



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

Stratolab-High 5 Voice Communications
Recordings and Transcript

2009

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Stratolab-High 5 Voice Communications Recordings and Transcript
Identifier:	NASM.2009.0003
Date:	(bulk 1961)
Extent:	0.05 Cubic feet ((1 folder))
Creator:	United States. Office of Naval Research
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Department of the Navy, Navy Historical Center, Gift, 2008

Preferred Citation

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Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

The Stratolab program was a series of manned balloon flights undertaken by the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Research to perform high-altitude experiments. The first flight of the Stratolab program took place on August 10, 1956 and set an altitude record for an open gondola. Stratolab-High 5 launched on May 4, 1961 from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Antietam in the Gulf of Mexico. The pilot was Commander Malcolm D. Ross of the Office of Naval Research and the observer was Lieutenant Commander Victor A. Prather, Jr. of the Naval Medical Research Institute. One of the objectives of Stratolab-High 5 was to test space suits above 99% of the Earth's atmosphere. The suits worn by Ross and Prather were slightly modified Mercury space suits that had the controls and gauges placed where they were easily reached and read and contained a liquid mixture that could be sipped through a tube fixed inside the helmet. Both men were wired to record physiological data which was automatically relayed to medical personnel aboard

the aircraft carrier. The gondola, designed by Winzen Research, Inc. of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was fitted with floats for an ocean landing and carried two radios. The balloon was the largest ever used for manned flight with a volume of 10 million cubic feet. The complete craft, balloon and gondola, was 483 feet tall at launch. Stratolab-High 5 set an altitude record for manned balloon flight by reaching 113,740 feet during the mission. Stratolab High-5 landed safely in the Gulf of Mexico at the end of the flight and Ross was recovered safely by helicopters but Prather was killed when he slipped off the hoist and drowned.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two reels of magnetic tape recordings and three copies of the transcript of these tapes which runs to 42 pages plus a cover sheet. The tapes contain in-flight voice transmissions from the Stratolab-High 5 flight.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Balloons
Stratolab Program

Types of Materials:

Magnetic tapes
Transcripts

Names:

Prather, Victor A.
Ross, Malcolm D., 1919-1985