



Area balloonists fly 'hot ship'

by Dan Fesperman
Staff Writer

"Look!"
"Up in the sky!"
"It's a bird!"
"It's a plane!"
"It's Superman!"

With Apollo space capsules and the "Spirit of St. Louis" quietly resting in the Smithsonian Institute, about the only flying thing that still rivals Superman for drawing crowds is a hot-air balloon — just ask Rocco Di Santo, David Williamson or Mac Sasser. The three are licensed balloonists and the operators of Aerostat Odysseys Inc., an outfit that provides pleasure flights, pilot lessons or high-altitude advertisements. The vital cog in the corporation is a multi-

colored balloon that is half the size of the Goodyear blimp when inflated, and is fitted with a nineteenth century-style wicker basket.

"People just sort of appear from nowhere to watch us," Williamson said, "whether we happen to land in a cow pasture or on a dirt road."

"People are usually pretty surprised by us because I guess it's not every day that they see a balloon," Di Santo said.

"Once when I was flying over Long Island," he said, "at least two-dozen jets that were headed for LaGuardia and Kennedy re-routed just to get a look at the balloon. They would sweep by and dip their wings to give everybody on the plane a good look."

The two people most astonished by the sight of the balloon are probably the elderly

couple who saw it over their house one morning. "An old lady came out of her back door and saw us," Di Santo said with a laugh. "It was pretty much of a flip-out for her, and she ran inside to get her husband. When he came out, I asked him, 'Is this the way to Boston?' You could tell they were pretty taken back by the whole thing."

The largest crowd the balloon has ever drawn was not exactly the friendliest, and surely not the happiest. The "crowd" consisted of four lanes of five o'clock traffic stopped on Interstate 40 near Raleigh.

"I was pretty much of a novice at the time," Di Santo said, "and I was looking for somewhere to land. I-40 looked good, so we put down on the median."

Among the "spectators" stretched for about 10 miles in both directions, were 16 patrol cars.

But Di Santo survived the ordeal with a minimum of trouble from the law. "They were curious about the balloon more than anything else," he said. "I think that's why so many of them came. It was really pretty neat."

The balloonists have come close to trouble with the law only one other time. An elderly lady who said, "I watch after that field you just landed in," called the local sheriff to investigate the situation.

"I don't think the sheriff knew if there were any laws that covered balloons," Williamson said. "It just seemed to him like something was wrong, so he felt like he had to say something about it. He didn't do anything, though."

One of the biggest problems in ballooning is finding a good place to land. "The worst landing I've ever had was in the Duke Forest," Di Santo said. "I had to climb down from a 70 ft. pine tree."

During one flight, the balloon was low on fuel and floating, once again, over the Duke Forest. But a crowd of curious onlookers saved the day by pulling the balloon to safety with lines thrown from the basket. "People



is this the way to Boston?"

Staff photo by Charles Hardy

help us out whenever they can," Williamson said. "That's the nice thing."

One of Di Santo's favorite stunts in the balloon is to land in a pond or lake. "We get up to about our knees in water in the basket, give it the heat and pop right out," he said.

According to Di Santo, there is hardly any danger in this, or in any other aspect of ballooning. "It's very hard to hurt yourself in

a balloon," he said, "unless you step out of the basket."

People are not the only creatures that have reacted strangely to their balloon. "Cows always have one of three reactions," Williamson said. "They either take-off in panic, group in the middle of the field like a wagon train or follow us across the field like spectators."

Santa reveals beliefs in songs

by Linda Livengood
DTH Contributor

"Some musicians use their music as a weapon — to get laid, some want to entertain the crowd, others regard it as art. It's really great when the art is appreciated by the audience."

With John Santa, the music is art and the people who listen do respond.

Sipping a Shasta strawberry soda after a recent Durham performance, Santa talked about the importance of communicating with his audience.

"I demand a reaction from them. Sometimes I'll even antagonize people just to get a response. It's so important to relate to the crowd."

This is accomplished in various ways — quips to a girl near the stage, response to a drunk in the corner, and song introductions — all bearing the trademark of John Santa's off-beat sense of humor.

