine that Skip was looking for pilots. He went to Texas in June of 2015, and stayed with the operation until September 2015. He then left Skip and went to Albuquerque for Fiesta and just stayed in New Mexico.

He said he did not care for the weather in Texas. While with Skip, he flew the Ultra-Magic 250, as well as the Kubicek 300 balloon that crashed. In August of 2015, Skip had to go up to St. Louis for business and stayed there while he continued to fly in Texas. He was not flying much when Skip left because of the weather in Texas. He said typical Texas weather would be crystal clear early in the morning, then a half an hour before sunrise the fog would roll in and the ceilings would develop at about 700-800 feet. That would happen almost every day, and was probably why so few balloon operators were in that part of Texas. It was a normal local weather phenomenon. High humidity close to 100% would also reduce the balloons lift capacity dramatically.

He said the Kubicek had an AD on its fuel lines. It would be important for the accident to know where the valve handles were on the propane tanks to see which ones were on and which ones were off, and if he was flying with a tank connected to the manifold. The 300 had 4 propane tanks that were not Kubiceks but were approved tanks. The manifold could be problematic since there were two check valves in the fuel line on each tank, and sometimes they would “lock up.” They would use the manifolds so the pilot would not have to change tanks in flight.

There were 2 O-rings in a female fitting that would sometimes pop out during the refueling of the propane tank. It would seal, but any wiggle of the O-ring and you could get a “nasty leak.”

¹ Mr. McGrath was sent a copy of this interview summary on September 1, 2016 at 1834 CDT for comments and corrections.

Fuel management in flight was the pilot's preference. There were 4 tanks in the balloon, and 2 of the tanks were connected by a manifold. He would normally run one to the tanks on the manifold connection dry first, and then move to one of the other full tanks. The inflation tank was a separate tank than those in the basket, and it also had an O-ring problem, and the fuel lines from the inflation tank went from the tank to the burner for inflation.

The burners were also "manifolded" with two of them connected through a cross over valve. You would not want to burn all 3 burners at once since you could burn the skirt of the balloon, but could do that if you really needed the performance. He personally did not care for manifolds, and would simply switch hoses in flight. He had an incident with a manifold on the 300 once where he stepped on the line and it sheared off, and the basket was covered in propane. He would switch one hose in flight. Full fuel would give about 20 minutes per tank, but was variable depending on the temperature.

When he was flying in Texas, Skip was also actively flying. Sometimes they would fly at the same time. He flew with Skip once, as a check out on the equipment. He had also crewed for Skip a few times.

He did not give Skip a Biennial Flight Review, and was not sure who had done that with him.

Skip used several people to do the annual inspections on his balloons. One that he knew of was in Corpus Christi and the other in St. Louis. A proper annual on a balloon could get "pricey", and Skip would go "low ball" to save costs.

He did not know much about the St. Louis operation other than he had a partner from high school working for him there. Skip had to go to St. Louis to fire the pilot up there for running up his credit card, and Skip stayed there for about a month to fly.

He said that Skip's bookings in Texas were a lot less than Skip had been expecting, there was little flying, and that was a primary reason he ended up leaving Texas. Ask if Skip had any financial issues, he said Skip had a big house for a while and eventually had to downsize to a smaller house, and his ground crew chief moved in with him. He said Skip was a "wheeler and dealer" type.

When asked if he ever experienced any mission pressure to complete a flight, he said yes, Skip would want him to fly low-ceiling trips, but he usually said no. He had a perfect safety record until he came to Texas, when he had a hard landing when the ground crew truck parked in their landing path, and a passenger hurt her leg.

For a typical flight, they would go out to the field, conduct weather checks, and sometimes the weather would be fine in some places and "spotty" in others.

He did not recall if Skip ever had any issues or close calls with power lines. Mostly their issues in Texas would be getting run off by land owners with shotguns. Some people did not mind where you landed, others did.

The accident 300 balloon was a larger balloon and with less maneuverability than smaller balloons that had more space to turn around. The 300 simply had more mass and inertia to handle. On a standard day, it would perform well. It had a combination “smart top,” where the pilot could open the vent and stop the balloon in short distance, but was not typically used in the air. The pilot could partially open the valve to descend or trim vent.

To descend, the pilot would pull the vent a little to release hot air. On landing, the pilot would pull it all the way out to keep it on the ground. One valve was for trimming, and there was one red line for opening that vent, and another to close the vent, similar to a venetian blind. The balloon also had two other trimming vent lines for vents located on the side of the balloon for spinning the basket around for alignment prior to landing. The pilot could also use those as trim vents as well. There could be a lot of rope on the vent line, and a rope could catch since it is so long.

