



FAI BALLOONING COMMISSION

Hall of Fame

Joe Kittinger Inducted 2013



Nationality: USA

Date of Birth: (Year/Month/Day): 1928

Joe was a part of the earliest of modern ballooning history. His work in the Air Force, with the high altitude testing, certainly was an asset to all aviation. And after his retirement from the military, he continued his love of flight with record setting in gas balloons, including crossing the Atlantic-solo. Joe's aviation work, and his record setting, brought public notoriety to the sport of ballooning, thus earning him a place in the Ballooning Hall of Fame.

Joe Kittinger began his aviation career in 1949 when he was accepted into the US Air Force Aviation School at Goodfellow Air Force Base. He flew assignments in Germany, and then was sent to the Air Force Missile Development Center at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. Here he flew experimental jet fighters and participated in aerospace medical research.

Joe became a test pilot for Project Man High. The purpose of this program was to study cosmic radiation, astronaut selection and training, physiological monitoring and high altitude hardware. In this program, Joe piloted a high altitude balloon, Man High One, with a pressurized gondola and partial pressure suit, to an altitude of 96,000 ft. NASA used the lessons learned from this project in the space program, Project Mercury.

In 1958, Joe was part of the Project Excelsior, to put man into space and test human ability to survive extremely high altitude bailouts. In 1959, Joe made a parachute jump from an altitude of 76,000 ft and survived. In 1960, Joe piloted the Excelsior III to an altitude of 102,800 ft, setting a world record for the highest balloon ascent. Joe faced life and death decisions in this flight. He stepped out of the gondola and set a world record for the longest parachute freefall – 4 minutes and 36 seconds. He reached speeds of up to 714 miles per hour, falling thru air temperatures as low as minus 110 degrees F.

In 1960 Kittinger was awarded the Harmon Trophy for outstanding accomplishments in aeronautics. In 1961, Joe co-authored The Long, Lonely Leap, which detailed his adventures during Project Man High and Project Excelsior.

Joe served three tours of duty in Vietnam. Joe was shot down over North Vietnam and spent 11 months as a prisoner of war in Hanoi.

For 14 years, Joe was Vice President of Flight Operations for Rosie O’Grady’s Flying Circus in Orlando. Joe directed banner towing and skywriting operations, in addition to flying hot air and gas balloons.

Achievements, honors and awards:

In 1983, November 15, Joe set a record for the longest distance flown in a 1,000 cubic meter gas balloon, AA-06, flying 3 221.23km (since broken), from Las Vegas to Farmersville, New York.

In 1984, Joe set another record, as the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic in a gas balloon, AA-10, flying 5 703.03 km 3543 miles in 83h 40min.

In 1995, Joe was awarded the NAA Elder Statesman of Aviation Award.

In 1997, Joe was enshrined in the National Aviation Hall of Fame.



Additional photos and information can be found on the Balloon Federation of America’s National Balloon Museum Website: <http://www.nationalballoonmuseum.com/HallofFame>