

*History of the Air Research and Development
Command 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1960*

22

~~Personnel received the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, and Mr. Jean A. Roché of the ARDC Regional Office was granted the Air Force Exceptional Service Award. For other award winners throughout the Command see Appendix 4.~~

Military and Civilian

The Aerospace Primus Club. As the Air Force looked toward space as a possible future area of operations, and as Air Force members began probing this new and challenging theater, the idea grew of some form of recognition for these intrepid pioneers. To this end the Aerospace Primus Club was formed with the following objectives and purposes:⁴⁷

1. To promote and encourage original accomplishments in the discovery, development, testing, and use of equipment and techniques in furtherance of the aerospace program of the United States Air Force.
2. To recognize and honor the first individuals to attain or participate in aerospace accomplishments deemed to be of historic significance.

To quote further from the Charter, approved on 26 August 1960,

Membership in the club shall be honorary and shall be comprised exclusively of those military and civilian members of the United States Air Force who are determined to have attained accomplishments in accordance with the objectives and purposes [of the club].

Officers of the club consisted of an Honorary President and an Honorary Secretary to be appointed annually, "and such other officers as may hereafter be determined to be appropriate."⁴⁸ On 6 October 1960 a special ARDC Aerospace Primus Club Board was appointed "to establish standards and procedures for review of nominations for membership in the Aerospace Primus Club and recommend individuals for membership to the Commander, ARDC."⁴⁹



Lapel pin worn by members of the
Aerospace Primus Club,
"the most exclusive club on earth."

Chart No. 10

At its first meeting on 10 October 1960, the Board established the following criteria for defining historic "firsts":⁵⁰

(1) Accomplishments by Air Force personnel in the discovery, development, testing and use of equipment.

(2) Achievements which open new vistas in techniques, testing or eventual operational use are considered more meritorious than those yielding only incremental improvements.

(3) Event must be of national significance.

Any organization or individual, "having knowledge of a person who has achieved a status of eligibility," could nominate a candidate, such nominations to be forwarded to the Board for final approval by the Commander.⁵¹ Should the event be of a classified nature, the achievement would be recognized when declassification permitted. The award would be retroactive "only in extremely exceptional cases." There were no limitations on the number of times one individual might be so honored, "if he accomplishes other historic firsts." Nor did membership in the Aerospace Primus Club "preclude receipt of other Air Force decorations or Special Trophies and Awards."

As an appropriate permanent memento of his accomplishment, the Board further recommended that each approved member be presented "a citation of accomplishment, a plaque suitable for wall display, and a lapel pin."⁵² It was further recommended by the Board that "a display plaque approximately 35" x 48", with a copy of the individual plaque at the top, be obtained and hung in the lobby, Headquarters Air Research and Development Command."⁵³ This plaque would contain individual 4" x 1" plates upon which would be inscribed the name, date, and brief description of the accomplishment of each member. The lapel pin was a distinctive circlet of red, white, and blue, enclosing a bronze numeral one, representing the

"first," against a background of golden bronze wings, representing the Air Force.⁵⁴

On 26 August 1960 General Schriever presented memberships in the Aerospace Primus Club to the following Charter Members, citing the accomplishment which qualified each for membership:⁵⁵

AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB

Charter Members

Major Robert M. White	Flying the X-15 to altitude record of 136,500 feet on 12 August 1960.
Captain Joseph W. Kittinger	Parachuting from 102,800 feet on 16 August 1960.
Colonel Alvan N. Moore	Commander of 6594th Test Wing (Satellite) directing the first Discoverer recovery operation on 19 August 1960.
Captain Harold E. Mitchell	Commander of aircraft making first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Captain Richard A. Apaka	Co-pilot of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
First Lieutenant Robert G. Counts	Navigator of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Technical Sergeant Louis F. Bannick	Crew chief of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Staff Sergeant Alagaene Harmon	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Staff Sergeant Arthur P. Hurst	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.

Staff Sergeant Wendell King	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Airman First Class George W. Donahou	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Airman Second Class Lester L. Beale	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.
Airman Second Class Daniel R. Hill	Crew member of aircraft making the first aerial recovery of satellite from space on 19 August 1960.

