



The Lawn Chair Man (true story)

Larry Walters went to the local Army-Navy surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. He securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair and anchored the chair to the bumper of his jeep and inflated the balloons with the helium. Larry packed several sandwiches and a six-pack of Miller Lite and loaded his pellet gun figuring he could pop a few balloons when it was time to descend. Larry's plan was to lazily float up to a height of about 30 feet above his back yard and come back down in a few hours. Things didn't quite work out for Larry. When he cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to his jeep he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon. He didn't level off at 30 feet but 16,000 feet. At that height he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons. So he stayed, there, drifting cold and frightened for more than 14 hours when he found himself in the primary approach corridor of LAX. A Pan Am pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair...with a gun! Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating 16,000 feet above the airport. LAX emergency procedures swung into full alert and a helicopter was dispatched to investigate. The offshore breeze began to flow and carried Larry out to sea. Right on Larry's heels was the rescue helicopter. The helicopter ascended to a position several hundred feet above Larry and lowered a rescue line. Larry snagged the line, with which he was hauled back to shore. As soon as Larry was hauled to earth, he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD for violating LAX airspace.