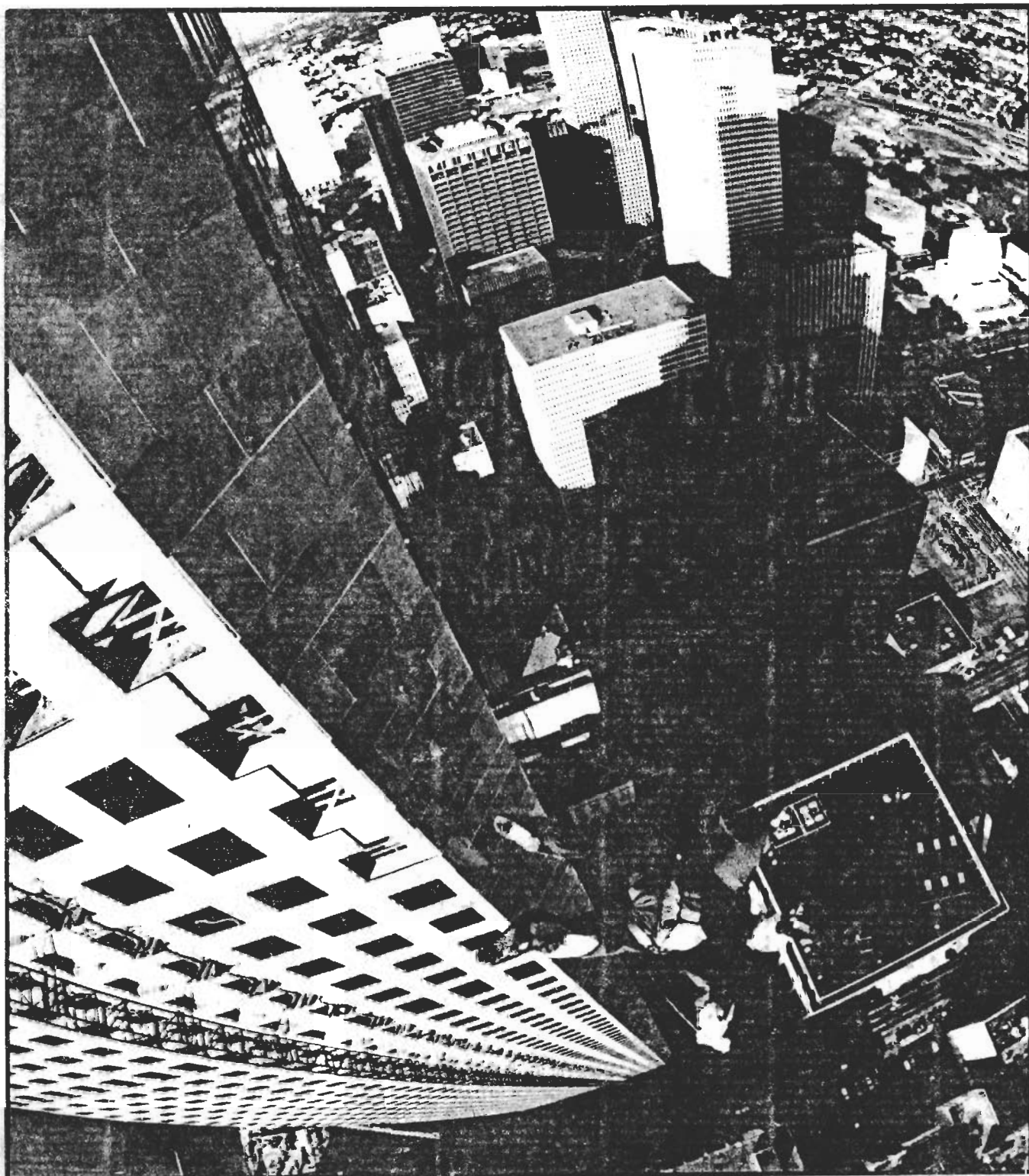


BASETM MAGAZINE

TO BENEFIT ALL MEN . . . TO HARM NO MAN . . .



HOUSTON'S TEXAS COMMERCE TOWER AND THE COMPLETE STORY ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF "BASE"

NEW QUOTATIONS

We'll jump everything we can get our ~~feet~~ hands on!

We all put on our parachutes--one leg strap at a time.

One of the things that makes for life is differences;
One of the things that makes for death is sameness.

What the caterpillar calls the end of the world
the master calls a butterfly. (Bach)

"I wouldn't classify myself as a fatalist or anything like that. I just think that when I am engaged in one of these things I'm in no danger at all. It may be a question of faith, a belief that I wasn't brought here to meet with some untimely occurrence. I've wondered often why I feel the way I do about these things, but I really don't have a concern. It's more a question of being prepared to meet situations as they come up. I think a person creates his own faith somehow in order to respond to a situation, to look for something bigger and better to do.

I think we have obviously accepted a challenge to undertake this task of going to the moon. I think the challenge would have been there anyway, and there is no doubt in my mind that whether the target date had been the 1960's or later, we would have gone about this particular task sooner or later, just because it is a challenge. As man develops the tools and the capabilities to extend his reach further and further, there is no doubt we shall feel compelled to go as far as we are capable of going."

--Buzz Aldrin "FIRST ON THE MOON"

Agassiz, the celebrated naturalist and author, has wisely said: "Every great scientific truth goes through three states. First, people say it conflicts with the Bible. Next, they say it has been discovered before. Lastly, they say they have always believed it."

"There was a time when 'real adventure' was open to many. But unknowns, dangers, and risks--with the stakes being your own life--have all but disappeared with modern technology. Modern mankind has found himself adrift in a society that protects its members from any risks--and therefore, any adventures--in their normal day-to-day lives. So, he has found the only answer is to create adventure in the form of high-risk sports."

--paraphrased from Rick Ridgeway's THE BOLDEST DREAM



BASE AWARD (JUMPS)

BASE #1	Phil Smith	42	TX
BASE #2	Phil Mayfield	32	TX
BASE #3	Jean Boenish	10	CA
BASE #4	Carl Boenish	23	CA
BASE #5	Mike Perron	14	CA
BASE #6	Sammy Ramos	13	CA
BASE #7	Dwayne Bruette	8	LA
BASE #8	Bradley Smith	29	CA
BASE #9	Andy Smith	32	TX
BASE #10	Dennis Murphy	14	CA
BASE #11	Peter Hart	12	CA
BASE #12	Frank Donnellan	6	ENG
BASE #13	Jim Tyler	9	CA
BASE #14	Andy Guest	6	ENG
BASE #15	Satellite	8	US
BASE #16	Ken Masters	8	CA
BASE #17	Matt McCarter	8	CA

NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS!

With the mailing of issue #6, you should have received all of the first 6 issues of BASE Magazine. Back issues for the calendar year 1981 (issues 1-6 totalling 92 pages) will remain available for

\$10 per set, postage prepaid anywhere in the world. Calendar year 1982 is currently scheduled to be published quarterly (four issues per year) and, if you wish, you may subscribe for 1982 for \$8 per year. We thank you very much for your support, interest,

and letters. Please continue to send in any comments, opinions, experiences, and newspaper clippings pertaining to BASE jumping throughout the world. Please remember that BASE jumping is a science of *attention to detail!* Have a fun and safe skydive! --Ed.

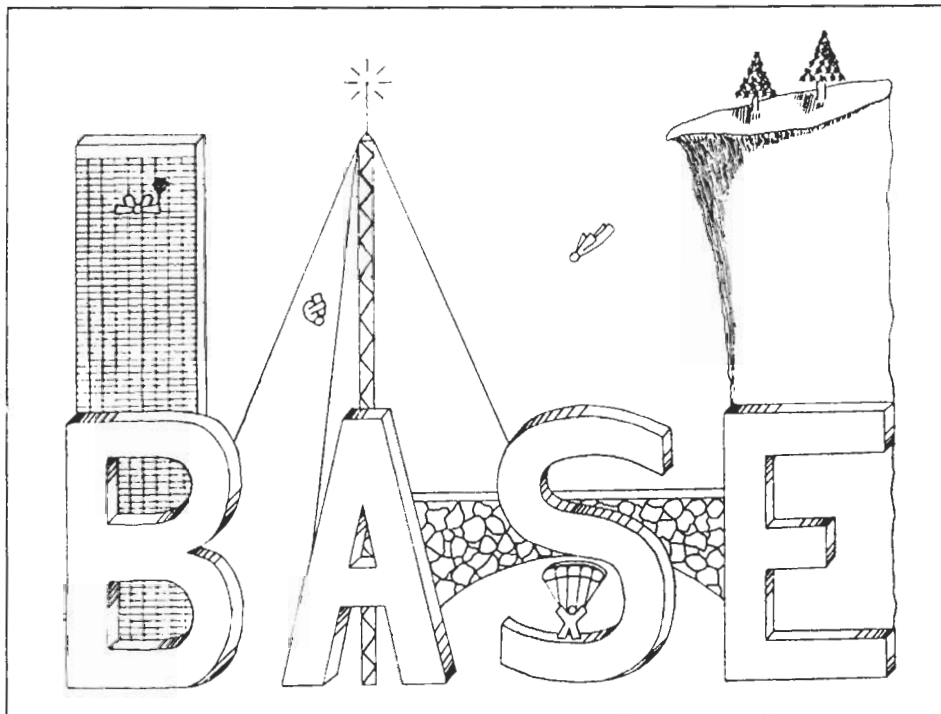
DISCLAIMER: Even though the USBA, BASE Magazine and/or Carl Boenish, hereinafter referred to as "the cause," may appear to be exuberant and unlimited in its concepts of BASE jumping--man jumping off of fixed objects--throughout the world, nevertheless, it must always be presupposed that the cause does not advocate, recommend or endorse anyone breaking the law to accomplish these jumps. The cause is interested in reporting all news about BASE jumping--whether controversial or not, in as free and unlimited a form as possible, but in a manner which strives to benefit all men, and to injure no man or entity. Furthermore, any ideas or concepts gleaned from the cause, expressed or implied, whether correct or incorrect, should not be performed by any reader or others, except at his own risk and sole responsibility. Other than this, "the ground is the limit!"

Carl Boenish

NEW VIDEO CASSETTE AVAILABLE - A VHS or Beta video cassette is now available on BASE jumping. It is a whole one-hour program filmed by Carl Boenish in episodes covering jumps from cliffs, spans, antennas, and buildings. If you like BASE jumping, you won't be disappointed. Purchase price is \$79.95 plus \$5.00 handling and shipping. The purchaser promises USBA to use this cassette(s) for his private, non-commercial uses only, and not to copy, alter, edit or duplicate this cassette(s), nor allow others to do so, and agrees to pay USBA \$2,500 as liquidated damages plus reasonable attorney fees plus all lost profits resulting from unauthorized commercial exploitation for each violation of this promise. The foregoing is hereby agreed to by: _____ (date). Send this agreement plus cash, check or money order with your signed agreement to USBA headquarters. Please specify VHS or Beta. This cassette(s) is an ideal gift. It also serves as a lucid visual aid in promoting authorized BASE jumps from prospective BASE-site governing bodies.

BASETM MAGAZINE

TO BENEFIT ALL MEN . . . TO HARM NO MAN . . .



The United States BASE Association is founded for and dedicated to the safety, advancement, and positive public image of BASE jumpers and BASE jumping throughout the world. Webster defines "association" as "a body of persons organized for some common purpose." The acronym BASE is derived from the words: BUILDING, ANTENNA TOWER (any tower or stack), SPAN (any bridge, arch, cable or dome), and EARTH (any cliff or natural formation). Every person who makes at least one jump from each category is awarded an officially recorded BASE number. Each jump must involve using a parachute as a life-saving device which cannot be inflated prior to the jump. The USBA publishes a list of all known "jumped" and "jumpable" BASE sites. BASE Magazine strives to disseminate information, technology, experiences, and opinions about BASE jumping "to benefit all men, to harm no man." Mem-

bership into the United States BASE Association is extended to anyone interested in the concept of man jumping off of fixed objects, an esoteric aspect of man's age-old dream of self-flight. BASE jumping is recognized as a sport, not a stunt. Understanding the motivation behind BASE jumping is perhaps only reached through the gradual osmosis of knowledge that "man's birthright is freedom and dominion over all the earth." BASE jumping is but one of countless facets of life which help inspire all of us to find, understand, and demonstrate this birthright. For these reasons, "everybody envies our ecstasy, but only those who dare, can share it."

QUOTATIONS... TO INSPIRE US BY...

- Happy are those who dream dreams, and are willing to pay the price to see them come true.
- I DO NOT CHOOSE TO BE A COMMON MAN. It is my right to be uncommon . . . if I can. I seek opportunity . . . not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole. I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the thrill of fulfillment to the state of calm utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat. It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself; enjoy the benefits of my creations and to face the world boldly and say, this I have done. All this is what it means to be an American.
- The man who knows "how" will always have a job; the man who knows "why" will be his boss.
- The highest mountain peak receives the light first, followed eventually by even the entire valley at noonday.
- The man who puts aside perfection for the sake of travel, get nowhere slowly; but the man who puts aside travel for the sake of perfection, gets anywhere instantly.
- Results need no excuses.
- What you identify with, and respond to, you experience.
- In the service of good, giving never impoverishes and withholding never enriches.
- Anyone can tell you how many seeds an apple has, but who can tell you how many apples a seed has?
- There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.—Shakespeare.
- One man's floor is another man's ceiling.

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LETTERS

Dear Carl,

This is just a note to say thanks for the complimentary copy of BASE Magazine which I received in the post this morning.

Although I do not intend to take my "BASE" experiences further than cliff diving in the near future, I would like to thank you, not only for helping to make the El Cap dives a realistic possibility and unforgettable experience for so many skydivers, but also for the sheer energy and creativity that has brought so many people across the world your superb photography, and has pushed forward the boundaries of our sport. Take care.

With all respect, yours,
Frank C.T. Smith EC-227
Birmingham, ENGLAND

Hello Carl and Jean,

Received my copy of BASE Magazine two days ago, devoured it, felt inspired and wrote this poem about my first BASE jump. Hope you like it.

I'm looking forward to the list of jumped objects (and whatever else) in the next issue of BASE.... Blue skies and more freedom for mankind.
Larry Wolfe
Ontario, CA

Thanks for your beautiful poem which is printed herein, Larry. A summary of all objects jumped to date will appear in a future issue of BASE Magazine--it's turning out to be a more formidable job than at first anticipated. Fly high and keep up the good work!
--Ed.

Carl,

I picked up a copy of the L.A. Times of you guys going off of Crocker Bank building. Unbelievably Great!!
Your friend,
Jim Wallace
Telluride, CO

Thanks, Jim! Building jumping certainly isn't for everybody. In fact, until we find the proper building--complete with the proper authorization, insurance, etc., we are not trying to popularize building jumping. After three months of quiet building jumping, we were "forced to go public" when the activity was detected and "officially discouraged." Our strategy in publicizing the jumps at Crocker Center was to inform and educate the general public that such activities were possible and could be conducted safely, but also to meet with the building management and present various public relation proposals. So far, we haven't been able to meet with the owners. We hope to

find one or more buildings in the US where we can add the "finishing touches" to their "topping out" ceremonies. If there are any PR firms who can help us out, please let us know.
--Ed.

Carl, Jean,

Your latest issue of BASE Magazine had a reproduction of Michael Pelkey's El Cap No. 1 Certificate. I have never read anything more than a few sketchy words on his and another friend's memorable first jump there. How about a complete article on the very first two to do it? The preparation, fears, doubts, anxieties, the hike, jump, afterwards, etc.

Jim Neumann
Dallas, TX

We plan to do just that, Jim, just as soon as we can locate him! Thanks for your ideas.
--Ed.

Carl,

Your BASE jumping magazine gave me a new insight to fixed-object jumping. It's changed my views on it. Thanks.
Toby Tollefsen
Kearney, NE

It's nice to know one's striving meets a need. Thanks for the encouragement.
--Ed.

BASE,

I knew, after my first fixed-object jump, that it would not be my last. I hope your magazine will expand my new horizon.

Skydive!
Jason Huminsky
Lafayette, IN

We'll try.
--Ed.

Dear Mr. Boenish,

Enclosed is my check for a subscription to your BASE newsletter. I would like to start my subscription with your first issue, if possible.

I am planning a trip to Yosemite. I would very much appreciate some advice as to how to make a safe and undetected El Cap jump. I am also interested in the legal penalties if I should run afoul of the law.

Thank you for your time.

Paul Cochran
Ft. Wayne, IN

Thanks, Paul, for your letter. Let's hope that the summer of 1982 brings plenty of El Cap jumps totally above-board. We are constantly striving to work hand-in-hand with the Park Service for an amicable relationship regarding the cliff jumping activity. They are, however, pretty adamant that jumping off of El Capitan from

February 1 through July 31 is a possible endangerment to the peregrin falcon which carries a penalty of up to one year imprisonment and up to \$10,000 fine. Therefore, it might be especially wise to avoid those dates or find another site.

Stay in touch!
--Ed.

Dear USBA,

I really enjoyed my first issue (#5); hope you keep up the good work. I'm enclosing a check for the VHS cassette on BASE jumping. By the way, I'll be looking for some help this summer because I'd really like to jump El Cap one way or another. Thanks.

Tom Bienvenu
La Glace, LA

I'd certainly like to jump El Capitan this summer, too, Tom. We'll see what we can put together.
--Ed.

Editor--

I would greatly appreciate it if you could send me a copy of your USBA published list of all known BASE sites which you advertise. I am in the process of planning a 4 week trek across the country with the sole purpose of making BASE jumps and jumping at a variety of different DZ's. Any info you can give to aid me in this endeavor would be much appreciated. Thanks.

Bruce Hunt
Tampa, FL

Dear Bruce,

I'd like to help you a lot more than I am able to! First of all, the "list" is under compilation but is not forthcoming. Second of all, BASE jumps are not all that easy to come by. Unfortunately, sometimes an entire month is spent in the preparation of a single jump! It's taken me three years just to make 25 jumps! I don't know what to tell you except to be patient and have some initiative--but do everything in small steps. Best of luck!
--Ed.

To BASE Magazine and its readers:

First of all, I don't want to sound like all I'm doing is complaining, but this is the way I feel, and believe many others stand behind me.

I don't like the lay-out of your magazine. It seems to relate only to about 10-15 different people throughout, other than your "letters" column. The magazine is supposed to be about BASE jumps, so why not tell of where and how to do such jumps. In that way, many others may enjoy them and do them safely. You should tell of what type of canopies/container systems are mostly used or best to use. As far as

LETTERS

Cap jumping, there's about as many pro's and con's as of why it is illegal. Remember, it was legal one time. I feel as though jumpers made it illegal again, not the Park Service. They set a few simple rules to follow, and we were simply obey. Maybe if people would send letters to the Park Service saying that they were sorry for their actions and would like another chance doing it right with their rules, instead of writing letters saying they were wrong the Park Service is at their decisions, maybe we might get somewhere. I know I would sure like to make the jump. I was unable to do the first legal season, but was waiting for the next, since I have come all the way from New York State. During our summer months we made a couple BASE jumps from a bridge and a TV tower and would like to complete my BASE jumps with a building and an earth-type jump, if the rest of the BASE-type jumpers keep on doing things the way they are I guess I can kiss it good-bye also.