Suggestion Awards. The Command continued its successful promotion of the suggestion program by remaining in the "top ten" of all major commands attaining 25 percent or higher participation in the civilian suggestion program. The following chart indicates the continuing improvement (except for a slight loss in 1960) in the participation rate, number of suggestions received, and estimated first year savings of the civilian program through Fiscal Years 1953 to 1960.⁵⁶

Suggestion Program
FY 1953 through FY 1960

Year	Suggestions Received	Percent of Participation	Adoptions	Awards Paid	First Year Savings
1953	2,008	9.51	318	\$15,495	\$1,444,609
1954	2,050	9.57	341	16,447	458,804
1955	2,737	14.61	534	53,837	652,539
1956	4,163	23.22	925	48,366	1,878,342
1957	6,747	33.00	1,427	57,396	3,122,316
1958	6,460	29.72	1,545	63,405	3,840,455
1959	6,490	30.78	1,812	75,175	1,758,535
1960	6,342	30.07	1,729	67,225	1,346,376

CHARTER

of

THE AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB

ARTICLE I. ESTABLISHMENT AND NAME.

There is hereby established, for the objectives and purposes hereinafter set forth, an unincorporated association to be known as THE AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB, composed of members to be selected in accordance with the provisions of this Charter.

ARTICLE II. OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES.

The objectives and purposes of the club are as follows:

1. To promote and encourage original accomplishments in the discovery, development, testing, and use of equipment and techniques in furtherance of the aerospace program of the United States Air Force.
2. To recognize and honor the first individuals to attain or participate in aerospace accomplishments deemed to be of historic significance.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP.

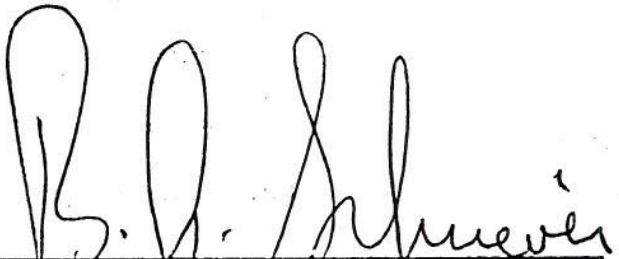
Membership in the club shall be honorary and shall be comprised exclusively of those military and civilian members of the United States Air Force who are determined to have attained accomplishments in accordance with the objectives and purposes set forth in Article II above. Nominations for membership shall be submitted to the Commander, Air Research and Development Command.

ARTICLE IV. ADMINISTRATION.

1. The administration of the club will be under the general supervision of the Commander, Air Research and Development Command.

2. The officers of the club shall consist of an Honorary President and an Honorary Secretary to be appointed annually and such other officers as may hereafter be determined to be appropriate.

EXECUTED at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland this 26th
day of August 1960.



B. A. SCHRIEVER
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander

ARDCR 34-5

ARDC REGULATION
NO. 34-5

HEADQUARTERS, AIR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
Andrews Air Force Base, Washington 25, D. C.
24 March 1961

Personnel Services

AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB MEMBERSHIP

THIS REGULATION SETS FORTH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB AND ESTABLISHES PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHARTER DATED 26 AUGUST 1960.

1. Objectives. The objectives of the Aerospace Primus Club are to promote and encourage original accomplishments in the discovery, research, development, testing, and use of equipment and techniques in furtherance of the aerospace program of the United States Air Force, and to recognize and honor the first individuals to attain or participate in aerospace accomplishments deemed to be of national and historic significance.

2. Membership. The Aerospace Primus Club will consist solely of military and civilian personnel of the Air Force who have met the status of eligibility. Each member will be presented a citation of accomplishment, a plaque suitable for wall display, and a lapel pin, which will become the permanent property of the recipient.

3. Administration. Administration of the Aerospace Primus Club will be under the general supervision of the Commander, Air Research and Development Command.

4. Criteria for Determining Significant Historic Firsts.

a. Accomplishments by Air Force personnel in the discovery, research, development, testing, and use of equipment will be used.

b. Achievements which open new vistas in techniques, testing, or eventual operational use will be considered more meritorious than those yielding only incremental improvements.

c. Accomplishment or achievement must be of national significance.

5. Standards of Eligibility. Generally, the award is for individual and small team achievements in discoveries, research, development, techniques, or tests and should be unique and identifiable.

