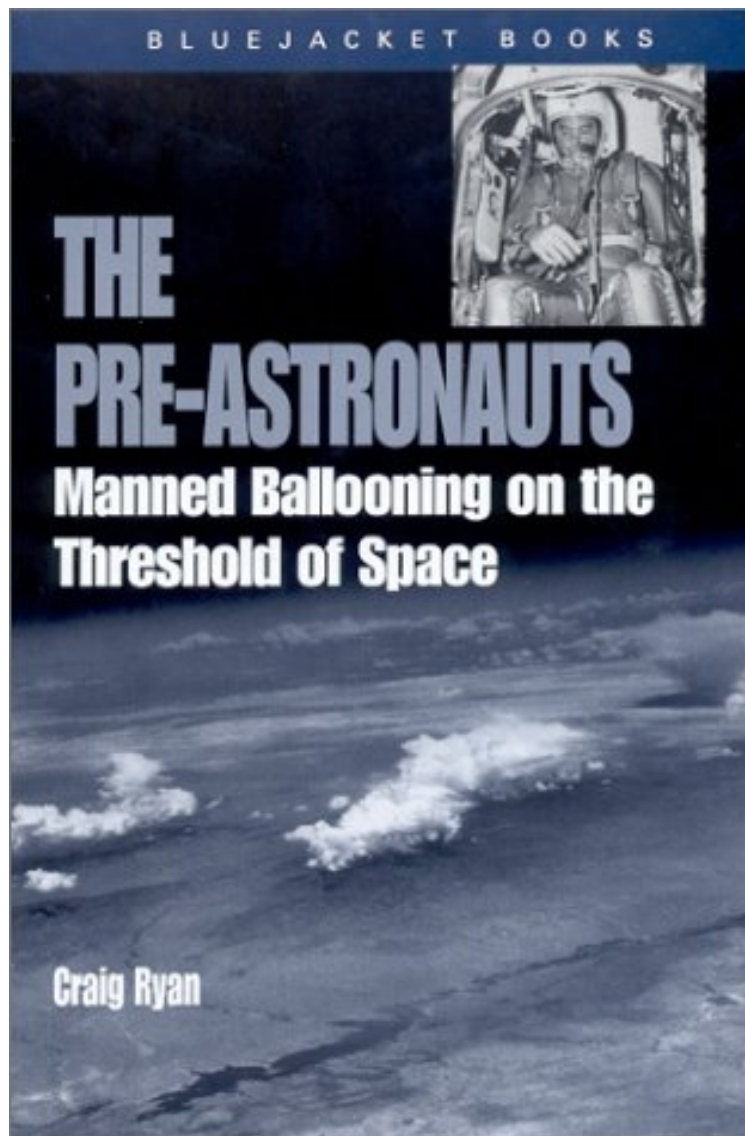


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## The Pre-Astronauts: Manned Ballooning on the Threshold of Space (Bluejacket Paperback Series)