So you first fifteen BASE people--please help the rest of the seekers achieve it, also, just as I have helped some of my fellow jumpers to jump from airplanes). There's a lot "how to do" needed and only the experienced people are capable of writing or telling (the rest what the right way is).

I'm not trying to tell you how to do your magazine but please be as informative about "how to do" as not so much on what a rush it is when the cops when you are arrested doing a BASE jump. Skydivers have a sour taste to the general public because they don't understand feelings but we keep fighting them by adding wood. Let's give in to them some and make them think that they are boss, play by some of their rules and maybe we can be given some breaks to try what we would like to

Let's get BASE jumping off to a good start. Let's hope this letter will be used as one of many to bring strong feelings which should have nothing to do about its future. So, I have been jumping for 11 years and have 2300 jumps to back up my opinions. Thank you.

Richard Cordaro
Pavilion, N.Y.

Richard,
Thank you for your very sincere letter which no doubt came "from the heart."

If you feel frustrated, please don't feel alone! I don't know one BASE jumper who doesn't feel frustrated much of the time regarding the unavailability of sites! It's taken me personally three years to make only 25 BASE jumps! But they unquestionably have been the most exciting and rewarding ones I've ever made!

Until the USB A can find the proper buildings and antennae with the proper authorization, insurance, etc., it is not trying to popularize these types of jumps. But it doesn't want to bury its head, either. If certain individuals pioneer these objects, then that's their business and their feats become mankind's history which is worthy of broadcasting. A good example in point is Phil and Andy Smith's successful BASE jumps from the 200-foot ceiling of the Houston Astrodome before crowds of 50,000 paying spectators! What a giant step forward for BASE jumping. But those two days of jumping took two months of preparation!

I really don't know what to tell you about El Capitan, either. I've been working on the problem for four years, now, and still haven't completely solved the problem yet! I know that it is my legitimate right to jump El Capitan and I hope never to give up to exercise that right. I hope others discover their rights and choose to exercise them, too! If you want to jump El Capitan, and feel you can't, start writing letters to your Congressmen, the Department of the Interior, etc. Don't just complain to me.

If I felt that BASE jumping pertained just to 15 people, I would be very disappointed and disillusioned! But I see where you are coming from, too. We need your help! In three years, we've made over 500 jumps from El Capitan. I hope in the next 5 years we'll have over 5,000 jumps from that site.

No one would consider making his first airplane jump without having an instructor who has jumped himself before, would he? Well, similarly, anyone planning his first BASE jump would be very very wise to have someone along who has jumped that very same object first. Experience is manifested in subtle ways! BASE jumping is a science of "attention to detail." It's just not possible to put every possible contingency for every possible situation in a book! It is the overall philosophy which must be mastered by every individual! That comes with practice and experi-

ence and patience!

BASE jumping is here to stay is not going to go anywhere. Air can make it his own if he chooses to do so! Keep the faith. --Ec

EDITORIAL

CLEARING THE AIR

Recently various correspondents and news articles have referred to the BASE Association as pushing, promoting, encouraging, and advocating that BASE jumps be made. While the Association supports the development and dissemination of knowledge and safety about all forms of BASE jumping, it is equally interested in the public acceptance of the same. Perhaps the following should help clarify the confusion:

BASE magazine and the United States BASE Association--at the present time a mythical collection or association of like-minded people who are "interested in the concept of man jumping off of fixed objects" an esoteric aspect of man's age-old dream of self-flight"--is really nothing more than a rap session held in the proverbial ivory tower. It is a mixture of history, opinions and dreams. It is meant to inspire, illuminate, and guide, but not to advocate!

Only humans advocate. Nature does not! Nature does not care if humans jump off Her cliffs or not. Nature also does not care if humans build skyscrapers, let alone whether they jump off of them!

Nature is infinitely just, pure, uncompromising, and truthful. Nature has the final word and nobody, but nobody, argues with Her. If humans break but one of Her laws that is the last law they will live to break!

But on the other hand, humans have myriads of laws governing other humans. Some of these laws are good, some black, some grey, some good, some bad, some vital, some unnecessary, some just, some hypocritical, and so on. If a human breaks a human law, he must deal with other humans.

In a fashion striving to emulate Nature, the concept of BASE jumping strives not to advocate. The concept does not care if it has a following of one, or ten, or a thousand, or a million. BASE jumping, compared to other sports, is one of the most unforgiving--yet one of the most exhilarating and satisfying

sports known to mankind. It should seek out its own level, and no more, whatever level that is. BASE jumping is certainly not meant for everyone!

Unique from all other sports' associations, the BASE Association does not advocate nor encourage people at large to make BASE jumps. But for the few people who eventually gravitate towards wanting to, regardless of the source of attraction, it is hoped that the USBA can only help promote health and safety through its dissemination of knowledge. (Remember, the USBA and BASE Magazine were *forced* into existence because no established or recognized source would give it more than passing notice!)

The USBA and BASE Magazine do not advocate breaking any local, city, state or federal laws of any country. But it does advocate that every human being, in his daily duties, constantly strive to more fully understand his God-given, inalienable rights to freedom and dominion over all the earth. If ever this one, simple, all-pervading guideline is broken, somewhere along the line, some human law must be ferreted out and changed. It is possible to BASE jump with the full, total support of all mankind.

El Capitan, figuratively speaking, is the Mother of all modern BASE jumping. El Capitan has taught us more about sub-terminal delays from fixed objects than all other sites

combined. El Capitan has been the most accessible and safest site yet found, and possibly will remain so for a long time. This makes it all the more important that we keep El Capitan--and also Half Dome--open to those BASE jumpers who are qualified and so-inclined.

Lastly, the USBA does not knowingly endorse or condone foolhardiness or disrespect towards any form of established law.

Here is to safe, informed, and legal BASE jumping throughout the world. Remembering that "the ground's the limit, and the life you save may be your own," go out and have a fun skydive! -Ed.

WARNING: BASE JUMPING MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH!

"--But let him not vow to walk in the dark, who has not seen the night fall...." --Elrond to Gimli (J.R.R.Tolkien Trilogy.)

by Phil Mayfield

We live in an age of omnipresent warnings. Countless times nearly every day we are cautioned:

DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE
BEWARE OF DOG
SLIPPERY WHEN WET
SWIM AT YOUR OWN RISK
WEAR HELMET ON TAKE-OFF
FASTEN SEAT BELT
NO SMOKING
ETC.

These admonitions serve as surrogate mothers for us: "Now don't go in the deep end, Johnny"--lulling us into a dependence on someone else's judgement rather than our own.

Gone is the need to establish personal limitations. Common sense is passe. Big Brother has removed the need for caution in unfamiliar situations. Don't worry about it, right?

Wrong! Possibly DEAD WRONG!

Skydiving is inherently a frightening enough concept that the mere thought of it acts as a sufficient deterrent for most who consider doing it. The aspiring jumper is also presented with other obstacles such as *where* to do it, *how* to do it, *who* to see for instruction, etc. If the desire and initiative are great enough, however, this second round of roadblocks is easily surmounted. Certain parachute regula-

tions (such as minimum age requirements, Basic Safety Regulations, etc.) provide more checks and counter checks. Finally, if the Instructor, Jumpmaster, or Pilot are skeptical enough about your readiness, any of them can forestall your skydiving career.

Once the novice gets 40 or 50 jumps under his belt, he stands the greatest chance of becoming a statistic. He has overcome most or all of his initial fear and may be over-confident to the point of being lax and careless. If he survives this period, he becomes an "experienced jumper" or possibly even a SKYGOD! In hang-gliding, the term is called "intermediate syndrome." The majority of aspiring BASE jumpers seem to come from this group.

It does, in a sense, seem logical that once the skygod has gained mastery over aircraft jumps, he must surely have inherited dominion over all parachute jumps--including *out of* or *off of* anything! It is this *assumption* that constitutes the gravest danger to any BASE jumper--i.e., the ignorance of the critical differences between BASE jumping and skydiving. This *lack of respect* has been the foremost cause of all BASE-related accidents that have occurred to date. Most who have this attitude will nevertheless make their BASE jumps without an accident because, although these leaps are more dangerous than most skydives, it

still *usually* takes more than one mistake to result in an accident.

Unfortunately for those of us who seek to legitimize the new sport of BASE jumping, accidents invariably find their way to the headlines. This harms both BASE jumping and skydiving, as the public naturally lumps all parachute jumps together.

Considering all of this, it is in the best interests of everybody related to parachuting, and especially all prospective BASE jumpers, to seek education and illumination of everything involved with making a BASE jump. The United States BASE Association does not make it a policy to try to encourage skydivers or anyone else to make BASE jumps. Its policy does, however, encourage safety in BASE jumping as well as to lobby for widespread acknowledgement of the rights of those so-inclined to pursue this sport.

People will continue to injure or kill themselves in parachuting sports as well as others despite the best efforts of safety-conscious individuals and organizations. The least we should do to limit the number of accidents is to provide a source for information pertaining to the safety and advisability of prospective BASE leaps. It is to that end that the USBA offers its services.

Please remember to look and ~~leap~~ before you LEAP!

THE COMING OF AGE OF BASE JUMPING

by Max Dereta

Max Dereta is a well-known skydiver and free-fall photographer who resides in Holland. His occupation is in commercial graphics; hence, it is easy to see why he has come up with three incredibly beautiful patches which grace our humanity: namely, YOSEMITE CLIFF JUMPER--EL CAPITAN NO., BASE JUMPING, and CLIFF-DIVING IN NORWAY--TROLLVEGGEN. Max felt compelled to write the following article as a rebuttal to a European magazine article that questioned the existence of fixed-object jumping as a legitimate sport.

First of all, why is there so much noise about all this BASE jumping? I feel BASE jumping is perfectly logical in context to the "crazy times" in which we live.

If we will look back to the early days of our sport of parachuting, we will see that we really have evolved from little birds who have just gotten out of our egg shells into majestic eagles with fully outstretched wings!

In the 1950's, our only capability was to fall free--more or less stably--and that was the discipline of the very first World Championships in 1951. Accuracy was another discipline, and it was measured in tens of meters.

In the 1960's, because we learned more things to do in free-fall, we invented two new disciplines: the baton pass and style. Simultaneously, parachutes became more sophisticated, and accuracy was then measured in centimeters.

In the 1970's, veritable upheavals of revolution ushered in: large jumpsuits, relative work, small and lightweight piggybacks, square canopies, and canopy relative work. Accuracy was now measured in millimeters and on an electronic disc! The whole sport became safer, easier and more popular. More people started jumping in the 1970's alone than during the 1950's and 1960's combined. With more people came more ideas, more innovations, and more--unfortunately--separation. What used to be one big para-family is now divided into groups. The relative workers stopped talking to the accuracy and style freaks because they lost their common interest that they once had had. That most likely explains why we now have two completely different and separate world championships--relative work on odd-numbered years and style and accuracy on even-numbered years. Even more, in the late 1970's, a third group has even appeared: Canopy Relative Workers' World Championships. Obviously things have started happening faster and faster, and now there are so many new things in our sport that it even now becomes difficult to follow them all!

I have been jumping 16 years now, and I can do fairly well all of the disciplines: baton passing, style, accuracy, relative work, canopy relative work, free-fall photography, and other recognized disciplines. Now I have reached the level where I have started thinking about the possibility of quitting these para-sports and perhaps looking for totally new sports to try. Jumping itself recently has not given me as much kick as it did in the beginning.

Eventually I heard about El Capitan and decided to jump it. I did! It gave me such a kick that I decided to remain in the sport and skydive as much as I could in order to improve my skills in it to such a level that I could be perfectly self-confident for more difficult and dangerous fixed-object jumps. My next step was Trollveggen in Norway, and it went really smoothly.

What will be my next step? Another cliff? A building? An antenna? A bridge? I don't know. It is very difficult to say right now, sitting here in my warm room in front of my typewriter. But what I do know for sure is that I have got to go there, climb it and then decide whether I will jump it or walk back to the ground. That is all.

We cannot generalize much about this sort of jumping because it is still new and not completely "discovered." At the moment there is only a small group of us who have made BASE jumps (about 600 jumpers in the whole world), but it is growing quickly. Nobody can stop it anymore! As a matter of fact, things are growing towards legalizing it at all levels from all objects. Consider El Capitan, Canyon de Chelly, New River Gorge Bridge, Royal Gorge Bridge, etc. Nobody at the Trollveggen in Norway ever tried to stop me or give me a fine for making a BASE jump there. The guys and girls who jumped from certain buildings and antennas paid fines only for trespassing, or not having permission from the managers, not for jumping from it. Those problems can be solved, too.

Apparently, the public in general has no big complaints about BASE jumping. The people who do complain about it is somebody sitting in "the Organization" who probably jumps now and then (usually a person "behind" the times), one who never has even seen or tried a BASE jump but only reads the articles in the newspapers about those few unfortunate ones who have gotten hurt--usually as a result of a prior lack of knowledge to make the jump safely. Only because of all of this, he says: "We must put an end to all these stunts!" This is the easiest thing for him to say and do BECAUSE he has no knowledge nor experience in this "new kind" of jumping!

Life, however, goes on, and there are more and more jumpers keen on jumping from antennas, buildings, bridges and cliffs, and this has to be accepted as a fact! The "Organization," actually, must help. That is why it is there, I suppose. The Organization should be on hand to give as much information and advice as possible in order to help jumpers and teach them how to do BASE jumping safely and enjoyably.

Carl Boenish in the USA is already doing this. He has established the United States BASE Association. Since BASE jumping has very little to do with the FAI, the FAI is a bit puzzled with what to do with this so-called "problem." I believe that BASE organizations around the world will take the full responsibility of these matters in the future. That is the only logical development that I can see.

Before I finish this letter, let me remind you that we should not forget that we skydivers are, after all, just human beings. Maybe it sounds like a joke, but if we look deep down into our minds, we shall see that the "kick" that we all have gotten from all the jumps that we've made through the years is quite similar to the one we find in "sex":

IT'S SHORT, BUT INTENSE

IT'S EXHAUSTING, BUT EXCITING

AND, IN THE END, IT MAKES US FEEL GOOD AND SATISFIED.

That is why we all skydive, and have sex.

Yours truly,

Max Dereta

EC-139

IV- 29



WHY IT IS MY RIGHT TO CLIFF JUMP

"All legitimate desires converge to one endpoint."

Cliffs are natural objects, ultimately not owned by anyone and available to all. Cliff jumping is a legitimate activity since it is beneficial to the participant, is not harmful to anyone or anything, leaves no traces, and does not conflict with other interests or activities. The public's acceptance and support of cliff jumping is an excellent indicator of the sport's validity. In essence, it is the public's vote that counts, and cliff jumping wins hands down.

In Yosemite, people flock to see cliff jumpers just as much as rock climbers, and when it is all over, they ask when there will be more. The attitude of every observer is always positive and supportive, and their inquiries demonstrate genuine interest and curiosity--certainly not condemnation. The Park Service can use this simple measuring device to test any new activity--like cliff

jumping--against the theme of the park to conclude whether or not the majority of people will find it attractive and desirable.

The public grumbles over any situation it finds unacceptable, especially if it may be a threat to them or the park they are trying to enjoy. Unfortunately, it tends to be human nature that such grumblings are often unobtrusive. Because there are relatively few outright complaints for change, park officials must listen very carefully to know their constituents' needs and desires. This is the only way public lands can be selflessly administered for the preservation and enjoyment of everyone. The Park Service alone cannot make decisions that will be in the best interests of the public if it does not know the mind of the public.

Cliff jumping does not cheapen the sense of nature's majesty, but heightens it for both participants and onlookers. Only an insensitive administration would arrest "law-breaking cliff jumpers committing a criminal act"--a description of dubious accuracy and merit--while the public looks on wondering, "What did they do wrong? I thought it was great!" It is up to the Park Service to seek a more positive pursuit of

their objective to "draw the public back into a self-reliant experience with nature." The idea is for the Park Service to help people do what they want to do, not to tell them what to do.

The justification for fining and incarcerating cliff jumpers is in question. To enforce an ambiguous law which was legislated prior to the popularization of cliff jumping only serves to intimidate jumpers and set bad precedents of control, for cliff jumping is meant to be an unregulated activity. Its pure and individualistic nature merits at least as much deregulation as rock climbing and hiking. Jumpers do not want to tacitly waive this right by agreeing to unnecessary Park controls. Cliff jumpers already make use of nothing more than their Wilderness Permits allow.

So, since cliff jumping is more ecologically sound than technical rock climbing, superlatively suited to a national park's objective, and fully supported by the public, it certainly deserves at least a *laissez-faire* attitude from the Park Service, if not its full support.

Jean Boenish



Bradley Smith is shown on a twilight dive from the Gerald Desmond Bridge at Terminal Island, California "in the old days." The bridge is only 160 feet above the shipping channel and the entire jump lasts but 6 seconds--3 for the static-lined canopy deployment and 3 for the canopy ride! Brad used an unmodified 22-foot hang-glider parachute mounted in a "grocery bag." It was the "hot set-up" until a "cleaner" container could be sewn together using nylon instead of paper! The former, however, required a "launch person," whereas the latter could be "self-unlatched." The world high diving record is 168 feet, 8 feet higher than this bridge jump which ironically necessitated the use of a parachute to make it safe for a non-world-class diver. When the rig was completed, world-famous filmmaker Mike Jittlov made his very first parachute jump off of this bridge, into water, and at night! Two weeks later he made his first jump from an airplane which he liked, too, but not in the same way.

WHY I BASE JUMP

by Bradley Smith
BASE #8
EC-409

Just over four years ago, I drove to a private airport in central Kansas on a Saturday afternoon and entrusted my life to a complete stranger who helped me jump from an airplane. I spent the next three years and over 700 skydives convinced that I had become a part of the most exciting and personally rewarding sport that I could experience within the confines of earth's gravity. I was wrong.

In August of 1980, John Noak asked if I would like to jump from a bridge with him. The very next day I experienced something unique

to my senses. Brian Hinni, John Noak and I combined our efforts and knowledge to overcome our fears of the unknown and jumped from a structure 876 feet high.