6. Pertinent Facts Relative to Nominations.

a. Public reaction from press releases concerning significant historic "firsts" should be considered in determining the basis for nominating an individual for membership.

b. Nominations based on recognized historic "firsts" prior to the establishment of the Aerospace Primus Club will be considered in exceptional cases.

c. Nominations for achievements which must be withheld for security reasons will be recognized and processed when declassification permits.

d. Any club member who accomplishes other significant historic "firsts" may receive additional recognition.

7. Procedures for Nominating Members.

a. Any individual having knowledge of a person who has achieved a status of eligibility may initiate a nomination for membership in the Aerospace Primus Club. This nomination will be prepared in the format shown in attachment 1 and submitted through channels to Headquarters ARDC (RDPD) in seven copies. The original must be signed by the commander or deputy commander of the nominating organization.

b. The Aerospace Primus Club Board will meet at the call of the Chairman to process nominations.

8. Awards and Their Presentation. A citation of accomplishment, a plaque suitable for wall display (containing name of member, date, and brief description of achievement), and a lapel pin will be presented to each member by the Commander, ARDC. Provisions of paragraph 9a(3), AFR 900-7, will apply to members who cannot be present at the presentation ceremony.

OPF: KOFB
DISTRIBUTION: 3

9. Maintenance of Records. The recorder of the ARDC Aerospace Primus Club Board will maintain the permanent records of the club.

10. Disposition of Records. Records of the ARDC Aerospace Primus Club Board will

be retired after two years in accordance with paragraph 160102, AFM 181-5. Copies of nominations retained by the nominating agency will be destroyed after two years in accordance with paragraph 060101, AFM 181-5.



JOHN F. RASH
Colonel, USAF
Director of Administrative Services

B. A. SCHRIEVEL
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander

1 Attachment
Format of Nominations.

AEROSPACE PRIMUS CLUB MEMBERS

Handwritten:
6E
slc

MAJOR ROBERT M. WHITE
FLYING THE X-15 TO ALTITUDE RECORD OF 136,500 FEET
12 AUGUST 1960

CAPTAIN JOSEPH W. KITTINGER, JR.
PARACHUTING FROM 102,800 FEET
16 AUGUST 1960

COLONEL ALVAN N. MOORE
COMMANDER, 6594 TEST WING (SAT)
DIRECTING THE FIRST DISCOVERER RECOVERY OPERATION
19 AUGUST 1960

CAPTAIN HAROLD E. MITCHELL
COMMANDER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

CAPTAIN RICHMOND A. APAKA
CO-PILOT OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT G. COUNTS
NAVIGATOR OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

TECHNICAL SERGEANT LOUIS F. BANNICK
CREW CHIEF OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

STAFF SERGEANT ALGAENE HARMON
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

STAFF SERGEANT ARTHUR P. HURST
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

STAFF SERGEANT WENDELL KING
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

AIRMAN FIRST CLASS GEORGE W. DONAHOU
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

AIRMAN SECOND CLASS LESTER L. BEALE
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

AIRMAN SECOND CLASS DANIEL R. HILL
CREW MEMBER OF AIRCRAFT
MAKING THE FIRST AERIAL RECOVERY OF
SATELLITE FROM SPACE
19 AUGUST 1960

TECHNICAL SERGEANT JAMES A. HOWELL
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER TO ACCOMPLISH
A SEAT EJECTION FROM A F-106 AIRCRAFT
6 JUNE 1961

TECHNICAL SERGEANT LENOTE M. VIGARE
MEMBER OF THE FIRST PARARESCUE SCUBA TEAM
TO RECOVER A SPACE CAPSULE
18 JUNE 1961

STAFF SERGEANT WILLIAM V. VARGAS
MEMBER OF THE FIRST PARARESCUE SCUBA TEAM
TO RECOVER A SPACE CAPSULE
18 JUNE 1961

STAFF SERGEANT RAY E. MC CLURE
MEMBER OF THE FIRST PARARESCUE SCUBA TEAM
TO RECOVER A SPACE CAPSULE
18 JUNE 1961

CAPTAIN VIRGIL I. GRISSOM
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER TO ACCOMPLISH
A SUBORBITAL MANNED SPACE FLIGHT
21 JULY 1961

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER EDWARD J. MURRAY
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER TO ACCOMPLISH
A MANNED EJECTION TEST OF A B-58 ESCAPE CAPSULE
28 FEBRUARY 1962

