

Brigadier General William G. King Jr.
Inducted 1989



Brigadier General William G. King Jr. was born in Topeka, Kansas, on 14 December 1918. After attending Kansas State University he received a commission from the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps and served as a second lieutenant. He entered active duty and served as an antiaircraft artillery officer in the Pacific theater. Following World War II he returned and completed his Bachelor of Science degree in 1946. He later received his Master's degree in business administration, with an emphasis on the management of research and development (R&D) from the University of Chicago.

In 1947 he accepted a regular Army commission and served as a group commander in the Aviation Engineers Training School at Ft. Warren, Wyoming. He became a member of the U.S. Air Force upon its formation in September 1947. From December 1947 to August 1949, he held several different positions at Francis E. Warren AFB, Wyoming. In 1950, he was assigned to the newly established Joint Long Range Proving Center at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. Here, he participated in a variety of activities including the initial exploration and surveying of the adjoining islands, which facilitated the planning and design of the downrange stations of the Air Force Eastern Test Range. He also served as the station commander at Grand Bahama Island Auxiliary Air Base.

In January 1955 he joined the Air Research and Development Command (ARDC), in the Weapon Systems Program Office, at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, where initially he worked in a small office engaged in writing the systems requirements for a medium-range, tactical guided missile. While at Wright-Patterson, General King initiated the Air Force Weapon System 117L satellite program and then led the first competitive acquisition of a military space program.

In 1951 the newly formed Air Research and Development Command had authorized RAND to make specific recommendations for the start of developmental work on a reconnaissance satellite system. RAND recommended that "the Air Force undertake the earliest possible completion and use of an efficient satellite reconnaissance vehicle as a matter of "vital strategic importance to the United States." General King read through the Project Feedback reports that addressed such matters as orbital mechanics and satellite photography of the earth in a manner that made the achievement of space capabilities in the near future seem plausible. These studies, and his earlier observation of ballistic missile launches at White Sands and the Joint Proving Grounds, convinced General King that the United States could cross the space frontier. Consequently, he participated in the establishment of a space program office at Wright-Patterson which became known as the Advanced Reconnaissance Satellite Program Office. As its project officer he briefed the Secretary of the Air Force who provided \$2 million for systems concept studies of military satellites. General King sat on the program's selection committee which chose Lockheed as the contractor for WS-117L program.

In 1957 General King became the project officer for the Snark: a surface-to-surface air-breathing missile. He oversaw its development, early testing, and supervised the system's deployment to Presque Isle AFB, Maine. He returned to the space program in July 1959 and served as the Director of the Samos satellite program, and, in November 1960 as Vice Director for Technical Matters on Samos 19-the photographic satellite which electronically transmitted its photographs back to earth. In March 1962 he served as the Deputy Director, Special Projects, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force and then as the Deputy Director, Special Projects, Office of the Secretary of Air Force, and in September 1966, he became the commander of the Air Force Satellite Control Facility.

In August 1967 General King moved to Headquarters Air Force Systems Command, Andrews AFB, Maryland, where he was the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations. There, he managed the resources of Systems Command: including manpower, facilities, aircraft, ranges, and communications. He returned to Los Angeles in January 1969, and became Assistant to the Director of Special Projects, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, and in July 1969 he became its Director.

He retired from the Air Force on 1 April 1971, and began an eighteen-year career with Aerojet General where he served both as Vice President and General Manager of the Space Surveillance Division of the Electronics Systems Division, and Director of the Defense Support Program. General King died in June 2009.