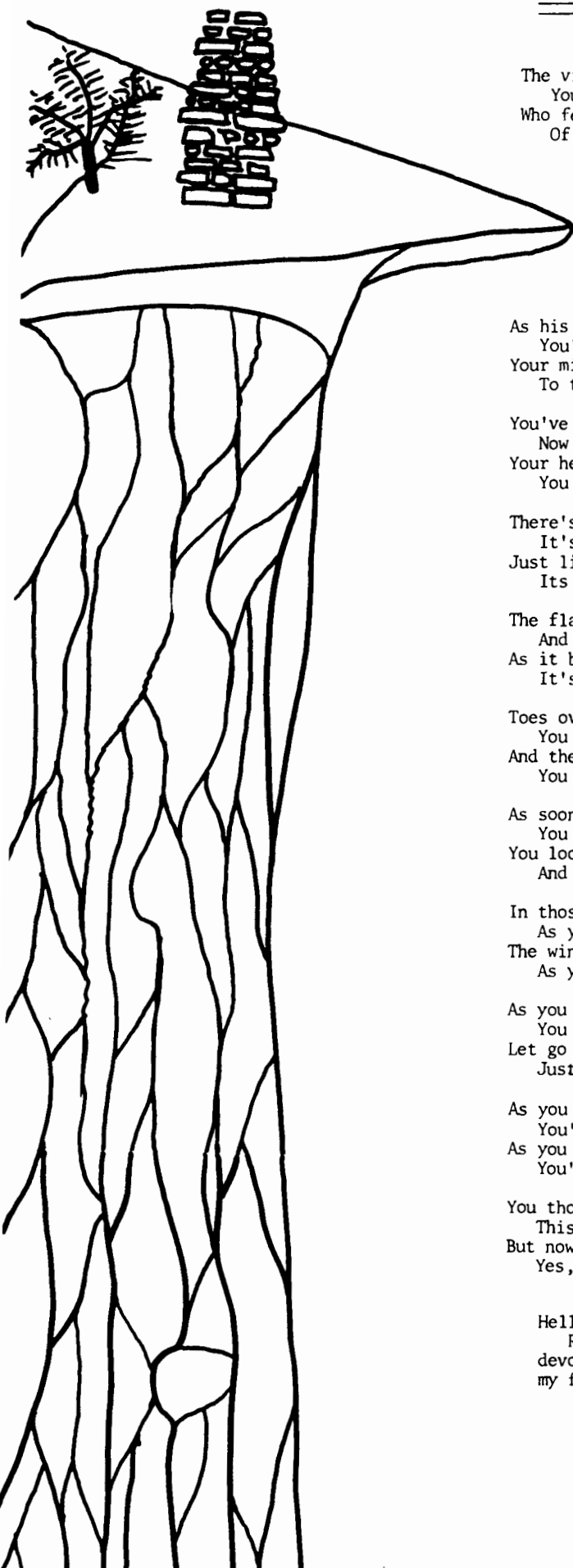
The excitement and personal reward was intense. When I learned to skydive, I gained confidence in my instructor's ability to guide me through a safe parachute jump. When I learned (and am still learning) to dive from fixed objects, I gained confidence and pride in my own ability to guide myself through the frontiers of a safe BASE jump. Now, in my dreams, I re-live those breathtaking launches, the sensation of acceleration, the rush of windows passing by! I sense the same enjoyment in other BASE jumpers each week as we experience new things together, whether it be their first jump or

their twentieth. It is a feeling of exploring the capabilities of our own souls as well as the laws of nature as they pertain to flight.

The knowledge and friendships that I have acquired in the past year of object jumping are so personally rewarding that it makes my head spin, and we have merely scratched the surface of this awesome sport.

I still love to jump from airplanes and fly through the air with the greatest of ease, but mine is now a "schizophrenic" existence that is twice as nice.

Bradley Smith



The view is majestic, the silence is, too.
You feel all alone, but there are a few
Who feel the same need; to stand there on top
Of some great fixed object, and then to step off.

Your buddy says, "Move, I just can't wait,"
And you watch him enjoy a thrilling new state
You stand there and watch him as he falls
And think to yourself, "This is finally my day."

As his canopy moves out, giving you room,
You're suddenly as nervous as a new bride or groom.
Your mind is still wondering, just what it is like
To take that one step, is it worth the long hike?

You've wanted to do this since you were age twelve.
Now into your mind, so deeply you delve.
Your heart rate increases, your palms start to sweat.
You tell yourself, "Go!" but you're not ready yet.

There's something inside you, you don't know just what
It's growing and swelling and filling you up.
Just like a rocket, before it starts moving,
Its engines are screaming, yet they seem to be losing.

The flames and the smoke grow like a great fright,
And then it goes up, up, up out of sight.
As it builds up inside you, it feels not like fright--
It's fantastic excitement now felt at new heights.

Toes over the edge, your eyes on the ground,
You feel nearly ready to try this new round.
And then the excitement, it reaches its peak;
You find yourself moving, to take the big leap.

As soon as you spring out, out into the air,
You find that you're home, you belong right out there.
You look at the object, you're hurtling past,
And decide this is better than starting out fast.

In those first seconds there's silence--no sound,
As your body it plummets, straight down toward the ground.
The wind is now growing, the object still near,
As you start to fly, and there is no fear.

As you track away, from where you just came,
You know you have found it, this is your game.
Let go the pilot chute, your canopy unfolds
Just as expected, an old friend you know.

As you float to Earth, preparing to land,
You're already working on your next BASE jump plan.
As you touch down, you don't feel that way--
You're still quite up, for awhile there you'll stay.

You thought halfway up, "The going's so rough,
This climb can't be worth it, once is enough."
But now you feel ready to start up again.
Yes, it was worth it, and will be again.

Hello Carl and Jean:

Received my copy of BASE Magazine two days ago,
devoured it, felt inspired and wrote this poem about
my first BASE jump. Hope you like it.

Larry Wolfe

Please read the following article very carefully. It talks about very, very simple issues: "Does my government have the right to compel me to wear a helmet everytime I ride a motorcycle down the public streets?" A lot of good, hard work has gone down before us in the last 15 years regarding the motor-

cycle/helmet issue. In many ways, the cliff jumping rights issue is similar. We should study both of these issues so that we can exercise our rights. Everything good comes from UNDERSTANDING. In your editor's opinion, it is our God-given, inalienable right to cliff jump, if we are able to and so-inclined. Nature should be the only judge of that. And in 1982, if it is humanly possible to cliff jump, let's realize that privilege with the harmony and concord of the United States National Park Service.

Strong Cycle Lobby Keeps Lid on Helmet Laws

By BILL BILLITER, Times Staff Writer

Wearing crash helmets saves lives, admits the American Motorcyclist Assn.

But the same association and its supporters have been successful in blocking passage of state and federal laws requiring cyclists to wear helmets.

The motorcycle lobby, it turns out, is a very powerful one.

ITEM: In its 1966 Highway Safety Act, Congress said states must require motorcyclists to wear helmets or else lose 10% of the state's share of federal highway funds. By 1975, all but three states—California, Illinois and Utah—had laws requiring motorcycle helmets.

But the motorcycle lobby countered: and the next year Congress quietly removed the federal penalty if states did not have laws requiring motorcycle helmet use.

As a result, states began repealing or weakening their helmet laws. As of this summer, only 19 states still require helmet wearing by all motorcycle riders.

ITEM: For 15 years, one or more members of the California legislature have vainly fought to get the state to require helmet wearing by motorcyclists.

Virtually every year, motorcycle riders have shown up in Sacramento to oppose the bills. All helmet bills have gone down to defeat.

This year the motorcycle lobby dealt an overwhelming defeat to a mandatory helmet bill sponsored by Assemblyman Richard Floyd (D-Lawndale), a motorcycle rider since he was 14.

Even though Floyd watered down his bill so that it would have required helmets only of motorcycle and moped riders 18 years old and under and those holding a motorcycle license less than a year, the bill met solid opposition in the Assembly Transportation Committee where it died when it failed to get a single vote.

"I keep getting the feeling that my colleagues feel that if they vote for a helmet law, a Hell's Angel will be on their doorstep the next morning," Floyd said in a recent interview.

"Some of the motorcyclists lobbying against helmet bills are rather imposing," Floyd added. "They come in wearing a cutaway vest, blue jeans and a bandana around their heads—sort of super macho figures, the last of the pirates."

"I guess some of the legislators are intimidated."

Floyd said the motorcyclist-lobbyists are never actually threatening, however. He said he has met with motorcycle groups that angrily disagreed with him but never threatened him.

"They feel it (a helmet law) would be a restriction on their rights," Floyd said.

The "restriction on rights" argument is the one cited by most leg-

islators as the reason for opposing a helmet law. It was a major reason cited by congressmen who successfully changed the federal law so it no longer penalizes states without helmet laws.

And personal rights vs. government interference was also cited by most California lawmakers opposed to a mandatory helmet law.

"Where do we draw the line as far as how protective we should be of everyone?" asked Assemblywoman Marian LaFollette (R-Malibu) when Floyd's helmet bill was before the Assembly Transportation Committee last April.

LaFollette was among the committee members who suggested the bill should be allowed to die because of the personal rights question.

"We already have too many laws interfering with the rights of people," said Assemblyman Louis Pappan (D-Milbrae), a member of Transportation Committee.

Pappan, a burly, outspoken man, bristled at Floyd's suggestion that some legislators may have been intimidated by motorcycle lobbyists.

"I don't intimidate," said Pappan, adding "I just don't see the sense of putting the helmet bill into law. I think helmets are good things for them (motorcyclists), but I don't want to impose it in law. There would also be the problem of trying to enforce this—who is going to put the riders in jail or cite them?"

"Educating the riders to wear helmets is better than passing a law."

Assemblyman Nolan Frizzelle (R-Costa Mesa), another Transportation Committee member, said he opposed the bill because he thinks helmets contribute to motorcycle accidents and injuries in some cases.

(Officials of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration point to federal safety standards for motorcycle helmets and say a 2½-year study at USC conclusively proved helmets do not contribute to accidents and almost never cause injuries—never any serious injury.)

"I received a whole lot of letters on this (helmet) issue," said Frizzelle.

Gary Winn, legislative analyst for the American Motorcyclist Assn. based in Columbus, Ohio, said in a telephone interview that California's 649,631 licensed motorcycle riders form a "a very, very powerful, vocal group" in opposing proposed helmet laws. He indicated the motorcycle riders in other states are as militant—and politically potent.

Winn said the association, reflecting the views of most motorcycle riders in the nation, "is very much in favor of voluntary use of helmets but very much against a helmet law," one exception being that "we would not argue against minors or first-year riders having helmet restrictions."

Most of the states that have weakened their mandatory helmet laws since 1976 (when Congress removed the federal penalty) have

changed to laws requiring helmet use only by those under 18 or those riding motorcycles for the first year.

While the goal is to protect the young and the inexperienced—who have higher motorcycle accident rates—the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says these laws are hard to enforce and not nearly as effective in bringing down motorcycle death rates as are mandatory helmet laws for all riders.

Assemblyman Bruce Young (D-Norwalk), chairman of the Assembly Transportation Committee, said he opposed Floyd's bill largely because it applied only to those 18 and under and those holding a motorcycle license less than a year.

"How do you enforce a law like that?" Young asked, noting that police would have to make guesses about age in stopping unhelmeted motorcycle riders.

Young also questioned whether helmets actually do all the good things their supporters claim.

Looking for evidence on that score, Young and his committee need look no further than the USC Institute of Safety and Systems Management.

The institute's Prof. Harry Hurt completed a 2½-year study in 1979 that documented causes and effects of motorcycle accidents. The study, financed by a \$381,754 federal contract, involved members of Hurt's research team going to the scenes of about 1,100 motorcycle accidents in Los Angeles immediately after they happened.

The Hurt study is considered the benchmark in motorcycle safety investigation, all the more so since most states, including California, keep no statistical data about causes of motorcycle accidents and rider injuries.

"Our study proved positively and conclusively that helmets are very good for your health," Hurt said in an interview. "The typical helmet provides safety beyond any reasonable expectation."

"The only issue remaining for opponents (of helmets) is the rights issue. Our study proved that helmets provide high levels of protection without any jeopardy to the rider."

Hurt said that of the 1,100 accidents his team investigated, only three or four showed any injury caused by the helmet itself. In those rare cases, he said, the helmet was not the cause of the accident and, indeed, had saved the rider from more serious head injuries.

The rare helmet injuries, he said, were "Band-Aid type injuries" such as minor cuts from chin straps.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has made Hurt's motorcycle helmet study available to the states, but some, like California, still routinely debate the effectiveness of helmets.

Since Congress repealed its penalty for non-helmet states, the National Highway Traffic Safety Ad-

ministration says deaths in motorcycle accidents have soared. There were 61% more motorcycle deaths in the nation in 1980 than in 1975, the safety administration says.

During the 1975-80 period, the agency added, there was only a 17% increase in motorcycle numbers.

"It's pretty well documented that unhelmeted riders have twice as many head injuries and three times as many fatalities as helmeted riders," said Lew Buchanan, a motorcycle safety specialist with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The American Motorcyclist Assn., however, said that the high increase in motorcycle deaths cannot be attributed solely to repeal of helmet laws. "Some states maintaining helmet laws have experienced radical, even awesome increases in fatalities," said the association.

But while questioning the federal safety agency's statistics and interpretations, the motorcyclist association said it readily agrees, as do most of its members, that it makes good sense to wear helmets.

The question remains: Should a state require helmet wearing?

Voices as disparate as President Reagan, Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. and the Hell's Angels all say mandatory helmet laws are an unwarranted intrusion into personal rights.

But supporters of helmet laws say such a view ignores needless deaths that result from lack of helmet laws. Supporters of a helmet law say new, young riders often refuse to wear helmets because they see older peers going without them.

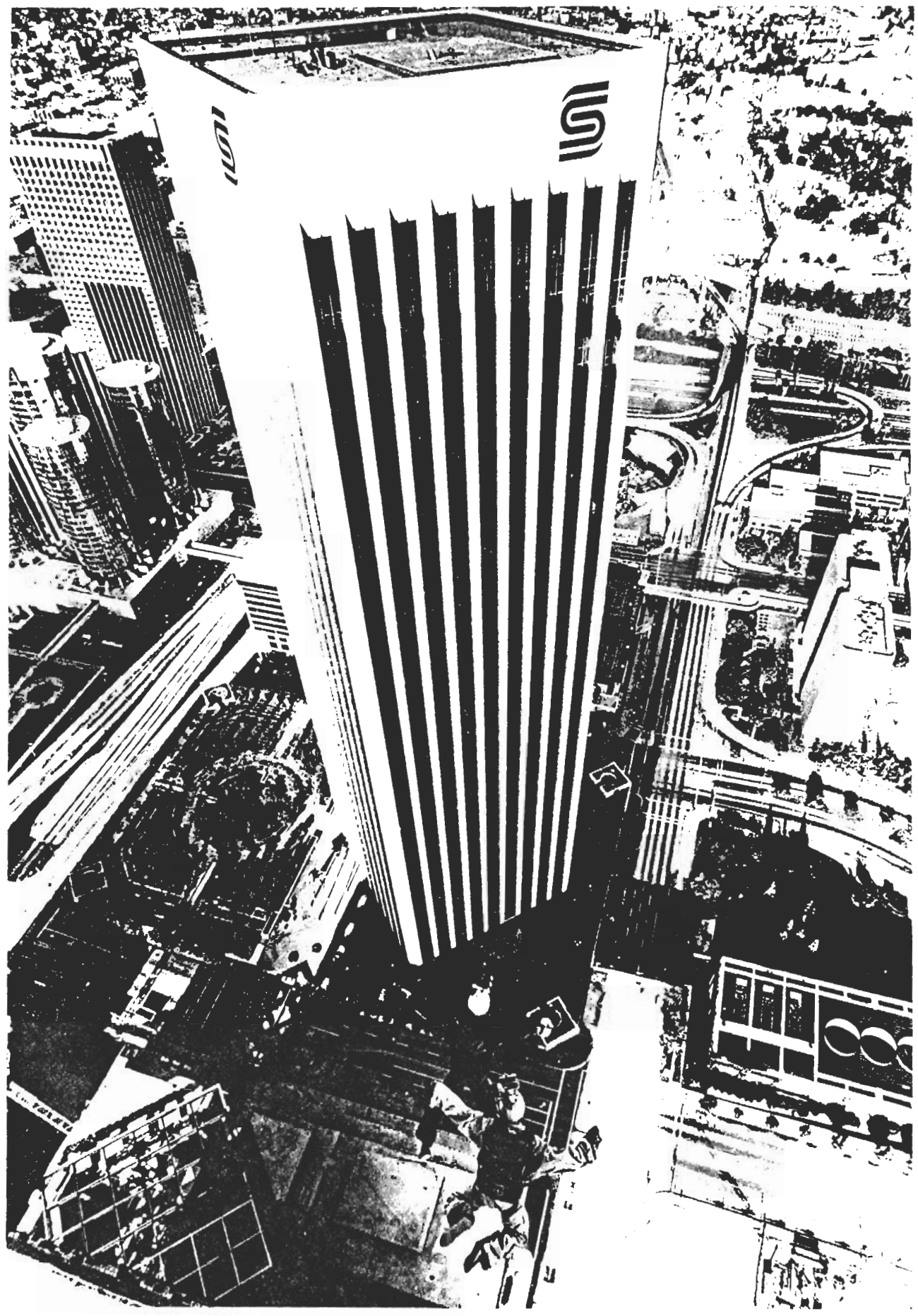
Thus, they say, peer pressure—not mature decisions about taking safety risks—causes deaths of many unhelmeted riders.

Floyd, disappointed that his bill died in committee, said he may make another attempt in the 1983 legislative session.

But in a separate interview, Assembly Transportation Committee Chairman Young said Floyd may not have to wait that long. "If Dick Floyd will amend his bill to cover all motorcycle riders so that it's a serious, enforceable bill, I'll be glad to hold interim hearings on it this fall, including having the USC professor called to testify," Young said.

Since Floyd originally favored a bill covering all riders, the Young proposal thus opens the door to one more attempt this year for the California Legislature to debate a helmet law.

But supporters of such a law, noting that the motorcycle lobby has easily killed all such proposals for 15 years in California, say they are not holding their breath.



Carl Boenish and Brad Smith take express route down from Crocker Center past Security Pacific Building

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Fall Guys Take the Plunge — Off 54-Story Building

By KEITH LOVE, Times Staff Writer

In the first second, there is "ground rush" as the earth and concrete leap to meet you.

The windows of the building across the street whiz by like a picket fence. Your head, which was pointing up when you leaped, is suddenly pointing down. You have your stomach on the ledge above.

That is what it is like to jump off a skyscraper, according to three men who did it Sunday morning from the top of Crocker Center, the 54-story tower in downtown Los Angeles.

If you have on a parachute, as they did, you open it four seconds after the plunge. Twenty seconds later you're on the ground.

"It is scary because you are falling at first," said Carl Boenish, a free-lance photographer from Hawthorne who is the group's leader. "But when the chute opens, it is man's greatest dream. You are flying." Compared to jumping off a building, Boenish said, sky diving from an airplane is about as exciting as leaping onto a bed. He said members of his group had made more than 30 jumps from Crocker Center since July.

Brad Smith, 24, who jumped Sunday, recalled the night he sailed off above Third and Hope streets, opened his parachute and drifted down to Fourth Street, and then landed right and glided past the Bonaventure Hotel.

One night, Smith said, he landed right in front of a well-dressed couple near the hotel. "They didn't give me a second look."

Boenish, Smith and another man named Phil Smith entered the unfinished Crocker skyscraper at Third and Hope streets around 4 a.m. Sunday and began the long, dark climb up a stairwell to the top.

With the wind whipping through the tower—most of which is still open on all sides—the jumpers looked like Sherpa guides on Mt. Everest as they slowly ascended with their gear.

After awhile, the top of Union Bank's tower came into view to the southwest. But it was soon left far behind. A few minutes later, to the south, the helicopter pad atop Wells Fargo's tower took shape. It was quickly forgotten.

As the jumpers reached the top of Crocker Center, they looked down on Security Pacific Bank's skyscraper.

There apparently is no law on the books prohibiting such sky diving.

per, too. Far below, the Bunker Hill condominiums looked like architect's toys.

The Crocker Center tower is not the tallest building downtown—First Interstate Bank's gleaming shaft is higher—but at 710 feet it is one of the tallest buildings in the Southland.

Sitting on its roof and watching the sunrise light up Los Angeles County from the mountains to the sea is a special experience. By 8 a.m., when Sunday's jumps took place, the metropolis looked white and fuzzy blue as it spilled across hills and freeways and spread out into the coastal plain.

Boenish and his partners made radio contact with friends on the street below and, after double-checking their gear, leaped off the northwest corner of the building.