MAJOR ROBERT M. WHITE
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER TO ACCOMPLISH
A SPACE FLIGHT OF A MANNED AIRCRAFT
17 JULY 1962

MAJOR LEROY GORDON COOPER, JR.
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER TO ACCOMPLISH
AN ORBITAL FLIGHT OF A MANNED SPACE CRAFT
15 AND 16 MAY 1963

MAJOR GENERAL BENJAMIN D. FOULOIS - USAF RETIRED
PIONEERED A SERIES OF AVIATION FIRSTS WHICH ADVANCED
THE SCIENCE OF AERONAUTICS DURING THE PERIOD OF
1908 - 1964

MAJOR JAMES A. MC DAVITT
FOR COLLABORATING IN FIRST EXTRAVEHICULAR SPACE ACTIVITY
USING SELFCONTAINED PROPULSION UNIT
3 JUNE 1965

MAJOR EDWARD H. WHITE, II
FOR COLLABORATING IN FIRST EXTRAVEHICULAR SPACE ACTIVITY
USING SELFCONTAINED PROPULSION UNIT
3 JUNE 1965

CAPTAIN WILLIAM D. EASTMAN, JR.
FIRST MILITARY PILOT TO DEMONSTRATE
PRACTICAL HELICOPTER AERIAL REFUELING
USING CONVENTIONAL PROBE AND DROGUE SYSTEM
15 DECEMBER 1965

MAJOR WILLIAM J. KNIGHT
FIRST SIGNIFICANT PENETRATION OF "THERMAL BARRIER"
FOR MANNED WINGED VEHICLE
3 OCTOBER 1967

MAJOR JAMES H. VEGHTE
FIRST DETERMINATION OF HUMAN TOLERANCE
TO EXTREME INTENSITY AMBIENT TEMPERATURE
10 SEPTEMBER 1968

CAPTAIN GRANT D. CALLIN
FIRST DETERMINATION OF HUMAN TOLERANCE
TO EXTREME INTENSITY AMBIENT TEMPERATURE
10 SEPTEMBER 1968

COLONEL EDWIN E. ALDRIN, JR.
FIRST AIR FORCE MEMBER
TO LAND ON AND EXPLORE THE MOON
20 JULY 1969

MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL COLLINS
COMMAND MODULE PILOT - APOLLO XI
RESULTED IN THE FIRST LANDING OF MEN ON THE MOON
16 - 24 JULY 1969

MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS P. STAFFORD
COMMANDER APOLLO - SOYUZ
FIRST JOINT UNITED STATES - SOVIET
SPACE FLIGHT
15 - 24 JULY 1975

Record X-15 Flight Bri

Earns AFSC Major First Astronaut Wings In Comd And 2nd 'Prinaus' Honor

When Maj. Robert M. White, famed X-15 pilot, pushed his tiny rocket powered research craft to an altitude of 314,750 feet July 17, he scored more aerospace firsts than the casual observer would probably notice.

His more obvious accomplishments included becoming the first man to qualify as an astronaut in a winged aircraft and becoming the first Air Force Systems Command member to wear astronaut wings.

To earn the name and the wings of an astronaut, Major White had to reach an altitude of 50 miles. He bettered this mark by 9.6 miles in a flight which lasted only 11 minutes after the X-15 was released from the B-52 mother aircraft.

The historic flight shattered an earlier X-15 altitude record jointly held by Major White and National Aeronautics and Space Administration test pilot Joe Walker. That record was in the neighborhood of 250,000 feet.

As Major White figuratively gave the X-15's 57,000 pounds of thrust a kick in the pants, he nosed the craft upward in the sharpest angle of climb yet attempted in the X-15 program. The liquid fueled rocket engine burned 71 seconds and a maximum speed of 3,784 mph was attained at an altitude of 156,000 feet.

Last month's flight had been originally programmed for 282,000 feet with a maximum speed of 3,500 mph. The flight as planned would have reached an altitude of 53.4 miles, more than enough for the award of astronaut wings.

Shortly after the flight, Major White was flown to Washington, D. C. where he was presented astronaut wings by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Curtis E. LeMay in a Pentagon ceremony on July 18. Mrs. White was present for the occasion and pinned on the major's new wings.

