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Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1997](#) -> [Jul](#) -> **Parachutist Of 'Dummy' Report Speaks Out**

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Parachutist Of 'Dummy' Report Speaks Out

From: Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk (Stig Agermose)
Date: Tue, 22 Jul 1997 05:29:46 +0200
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Subject: Parachutist Of 'Dummy' Report Speaks Out

Inductee Recalls Record Jumps, Roswell Rumors =20

Dayton Daily News=20

Sat, Jul 19 1997=20

NATIONAL AVIATION HALL OF FAME * A distinguished test pilot and parachutist is remembered by some for a day in the desert.=20

Joe Kittinger broke a parachuting record that has stood since 1960, participated in experiments that paved the way to send Americans into space and continues to win awards as a barnstorming pilot.=20

But he only started making national headlines when he was recently connected to an event that almost certainly never happened: the flying saucer crash at Roswell, N.M., in 1947.=20

Retired Air Force Col. Joseph W. Kittinger Jr., 68, will be inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame this evening during black-tie ceremonies at the Dayton Convention Center. His induction recognizes his achievements as a test pilot, balloon pilot, test parachutist, combat fighter pilot, prisoner of war, civilian pilot and barnstormer.=20

"It's the biggest honor I've ever had," Kittinger said Friday. "Just to think I could be considered in the same league with people like Neil Armstrong and Chuck Yeager. I never dreamed I'd be in that type of company."=20

He also said he's delighted to be a central figure in a report the Air Force released recently called Roswell Report: Case Closed. He said he's always "been insulted by the idea that my Air Force would cover something uplike that," and he's glad the record is being set straight.=20

Many UFO enthusiasts believe an extraterrestrial craft landed near Roswell in 1947, and the government recovered the craft as well as its alien occupants.=20

The Air Force said the legend is based in part on the 1959 Roswell-area crash of a high-altitude balloon that carried Kittinger and two other men. One of the men, Dan Fulgham, was injured in the accident, and when witnesses saw his swollen, sunken, yellowed face, the story of a surviving alien was born.=20

"There was always a rumor that there was a red-haired captain sneaking around collecting alien bodies in the desert and telling people to keep quiet about it," Kittinger said. "That red-haired captain was me."=20

Kittinger said the "bodies" were actually crash dummies that were pushed out of high altitude balloons to test methods of surviving high-altitude aircraft evacuations.=20

He said he and other Air Force personnel collected the dummies and any debris that might have fallen with them to keep the area clean and to keep cows from swallowing dummy parts.=20

"It wasn't classified work, but we didn't give people details of what we were doing," he said. "And we were always polite; I never threatened anybody."=20

Balloon tests conducted with crash dummies set the stage for Kittinger's 1960 jump from a balloon at 102,800 feet, a parachute record that still stands.=20

About 750 people are expected to attend the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies that begin with a 6 p.m. reception.=20

In addition to Kittinger, former astronaut and test pilot Thomas P. Stafford will attend and be inducted into the Hall of Fame tonight. Stafford flew on Gemini and Apollo space missions and commanded the Apollo 18 flight that docked with the Soviet Union's Soyuz craft.=20

The two other inductees are deceased.=20

One is Clayton Brukner, who formed the Weaver Aircraft Co. in Lorain with George Weaver in 1920. The company moved to Troy in 1923, and ultimately became the Waco Aircraft Co., the world's largest commercial aircraft builder in the 1930s.=20

The other is Herbert Dargue, who in 1907 piloted the first Army plane to transmit and receive radio messages in flight. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Dargue was assigned command of Army units in Hawaii.=20

Also to be honored tonight is the Air Force Association, a 70,000-member nonprofit, civilian organization that conducts programs to increase public understanding of national security issues. The association will receive the Milton Caniff Spirit of Flight Award.=20

The special guest mistress of ceremonies will be actress Maureen O'Hara, who was the first female CEO of a commercial airline.=20

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_____via IntellX_____ =20

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