A crowd of about two dozen people had gathered below, drawn by the activity of the ground crew.

They landed on Hope Street in front of Security Pacific and a car whisked them away. They didn't want to stay around because they have already been warned by Los Angeles police that to get to their jumping-off point they are trespassing on private property.

According to the city attorney's office, however, there is apparently no law on the books prohibiting the sky dive itself. Attempts to reach Crocker officials were unsuccessful.

Jumping from Crocker Center has become a pleasant pastime for Boenish and his friends. Sometimes, he and his wife, Jean take the plunge together. Brad Smith said he had jumped alone on several nights.

"Sometimes I come down early in the morning and jump a couple of times before I go to work," said Smith, who makes airplane parts in Burbank. "One night, I did it barefoot and without a helmet."

That kind of casual approach to the jumps is not favored by Boenish, 40. He said he has made more than 1,700 leaps from planes and fixed objects since he began sky diving 19 years ago. And one thing he has learned is that you cannot be too careful.

"The state of the art in sky diving has changed enormously in the last decade," Boenish said. "The chutes used to weigh 40 pounds and everybody wore paratrooper boots. Now, the weight is down to less than 25 pounds and you can jump in running shoes."

"In the early days of sky diving, you didn't have much control over the chutes, but today you can fly them like a hang glider. I can land wherever I want."

For Phil Smith, a truck driver from Houston, Sunday's expedition was worth a special flight to Los Angeles. He often jumps off the 1,100-foot Texas Commerce Tower in

downtown Houston and is one of the most experienced members of BASE, an organization started recently by Boenish.

To qualify for the group, you have to sky dive off a bridge, an antenna, a span and an earth formation—hence the group's call letters. Boenish and the other members have jumped many times off El Capitan in Yosemite, and also off a 900-foot bridge in West Virginia

'One night, I did it barefoot and without a helmet,' declared Smith.

and a television antenna tower in Dallas.

All of the group's members had jumped many times from airplanes, the traditional form of sky diving, before they began leaping from fixed objects.

Whereas sky divers like to open their chutes 2,500 feet above the ground when they leap out of planes, they do not have that luxury when they jump off fixed objects. One of New York's World Trade towers—1,350 feet tall—is believed to be the tallest fixed object conquered so far.

"The great thing about base jumping is you don't need an airplane," said Boenish, who estimated it would take about a year for a beginner to gain the experience and confidence to do base jumps routinely.

"In 20 years," he said, "the technology will allow you to do it in nothing more than a jump suit. You could walk out on the roof of your office building and jump down and catch the bus."

DIVE — Off 54-Story Crocker Center

Skydivers playing Superman in L.A.

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — It is not against the law to jump from skyscrapers — unless traffic is disrupted.

Police spokesman John Connelly said Monday there is no law prohibiting a group of urban skydivers from playing Superman and leaping from downtown skyscrapers in a single bound.

A group of parachutists — including a Hawthorne man — leaped from the 54-story Crocker Center.

"I guess if they started doing it in the middle of the day it would disrupt traffic, or something," Connelly said. "But we can't find anything illegal about it except for trespassing and that would be a citizen's arrest."

The bizarre parachute jumps were recorded by television crews early Sunday morning.

"The feeling is euphoric. It's mankind's most incredible high," Carl Boenish said, describing his leap from the

building. "It gives a person a feeling of accomplishment, a feeling of power."

"We literally feel like supermen," said the free-lance photographer from Hawthorne.

Boenish, 40, and two other men climbed to the top of the downtown building and parachuted 710 feet to the street.

Eight people have made 37 jumps from the Crocker Center tower, Boenish said. The building is not the tallest in Los Angeles, but because it is still under construction the jumpers have easy access to the roof.

The skydivers have not gained permission from the managers of Crocker Center to jump from the tower, but Boenish said the group will try to work out an arrangement.

THE HISTORY OF CROCKER CENTER

On November 8, 1981, there were allegedly three jumps made from the 40-foot Crocker Center in downtown Los Angeles, California. Photos and a story of the alleged building jumping activity were carried on the front page of the Los Angeles Times newspaper whose circulation is well over 1,000,000 copies, plus the UPI and API wire services, and the CBS television stations.

Reportedly, a clandestine activity of skydivers jumping off the uncompleted 54-story skyscraper in the middle of the night had been going on for nearly 3 months before it was detected, publicized and then officially discouraged."

Several people in the skydiving community have asked why the jumps were finally publicized--after months of alleged secrecy.

Apparently some of the reported participants allegedly reported that the police knew of the activity for at least 2-3 weeks prior to the Times article--most of whom allegedly thought the jumps were amazing and fun to watch." About eight or so police officers who supposedly witnessed some of the alleged jumps told the jumpers that as long as nobody complained--any public citizen or the proprietors--the activity could not be reported nor curtailed.

The security guard allegedly knew of the activity for over a month. Some of the alleged jumpers had befriended him and he actually took liking to the activity because he thought it was exciting and broke up the otherwise boring vigilance. It later turned out, reportedly, that the security guard didn't have any say-so anyway because he was guarding another building, not the Crocker Center! No wonder he didn't care!!!

Supposedly with the "blessing" of the police on patrol at 3:00 AM and the "wrong" security guard, the jumpers erroneously let their guard down and ceased more and more to hide their activity. They felt that they could continue the activity indefinitely as long as they were super careful not to hurt anybody, anything or themselves.

WRONG! Enter Murphy's Law: "If anything can go wrong, it will, and at the worst possible time."

Anyway, one police officer in the area came along and thought that the activity should come to an end. Nobody knows this for sure, but the group allegedly believed that he went to the building owners and asked them if they wanted "to complain." Apparently shortly afterwards, an official order was issued by the L.A. Police Department to stop any

GIANT DILEMMA

The biggest dilemma facing BASE jumping and BASE jumpers today is not the technology to do it safely and repeatedly, but *where* to do it at all! Practice makes perfect, but where does one practice?

USBA'S OFFICIAL POSITION

Until BASE jumpers find the proper buildings--with the proper authorization and insurance, etc., they are not trying to popularize building jumping. (This position does not address the issue of pioneering building jumping.) But we can all take heart in knowing that it is possible to jump buildings legally because Dar Robinson made the first legal building jump back in 1979 as a stunt for a movie from the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada. Dar has also made another building jump legally in Atlanta, Georgia from the Peachtree Plaza out of the 16th story into an airbag, also for a movie stunt. So, the question is really how to find the right vehicle and motive to seek and obtain prior permission and backing

for the jumps. Several BASE jumpers from all over the country are trying separately to interest various public relations firms to interface between them and various television networks, building management groups, insurance companies, etc., into sponsoring either "benefit performances," "charity jumps," "topping out ceremonies," "ribbon cutting" ceremonies, etc. Certainly if New York City, Boston, etc., can be "shut down" for a day per year to run 26 mile marathon runs attracting thousands of participants and spectators alike, it shouldn't be too unfeasible to cordon off a two-block area from 6:00-8:00 AM once a year per city to allow 50 BASE jumpers to make individual leaps in the 2 hour period. It's all in the mind--the technology has long been with us to do this safely and routinely.

If building owners dream of adding on stories one by one until "we have the tallest skyscraper in the city," then why are these egotistical dreams noble, yet the dreams of the masses "to jump off of them" ignoble?

Chicago tower to soar 169 stories, paper says

Associated Press

CHICAGO — An architectural firm that designed the tallest building in the world plans to top itself with a super skyscraper that would reach almost a half-mile high, a newspaper reported Monday.

The design firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill is working on plans for a \$1.25 billion building, more than 800 feet above the Sears Tower, the tallest building in the world, the Chicago Tribune said Monday.

Interest rates have delayed the building of the 169-floor, 2,300-foot-high structure, sources said. Construction was scheduled to begin before Labor Day.

A Skidmore spokeswoman, who asked not to be identified, denied any knowledge of the project. "Nobody here knows anything about it at all," she said.

A real estate firm has acquired options for purchase of the land for the

skyscraper, which sources said would be erected just north of the Chicago Loop, the Tribune reported.

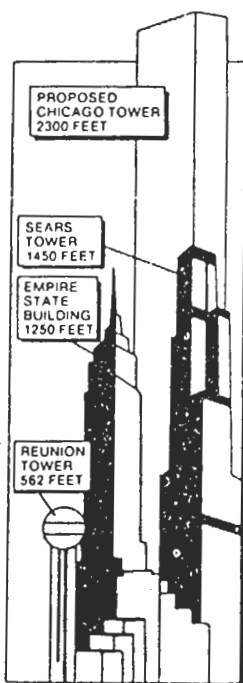
The building would have a volume of 4 million to 6 million square feet, as much as three times the amount of interior room in the Empire State Building.

Overseas and U.S. banks would be involved in the project, where as many as 45,000 people would live, work and play.

The developer, whom the newspaper did not identify, had said he would be ready to announce the project before Labor Day, but interest rates prevented investors from committing money, the Tribune quoted sources as saying.

Such a project is the largest anyone has envisioned since architect Frank Lloyd Wright once fancied erecting a 528-story, 1-mile-high skyscraper on the Chicago lakefront.

Chicago is the home of the Sears Tower, the world's tallest building, and the John Hancock Center, the 5th-tallest building.



The Dallas Morning News

night building BASE jumping in progress! Reportedly, the Police succeeded in warding off about 5 BASE jumpers from entering the building any longer, and that "scare" pretty much "stuck."

However, after five days of stewing with disappointed rumination, one of the alleged members went to a local public relations firm and

told them their "track record" in hopes of having the firm represent legitimate interfacing with the building owners to go public and to get official sanction for the jumps.

The first order of business by the PR firm was to "inform the press" so that the public could be educated. The press wanted to "schedule" an

Allegedly the demo jumps--

The initial publicity splash was made in an effort to meet with the building owners and present them with a formal, favorable proposal to let certain qualified BASE jumpers help with the ribbon-cutting ceremony once the building was completed. Apparently the scheme backfired as the owners--still anonymous and unidentifiable--filed a \$100,000 civil law suit against the alleged jumpers, the so-called United States BASE Association, and 500 John Doe's who

So goes life in the city....

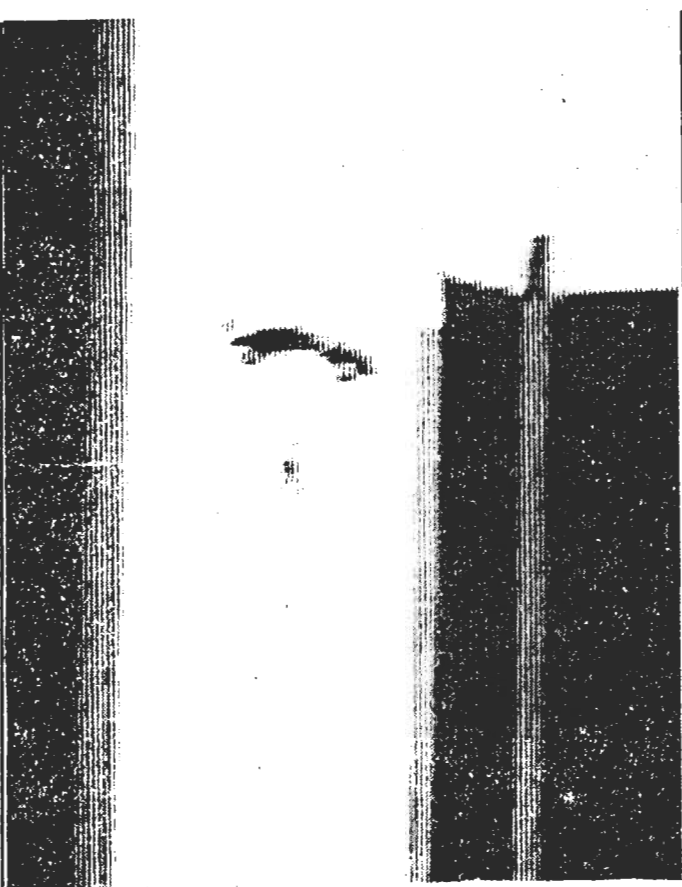
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BASE, a parachutists' organization advocating jumping from buildings, antennae, structures and earth formations, was placed under a continuing restraining order banning members from leaping off Crocker Center downtown. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John L. Cole extended the order to give the attorney for Maguire Partners, the center's developer, time to serve the lawsuit on BASE leaders. "I am still of the opinion that people should not jump off the Crocker bank building," Cole said.

Carl and Jean Boenish can no longer legally leap off the 54-story Crocker Center downtown, but everybody else can—briefly. Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John L. Cole dissolved a temporary ban against jumps by the BASE organization and others inclined to parachute from the structure on grounds they had not been served with legal notice of a civil injunction suit. He later issued a new temporary order, however, to give Maguire Partners, owner of Crocker Center, time to notify the group. The Boenishes of Hawthorne were already properly notified, so their jumps were enjoined pending trial in about five years.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John L. Cole extended his continuing restraining order to prevent members of BASE—a parachutist group advocating jumps from buildings, towers, earth formations and antennae—from leaping off Crocker Center downtown. Meanwhile, Superior Court Judge Edward M. Ross, in another action, ordered BASE leader Carl Boenish to answer questions asked in connection with a civil suit filed by attorneys for Maguire Partners, developers of Crocker Center. The judge, however, allowed Boenish to remain silent on three questions that might incriminate him. Ross also ordered Boenish, a free-lance photographer from Hawthorne, to supply the Maguire attorneys with membership and mailing lists for BASE by Dec. 31.

Two Los Angeles-area men were fined and placed on one year's unsupervised probation after they pleaded guilty to conspiring to parachute off El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. March Sechler, of Lakewood, was ordered to pay \$500 restitution to the Yosemite Mountain Rescue Fund, while Peter Hammond, of Venice, was ordered to make a \$250 restitution. Both men were cited after Hammond hiked off El Capitan to report that Sechler fell down an embankment and injured his leg.



Videotaped jump

An unidentified man parachuting from the 60-story City of Faith hospital Tuesday was captured on videotape by a KTUL-8 cameraman. This photo was taken from a television screen.

City of Faith jump confirmed on film

By TERRY FLETCHER

The only proof that a man parachuted from the 60-story Oral Roberts University City of Faith hospital Tuesday afternoon is a few seconds of videotape taken by a cameraman at television station KTUL-8.

Assistant KTUL-8 News Director Beverly Trimble said a man, who refused to identify himself, telephoned the station shortly before 2 p.m., claiming someone would attempt to parachute from the tower.

"We sent a cameraman out there on the chance that the claim was not a hoax and sure enough a guy jumped off the building," Trimble said. "We have no idea who the guy was."

Trimble said the cameraman, who was not identified, watched the man land, gather up his parachute and get into a waiting car that sped away.

Carroll Boze, ORU security director, said he had not received any calls about the incident and that workmen on the upper floors told him they did not see anyone on the tower.

"I didn't know a lot about it until I saw the film on the news last night," Boze said. "I don't know how he managed to get up there because it is impossible to get to the top three floors by elevator without a key. I read this morning that . . . the guy

who supposedly did it said he scaled the outside of the building.

"From the film last night it looked like he went right off the roof," Boze said.

The owner and manager of Skydance Inc., a parachuting firm in Muskogee, viewed the tape today and said the parachute appeared to be a "ram air" which allows a jumper to move forward at about 20 to 30 mph.

"It is totally ridiculous and gives the sport a bad name," Ken Hills said. "The guy was putting his life in his hands. The tower (600 feet) is not tall enough to allow for any problems on the way down and if the wind shifts it can send you right against the side of the building and then you're out of luck."

Hills said the United States Parachuting Association suspends its members for one year for jumping from fixed objects.

"I think people do it because it is new and different, but it is completely irresponsible," he said.

The man, calling himself the "Bandit," "Sammy" or "CJ," reportedly claimed he is a 28-year-old native Tulsan who has jumped 10 times from fixed objects to "prove the safety of the sport."



Tom Keating

BASE group surely based on daring!

SKY-DIVING would seem to be an activity with enough excitement and thrills to satisfy anyone.

But, for a group of eight Indianapolis men, even free-falling from airplanes started to get a bit dull recently.

That's when they discovered an organization called BASE.

Local parachutist Rich Phillips, a 27-year-old government employee, explains.

"BASE stands for Buildings, Antennas, Spans and Earth," Phillips said. "To become a member, a person has to jump from each kind of structure at least once. The buildings can be skyscrapers, the antennas can be towers, the spans are bridges and the earth jumps can be made from cliffs."

AS MIGHT BE expected, parachute jumping from such places is not looked upon kindly by a wide range of authorities, ranging from the police to the United States Parachute Association.

"The BASE organization is located in California and so far there are only 11 men who have jumped from all four types of locations and qualified as members," Phillips said. "But there is a group of us in Indianapolis hoping to qualify."

As their first step in this plan, Phillips and seven of his friends, who have made a combined 6,000 jumps from airplanes, went by mobile home recently to the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia.

THE BRIDGE, 876 feet above a shallow, rocky flow of water, is the second highest in the country and one of only two bridges with enough altitude to allow a jumper time to open a chute. The minimum altitude for a jump from an airplane, according to FAA regulations, is 2,500 feet.

"We planned everything very carefully and very safely," Phillips said. "We packed our chutes a special way so they would open quickly. If there was a malfunction there wasn't time for a backup chute to open. We jumped, counted to three to clear the bridge, opened the chute and had about a 30 second ride before hitting down. Everyone had a clean jump and we had people videotape the whole thing. It was the most exciting thing I've ever done."