On the same day, President Kennedy presented the major and three other X-15 pilots, Scott Crossfield, Joe Walker, and Navy Comdr. Forrest Peterson, the coveted Collier Trophy for contributions to aviation through X-15 flights.

During the time of peak excitement
(Continued on page 4)



Major Robert M. White is met on R/ altitude record for winged craft. Th soared to an altitude of almost 60 m becoming the first man to earn astro

over the more glamorous and spectacular news, the exclusive AFSC Aerospace Primus Club quietly announced another significant first for Major White. He had become the first man twice honored by that organization. The announcement received little notice.

A charter member of Aerospace Primus, Major White was selected for membership on the basis of an altitude record he set with the X-15 on August 12, 1960. He reached an altitude of 156,500 feet, less than half of his recent record.

Known as the most exclusive club on earth, the Aerospace Primus Club was established Aug. 26, 1960 by Gen. B. A. Schriever, AFSC commander. There were 13 charter members. In the two years of its existence, only five new members have been added.

Objectives of the club—stated in its charter—are to promote original accomplishment in the discovery, development, testing and use of techniques and equipment in furtherance of the aerospace program and to honor first individuals to attain or participate in aerospace accomplishments deemed to be of historic significance.

Membership in the club is restricted to military and civilian members of the Air Force who have accomplished significant aerospace firsts. A special Primus Club board, made up of top military and civilian officials at Hq. AFSC, meets as required to nominate new members. All nominations are submitted to the AFSC commander for approval.

Charter members of the Primus Club were recognized for three spectacular aerospace accomplishments during the period of Aug. 9-19, 1960. Speaking of that brief period, General Schriever said, "We have achieved more important aerospace firsts than at any time in history."

The period began with the successful launch of Discoverer XIII into orbit from Vandenberg AFB, Calif. The following day, the Discoverer XIII capsule became the first object in history to be recovered from orbit. On the same day, there were three successful Bomarcé launches.

On Aug. 12, Major White set a new altitude record in the X-15 and an Air Force developed Thor boosted the NASA communications balloon, Echo, into orbit.

On August 16, Capt. Joseph W. Kittinger Jr. performed a record breaking parachute jump for which he received his second Distinguished Flying Cross. The next day, a Bomarcé missile sought out and destroyed a QE-47 drone aircraft.

The period of unprecedented success reached a climax on Aug. 19 when Capt. Harold G. Mitchell's C-119 crew made the first successful aerial catch of an object rebounding from space, the Discoverer XIV capsule.

In addition to Major White, the people closely associated with the space capsule aerial recovery and Captain Kittinger were selected as charter members of the Aerospace Primus Club.

General Schriever personally praised the individuals singled out and presented them with inscribed plaques on Aug. 26, 1960.

The feat which brought Primus Club membership to Captain Kittinger started with a first step that was followed by a 102,800 foot descent to earth. Stepping from the open gondola of a balloon high above the New Mexico desert, the plucky captain free-fell 85,300 feet before his parachute opened. During the free-fall period, 4 minutes 38 seconds, he reached a speed of 614 mph.

Captain Kittinger received his first DFC in 1957 when he rose to an altitude of 96,000 feet in an enclosed bat-



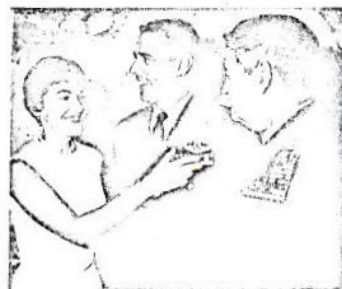
Astronaut wings represent flight at altitudes of 50 miles or more. Major Robert M. White became the fifth man to receive such wings in Pentagon conducted ceremonies.



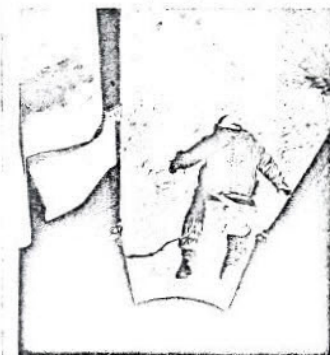
loon gondola. His 1960 parachute descent shattered a jump and free-fall record he had established in November 1959. For that accomplishment, he was awarded the 1959 Harmon Trophy.

