

For Immediate Release  
December 12, 2006

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## **Historic First Flight Made in New Class of Hot Air Blimp**

Unique Internal Frame Allows for Quiet, Safe, Affordable Flight  
With Enhanced Maneuverability

**December 12, 2006 – Amherst, MA** – The Airship *Alberto*, prototype of an entirely new class of personal aircraft, made its historic first flight on October 27, 2006 in Amherst, MA. Designed and built by Skyacht Aircraft, Inc., *Alberto* is a hot air blimp, or airship, with a patented rigid, but foldable, structural frame.

Unlike conventional blimps which use helium, the Personal Blimp is filled with hot air. Hot air is less expensive, easier to control, and allows the blimp to be deflated between flights.

The product of nearly five years of rigorous modeling, engineering and testing, the Personal Blimp's frame and other technical innovations create a new type of aircraft. Its novel capabilities for both personal and commercial use include nearly silent operation, precise steering, low altitude flying, ease of use and storage, and affordability.

Named after the famed aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont, who designed, built, and flew the first practical blimps in the early 1900's, *Alberto* is the first of a new class of aircraft, the personal blimp, which will likely sell for between \$100,000 and \$200,000, depending upon configuration. That is less than one tenth the price of a small helium blimp. The aircraft is 102 feet long and 70 feet in diameter.

The company plans to spend the next year in further development, including converting from a gasoline motor to an electric motor and adding a quieter hot air burner. Thereafter, the company will seek FAA approval to manufacture and make the aircraft publicly available.

“In launching this labor of love, our team's mission has been clear – to create a unique aircraft capable of quiet, steerable, safe, and affordable flight.” says Dan Nachbar, Skyacht's President and the aircraft's principal designer. “We have succeeded beyond our wildest imagination. The aircraft's unique frame offers functionality not found in anything else that flies. It is capable of slow, low-level flying as well as turn-on-a-dime steering that balloons and conventional blimps simply cannot match.”

In addition to Nachbar, *Alberto*'s product design and development team includes co-builder Michael Kuehlmuss, an experienced designer and mechanic. The project also has a technical advisory team that includes aviation specialists and innovators, as well as experts in structural design and computational fluid dynamics.

“Like millions of other people, I have this passion for flight. Being in the air, above the earth, offers a captivating perspective and sense of serenity,” says Kuehlmuss. “*Alberto* offers the ultimate in ‘air therapy’, that sense of joy and pleasure, a departure from the problems of the world below.”

According to Nachbar and Kuehlmuss, the design of *Alberto*'s rigid but foldable frame also provides a unique attachment point on the tail of the aircraft. This attachment point allows the engine and

propeller to be mounted on the tail rather than on the cabin as is done on conventional blimps. With its tail-mounted engine, the Personal Blimp can be steered much like a motorboat. This arrangement provides far greater maneuverability than any previous hot air blimp and also minimizes noise in the cabin. Superior maneuverability, combined with the low airspeed and low altitude at which the Personal Blimp usually flies, offers tremendous safety to both pilot and passenger.

When not in use, the Personal Blimp can be deflated and folded for storage. The combination of precise buoyancy control and rapid deflation eliminates not only costly hangars but also the large ground crews required for conventional helium blimps.

"The Personal Blimp flies low, slow, and smooth." says Kuehlmuss. "This lets you do fun things like pick leaves off the tops of trees and more serious work such as carrying the airborne gravimetric measurement equipments that are used in diamond prospecting. *Alberto* can get much better data than any airplane or helicopter." The company sees other areas of application in forest canopy research, wetlands survey/management, eco-tourism, aerial photography, and film-making.

"Since that first flight we have had many more wonderful flights with *Alberto*." says Nachbar. "It's how I imagine it would be to fly like Mary Poppins, cruising through the sky."

Further information about the Personal Blimp, the company's management, and the design team can be found at [www.personalblimp.com](http://www.personalblimp.com) . High resolution digital photographs are available for viewing and downloading at: [www.personalblimp.com/press.html](http://www.personalblimp.com/press.html)

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