"SO FAR ONLY 30 persons, counting our group, have made that jump and the local police were

JUMPING THE NEW RIVER BRIDGE

by Mike Millhorn

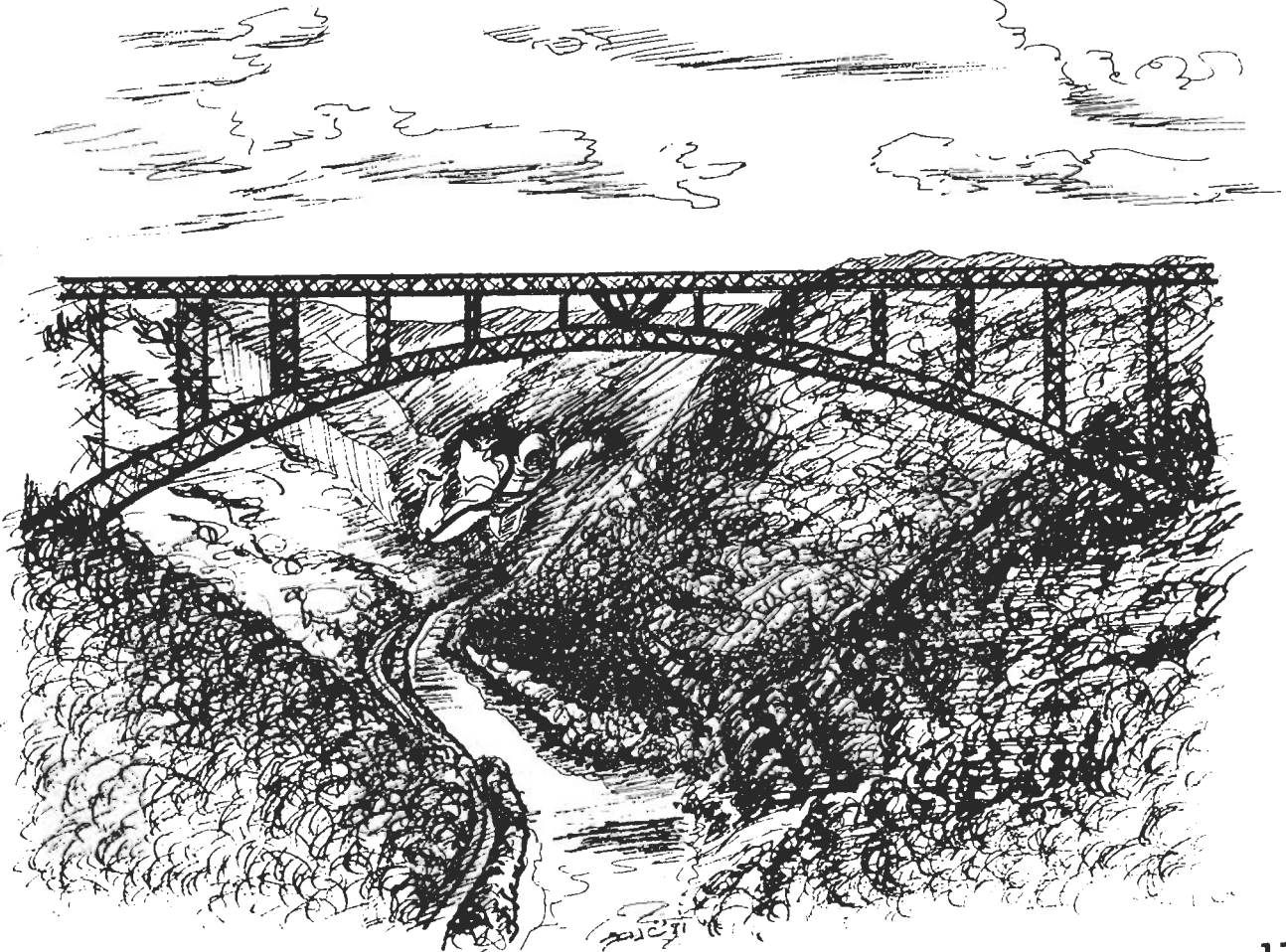
Following is one man's opinion on how to jump the New River Gorge safely and without incident. First of all, understand that not advocating making an easy or dangerous jump. People still going to jump New River, a little knowledge is better than no knowledge at all. Please bear in mind that we are all in the learning process of these BASE jumps and not only not all is known about it. However, this is what I have learned about spans to date. As you skydive, proper preparation is the key to a successful jump. Fixed-object jumps, more preparation is required than an airplane because after all, it is inherently more dangerous. When my friends make a New River jump, we know ahead just what our exit order is where we will land, who's wearing cameras, when to turn them on, when we arrive on site, we check out the landing site(s) to determine if the river is high or low and what alternate sites we can land in. We pick 2 or 3 possible landing sites and stick to them if we can. That also helps the camera people on the bottom. For instance, in a 2 week period,

a landing site we had picked out the first time we jumped no longer existed due to the rising river. (The river had risen approximately 3 feet.) I feel that it is up to each individual who jumps New River as to whether or not their accuracy skill is going to get them into an area approximately 10X20 feet. If you feel your accuracy isn't all it should be, by all means land in the water. It's soft! However, it is a must to have at least 2 ground people to assist (if needed) in helping the jumpers out of the water. The river, in places, is 30-40 feet deep with very strong undercurrents. We had a jumper recently land in the middle of the river. He had to get out of his gear because he was getting tired with all his soaking gear on. He swam to shore safely but he ended up losing his gear! So, another lesson has been learned. If you elect to go into the water, land as close to the shore as you possibly can. Flotation gear is highly recommended.

Next comes the actual jump. If you're spending a lot of money, time and effort to film these dives, it pays to take your time when you get to the bridge launch site. Make sure all jumpers are lined up in relation to their exit order, make

sure that all the ground cameras are ready and all the top cameras are ready. We have used both walkies and streamers and have found streamers to be better. Streamers are easy to see (especially from 876 feet) and it tells the ground cameras that we are jumping in 10 seconds. After the first person leaves, each consecutive jumper waits 10 seconds and launches. The entire time on the bridge should take no more than 5-6 minutes. It is ill-advised to stop on the bridge but from what we know now, no one is too interested in stopping us from jumping off of it. We got caught on top of the bridge last time by a West Virginia State Policeman. We ended up getting a parking ticket for stopping on the bridge, not for jumping off of it. As the policeman was writing the ticket, he said, "I really enjoyed you guys, your jumps were beautiful, have a nice day!"

Anyway, in terms of the actual launch, I have found (and again, this is not gospel) that the best launch is achieved by a good push off with your legs, a hard arch, chest to the horizon, and head low. An ideal delay would be 2-3 seconds and fire. Of course, pack very carefully with slider down as you should have an opening that is so good!" To cutaway or not to cut



away is your own decision, but I personally don't want to cut away at 600 feet. A tertiary parachute, I feel, is the ideal solution.

Another point to remember is not to panic. One of our group last time panicked and dumped in a very unglorified position. His parachute opened fine, however, he increased the risks of the jump tenfold.

And please, try to maintain as low a profile as you possibly can! You should be making this jump for the inner beauty of it, not because you want to make the front page of your local newspaper.

As previously mentioned, I'm not advocating making illegal or dangerous bridge jumps. If you're going to do it, do your homework, and do it right.

To date, there have been 65 recorded jumps made by 42 different people. If you ever jump the New River Gorge Bridge, please drop me a line and let me know so I can add you to the list. I plan to issue jumper ID cards for the New River Bridge soon.

Have a safe one! Mike Millhorn

6531 W. Washington
Indianapolis, IN
46241
317 243-7093

SUBJECT -- HELP!

Over this past summer I decided that I need to do a cliff jump, and that I need to find out more information on it. I recently picked up BASE issue #5 and found it very interesting, but it didn't address the issue of making a first fixed-object jump in any clear way. (I don't think that was intended, anyway.) There are a few questions that I need to find out about:

- (1) What special skills will I need?
 - (2) Do I need to make any modifications to my gear (Wonderhog with throwout, Stato Cloud 1981, Security Crossbow steerable reserve with diaper?)
 - (3) What time of year will I find the best weather.
 - (4) What kind of action should I take if I encounter a Park Ranger?
 - (5) What kind of experience in skydiving should I have?
(I have 300 jumps and 3 hours of free-fall time--95% RW and I have 280 square jumps. I came from a progressive D.Z.)
- Your reply would be greatly appreciated.
Paul Witherland
SCS 5630 Canada

Thanks for your letter, Paul.

(1) Special skill: desire, "so-inclined" state of mind. You have these. You also possess the requi-

site physical skills, too, as you listed in (5).

(2) With the exception of "attention to detail," BASE jumping is very simple and straightforward. I would list these hints:

(A) Always have at least one person on your "load" who has made at least one BASE jump before--mainly to oversee little "common-sense" things. A first-time jump student probably wouldn't consider his first jump with either no assistance or the assistance of a non-jumper, would he?

For a 3-second delay or less, pack your normal way but with the slider down. Normal way can be "factory," "trash-pack," or "side" pack. Test jump that pack job (except with slider up) from an airplane to verify on-heading openings!

Free-fall now lower than 700 feet with a 3-second maximum delay, slider down. Use a tertiary parachute for a jump this low (see previous articles in previous issues).

From around 1,200-1,500 feet, consider delaying 3-5 seconds and go ahead and put the slider back up.

From a net of 2,000 feet, consider up to a 10-second delay, slider up.

For all 3-second delays, exit with the throwaway pilot chute in your hand--see Bridge Day '81 article, issue #5.

Any square is fine to use. Seven-cells are preferable to 5-cells, unless you're a lightweight. Insist on a square reserve only if terrain requires it (long glide ratio over rugged terrain), otherwise, either a square or round reserve is okay and is personal choice. Try not to cutaway below 1,000 feet unless under some special circumstance where it is unavoidable. Diaper on reserve is okay.

(3) Summer months are almost a necessity unless you are an expert in the snow. 95%+ cliff jumps are probably all made between May and November in the northern hemisphere.

(4) It is my personal belief at this point in time that only through usage can we expect to exercise our rights to cliff jump, regardless of what countries you may be talking about. With respect to Yosemite--El Capitan and Half Dome--in 1982, I couldn't tell you whether the sites will be unregulated, regulated, or banned. I hope for the first of these choices. (People call me a dreamer. Remember, it's not just my right--and my struggle--it's everyone's. The more who want to cliff jump, the easier it should be to succeed! I cannot advise you or anyone but myself what to do with respect to the legal consequences, should a particular country hold the view that cliff jumping at their

locale is "illegal." It seems that most people who get "caught" choose not to fight the "citation." I personally feel that only by fighting the interpretations of "obscure laws" that very likely do not apply if challenged in an appellate court can we ascertain whether or not they, in fact, do apply. I do know that the "aerial delivery law" which is currently being used in Yosemite to prosecute cliff jumpers was written a few years before cliff jumping was popularized in 1978. If that is the case, how could that law possibly deal with something that was not even thought about when the law was written? And even if the law did apply, it should be changed if it is unjust with the uncovering of constant new technology and desire by the populace. If "I" were to get "caught" for cliff jumping anywhere on the planet where I thought that it were "legal" to cliff jump, I would strive to be friendly and courteous, give my name and address to the authorities, but I would not discuss ANY details of any allegations at any time with any officials, and I would immediately get a lawyer, and I would fight the citation to the maximum limit of my means and determination, and I would strive not to have the case heard within the park, if possible. Few people want to go through these hassles. In time, all of this internal struggle will be long forgotten when cliff jumping is understood and taken for granted!

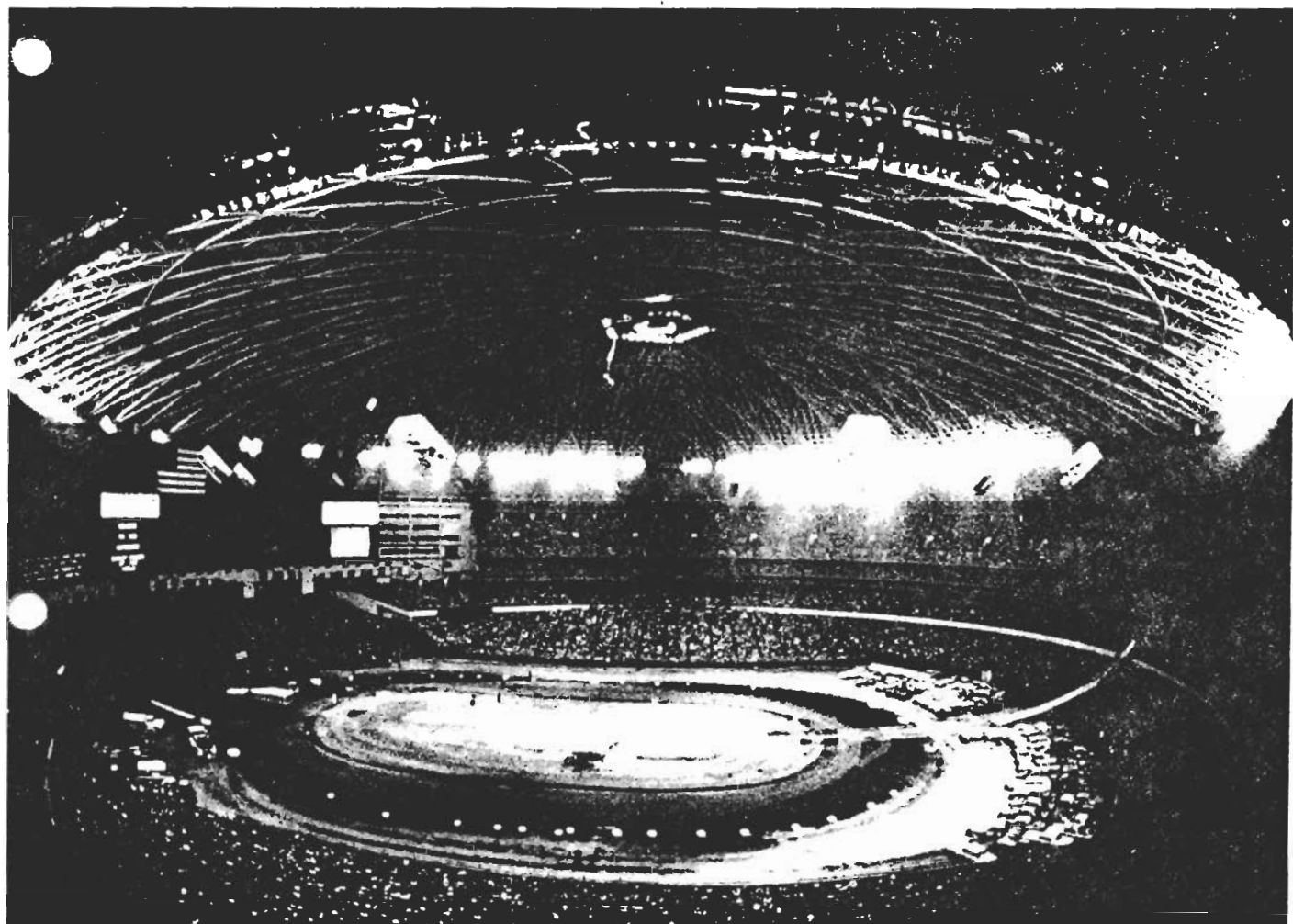
"THE GROUND'S THE LIMIT" by Harry Hurt III

Reprinted in this issue of BASE Magazine is an article on BASE jumping which first appeared in the Texas Monthly Magazine by Harry Hurt III. He spent weeks and months researching the history of BASE and, in particular, the first building jumps in Texas. He has provided a permanent record of how the movement got underway. We are particularly grateful that he chose this assignment; if he hadn't, much of the detail which he has provided probably would have been lost forever. Our hats are off to you, Harry. Thank you for a job well done, and the added excitement you have given everybody.

NEWS FLASHES

BASE Magazine has received reports that two or three Brits have made successful parachute jumps from a 330-foot apartment building in downtown London! Reports said they used static-lined square parachutes which opened in about 50 feet. If the reports are true, we'll try to have further details in a subsequent issue.

HOUSTON ASTRODOME THRILL SHOW AND THE FLYING SMITTIES



THE FLYING SMITTIES

To most of us, sky divers — those crazy guys who jump out of airplanes for fun — are just that, crazy guys. But sky diving has become quite a popular recreation, enjoyed by hundreds of intrepid men and women.

Now there's an even more interesting version of the sport — jumping from fixed objects. That fixed object may be a TV tower

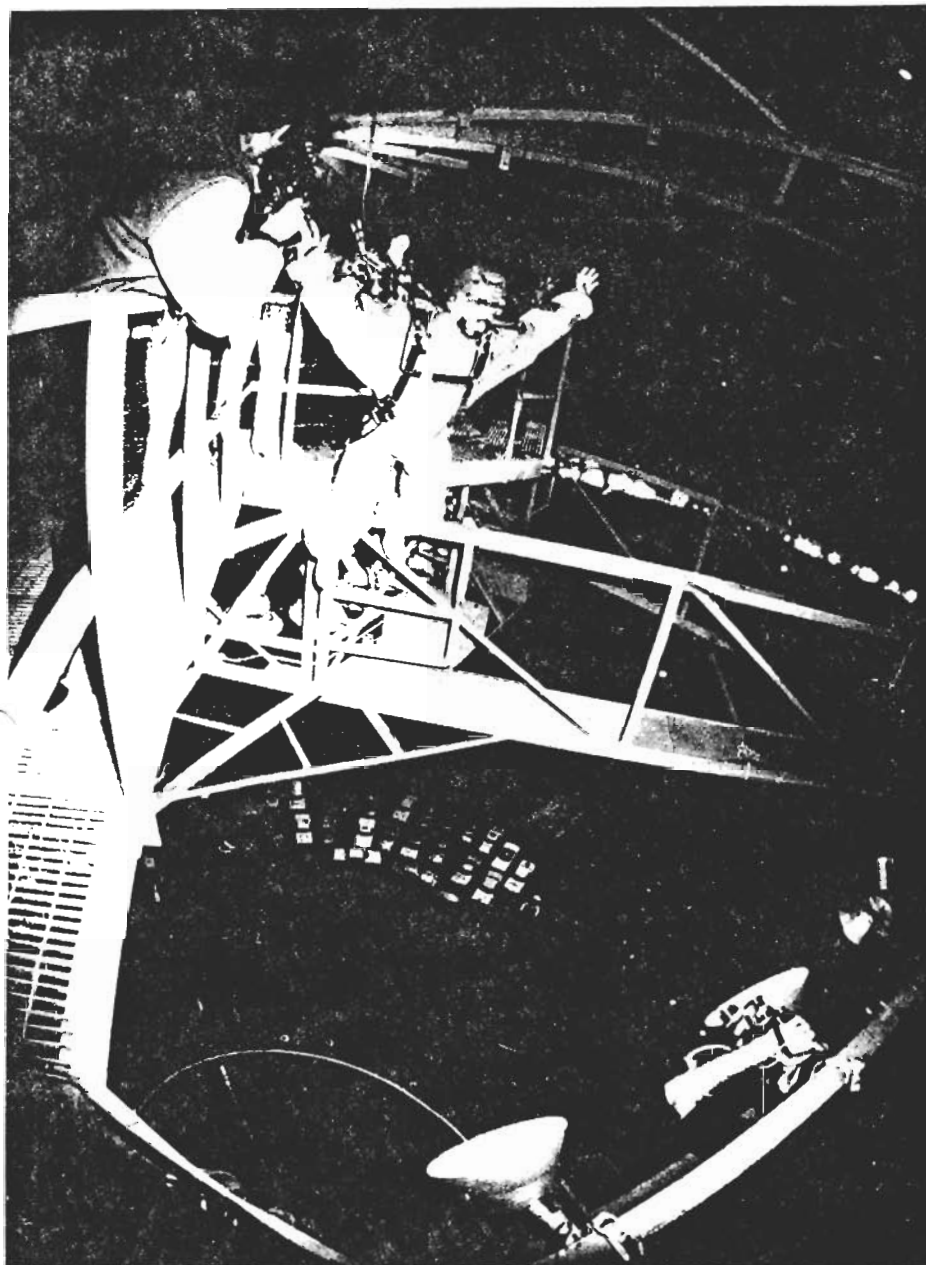
antenna, a cliff, a building, a bridge — or the roof of the Astrodome.

One of the highlights of this year's annual Thrill Show and Destruction Derby will be double parachute jumps from the gondola which hangs just below the roof of the dome.

The daring young men who will attempt these jumps are Houstonians Andy Smith and Phil Smith (no relation). Both are experienced sky divers — Andy has been doing it for six years, Phil for twelve — but

have been jumping from fixed objects for only a little over a year. In fact, they're somewhat notorious in that respect.

A few months ago, they were arrested for jumping off the 610 Bridge at the Houston Ship Channel. They have also jumped off TV antenna towers in Houston and several times off the new Texas Commerce Bank Building now under construction in downtown Houston.



Andy and Phil are members of a still quite small organization called BASE. In order to qualify for this group, one has to jump from four different kinds of fixed objects: Building (B), Antenna or tower (A), Span or bridge (S), and Earth or cliff or any other natural formation (E). At this writing, Andy has 25 BASE jumps all over the country and Phil has 39.

