

Col. Joseph W. Kittinger II, Ret. USAF

Accomplishments

1957, June 2: as part of *Project Manhigh*, Kittinger set an interim balloon altitude record of 96,760 feet (29,490 m), for which he was awarded his first Distinguished Flying Cross.

1959, November 16: Kittinger's first high-altitude jump, from 76,400 feet (23,300 m) was a near-disaster when an equipment malfunction caused him to lose consciousness. The automatic parachute opener in his equipment saved his life. He went into a flat spin at a rotational velocity of about 120 rpm. The g-forces at his extremities have been calculated to be over 22 times the force of gravity, setting another record.

1959, December 11: Kittinger jumped from about 74,700 feet (22,800 m). For this jump he was awarded the A. Leo Stevens Parachute Medal.

1960, August 16: Kittinger made the final jump from 102,800 feet (31,300 m) from the *Excelsior III*. Towing a small drogue parachute for initial stabilization, he fell for four minutes and 36 seconds, reaching a maximum speed of 614 miles per hour (988 km/h) before opening his parachute at 18,000 feet (5,500 m). He set records for highest balloon ascent, highest parachute jump, longest drogue-fall (four minutes), and fastest speed by a human being through the atmosphere. These were USAF records, but were not submitted to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) for ratification.

1963, December 13–14: Kittinger took part in *Project Stargazer*. He and astronomer William C. White took an open-gondola helium balloon to an altitude of about 82,200 feet (25,100 m), where they spent over 18 hours performing astronomical observations.

1983: Kittinger set a gas balloon world distance record for the AA-06 size class of 2001 miles (3,221 km).

1984, September 14–18: Kittinger made the first solo Atlantic crossing in the 106,000 cu. ft. (3,000 m³) *Balloon of Peace*, an official FAI world aerospace record for the longest gas balloon distance flight in AA-10 size category, 3544 miles (5,703 km).

1980's: Kittinger won the Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race four times during the 1980s and retired the trophy after three consecutive victories.

Kittinger retired from the U.S. Air Force as a Colonel in 1978. Throughout his career he has piloted close to 80 different aircraft types. In 2012 he has been advising Felix Baumgartner and the Red Bull Stratos team as they attempt a record-setting jump from 102,000 feet (36,500 m), during which Baumgartner expects to exceed the speed of sound during free fall.