

# The Stratobowl Balloon Launches: Soaring Through the Barrier of the Stratosphere

Carter Guenther

Junior Division  
Individual Website

Student Composed Words: 486

I chose my topic when my family and I were planning a trip to the Black Hills of South Dakota. We were looking online for a place to stay when a friend of ours suggested staying at the Stratobowl. We found a website that had information about lodging at the Stratobowl as well as the history of the area, which really intrigued me. I did a little bit more research and I decided that the Stratobowl balloon launches of Explorer I, Explorer II, Stratolab I, and Stratolab IV would be a great topic for me.

To begin my research, while my family and I were in the Black Hills we hiked the stratobowl and read the historical markers at the Stratobowl site. Next, we went to The Journey Museum where I interviewed a museum manager, a volunteer, and an exhibit creator, as well as finding historical artifacts and documents. Then we went to the South Dakota Air and Space Museum where I obtained a copy of The Rapid City Daily Journal, printed the day of the Explorer II launch, and saw original pieces of the gondola. To conclude my research, I found some books at the library, obtained original copies of National Geographic magazines, and explored some pdf documents and websites online. I took notes in my notebook on all of the information I found so it was all conveniently located in one spot.

I decided right away that I was going to do a website. Last year I built a website and it was fun to make. Through the process I discovered the key information needed to skillfully design a website. I also thought that it would be enjoyable to toy around with the new history day website maker that the National History Day organization had just released. To start my website I began by creating my home page. Then I decided on the

rest of my page titles and chose a layout. Next I started to add my information and pictures, and that's when it all started to come together! And finally I proofread it over and over, and had my parents, friends, and family look it over as well.

My project is very closely related to the theme "Breaking Barriers in History" because when the United States Air Corps and the National Geographic Society conducted the first balloon flight that launched from the Stratobowl, the balloon rose and broke the barrier of the Stratosphere. That flight, Explorer I, sparked the interest for continued flights. When the second balloon (Explorer II) launched, that balloon set the highest official altitude record and held it for nearly two decades. Stratolab I and IV were two scientific flights, also launched out of the Stratobowl, that helped break into atmospheric study. These balloon flights ultimately began the "space race", which led to breaking through the barrier of space with the landing of the first man on the moon.