A memorable song intro went roughly as follows — "This song is about life in a trailer. Now all you trailer-dwellers know about the pilot light. It goes out. In the middle of the night. When it's 32 below. When you have company." Then the transition into the lyrics — "Lady, oh lady, won't you come back to bed... Just thinking about your health babe. Ain't thinking 'bout nothing else babe... We've got to generate a little heat."

All of the songs in Santa's repertoire are original compositions with the exception of "Black to be Blue" and "Just Passing Through." These songs are Bob Griendling/John Santa collaborations.

Griendling is the musically versatile partner who plays lead and rhythm on the 6 string, bass, and joins in on vocals. Griendling's lower pitched, occasionally guttural voice is in its element on his solo vocal performance in "Black to be Blue."

Santa concentrates his musical talents on mastery of the 12-string, lead and rhythm on the six string, and harmonica. Santa's expertise on these instruments would long qualify him as an excellent musician. The richness and versatility of his mellow voice add even another dimension to his music.

The voice is perfectly suited to the lyrics. The songs cover a wide range of emotions. From lost love to loneliness back to a new love. The combination of melancholy voice and lyrics transmits the songs' emotions to the audience.

Santa the man and Santa the lyricist are inextricably linked. Bits of his philosophy are revealed in such songs as the bittersweet "Pink Champagne", "...Honesty's suicide and I think you're right, Yes, I think you're right. You sure taught me."

The audience responds to these emotions. Santa's music is more than background music for drunks. With the attention



More than background music for drunks.

afforded him, Santa transforms a bar filled with boisterous people into an intimate setting for a memorable performance.

For those who appreciate good blues, excellent musicianship, and meaningful songs, an evening with John Santa and Bob Griendling is an evening well spent.

'You Can't Take It With You' Play has bicentennial flavor

by Rick Sebak
DTH Critic

Next year, in the long-awaited year of the bicentennial, many people will try to create the ultimate in Americana. They will have a hard time topping the recent Everyman production of Kaufman and Hart's *You Can't Take It With You*, undoubtedly the most free-spirited and exuberant celebration of All-American zaniness which will be seen here for a long time.

Grandpa Vanderhof and his happy household dare to ignore the conventional life style in order to have fun. They paint pictures, make candy, give and take dance lessons, raise snakes, design fireworks, play xylophones, entertain drunk actresses, print revolutionary handbills, cook blintzes and refuse to pay income taxes. All these activities are acceptable and overlooked until granddaughter Alice, the ingenue with a playwright mother and a father who plays with an erector set, falls in love with Tony Kirby, rich, conventional and the boss' son.

The classic confrontation of the families results in chaos and a night in jail. Montagues and Capulets could never be as funny or as lovable as Sycamores and Kirbys.

This Everyman Company production was directed by Brenda Mezz with a speed and relaxed attitude which would surely have met with Grandpa's approval. The charm of the family was all the more believable because people were obviously and truly having fun.

The delightful life and love which exuded from each of the three acts were the result of some fine performances which were delivered without a touch of pretension. Two of the interpretations were definitive. Wilburn Hayden's smiling Donald would be hard to beat anywhere, and Mark Fiedelman's Mr. Kirby (in spite of a missed cue) was close to perfection.

I can't say that I agreed with all the interpretations (Tony should have been more wholesome and less vain) or all the casting (Mr. DePinna must be Italian in order for the role to work effectively), but there was definitely a lot to admire in this mounting. Lucretia Pineo was an odd but believable and charming Alice. Richard Zaffron managed to get a laugh on most of Grandpa's lines and seemed totally convinced that his philosophy was best.

Rita Golomb staggered around the stage as Gay Wellington with a wonderful lack of self-awareness and sang some of the incidental music with Marcia Wilson. The music added a wonderful kind of counterpoint to the play and established and extended its various moods.

Randy Brittain and Dawn Darful as Ed and Essie Carmichael turned in two solid performances which shouldn't be overlooked. Likewise, Jeffry Stephens as Olga Katrina, Virginia Hill as Penelope Sycamore, Glenn Knight as Paul Sycamore and Liz Cullington as Mrs. Kirby were all worthy of praise.

The play itself is dated, but not distractingly so. In fact, much of the play's beauty comes from its ability to remain universally appealing and true after nearly forty years. As a great fan of the play, I was disappointed in the second scene of Act One when Tony's line about the Singer Midgets (they played the Munchkins in *Wizard of Oz*) was cut. Except for this small omission, the recreation of the 1936 world of Grandpa Vanderhof was exciting and satisfying even in 1975. Someone deserves special recognition for deciding to present the play at the height of income tax anxieties.