The much publicized aerial catch of the XIV capsule earned C-119 aircraft commander Captain Mitchell and his entire crew Primus Club honors. Colonel Alvan N. Moore, 6594th Test Wing commander, also became a charter member of the club for his part in directing aerial recovery operations.

Members of Captain Mitchell's "Pelican Nine" crew included Capt. Richmond A. Apaka, co-pilot; Lt. Robert G. Counts, navigator; TSgt. Louis F. Bannick, SSgt. Alagaene Harmon, SSgt. Arthur P. Hurst, SSgt. Wendell King,



Major and Mrs. Robert M. White and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Curtis E. LeMay chat informally after the astronaut wing pinning ceremony.



Captain Joseph Kittinger starts the longest first step ever recorded, 102,800 feet. The captain's record breaking parachute descent earned him charter membership in the Aerospace Primus Club.

A1C George W. Donahou, A2C Lester L. Beale and A2C Daniel R. Hill.

Catch of the Discoverer capsule—ejected over Alaska on the satellite's 17th Polar orbit—was accomplished at an altitude of 8,500 feet. Captain Mitchell sighted the capsule parachute dead ahead of his aircraft at an altitude of about 16,000 feet.

A total of about 10 minutes were available to make the catch within the limits of the aircraft's operational altitude. The first attempt missed by a heart breaking six inches.

A second attempt, hastily executed, missed by as much as two or three feet. But, the third time was a charm and luckily so. Two decks of scattered clouds at about 7,000 feet could have made a fourth pass impractical.

Four of the remaining five Primus Club members were presented membership plaques as recently as June of this year. They were recognized by General Schriever in ceremonies at the Aerospace Medical Division, headquartered at Brooks AFB, Tex.

Three of the new members honored at AMD, TSgt. Lenote M. Vigare and SSgts. William V. Vargas and Ray E. McClure, are members of Air Rescue Service. They were selected for club membership on the basis of being the first pararescue scuba team to recover a space capsule.

Shortly after the Discoverer XXV capsule plummeted into the Pacific Ocean, on June 18, 1961 the three ARS scuba divers parachuted to it from an SC-54 Rescuemaster. Reaching the capsule, they lifted it into a doughnut-shaped life raft and prepared to spend a long night of capsule-sitting.

In addition to their later selection for Primus Club membership, the three

sergeants received Air Medals and the warm congratulations of Gen. Emmett O'Donnell Jr., C1C Pacific Air Forces, and Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Cunningham, Air Rescue Service commander.

Also recognized at AMD ceremonies, TSgt. James A. Howell was the only command member among those recently selected. General Schriever presented Sergeant Howell's club plaque at an AFSC Commanders Conference which was being conducted at AMD.

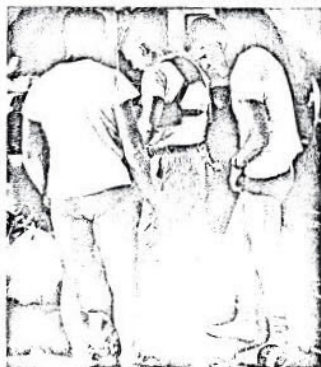
Sergeant Howell made a seat ejection from an F-106 aircraft flying at an altitude of 22,000 feet and at a speed of 535 mph on June 6, 1961. He was the first Air Force member to perform this operation. In addition to Primus Club recognition the feat earned him a DFC.

The fifth and final man of those recently selected for Primus Club membership, Air Force Capt. Virgil I. Grissom of NASA's astronaut team, has not yet been presented the distinctive club plaque.

Captain Grissom became the first Air Force member to accomplish suborbital space flight on July 21, 1961. In a Project Mercury flight boosted by a Redstone rocket, Captain Grissom reached a top speed in excess of 5,000 mph and an altitude that nudged 117 miles. His flight lasted 16 minutes.

The suborbital flight down AFSC's Atlantic Missile Range qualified Captain Grissom for the first pair of astronaut wings awarded to an Air Force member.

Astronaut wings recently awarded to Major White were the second ones awarded to an Air Force member. To date, five pairs of astronaut wings have been awarded. Major White's wings represent a first for AFSC and for the Aerospace Primus Club.



Pararescue scuba divers (from left) SSgt. William V. Vargas, TSgt. Lenote M. Vigare and SSgt. Ray E. McClure don wet suits and scuba gear shortly before parachuting into the Pacific to recover the Discoverer XXV.