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**Craig Ryan : The Pre-Astronauts: Manned Ballooning on the Threshold of Space (Bluejacket Paperback Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pre-Astronauts: Manned Ballooning on the Threshold of Space (Bluejacket Paperback Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Anyone interested in the U.S. space program should read this By John I like learning how air travel led to space travel. Obviously the test flight programs of the late 40s to late 50s plays a large part as did the Cold War in its need for intercontinental ballistic missiles, however more interesting, is the low level research probing the boundaries of Earth and space. This book chronicles the search for "out there" and does so extremely well. A great story is told and I enjoyed reading it thoroughly. The only dry section for me was the history of ballooning, as I'm not very interested in that aspect. The rest of the book transports me back to the heady days of unabashed research for the sake of learning. The story delivers not just the romanticism of aerial research in the 50s but the technical details I crave as an engineer. I consider this one of the best books I have. On nice summer days when I daydream of flying through the great puffy white clouds in the sky, I grab it and start reading. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the Best Books I Have Ever Read. By Mike Smith This book is about, as its title suggests, the pre-astronauts--the men who braved the edges of space before those more famous men who went into orbit, and to the moon--the men who took balloons above the Earth's atmosphere, above the blue of the sky, above the curve of the world. The people you will meet within this book are unforgettable. There's Joseph Kittinger, of course, who took a balloon 103,000 feet above the Earth and then jumped. There's Clifton McClure, one of the bravest and most indomitable people ever, who managed to stay conscious during temperatures that would have killed others. And there's Scott Stapp whose experiments in high speeds and high-speed braking literally emblazoned images onto his retinas. In addition to the people, the book will give you a great idea of the complexities and dangers of the upper atmosphere, the fragility of earth, the progression of technology, the importance of courage and daring and discovery. THE PRE-ASTRONAUTS is, without exaggeration, among the very best books I have ever read. I can think of few non-fiction books that tell a more compelling story in a more compelling way. In fact, off the top of my head, I can think of none. Craig Ryan keeps the story speeding along, the story he has to tell is just mind-blowing, and every detail feels valid and necessary, fascinating and exciting. After reading this, not only did I buy just about every other book on the subject, but I bought all of Ryan's other books as well. This book is potentially life-changing. After reading about what these guys did, it will make you want to do something huge and meaningful yourself. It will drive home reality of the closeness of space to where you are right now, and will very likely make you want to go there yourself. Buy this. Read it. It really is amazing, and I wish there were more books like it. 12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Joe W. Kittinger, Jr -- Biggest Balls Ever! By M. Craig Ryan's history of high-altitude manned ballooning is one of the most compelling books I have ever read. Taking place on the fledgling edge of the space age, this is the true story of men who, on an almost non-existent budget, originated the hitherto unknown fields of space medicine and safety. Dr. Stapp and the men and women who worked with him pioneered new technology and conducted valuable research that, in the end, was largely lost to history -- research and technology that might have saved lives in the Apollo 1 and Challenger disasters. This book is a tribute to their almost-unknown accomplishments and a reminder never to let something so valuable be lost or forgotten. And if you don't care for the science side of the story, just as incredible are the tales of personal courage. This book also tells the story of Joe Kittinger, who stepped out of an open balloon gondola in his pressure suit nearly 20 MILES above the surface of the Earth and parachuted safely to the ground after almost 5 minutes of freefall (a feat never since equalled or exceeded). Personally, Mr. Kittinger gets my vote for the biggest balls ever. You have to admire the man who was the first person ever to break the sound barrier... WITHOUT a vehicle!

In the 1950s and early 1960s a small fraternity of daring, brilliant men made the first exploratory trips into the upper stratosphere, reaching the edge of outer space in tiny capsules suspended beneath plastic balloons. This book tells the story of these tenacious men as they labored on the cusp of a new age, seeing things that no one had ever seen and experiencing conditions no one was sure they could survive. Mostly U.S. Air Force and Navy officers, among them doctors, physicists, meteorologists, engineers, astronomers, and test pilots, they struggled with meager budgets, bureaucratic politics, and one another. It is a thrilling story of tremendous personal sacrifice and great risk for the promise of adventure and the opportunity to uncover a few precious aspects of the universe. Capt. Joseph Kittinger, for example, rode a balloon up to 103,000 feet in an open gondola and then stepped out and freefell to Earth, becoming the only person to break the sound barrier without a vehicle. Lt. Col. David Simons stayed aloft for a full day and night in a primitive pressurized capsule to become one of the first to see the curvature of the planet. In this work, Craig Ryan masterfully captures the drama of their spectacular achievements and those of many of the other space pioneers who made America's stratospheric balloon programs possible.

From Booklist Here is the Naval Institute Press at its best, offering a superb, thorough history of a subject most other publishers would ignore. Ryan's book is a complete accounting of the U.S. efforts at manned stratospheric ballooning between World War II and the first manned spaceflights of Project Mercury--missions that included not only scientific and would-be record-setting flights, but also high-altitude parachute jumps and airborne telescopic surveys. Ryan also provides capsule histories of modern manned ballooning and skydiving and vivid portraits of men and women who, on shoestring budgets, risked and sometimes lost their lives while gathering much of the research essential to eventually

achieving manned spaceflight. In all, Ryan gives aviation and space buffs an absolute feast of information. Roland Green "An absolute feast of information." ? Booklist"Comprehensive..." ? Air and Space"Craig Ryan superbly narrates harrowing moments experienced by the balloonists." ? The Houston ChronicleAbout the AuthorCraig Ryan is a pilot, balloonist, skydiver, and prize-winning writer who lives in Portland, Oregon. He is also the author of Beautiful New Mexico and Beautiful New York.