It is unfortunate that this review must be written in the past tense because the production deserved a lot more attention that it received. Closing night at the Cat's Cradle seemed like a premature demise for a fine and funny presentation.

RICHARD'S SUPER SPRING'S BUSTIN' OUT SALE continues ...
sale hours 10-9 Mon.-Sat. closed Sunday

You get: **25% or 50% off everything!**

Just look at these values in JACKETS:

- LEE Denim's. Reg. 12.98 NOW **\$973**
- Hooded Down. Reg. 52.95 NOW **\$2647**
- Non-hooded Down. Reg. 49.95 NOW **\$2497**
- Bomber Jackets. Reg. 19.95 NOW **\$1496**
- LEE Cotton Jackets. Reg. 7.95 NOW **\$3.98**
- Plaid Shirt Jackets. Reg. 19.95 NOW **\$1496**
- Corduroy Jackets. Reg. 29.95 NOW **\$1497**
- Suede Coats. Reg. 55.00 NOW **\$2750**

and all SWEATSHIRTS: \$896

- laminated, w. hoods Reg. 11.95 NOW
- cotton, hooded Reg. 9.95 NOW **\$746**
- yellow, w. zipfront Reg. 5.00 NOW **\$250**

RICHARD'S
215 S. Elliot Rd. • Next to Plaza Theaters

The Kinks!
A Carolina Union Presentation

In concert: "Celebrate the end of classes."
THURSDAY, APRIL 24 • 8 p.m.
CARMICHAEL AUDITORIUM

Tickets \$3.
Available at the Carolina Union & Chapel Hill Record Bars.
"You can't afford to miss THIS one at this LOW PRICE"

Dear Alfredo,
Guess I'll buy a bike this spring. Sure are a lot of choices and I'm really confused. One guy tells me the frame isn't important, it's the equipment that counts, but I still would feel better with a good frame under me. But what do I know, after all, he was wearing the bike T-shirt, must know what he's talking about. All their bikes are hand-crafted, not so sure what that means. Must have a lot of hands to make a half-million bike frames a year. Don't know what to believe anymore, especially since the same fellow bad-mouthed the derailleurs and brakes on some bikes down the street and he had the same ones. Must have slipped his mind. Some places are pretty flashy, wonder what the overhead is? I suppose it's passed on. Another shop claims to be a bicycle importer; it says so on their truck but I didn't think New York was a foreign country. Yankee, yes, but foreign? Right now I'm deciding between a **COMPETITION SUPER COURSE GRAN PRIX** and a **CHAMPION RECORD PRO DELUXE RACER**. After all, with names like that the racier the decal the heavier the bike. Does that make sense? One more thing, Alfredo, why do all the name brands cost so much more than some other bikes around with the same equipment, especially when the name brands are mass-produced. Must be a lot of folks slicing up that old pie or awfully expensive decals.

Help,
Dizzy

Dear Diz,
Check out **TUMBLEWEED** in lovely downtown CARRBORO. They sell the best bicycle values in the area, **FRENCH** and **ITALIAN**. I guess they like whales. Compare their prices and service, you'll like it.

Alfredo

TUMBLEWEED CYCLERY
153 E. MAIN ST. • CARRBORO, N.C.
Tel. 967-4874

PIANUS

YOU NEVER LOVED TRUFFLES THE WAY I DID!

I LOVED HER AS A PERSON!

YOU ONLY WENT TO SEE HER BECAUSE SHE GAVE YOU COOKIES!

I SURE MISS SCARFING THOSE COOKIES.

DOONESBURY

LOOK, I DON'T CARE WHAT MIKE SAYS— HE REALLY HAD IT OUT FOR US! AMEN!

HE BEAT US, ABUSED US, AND LEFT THE WIN-DOWS OPEN EVERY NIGHT ALL WINTER!

OH, YEAH? WELL, WE CAN PROVE IT!

YOU CAN?

ERDIE! ROLL THOSE FILM CLIPS!

RIGHT! SOMEBODY HIT THE LIGHTS!