

Storm-damaged science balloon returned to Purdue by IU fan

November 28 2013, by Jim Schenke

A science balloon launched by Purdue College of Technology students that was damaged by tornado-creating storms has dramatically returned to campus after crash-landing near Kalida, Ohio.

The balloon was launched the day before dangerous storms lashed the Midwest. The Association of Mechanical and Electrical Technologists students who launched the balloon lost telemetry high above Peru, Ind. Calculations show it reached almost 100,000 feet, but there was no way to know where jet streams approaching 200 mph sent the balloon.

Friday the Purdue Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Department received a call from a farmer in Ottawa in northwest Ohio who found the balloon in his field. Severe weather had removed the contact information from the gondola. Joseph Recker, an uncle to former IU basketball player Luke Recker, almost ran the balloon over with his combine. He thought it was a party balloon at first, then stopped at the last second when he realized it was something far more important.

The storm had removed the balloon owner's contact information. So Recker pulled the chip out of the video camera hoping to find clues to the origins. His computer wouldn't play the chip, so he took it to his local fertilizer plant where he and others enjoyed the show, including the windy tumultuous launch. The video included an inadvertent "selfie" of the student mounting the camera. Fortunately, he was wearing a Purdue hat. Students in the background were wearing Purdue garb as well. Video

clips can be seen

at www.youtube.com/channel/UCa40x3b-Ozx-MkMk_8oPUjA

Recker hopped on the Purdue website and found the most likely department to launch such a thing. Within an hour the rightful owners called back. He kept the balloon waiting in his garage for the technology students until they could pick it up.

Provided by Purdue University

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