Unlike many other dangerous stunts in which the higher the altitude, the higher the degree of risk, in jumping from fixed objects, the opposite is true. After all, the shorter the jump, the less time there is for the parachute to open.

The lowest jump that Andy and Phil have attempted up to now is

the rather infamous jump into the Houston Ship Channel — that was only 168 feet — but it was into water. Their attempts this weekend in the Astrodome will be 192 feet onto hard ground — definitely more dangerous.

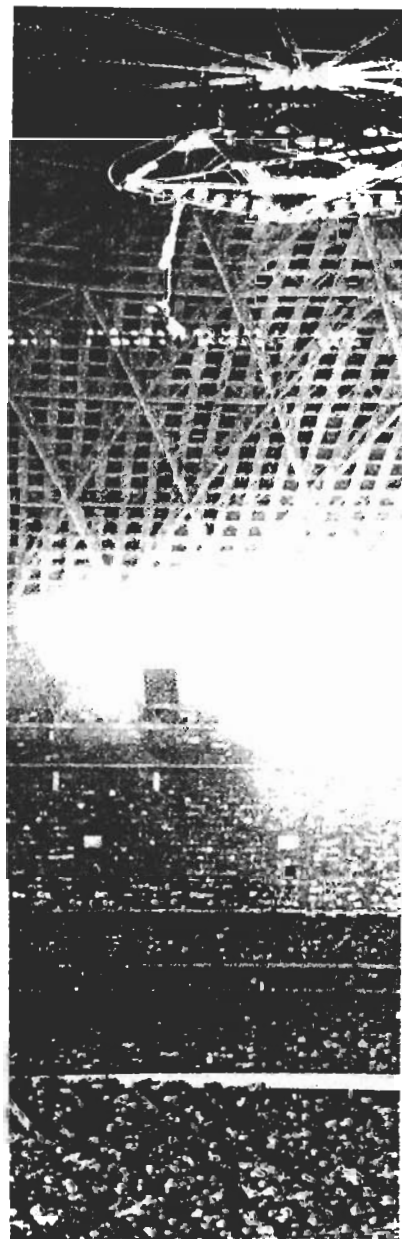
For comparison's sake, in ordinary sky diving, it usually requires 200 feet for a parachute to open, another 100 feet for it to open completely, then 20 more feet for it to slow down for a safe landing. And that doesn't include the extra time allowed for a backup parachute if needed. Obviously, "The Flying Smitties," as they jokingly call themselves, aren't going to have that much time and space inside the Astrodome.

Andy says the jumps will take 7 to 9 seconds from top to bottom, and 4 to 6 seconds from the time the chutes open to the time they touch the ground.

All of this may lead us to ask — Why?

Andy, a 28-year-old machinist at N. L. McCullough, replies, "Thrills...we like to see what these parachutes can do — we've used a lot of techniques never used before. It's a challenge to overcome the fear of that first step."

Phil, a 30-year-old truck driver for McLean Trucking Co., agrees but adds, "I do it because it scares me. If anything goes wrong, there's nothing we can do."



BASE MEETS THE "ASTRODOME"

It's been the dream of nearly every skydiver who has ever set foot inside the Houston Astrodome to make a parachute jump from its ceiling. During the annual "Auto Thrill Show and Destruction Derby" on January 16 and 17, 1982, Andy Smith and Phil Smith, both of Houston, Texas, got to realize that dream.

It all started last October when Andy secured a contract with the promoters of the event to "provide an act." Andy and his partner, Phil Smith, who are not related, were billed in the show as "The Flying Smitties."

The Smiths had access to the Dome's test drops. They collected some cinder blocks, ropes and rigging equipment and "set up shop." Two canopies were selected for initial testing: the Para-Flite Cruiselite 7-cell ram air canopy and the Para-Innovators R4-2 round reserve canopy. A total of 4 dummy drops were made on the square canopy and 14 dummy drops on the round.

The Cruiselite opened fast and clean but flew into the stands--23 rows up! Since the launch platform was only 192 feet above the ground, it was argued that using a square canopy might force the jumper to hook a 180° turn below 100 feet. With that possibility in mind, the ram-air concept was scrapped and all further energy was devoted to testing the round canopy.

The Para-Innovators R4-2 round reserve canopy--not yet on the market--is a 26-foot conical made of zero porosity F-111 material. Several variations of packing methods were tried, but the one decided upon was the "factory" pack, minus the diaper, with the lines stowed in the pack tray and a rubber band placed around the vent about 4 inches below its uppermost seam. The static-lined test drops of 135 lbs. took about 2 seconds to open fully and another 6-7 seconds to reach the floor. Special custom harness and containers were designed and built by Jim Handbury specifically for bridge jumping. The original rig consisted of a 22-foot hang-glider main canopy with no reserve and weighed a scant 10½ lbs!)

Both Smiths and their alternate guru, Carl Boenish, got to make a practice jump before the event.

For the actual show, the "Flying Smitties" jumped 20 seconds apart, landed softly on the earthen floor and were applauded by 42,000 scream-

ing spectators.

Andy, Phil and Carl feel that the public acceptance of their jumps is a major breakthrough for BASE jumping. However, they don't encourage anyone to duplicate their feats without thorough research and the proper equipment. They would like to thank their hard-working and capable crew of Phil and Kathy Chapline, Rick Spigarelli, Kim Thomey, John and Pam Cattaneo, Billy Lee, Scott Tedaro, Mike Smith, Kevin Vinnel, Mary Ann Rossi, and Dwayne Bruette.

The "Flying Smitties" and crew are considering some future BASE jumps which will be published faithfully by BASE Magazine.

Yours truly,

Phil Smith
BASE #1

FROM THE GROUND UP

by Kim Ogg

When the first domed stadium was completed in Houston during the early 60's, the idea was for people to perform outdoor events with all the comforts of the indoors. Anything that could be done on the ground could be done in the Astrodome. The sky was literally the limit.

That is, before Phil and Andy Smith came along.

On January 16, 1982 at 9:50 PM, the two parachutists began their ascent up the catwalk which leads from the highest level of the seating sections to the center of the ceiling of the Astrodome--called the *gondola*.

The two Smiths had been up there many times before to get the feel of the place and to make their numerous calculations. The knew, for example, that it was exactly 192 feet from the Astrodome gondola to the floor. They also knew that to jump from there had never been done before!

Below, 40,000 people were shifting in their seats, hollering for the food peddlers, flipping through their 16th annual "Thrill Show and Destruction Derby" programs.

Intermission in the Astrodome is calculated chaos. Few, if any, of those thrill-watchers saw Phil and Andy Smith step into the gondola, put on their parachutes and check their watches. It was now 10:15 PM.

The announcer introduced Phil Smith, 30 and Andy Smith, 28 as brothers, even though they are not related. He called them by their stage name of "The Flying Smitties"

and quickly summed up their qualifications. The two Smiths were prepared to try the most dangerous jumps of their BASE jumping careers. At stake was the world record in two categories:

- (1) The lowest parachute jump over ground;
- (2) The lowest indoor parachute jump.

Andy looked at Phil. He would go first. This jump is what they both called a very unforgiving jump. The time from the gondola exit until their feet touched the ground would be less than 10 seconds. If the parachute failed for any reason, whatsoever, there would be no chance for a reserve chute. In fact, they didn't even bother to wear a reserve chute! In fact, there would not even be time in which to respond. Without the deceleration of the chute a person would hit the ground in 2.8 seconds at 75 miles per hour.

Somehow the announcer managed to get the audience's attention. The moment's loud confusion gave way to an eerie silence. An act was about to be *premiered*.

From the gondola Andy Smith looked down. The low altitude of the dome renders people visible, though not their expressions. But the hard brown earth below was perfectly clear.

Phil nodded to Andy as they both stood at the edge of the platform. Then Andy stretched forth his arms and took the great plunge. Phil Smith followed him 20 seconds later. As they fell, the people in the audience didn't move; they were utterly quiet. The chutes opened before many eyelids did. The jumps went perfectly! Two world records had been set and another object in the world of BASE jumping had been conquered!

On January 17, 1982, the Smiths repeated their jumps in a second performance for the "Thrill Show" which cemented their records.

For those of us who live with our feet firmly attached to the ground, the "Flying Smitties" are an enigma. They are walkers along the *edge*. For that reason, some people have criticized them--labelled them *kooks*--and have done their best to ignore them. As for me and nearly 70,000 other people who witnessed the Astrodome jumps--the beauty of the fall, the perfect landings--the sky will now hold a certain curious unknown! The ground will still seem a little mundane, but the "Flying Smitties" won't be ignored. They'll be admired, *from the ground up!*

BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND

by Phil Smith

A building jump can be the greatest experience in the career of a skydiver--something he will remember and re-live for all time. It can also be a disaster--an experience he would just as soon forget.

The intent of this article is to inform the prospective building jumper and hopefully help him avoid the various pitfalls that unknowingly await him.

If you don't already have a building in mind which has already been jumped and is thereby *proven*, then there are several considerations in selecting one which is *jumpable*.

You will have to find a building high enough to satisfy your minimum. There are over 75 buildings in the U.S. which are 700 feet or taller. To determine the height of a building, simply multiply the number of floors by the distance between floors. Most office building floors are about 13 feet apart while hotels and apartments are usually 10-11 feet. Choose a building which is accessible at any time of the day. Most buildings under construction are easy to walk into without being impeded. If you must jump from a completed building, you will have to find another way to the roof or window since most building managers keep their stairwells locked. You will want to check out the proximity of your building to surrounding structures and other obstructions. Obviously you want as much clear space as possible on the downwind side of the building. This brings up another consideration: wind patterns.

Try to find out how the wind will be blowing before you ever enter the building to jump it. If you don't, you may make an unnecessary trip!

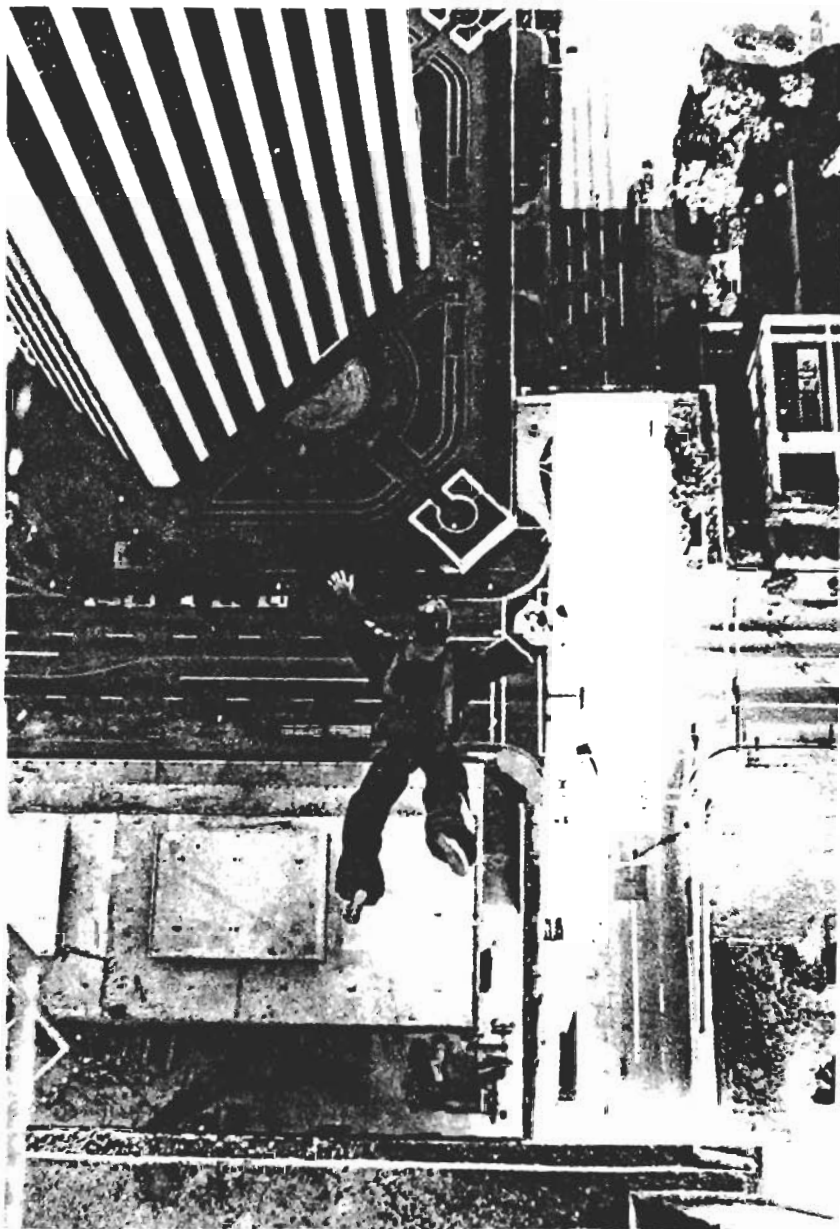
The day or night before the jump, sit down with your ground crew and the other jumpers and *make your plan!* For communications with your crew, two-way radios are very helpful and not necessarily too cumbersome. Otherwise, you may resort to visual signals such as flashlights or streamers. You will want to pack along some streamers anyway for determining wind speed and direction.

You will probably need to pack your rig especially for a building jump. One veteran of more than 15 building jumps prefers what he calls a *LALO* (*low altitude, lower opening*) pack job. (A description of this

pack job is found in another issue.) This author, however, prefers the *trash pack* method with lines unstowed (figure-eighted) in the pack tray and slider pulled down. With whichever method you select, the main consideration is that you have confidence that it will open *fast* and *straight*. Take the time at your local dropzone to work out a reliable packing method.

Equally important to your packing method is your pilot chute system. The most popular system seems to be the Booth *throw-away* hand-deploy pilot chute system which can be held

in the hand during freefall. (Although one highly experienced BASE jumper prefers his SST Racer with the stock *pull-out* pilot chute system (POP), there have been several calls by other jumpers using it. They have clawed for their POP handles while losing precious altitude going head low and even back-to-earth! The inexpensive alternative to buying a new rig for specialized BASE jumps is to attach a Booth-type pilot chute (with *curved pin* on the bridle line) to your normal rig for all BASE jumps.



The author makes a 3-second delay from a building in Los Angeles.

You will need to work out your emergency procedure *long before* the actual jump. Know what you are going to do if you have a spinning malfunction or a streamer. Some building jumpers carry a third or *tertiary* parachute which attaches to the front of the harness like the old chest reserve. The canopy, a small round, is attached at the connector links to a 8-15 foot tether which enables it to pass clear of the malfunctioned main canopy before opening. If you don't have a tertiary chute and have a malfunction below about 700 feet, you may be better off by just dumping your piggyback reserve and hopping for the best.

The time of day or night of your jump is a very important consideration. Jumping at night affords you the cover of darkness, thereby decreasing your chances of being seen or interfering with other people's activities. If your jump is successful, you and other BASE jumpers can jump the same site on other occasions. At night, there is less auto and pedestrian traffic and the winds are generally calmer.

If you must jump during daylight, you should usually consider early Sunday morning. Around 8:00-9:00 AM the wind and traffic are usually low and there is enough light for filming.

Once you arrive at the top of your building, you will need to determine a suitable exit point. Obviously you will want to jump off on the downwind side, as in the case of a TV antenna tower. But unlike



Selecting a suitable exit point should be done carefully.

TV towers, which allow the wind to pass through their skeletal frameworks freely, buildings offer a resistance to the wind which can create unpredictable turbulence and eddies on the downwind side. For this reason I recommend using the *corner* of the building which is tangential to the wind. See the diagram below.

You will want to use the corner of the building (rather than the middle of one side) for your exit point because it affords you 270° of running room once you are open, rather than 180°. Determine the wind direction and speed with a wind streamer or some light piece of debris found lying around. Throw the streamer out from the structure a ways so you won't be fooled by the dead air around the building. It is at this point that you should decide if you are going to go ahead with the jump or postpone it due to bad wind conditions. The wind is probably the single biggest factor in the safety of a building jump, so don't take it lightly! (No pun intended.)

During the last few minutes before your jump, you should rehearse your entire plan--from exit through landing--including possible emergencies. Get a thorough pin check from your buddy and then take your pilot chute in your right hand and bunch it up so there is no loose material to snag on something. When *loading* your pilot chute, you should take up the slack in the bridle cord, but don't pull it too tightly lest you zap yourself.

Your exit form should be like any other BASE jump, i.e., head high, chest out, back arched, and arms and legs spread. If you try to *dive* off, you will probably go head low

or maybe even on your back.

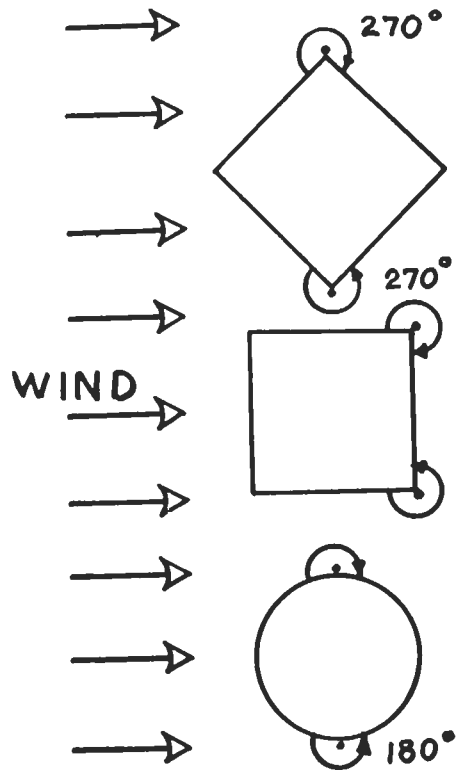
The length of delay you take is dictated by the height of the building and your daring. You should take at least 2 seconds because it takes that much time to accelerate to a speed that will allow your pilot chute to pull out your main canopy. If you let your pilot chute go on exit, you will have your pilot chute *in tow* for about 2 seconds--a scary proposition. Plus, if you release your pilot chute in moving air, there is that added amount of *snatch force* to pull your curved pin.

For buildings around 700 feet high, I recommend around a 3-second delay. For 1,000-footers, take no more than 5 seconds.

At the end of your planned delay release your pilot chute and get ready to grab your *rear risers*. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. If your canopy has a twist in it or opens facing the building, you may have only 1-2 seconds to take corrective action. Rear riser turns are the best because they rock the canopy back while turning. Once you get the parachute under control, brake released and end cells open, you are only half way home. You still have to avoid running into other buildings or other objects, make a safe landing and clear out of the area. Unless the air is dead calm you should fly with half brakes to compensate for any possible gusts and downdrafts. Once you land, pick up your gear and get out before anyone arrives. After all, you may want to come back and jump again another day.

Happy landings!

Phil Smith
BASE #1



THE GROUND'S THE LIMIT

by Harry Hurt III

When Phil Smith and his friends saw the tallest building in Texas rising up from the streets of Houston, there was only one thing they wanted to do—jump off the top and live to tell the tale.

At precisely 8:15 on the chilly, overcast morning of January 18, 1981, Philip Hammond Smith perched on the 72nd floor of the still-unfinished Texas Commerce Tower in Houston and prepared to jump. Smith, a lean but hard-muscled five feet ten inches tall, was dressed in a billowing red jump suit, an orange parachute harness, a white Bell crash helmet with two backward-pointing cameras mounted on it, and a pair of aviator-style prescription glasses. A few feet away crouched Phil Mayfield, his jumping partner, attired in a yellow jump suit, a yellow parachute harness, and a white crash helmet sporting two forward-pointing cameras. With the vertical girders of the building sticking up on either side of them like leafless steel branches, Smitty and Mayfield looked like camera-combed birdmen, strange nylon-and-metal flying creatures hybridized from classical mythology and contemporary science fiction.

