



# Meet the Kite Maker

Robert Trépanier



*Photo by Ben Ruhe*

Robert Trépanier is a kite maker from Canada. He lives in the province of Québec. French is the language in Québec. Say Robert's name with a French accent—Ro BEAR Tray pan yai. His last name means “Three Baskets” in English. Some friends call him Bobby Three Baskets for fun.

## Flying a Kite

Robert flew kites when he was a little boy. One time he flew a kite after dinner. His mother called him inside for bed. Robert wanted to keep flying the kite. He tied the kite line to a fence. The kite was still flying the next morning. Robert's family and neighbors were amazed. Robert says, “At age seven I was a hero!”



Pajama Man

*Photo by Robert Trépanier*

## **At the Kite Store**

Robert also visited a kite store when he was a little boy. He asked the owner many questions about kites. He got a summer job at the store when he was older. Then he learned even more about kites. He learned about stunt kites that do tricks in the air. He learned about the history of kites around the world. He even learned about how kites and airplanes fly.

## **At College**

Robert also had other skills. He used what he had learned about objects moving through the air. He became a champion bicycle racer. He rode in many races, all across Canada. In college he studied industrial design. An industrial designer makes a product like a toothbrush work well and look good. Then Robert designed sets for plays in the theater.

## **A Job**

Now Robert's theater is the sky. His job is to make kites. He sells his kites to people who collect art. He also goes to kite festivals around the world. And he makes kites with many school children in Québec each year. Some of these children may become kite makers themselves.



Kite

*Photo by Bruce Meade*

## Robert's Kites

Robert makes kites with pictures of people. He shows their faces and sometimes their bodies. Robert also draws many animals —



Dog in the Sky

*Photo by Stuart Allen*

dogs, birds, insects, fish. Robert's father was a veterinarian. He also took care of the animals at the city zoo. Robert likes to see his kites moving around in the "big open spaces" of the sky. Robert says that people who fly kites "want to play. They like to have a smile on their face."

## A Kite for Children

Robert designed a simple kite for school children. He used two pieces of paper. He folded one piece of paper in half and cut on a diagonal line. Robert cut tails from



At an Islamic School

*Photo by Kiyomi Okawa*

the other piece of paper. He also cut a vent, or hole, in the center of the kite sail. The kite spars, or sticks, cross in the middle of the vent. The flying line ties to the kite where the spars cross.

Why is this a good kite design for school children? The materials are cheap and easy to find. The kite is light and sturdy. It flies well in most kinds of wind.

The vent also does two important things. It helps the kite to fly steadily. And it makes the tow point easy to find. The tow point is the place where you tie your flying line. The wrong tow point puts your kite in the dust, not in the sky. But with Robert's kite you can't make a mistake. Children around the world, from Palestine to Taiwan, have made this kite and flown it.



Children in Taiwan

*Photo by Cathy Palmer*

## Key Vocabulary for the reading

**Design:** to plan, create, or carry out in a systematic way, often graphically, artistically, or in a highly skilled manner

**Diagonal:** slanted

**Industrial:** related to the manufacture of products

**Sail:** the material that covers the frame of the kite

**Spar: (stick):** one of the parts of the frame

**Stunt:** a feat or daring skill

**Tail:** like the tail of an animal in that kite tails extend beyond the main part of the kite frame and are often elongated

**Tow point:** the point at which the flying line attaches to the bridle. In some kites (such as the Trépanier Trapezoid), the flying line attaches directly to the kite.

**Sturdy:** strong or rugged; substantially made or built

**Vent:** a hole, opening, or slit. In a kite it allows wind to escape or be released.

**Veterinarian:** a doctor who cares for animals



*Photo by Ben Ruhe*