The old emergency adage was “when in doubt, rip it out” to emergency descend if about to hit power lines. If you were going to have to strike a power line, you would try and hit the envelope of the balloon on the line to hang it up, and you could possibly get away with it. A strike on the powerline with the cables on the basket could go through cables like a cutting torch.

When asked if Skip had any medical issues, he said not that he was aware of. Skip was a little overweight and liked to eat junk food. He said he thought Skip starting going to church, and was turning a new leaf from his troubled past. He said Skip wanted to be a success, had a bad patch but was getting on his feet.

When he flew for Skip, he was just a pilot. Skip handled all the bookings, and his mother helped run the business from her home in Florida. Bookings were all made through a website, and some Groupon bookings.

Skip had a Flytec for the 300. The balloon had a sensor at the top where temperatures could be read wirelessly to the Flytec. It also had an altimeter and variometer. It could hook up to software on the iPad and would chart your course through the flight. Skip also used the iPad for navigation, looking a “local features” chart. When he flew for Skip, most all air to ground crew communications was done via cell-phone.

He said he liked to use a checklist for setup, a lot of people do not, and most likely Skip never used a checklist. They had a manifest with the passenger weights, and there was a checklist in the flight manual, but it was “pretty redundant.”

His ground crew included two “Bubbas” and several young men.

When asked if he ever saw the FAA during any of his or Skip’s operations, he said no.

He said that ballooning was physical, and envelopes weighed a lot when being pulled out for setup and repacking. They would sometimes ask the passengers to help with the setup and inflation.

Skip kept his aircraft logbooks with him, and not always on the balloon when he flew. There was no requirement to have the logbook in the basket.

The 300 balloon was already in Skip's operation when he showed up in Texas. He thought it might be the first time Skip had flown a balloon that large. Some companies would require a pilot to get checked out on that large of a balloon. He was not sure if Skip ever got a check out on the 300.

There was a balloon company on the north side of Austin that would have meetings locally, but they were mostly social meetings, and he doubted if Skip had ever gone to one of those meetings. He was not sure if Skip ever participated in any of the BFA online safety courses. Sometimes insurance companies would provide a discount if the pilot attended a safety seminar. He was not sure if Skip had done that. Skip's insurance holder was Frank Welker, who may know more.

He said some flights you could be very busy, and others not so busy. Sometimes the wind could come up, weather change, or you could be involved with some "weird passengers."

He said the weather minimums for ballooning were basic VFR minimums, 1 mile and clear of cloud. Balloons typically do not fly when the wind is over 10 knots. Every pilot would cancel because of fog. Occasionally they would think the fog would burn off, but it wouldn't. He had seen Skip cancel a flight due to weather.

For marginal weather, they would discuss whether to fly. Asked what marginal weather was, he said visibility and precipitation could make conditions marginal, also imbedded storms, but the minimum was a mile visibility.

Asked if he ever saw Skip launch through a cloud layer, he said yes, he would go up through a hole in the clouds. Sometimes the temperature would drop as you climbed through the clouds, and the balloon would want to climb with the temperature drop and the balloon would pop you out of the top of the clouds. Temperature changes affect the performance of a balloon. Some clouds were cold, and some not so much. If you were on top of a cloud and venting to go down through a cold cloud, you could get disoriented and end up over burning. Sometimes a cold layer along the ground could assist you in giving the pilot more "power" for the landing and slow the descent, but it could also bounce you off the cold layer and extend your landing. He said "it's all pilotage."

When asked if there was a condition where the balloon was over the clouds and it experienced a loss of lift, he said sometimes with the temperature lapse rate and density altitude, it would affect balloons just like airplanes and affect the descent rate higher with warmer temps below.

Their typical load in the 300 was about 12-14 passengers, but Skip occasionally would "stuff it full." The idea in commercial ballooning is to take as many as you can for business. They would get pressure for the passengers for fly sometimes, who did not understand the risks.

Asked if Skip ever felt pressured to fly, he said if you cancelled 10 days in the row and then had marginal weather, you might push it a bit more with passengers standing there waiting to fly, especially toward the end of the month when the bills were due.

He said for the industry, it was hard to get everyone on same page. He thought there was movement in BFA to regulate big balloons, but thought that was just a way for the big operators to keep the smaller operators down.

He said big balloons like the 300 were new to the US over the past 10 years. Those balloons were much different and involved a higher skill level to fly. Little balloons were easy to handle. He thought there should be some form of continual training for balloon pilots, and there should be ratings based on the size of the balloon, similar to what they had in Kenya. In the UK, you had to take a check ride in each of the different class balloons to get that authorization on your license.

Medicals were not required at the moment for balloon pilots because the FAA did not think it was worth it. He was not sure if balloon pilots could fly commercially past age 65. Aviation medicals for balloon pilots would be a financial burden for some pilots. Most commercial ballooning is done on the cheap, and most operators have a tight budget.

Interview concluded at 1118.