Looking straight out from his exit point on the tower's north corner, Smitty had

the highest and best view afforded by any structure outside New York or Chicago. It began with the yellow-lined parking lots in the foreground, then fanned out past the fire station and the post office and Buffalo Bayou to the vast carpet of green treetops that merged with the blue-gray of the horizon at a point that seemed halfway to Oklahoma. In the distance Smitty could easily pick out the skyscrapers of Greenway Plaza and the Galleria. Closer in, just off his left shoulder, was the cluster of buildings that dominate the skyline of downtown Houston: Shell, Tenneco, First International, Bank of the Southwest, the Pennzoil towers, and the rest. Off his right shoulder were the *Houston Chronicle* building and Market Square.

Nine hundred and fifty feet below, the downtown streets stared up at Smitty with the empty concrete silence of a Sunday morning. Except for the last-minute bustling of the nine-member crew—the photographers and getaway-car drivers stationed on the sidewalks nearby—there were few signs of traffic or street life. The

parked cars appeared to be about the size of snap buttons. The people looked like pinheads.

A sharp wind gusted across the top of the building at ten or fifteen knots, rattling the corrugated steel floor on which Smitty and Mayfield were standing. Smitty's mind raced over his jump plan for the umpteenth time. He would exit from the north corner with the wind blowing from right to left, free-fall for three to five seconds down the side of the building, then release the parachute. Once his chute opened, he would have about a thirty-second ride to his targeted landing area, which was the parking lot beside the Western Union office on Capitol Street near the corner of Smith. As soon as he landed, he would gather up his canopy, jump in the getaway car his girlfriend was driving, and go.

At least that's what would happen if everything went right. The tricky thing about parachuting is the huge set of unpredictables inherent in man, nature, and the equipment. Those unpredictables vastly multiply when a jumper exits from a

Opposite: Camera on helmet, pilot chute in hand, Phil Smith takes the first plunge from the Texas Commerce Tower.

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Harry Hurt III

THE GROUND'S THE LIMIT

How a band of thrill-seekers called BASE made jumping off Texas' tallest building the ultimate urban adventure.

fixed object, like a building, instead of from an airplane.

Smitty had been obsessed with the idea of jumping from the Texas Commerce Tower for months before this cloudy Sunday morning. He had first gotten the notion when the building was only three quarters of the way to its projected height. Each week, Smitty had monitored the progress of the construction crew, dragging his girlfriend, Mike Vincent, downtown to observe such milestones as the girderwork for the 60th story, then the 65th and the 68th. The building was scheduled to be 75 stories high when completed, but by the time the work passed the 70th story, Smitty could hold off no longer. As far as he was concerned, the tower was either tall enough to be jumpable or it wasn't. A few more stories wouldn't make much difference.

In the fall of 1980, Smitty put on his usual truck driver's attire—blue jeans, T-shirt, and boots—then added a plastic hard hat and drove downtown to check out the building. Looking like a typical construction worker, he walked into the tower as calmly as if he were on his way to work and climbed up the stairwell to the top floor, which was then the 72nd. He passed several bona fide construction workers on the lower levels, but when he reached the summit he was alone. He picked up some paper trash that was lying around and began dropping small pieces off the edge, watching intently as his makeshift wind streamers sailed to the street. Then he turned and walked back down the stairwell to the ground.

"Looking straight out from their exit point on the tower's north corner, the sky divers had the highest and best view afforded by any structure outside New York or Chicago. Nine hundred and fifty feet below, the downtown streets of Houston stared up at them with the empty concrete silence of a Sunday morning."

Smitty made ten more forays to the top of the tower before the end of 1980. With each trip, he gleaned new information about the winds, the best exit points, the safest landing areas. By New Year's he felt that he knew enough to make the jump. He called up his skydiving friend Phil Mayfield in Arlington and invited him to come and jump too. He also telephoned the husband-and-wife skydiving photography team of Carl and Jean Boenish out in California and asked them to come along.

On the night of Friday, January 16, 1981, Smitty climbed the Texas Commerce Tower to make a last-minute wind test. The following night at eight o'clock, the jumpers held a briefing at Smitty's modest tract house in North Houston. He reported that the winds, instead of blow-

ing from the southeast, so that a jumper would be carried away from the other tall buildings, had been coming out of the east. That left some clearance, but conditions were enough short of ideal to give the Boenishes second thoughts. Still gung ho, Smitty and Mayfield decided to try going off in the early morning when the winds would be less turbulent. The Boenishes decided to stay on the ground, where their photographic talents would be needed to film the jumps.

Thirteen people showed up at the briefing. Besides the two jumpers and the Boenishes, there were Phil and Kathy Chaplin, who would be driving getaway cars; Mike, who had reluctantly agreed to drive a getaway car; and six other friends, four of whom were assigned to drive cars

No structure is immune from BASE jumpers.



Phil Mayfield (left) and Phil Smith in their baggy, high-drag jump suits.

while the other two took movies and still pictures from a rented helicopter. Carl Boenish directed most of the meeting, giving each photographer specific instructions about positioning, timing, and focusing. Smitty, who knew the city, briefed the drivers.

When the jumpers and their crew arrived at the tower at four o'clock on Sunday morning, there was no one in sight. A gaping hole in the fence encircling the building afforded an easy entry. Smitty and Mayfield bade good-bye to the others and went inside. Their 72-story journey up the stairwell took more than two hours. Dressed in blue jeans and carrying their parachutes on their backs, the two jumpers encountered no one on their way to the summit.

Once they got to the top, Smitty pulled out a walkie-talkie and notified Carl Boenish that they'd made it. It was only about six-thirty and still pitch-dark, not to mention cold, so Smitty and Mayfield went back down a couple of floors to a construction workers' shed they had spotted on the way up. The two of them huddled in the shack for about an hour, then went back up to the 72nd floor.

Dawn had broken across the cityscape, but the sky was a wintry gray. Smitty used his walkie-talkie to inform Boenish that they were back on top and ready to get into their jump suits to go off at eight o'clock sharp as planned.

Boenish asked if they could postpone things till the light improved. If they went off at eight, all the pictures would be dark and blurry. But if they could wait just half an hour, conditions might be much more favorable for getting this momentous event on film.

Smitty and Mayfield did not want to delay. Being on top of the building with the daylight all around them made them more anxious than ever to get on with it. And the longer they waited, the greater their chances of being caught.

Finally, Boenish and the jumpers reached a compromise. Smitty and Mayfield agreed to go off at 8:15. Then Smitty hid his walkie-talkie beneath a pile of building materials and started to dress.

All of a sudden, a yellow-and-brown-striped Bell JetRanger helicopter came out of the patchy sky and began orbiting the tower on a 75-foot radius. On the second pass, one of the passengers waved at Smitty, signaling that the helicopter-borne photographers were ready. Smitty reached into the pocket of his jump suit, pulled out a yellow wind streamer, and dropped it over the side of the building. The streamer floated to the pavement like a piece of crepe paper falling from the world's tallest goalpost. That was the signal for the ground crew to ready their cameras. It was also the signal for Phil Mayfield to start the countdown.

"Ten . . . nine . . . eight . . ." May-

field shouted at Smitty from upwind.

Although Smitty had planned this jump more carefully than any skydiving stunt he had ever attempted, he still felt the same emotion he had felt on his very first jump: pure, unadulterated, gut-wrenching fear. Smitty had good reason to be afraid. The jump he was about to make was no routine skydive. The main difference—and the main danger—was the altitude. When jumping out of airplanes, most sky divers open their chutes above the minimum altitude recommended by the United States Parachute Association (USPA): 2500 feet, a height that allows time for deploying a reserve chute if the main chute does not open. But the distance from the 72nd floor of the Texas Commerce Tower to the pavement of Milam Street was only 950 feet, considerably less than half the minimum recommended opening altitude, and that was just the height at which Smitty would begin his free-fall. His chute probably would not open until he reached about 600 feet. Although he was wearing a reserve chute, Smitty knew that if he needed it he would not have time to perform the usual cutaway procedure that prevents the reserve from tangling with the main chute. In essence, then, there would be no second chance. If Smitty's main chute did not open properly, he would probably "go in," the sky diver's euphemism for crashing to death.

Smitty reached back with his right hand and clutched a fistful of yellow nylon attached by a cord to the back of his knapsacklike parachute harness. Unlike old-fashioned parachutes, Smitty's modern skydiving rig did not have a rip cord. Instead, a plastic handle was located at the lower right corner of the backpack. In a typical airplane jump, a sky diver pushes back on or "throws" this handle to deploy a small pilot chute, which fills with air and pulls the main chute out of its Velcro-fastened sack. But Smitty planned to bypass the handle by holding the yellow nylon pilot chute in his hand when he leaped off. He hoped the main chute would open faster if he threw the pilot out manually.

But a quick opening was not the only element critical to Smitty's surviving the jump. Once his main chute filled with air, he would have to navigate away from the tower and the other tall buildings nearby. By jumping off the north corner with a favorable wind, Smitty and Phil hoped to drift away from any trouble. Their parachutes were square and shaped more like wings than umbrellas. Whereas the old-fashioned round chutes operate on drag, these ram-air "squares" operate on lift, like gliders. Since they can generate more forward speed, squares, which have come to predominate in sport skydiving, are more maneuverable than rounds. But if

Smitty's chute opened facing the Texas Commerce Tower, that forward speed could slam him into the side of the building. Then, too, at any time along the ride he could get caught in unexpected turbulence or a patch of dead air. A skydiver faces these dangers on any jump, but in this case the skyscraper canyons of downtown created all sorts of shields, box canyons, and oblique edges for the wind, and increased the problems of turbulence and dead air manifold.

The other obstacle Smitty had on his mind was his partner. Phil Mayfield, a short but broad-shouldered 29-year-old with a brown handlebar moustache and braces on his teeth, was a traveling salesman for the 3M Company, but he lived to jump and jumped to live. Mayfield was a veteran of more than 1400 airplane dives and had excelled in national skydiving competitions. He was a natural athlete with the strength and coordination of a gymnast. Smitty trusted Mayfield's jumping ability as he trusted his own. Still, any slipup in timing—either in going off the building or in releasing their chutes—could send the two of them tumbling into each other and, ultimately, the street.

"Seven . . . six . . . five . . ." Mayfield droned, as if he were oblivious to anything but his countdown.

Smitty stepped to the edge of the corrugated steel floor and reached for a thin metal cable that served as the only guard rail on the building's summit. Clutching his pilot chute in his right hand, he clung to the wire with his left hand and swung one leg over it at a time, so that he faced out from the building. Although he had not yet begun the jump, Smitty was already experiencing a sensation common to sky divers: time seemed to be slowing down. The jump would last only 35 seconds, counting the ride down under an open canopy. But to Smitty, it would seem more like 35 minutes. And afterward, if there was an afterward, the things to be said about the jump would consume days, weeks, maybe years.

Despite what some might regard as appearances to the contrary, Smitty had no intention of killing himself. He was not making the jump because of a suicide pact or a death wish. He simply thrived on confrontations with the unknown. The son of a patent attorney, he had been born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and had spent a rather predictable middle-class youth in Southwest Houston, where his family had moved when he was a child. After graduating from Westbury High School, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and trained as a computer programmer. In 1970, while stationed at Camp Pendleton in California, he took up skydiving—not as part of his military training but as a hobby. Now he was by occupation a truck driver for

McLean Trucking Company of Houston; he was also a perpetual student, working on a college degree in mathematics at the University of Houston. But he was at heart a skydiving junkie who geared almost everything else he did in life to getting yet another jump-fix. A veteran of more than 1750 jumps, Smitty was rather good at his addiction. Among his skydiving laurels were three first-place prizes in ten-man team competition at the USPA-sponsored Southwest Conference Championships and a USPA area safety officer designation.

But for what might be his most awesome jump Smith intended to avoid public attention at all costs. Although no specific law prohibited parachuting off a building, the mere fact that he entered the tower without permission might leave him open to trespassing charges. And Smitty did not want anything to interfere with his chance to accomplish his chosen feat. He and Ma, old even had a cover story in case they got caught: they would claim that they had parachuted not from the building but from a hot-air balloon that had accidentally dropped them over downtown.

"Four . . . three . . ." Mayfield continued.

The three-second mark was the pre-ordained time to activate the helmet-mounted cameras. Smitty flipped a switch taped to his chest. As the cameras started shooting, the whirr of the motor drives on top of his head almost drowned out the sound of Mayfield's voice.

Poised on the edge of the building, Smitty once again had to consider a single question: why jump? The answer was as deceptively simple as the question: Smitty was making the jump for sport, for fun, for the blood-tingling thrill of it. The skyscraper stood as a challenge to his nerve and ability and therefore to his very being. So, hinging gnawing inside Smitty pressed him to test and retest his own limits, to go after the "rush" of overcoming his own fear. For Smitty, it was all summed up in a line from Norman Mailer's book *The Executioner's Song*, which went, "No psychic reward might be as powerful as winning a dare with yourself."

Smitty was also making the jump for a nascent parachuting organization called BASE. The name was an acronym derived from the categories of things to be jumped from—buildings, antennas (and other towers), spans (bridges), and earth formations. A marked departure from skydiving proper, BASE represented the new and growing sport of fixed-object jumping. Smitty had already scored in three of the four categories by jumping a cliff, a bridge, and an antenna tower. Since jumping the Texas Commerce Tower had been Smitty's idea, he intended to be the first to go off, a distinction that would qualify him as BASE No. 1. Phil Mayfield would go off a fraction of a second after him, thereby becoming BASE No. 2.

Smitty felt the excitement surging up within him as the long-awaited moment

approached. But he also felt his fear grow in nearly equal measure. That was another reason he was glad to be going off first. As he had confided to Mike, he was worried that if Mayfield went off first, he might not have the guts to go after him.

"Two . . . one . . . go!" Phil shouted hoarsely.

Automatically, Smitty let go of the guard wire and flexed his knees. He usually began each jump with a blood-curdling yell. But this time he could not risk calling attention to himself with a scream that would echo off the building walls. So he arched his back and sprang silently into the void. Half a blink later, Mayfield dived after him, his hand grazing Smitty's shoulder.

When Mike Vincent saw the red and yellow figures leave the top of the Texas Commerce Tower, she felt like she had just plunged from the highest arch of a giant roller coaster. Mike, a petite brunette wearing oversized glasses, was five feet three inches tall and not an ounce over a hundred pounds. She had been shivering in the cold of the parking lot across the street from the Western Union office for what seemed like hours, too miserable to fool with the still camera that had been entrusted to her. Her white Dodge Monaco station wagon was only a few feet away, but she was too anxious about the jump to stay in the car warming herself. One of her three children, six-year-old Tad, was at her side. Besides being the driver of a getaway car, Mike was the one woman other than Smitty's mother and sister who really cared what happened to him. And as she watched Smitty and Phil fall from the building, Mike was overcome by a terrible sinking feeling in her stomach.

Mike was no stranger to skydiving. In the early seventies she had started parachuting from airplanes, only to quit after her third jump when she barely missed hitting some high-tension wires. Her husband, Bob, had been an active sky diver and one of Smitty's best friends. One night in 1974, Bob and Smitty had gone out to a go-cart track. When closing time came around, the two of them kept on racing. A cop finally showed up and Smitty pulled over, but Bob kept on driving. The cop threw a tire in front of Bob's go-cart. Bob swerved to a stop and started yelling at the cop. They argued and the cop drew his gun. Moments later, Bob lay dead on the pavement. Mike sued the Houston police, but nothing came of it.

Mike did not lack a sense of the absurd. She had been christened Shirley Jean but had gone through life with a boy's name because her parents had wanted a son whom they had intended to name Michael David. But Mike had a serious side, too. Her husband's tragedy merely confirmed a theory she had about sky divers and death. Like her late husband, most jumpers seemed to die young, suddenly,

accidentally, and unusually—but not because of a skydiving mishap. Instead of taking the obvious route, death seemed to mock and punish those who defied it by sneaking up on them in a roundabout way.

As Mike watched her boyfriend and his buddy dive from the tower, cold shivers shot through her bones. The red and yellow figures seemed to fall and fall and fall, and still their chutes did not open. When the figures dropped to what looked like halfway down the side of the building, Mike began to wonder if their chutes would ever open, or if death was pulling still another double cross by coming in the front door this time, laughing like the bitter wind.

Down Milam Street in front of the two Pennzoil towers, a wiry, brown-haired man in a winter jacket and corduroy jeans hunkered over a tripod and grinned a toothy grin. Keeping his right eye plastered to the viewfinder of a 16mm movie camera, he followed the jumpers with obvious excitement and delight. Unlike Mike Vincent, he felt no apprehension or dread. He seemed to know that the jump would come off perfectly. The sight of the red and yellow figures falling from the building only recharged his optimism.

Carl Boenish, 39, approached skydiving with an enthusiasm born when he was a 12-year-old kid jumping from trees and sheds near his home in the Los Angeles Airport suburb of Hawthorne, California. About that time, Boenish had set what he claimed was a world record of 800 consecutive jumps on a pogo stick. Boenish had made his first airplane jump in 1962 at the age of 21. Since that day, he had become a self-confessed "skydiving bum" who devoted his whole life to the sport. Deriving his income from a commercial photography business called Photo-Chuting Enterprises, which he set up in a home studio, he had made more than 1660 jumps and established himself as both a pioneer of skydiving formations and stunts and the sport's preeminent free-fall photographer. More recently, Boenish had become the founder, the guiding light, the guru, of BASE.

As he watched Smitty and Mayfield fall, Boenish knew that their jumps marked the culmination of a craze he had started back in the summer of 1978. Before that, the history of fixed-object jumping had consisted of a jump in the Dolomite Alps in Italy, a handful of mostly ill-fated (though not fatal) jumps from the 2200-foot cliffs of El Capitan in California's Yosemite National Park, Owen Quinn's jump from one of New York's World Trade Center towers in 1975, and a two-man jump from the Seattle Space Needle in 1976. In August 1978, Boenish had filmed a four-man jump from El Capitan. Equipped with square

"BASE is an acronym derived from the categories of things to be jumped from — buildings, antennas, spans (bridges), and earth formations. Smitty had already scored in three of the four categories. He intended to be the first to go off the Texas Commerce Tower, which would qualify him as BASE No. 1."

parachutes, the men easily cleared the trees on the valley floor and landed safely. Boenish got such good movies of the jump that he was able to make a deal with ABC Sports. But the National Park Service found out about the jumps, prosecuted Boenish and the others for unlawful hang gliding, subpoenaed Boenish's film, and tied him up in a court case for more than a year.

That episode had marked the escalation of a long-running war between Boenish and the Park Service, but it had also ignited interest in a new sport called cliff jumping. While the rangers pursued Boenish in the courts, other sky divers trekked to Yosemite, hiked the six hours to the top of El Capitan, and jumped. Soon the Park Service had twenty more cases of illegal hang gliding on its hands.

Meanwhile, Boenish started another new fixed-object jumping sport when he and three other experienced sky divers went off Colorado's 1053-foot Royal Gorge Bridge on August 11, 1979. Because of the low altitude, two of the jumpers asked friends to stand on the bridge and throw out their pilot chutes manually so that their main chutes would open more quickly. All four jumpers landed safely. The police spotted Boenish and one of the other jumpers and took them in for questioning. But there was no law the jumpers could be charged with breaking, so the police let them go.

