

ARMY MEN RISE 74,000 FEET ON FLIGHT IN STRATOSPHERE, THEN LAND GENTLY ON FARM

Fliers Talk With Ground for Eight Hours; Give Vivid Picture by Radio of the Trip

Captains Stevens and Anderson, besides going higher in the air than any other expedition, set a record yesterday by keeping up an intermittent conversation over the radio for nearly eight hours.

Starting within twenty minutes after their take-off, they talked with one person or another on a multitude of subjects throughout the day.

Captain Stevens was especially active, listening to advice from three of the corps of scientists attached to the expedition, chatting with a Pan American airplane over the Pacific, and in the next minute patiently answering the questions of a London newspaper man.

Wherever any one of consequence wanted to talk to the stratosphere balloon, engineers of the National Broadcasting Company quickly set up a microphone transmitter and receiver and tuned in the balloon.

Reception and transmission, except for a minute here and there, were characterized as perfect by Captain Stevens and his associates on the ground. Listeners on household

sets could not only follow the conversations clearly, but could also hear the ticking of the Geiger counters registering the arrival of the cosmic rays; the regular tripping of the machinery operating the battery of cameras, and finally toward the end of the flight the grunts and suppressed voices of the two fliers as they joined in heaving ballast overboard to slow up the descent of their ship.

There was no difficulty in identifying the speakers. Captain Stevens's Down East twang, with the clipped enunciation that comes only from Maine, contrasted with the drawl of Captain Anderson, who was reared on a Utah cattle ranch.

The first conversation was held between Captain Stevens and Thomas W. McKnew, secretary of the advisory committee on the flight and head of the National Geographic Society personnel at Rapid City during the flight preparations. It went something like this:

"That was a beautiful take-off you had."

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NEW ALTITUDE MARK SET

Figure of the Russians in Fatal Flight Topped by 2,000 Feet.

EIGHT HOURS IN THE AIR

Fliers Had Anxious Moments When Balloon Began Falling 500 Feet a Minute.

WERE THEN 23,000 FEET UP

But Stevens and Anderson Checked the Plunge—All Instruments Intact.

By The Associated Press.

WHITE LAKE, S. D., Nov. 11.

A gentle landing by the world's largest balloon in a field near here late today successfully ended man's most sensational venture into the heights of the stratosphere—to an unofficially recorded altitude of fourteen miles.

Two American Army fliers, Captains Albert W. Stevens and Orvil A. Anderson, if later calibrations sustain their barometric computations of 74,000 feet as the zenith of their soaring, by the daring venture returned to America the world's altitude record and brought back valuable additions to scientific knowledge of the super-atmosphere.

Their epic feat, coming after a wait of six weeks for favorable weather and compensating for two previous disappointments, moved smoothly to its climax, after the rocky wall of their camp's base was cleared by only fifty feet, at 8 o'clock (Central standard time) this morning (9 o'clock, Eastern standard time).

Landing Without a Scratch.

They landed at 4:13 P. M. (Central standard time) after eight hours and thirteen minutes of adventure which thrilled a world, some 240 miles east of their camp near Rapid City, S. D.

"Not a scratch" was the comment from the field about a dozen miles from here when the two climbed out of the gondola.

If record checkers sustain their 74,000-foot figure it will mean that Captains Stevens and Anderson surpassed by some 2,000 feet the hitherto unequalled, but never officially recognized, record claimed for a trio of Soviet airmen whose venture last year ended in their deaths.

In spite of the favorable weather and generally ideal conditions attending the flight, it had its highly anxious moments.

One came a few minutes before they landed when they wirelessly that the huge balloon and gondola, with an over-all height equivalent to that of a 31-story building, was plummeting downward 500 feet to the minute.

But it nosed into the farm land without mishap and this word was radioed to anxious colleagues:

"Very nice landing."

An army plane piloted by Capt. H. K. Baisley which had followed the big helium filled balloon landed near by soon afterward.

The Countryside Electrified.

The sight of the 315-foot craft scudding across the skies like a meteor electrified the countryside. By foot and by car, the curious raced to the prairie twelve miles from here to see the aviators end their epochal trip. A line of cars nearly four miles long was reported jamming the narrow country round within an hour or so of the trip's ending.

The fliers went at once to the John Methye farm near Stickney. They clambered into a farmer's car and started for White Lake for "rest and refreshments."

They reached their pinnacle, far in excess of the official record of 61,237 feet set by Major Chester Fordney and Lieut. T. G. W. Settle in 1933, at 12:30 P. M., four and a half hours after they took off. At 1:05 P. M. the descent was started. It proceeded satisfactorily for a time.

But anxiety welled up after some two hours. Captain Stevens radioed the balloon was at the 23,000-foot level and "dropping too fast." For several frenzied moments the pair tossed out ballast. The downward rush of 500 feet a minute was halted.

A thousand feet from the earth,

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BALLOON BATTLES WAY OUT OF BOWL

Ballast Is Dropped to Clear the Trees at Rim, Lined With 20,000 Cheering in Cold.

ASCENDS AT A RAPID RATE

Pilot Reports Conditions at Various Heights—Craft Drifts 50 Miles in 2½ Hours.

By The Associated Press.

RAPID CITY, S. D., Nov. 11.—Explorer II, the world's largest balloon, took off today at 7 A. M. (Mountain time) on its long-awaited journey into the stratosphere for scientific exploration.

A cheering crowd estimated as high as 20,000 persons braved six above zero cold to witness the take-off.

"Culminating a six weeks' wait for perfect weather, the giant craft rose successfully from the rock-walled natural bowl, eleven miles southwest of here, about two hours behind the scheduled ascent.

Rising about 600 feet a minute, the balloon quickly cleared the 500-foot rock wall of the flight base and then moved over the hills a trifle south and east.

Captain Orvil A. Anderson, pilot, dumped several bags of ballast when it appeared that the balloon might come too near the trees on the rim of the bowl, but the obstacle was successfully cleared. Captain Anderson was accompanied by Captain Albert W. Stevens, commander and scientific observer.

The aeronauts had to drop about 1,000 pounds of ballast to clear the rim by fifty feet. Moreover, it was a patched balloon that took them aloft. A twenty-foot rip was made in the lower part of the envelope during the inflation last night and cementing a patch over it caused a two-hour delay in the take-off.

Aeronauts Recount Progress.

At 10:07 A. M. (Central time) Captain Stevens radioed: "We're up 21,000 feet and going up 300 feet a minute." He reported mending a slight leak.

A rough estimate of the line of drift at 10:15 A. M. showed the balloon headed between Sioux Falls, S. D., and Sioux City, Iowa. Captain Anderson talked briefly with his wife who was listening in at the flight base.

At 10:25 A. M. Captain Stevens reported an altitude of 23,000 feet. The balloon had then drifted about fifty miles southeast of Rapid City and crossed zones from Mountain to Central time.

Captain Stevens reported that it was then 40 below zero outside the gondola, but everything was "all right."

At 11:07 A. M. he radioed: "We are over the Niobrara River (in Nebraska) now." The wind was then south to southeast.

Stating that the instruments, including the spectograph and stratoscope were working "O. K.," he added:

"We've registered the earth radiance at 200 candles."

The Seventh Army Corps Area

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