Back in California, the lawsuit-

burdened Park Service finally offered to allow cliff jumping if the USPA would sanction it. Although the 2200-foot height of El Cap was barely below the association's recommended minimum opening altitude, the USPA agreed to make an exception for El Capitan cliffs. On July 1, 1980, Boenish and some USPA officials, including national director Joe Svec of Houston, made the first legal El Cap jumps in a Park Service test. When all landed safely, the rangers agreed to start issuing a maximum of twelve permits a day with the stipulations that the jumpers go off singly and before eight-thirty in the morning.

That summer sky divers began flocking to El Capitan from all over the country. Among them were Phil Smith and Phil Mayfield, who made the trip out from Texas, and Carl Boenish's nineteen-year-old wife, Jean. It was at El Capitan that Smitty and Mayfield became fast friends with the Boenishes. Tentative at first about running off a cliff, the two Phils from Texas became as comfortable falling off El Cap as they were falling out of an airplane. Soon they were doing stunts for Carl Boenish's movies. In one film, Smitty walked off the cliff on a pair of stilts, Mayfield walked off on his hands, and Carl bounced off on a pogo stick.

By early September 1980, there had been a total of 479 jumps from El Capitan, according to the unofficial log kept by Boenish. Although there were no deaths, 5 of the estimated 400 jumpers who attempted El Cap sustained injuries serious enough to require hospitalization. Complaining that enforcement problems were just as bad as in the past, the Park Service stopped issuing permits for El Capitan, and cliff jumping once again became illegal.

Outlawing cliff jumping did not stop it. In the months that followed, Boenish and others continued to jump El Capitan and other Yosemite cliffs. But the volume of jumps decreased from about 120 a month to about 60 a year. Part of the reason was that the Boenishes and the two Phils from Texas were already enthralled by new types of fixed-object jumping.

Phil Smith, his spirit charged by the El Cap jumps, could no longer get excited about jumping out of airplanes. Upon his return to Texas, he began looking around for other jumpable earth formations. Although the flatlands of the Gulf Coast did not offer any cliffs, Smitty's skydiving friend Phil Chaplin discovered something that looked even more challenging: the 1100-foot KUHT-TV antenna tower south of downtown Houston. After sneaking up to the top for some wind streamer tests, Smitty made plans to jump the tower with Phil Mayfield on October 12, 1980. The hardest part of the jump proved to be the three-hour hand-over-hand climb to the top, a feat that required periodic rest stops along the way. At eight o'clock on the appointed morning, they jumped.

Since the skeletonlike structure of the antenna tower did not block the wind there was no major turbulence to contend with. Only the guy wires that helped support the tower presented a potential hazard. But the jumpers exited with the wind at their backs, and their initial spring carried them away from the guy wires. They landed perfectly and scrambled over the fence and into their cars without being seen. Later, Smitty phoned in the news of the jump to the *Houston Post*, which ran a brief story about it.

Smitty and Mayfield could not wait to make more antenna tower jumps. Near Dallas, Mayfield discovered the 1500-foot KNUS antenna in Cedar Hill; the Boenishes flew in from California and Smitty drove up from Houston. Once again, all jumped safely and without detection.

Neither the Texans nor the Californians confined themselves to antenna jumping. In September 1980, shortly after the Park Service "closed" El Capitan, the Boenishes and four other sky divers jumped the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia. Though the jumpers did not have official permission, the local authorities reportedly knew about the jumps in advance but did not intervene to stop them. The next week the Boenishes made the first completely legal fixed object jump aside from El Capitan when they went off the cliffs of Canyon de Chelly on reservation land in northeastern Arizona. They performed the jumps for a film being made by Home Box Office and they had the permission of the Navajo Indians, who shrewdly charged HBO a fee for using the canyon. After the first Houston antenna jumps, Smitty, Mayfield, and five other sky divers jumped the Royal Gorge Bridge in Colorado. One of the jumpers, Hank Ascianto, broke his leg on landing, but the others escaped injury. A short time later, Smitty and Mayfield returned to antenna jumping by making dives from the 1909-foot KTUL antenna near Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The exhilaration of the jumpers at this time was nearly indescribable. Like test pilots, they were exploring the edge of the envelope of human capabilities. But instead of going ever higher and faster, they were going lower and lower. About the only official negative reaction the jumper got came from USPA director Joe Svec who revoked Smitty's area safety office designation on the grounds that the antenna jumps set a bad example for other sky divers. But when Svec's term expired his successor reinstated Smitty as an ASO.

By this time, Phil Smith had the hot for jumping the Texas Commerce Tower and was talking of nothing else. His word gave his fellow fixed-object jumpers brainstorm. They began to see a pattern in the jumps they were making. After playing with several combinations of acronyms, Jean Boenish and Phil Smith came up with BASE. In addition to cover

ing every conceivable type of fixed-object jumping, the acronym also connoted something that was stationary. The group decided that from then on they would refer to what they were doing as BASE jumping and that those who completed jumps in all four categories would be called BASE jumpers.

Because he had elected not to jump from the Texas Commerce Tower with Smitty and Mayfield, Boenish would not be the first man to get his BASE. But he was still the unofficial leader of the maverick organization that was being born on this nippy January morning in Houston. As far as Boenish was concerned, filming a jump was the next-best thing to doing it. His talents were sorely needed on the ground. After all, without the photographic evidence, who would believe that such a jump had really happened?

Suddenly, Boenish saw something through the lens of his camera that made grin freeze.

When Smitty first pushed off the tower he felt as if he had just stepped out into his driveway. When he made an airplane jump, he was immediately socked by a rush of wind. But in the opening moments of his fall from the tower, Smitty dropped through an eerie, almost windless calm. Then he began to accelerate very rapidly. The wind blasted his face, and he saw a series of windows flash past floor by floor, a visual measure of his fall that was not available in a normal jump. Then he saw the street closing in.

Smitty was not counting seconds. That wasn't necessary. His years of skydiving had left him with an automatic timer in his brain. He had a sixth sense for the passage of one second. Two seconds. Three. Somewhere between seconds four and five, he opened his right fist and thrust out his pilot chute. A flicker of yellow nylon zipped past the corner of his right eye. Now everything was up to fate and his equipment. Either his main chute would open or he would accelerate into the pavement like a human bullet.

A split second before he saw Smitty's yellow pilot chute fly toward his face, Mayfield was still struggling to keep his back arched and his head up. That was not an easy thing to do. The weight of the two cameras attached to his helmet kept making his head dip forward. But Mayfield knew that if he went over too far, he might plunge into a head-over-heels tumble. He had to keep falling with his belly at a 45-degree angle to the ground so that he would not tangle in the lines of his chute when it started to open. At the same time, though, he wanted to keep his head far enough forward to get photographs of Smitty's fall. This was an enormous physical challenge, requiring not only strength but also balance and coordination. And that was just the kind of thing

Mayfield thrived on.

Suddenly Mayfield felt a sharp jolt across his neck and shoulders. His head snapped back and his legs swung forward and down in the manner of an aerialist swinging on a trapeze. That was what sky divers call opening shock, the sensation of the main chute opening and filling with air. As the second man off the building, Mayfield had thrown out his pilot chute an instant before Smitty had thrown his. They had planned it that way so that Mayfield would not fall into Smitty or Smitty's chute. But as it turned out, Mayfield saw Smitty's main chute unfurl and billow open at almost the same time he felt his own opening shock. That was what had alarmed Boenish. Fortunately, there was enough distance between the two to prevent a collision.

Mayfield looked straight ahead into the patchy gray horizon. To his relief he realized that his chute had opened facing to the west, away from the building. He looked down and saw that he was drifting over Jones Hall toward the parking lots and the federal building. He reached up for his steering lines and began to pilot himself through the morning air.

Phil Smith sailed over Milam Street on the wings of an open canopy and the most incredible jubilation he had ever experienced. The full impact of what he had just done was only beginning to hit him, but the adrenaline rush of the jump was already an afterglow. He manipulated the steering lines of his rig instinctively, reflexively, without even thinking about the individual tugs and slackenings he made as he flew. Having opened at about the fortieth floor, he was already less than six hundred feet from the ground. For a second or two, he worried about clearing Jones Hall, but then he realized that the forward speed of his rig would carry him over Jones Hall with ease. He needed only to navigate himself to an unobstructed landing area in one of the parking lots, and he was home free. For the first time all day, the tension flowed out of him. Forgetting his concern with attracting attention, Smitty let out a yell: "Yaaaaa-hoooooooo!"

Mike Vincent could not imagine what the small crowd of winos and early risers now standing on the street corner must have been thinking as they watched the two men with parachutes come out of the Sunday morning sky. The winos were laughing as if they were still drunk. The early risers seemed to be formulating what they would say when they got home that night: "Honey, you're not gonna believe what happened downtown this morning..."

Smitty's triumphant shout snapped Mike out of her reverie. He was still quite

a few feet from the ground, but he was heading for a spot just across the street. Mike grabbed her son and hustled over to her station wagon, determined not to flub her role as getaway-car driver if she was needed.

She wasn't. Smitty swirled to a soft landing on the grass-and-concrete top of the civic center's underground parking garage. Phil and Kathy Chaplin jumped into their tan truck and drove toward him. The moment his feet touched the ground, he began gathering up his parachute. Seconds later, Phil Mayfield landed in the parking lot across from Western Union and started pulling in his chute, too. Smitty tossed his gear in the Chaplins' truck and dived in after it. Mayfield hopped into the seat of a yellow Chevy station wagon driven by their friend Pam Cattaneo. Before any of the bystanders could make sense of what had happened, both the tan truck and the Chevy station wagon were speeding down Capitol Street.

Realizing that she was the only member of the ground crew left in the "drop zone," Mike pushed her son into the car and headed for the rendezvous point.

The Bell JetRanger descended on the Memorial Drive Holiday Inn just as the getaway cars were pulling into the parking lot. Besides being near the downtown jump site, this particular motel conveniently featured a helipad. By the time the helicopter touched down, Smitty, Mayfield, the Boenishes, the Chaplins, Mike, and the others were already filing into the dining room on the floor below. The chopper pilot and the two photographers quickly joined them.

The group was both drained and overjoyed, happy but not rowdy. Carl Boenish was oohing and aahing about the pictures they were going to get and laughing his car-motor-starting laugh. Mayfield was cracking sardonic jokes. Smitty was bouncing Tad on his knee and asking the boy what he thought of the jump, whether he had liked it.

After a couple of minutes of backslapping, Boenish and the helicopter pilot took their leave. Boenish was renting the chopper for \$400, and he wanted to film some tracking shots down Memorial Drive to downtown to establish the setting of the jump in his film. The rest of the group ordered breakfast and relived the events of the morning. Before the meal was over, Smitty and Mayfield were talking about when they could jump the building again.

The next Texas Commerce Tower jump took place the following Saturday at four o'clock in the morning. Although the sky was pitch-black, the lights of the downtown streets and buildings provided almost as much visibility for the sky divers as broad daylight. This time both Carl and Jean Boenish jumped the building with

Smitty and Mayfield. All four landed safely and without detection. Having completed their first building jump, Jean and Carl now had jumps in all four categories and became BASE No. 3 and BASE No. 4, respectively.

One month later, in February 1981, Carl came back to Houston from California with three more would-be building jumpers: Mike Perron, Brad Smith, and Sam Ramos. Smitty and the three Californians jumped at five o'clock on a Tuesday morning while Boenish photographed with strobe lights. By the end of June, sixteen jumps had been made from the Texas Commerce Tower. And no one had been hurt or apprehended by the authorities, and not a word of it had appeared in any of the Houston media.

When not jumping the Texas Commerce Tower, Smitty and the rest of the BASE jumpers were going off other fixed objects. They jumped off El Capitan again, despite the Park Service ban, and off the antennas in Houston and Tulsa. They also jumped the Gerald Desmond Bridge at Terminal Island, California. Other sky divers, some affiliated with BASE and some not, got wind of these exploits and started jumping off antennas and bridges in other parts of the country.

Soon the ranks of BASE-affiliated jumpers swelled to at least fifty nationwide, and the number of jumpers who had completed all four BASE categories grew to nine. By midsummer, Smitty could claim the most BASE jumps: 28. Mayfield and Andy Smith, one of Smitty's skydiving buddies, weren't far behind. No longer content to jump only in the early morning, they started a whole new class of jump called Night BASE and went back to rejump the buildings, antennas, bridges, and cliffs they had already done in daylight. The ever-competitive Mayfield proudly became the first of the group to get his Night BASE, followed by Smitty and Andy Smith.

Having been brazenly defied for months, death finally took its toll in April 1981 when a sky diver crashed from a television antenna tower in Virginia.

her fixed-object jumps produced some nasty injuries. But for the most part, the BASE jumpers and their kindred spirits across the country escaped mishap. About the only drawback for most BASE jumpers was the expense involved. Getting outfitted with a parachute, jump suit, and helmet calls for an initial investment of about \$1500. In a normal skydive, a jumper also pays \$11 to \$14 per jump for the airplane ride up. Airplanes are not necessary for jumping fixed objects, but they are often necessary for getting to them. In the fall of 1980 Smitty spent an estimated \$1000 simply on travel to jumpable bridges, antennas, and cliffs scattered all over the country.

Always the organizer, Carl Boenish began publishing *BASE Magazine*, a newsletter that he dubbed the unofficial

publication of the United States BASE Association. It featured a logo that could be worn by those who had jumped in all four categories, as well as statistics on all recorded BASE jumps, how-to articles by experienced BASE jumpers, and reprints of various newspaper stories pro and con fixed-object jumping. Although he nodded to commercialism by running ads for his Photo-Chuting Enterprises, Boenish took care not to neglect the philosophical basis of BASE. For those who worried about the illegality of some of the jumps, the Boenish line was essentially "as long as it doesn't hurt anybody, do it anyway." But the overall BASE ideology was summarized by an unattributed quote Boenish had found on a wall at a skydiving center in Florida. Listed among *BASE Magazine's* "Quotations to Inspire Us By," the passage began with the sentence "I do not choose to be a common man."

On June 28, 1981, Phil Smith, Phil Mayfield, Andy Smith, and Dwayne Bruette climbed to the top of the Texas Commerce Tower for another Sunday morning daylight jump. The plan called for the two Phils to go off first at eight o'clock, with Andy and Bruette following them after filming the jumps from atop the building. After Smitty, Mayfield, and Andy Smith had jumped, Bruette waited. He later said he delayed in order to let the other jumpers get out of his way and to complete the filming. At least five minutes passed. Finally, Bruette went off the building and drifted over to a routine landing in Market Square. By the time he touched the ground, Houston police cars had arrived on the scene.

Although they knew he had jumped from the Texas Commerce Tower, the cops could find nothing to arrest him for. At last they led him to the building security officers and informed them that there were no charges. The building security people kept calling higher-ups, trying to get instructions. Then word came down to file trespassing charges against the jumper. The police took Bruette down to the station and booked him. That afternoon, Smitty and the others bailed him out.

The BASE jumpers lay low pending the outcome of Bruette's hearing. But Bruette merely showed up in municipal court, entered a plea of guilty, paid a fine of \$75, reclaimed the balance of his bond money, and went home.

Smitty and Andy Smith immediately started planning their next jump: a leap from the Loop 610 bridge that arches over the Houston Ship Channel. Here again the challenge was not the altitude but the lack thereof. The bridge was only 168 feet above the water. That would make it the lowest BASE jump yet attempted. The fact that a disconsolate prostitute had managed to kill herself by jumping off the bridge a few years before attested to the

danger involved. But Smitty figured that if he and Andy relied on the static-line rigs used by novice sky divers and paratroopers, their chutes would open fast enough to get them down safely. The static lines would be attached to the bottom of the bridge and would automatically pull the chutes open as the jumpers went off. Besides, by jumping from the middle of the bridge, they could count on the water's breaking their fall.

Following what was becoming standard operating procedure for urban BASE jumps, the two Smiths asked some skydiving friends to photograph the event and to drive the getaway cars. They also arranged for a motorboat to be on hand to fish them out of the water when they landed. Then, in their first departure from their unofficial policy of avoiding publicity, the Smiths invited KPRC-TV and radio stations KLOL and KTRH to witness the jump.

They went off the bridge at 8:30 in the morning on Sunday, August 16, 1981. By 8:40, they were standing in bathing suits on the shore beside the getaway van, toweling off the murky Ship Channel water. KPRC-TV reporter Dana Millikin stood beside them, thrusting a microphone under their noses to record their post-jump reactions. But before the jumpers could get off the Port of Houston property, a blue city police car pulled up with its lights flashing.

As in the case of the Bruette jump, a lengthy period of official confusion ensued. Then some Port of Houston security officers showed up and advised the officer on the scene that the port wished to charge the jumpers with trespassing. Still dressed in their bathing suits, the two Smiths were taken downtown and booked for trespassing on Port of Houston property and for the additional offense of walking on a freeway, which they allegedly did before actually jumping off the Loop 610 bridge. That afternoon, they each posted a \$240 bond and were released.

On Labor Day weekend, while the Smiths were out doing some conventional skydiving, they got word that someone had just been hurt jumping the Texas Commerce Tower: 25-year-old Richard Davis of Austin. He had jumped at about two-thirty in the afternoon and had hit against one of the upper stories of the building, knocking a piece of granite off the facade that nearly hit some construction workers on the street below. Then he had drifted across the intersection of Milam and Capitol to bang into the northern Pennzoil tower. Somehow, Davis had proceeded down the north side of the building and turned south along Louisiana Street, only to crash into the glass canopy above the lobby on the building's west side. He was rescued from the shattered canopy by an emergency unit and rushed to St. Joseph Hospital.

Rick Davis turned out to be lucky. His injuries consisted of only a broken foot and some facial cuts. Except for his sky diver's ego, everything else was fine. When Smitty visited him in the hospital the next day, Davis still did not seem to know what had gone wrong. He remembered that his chute had opened facing the building, the worst of all possible opening directions. He remembered putting up his feet to absorb the impact before he hit the building. But the next thing he knew he was lying in the hospital. Davis surmised that he must have broken a steering line because of the severe opening shock, but he could not be sure until he examined his rig. And that he would be unable to do for some time, since his parachute was now in the custody of the Houston police, who were charging him with criminal mischief, a felony punishable by two to ten years in jail or up to \$5000 in fines or both. Davis had also been told that he had caused an estimated \$10,000 in damages and might face problems from the building owners.

Though Smitty and the other BASE jumpers were glad that Davis had escaped serious injury, they were highly critical of him for jumping in the afternoon when the winds were turbulent and a fair amount of traffic was on the street. The two Smiths had spoken with Davis on the telephone briefly in the days preceding the jump, but they did not know how well (if at all) he had checked out the building and tested the winds. More than anything, they regretted that the Davis jump, unlike all the previous jumps, had damaged property. They felt certain that it would cause a negative public reaction to BASE.

They were right. On September 19, 1981, in an editorial titled "No Sport in This," the *Houston Chronicle* labeled the building and bridge jumps a "dangerous and unnecessary nuisance" and called on law enforcement agencies to treat them as such. A short time later, Joe Svec wrote a letter to the *Chronicle's* "Viewpoint" column, branding the building jumpers "skydiving outlaws" who were "not representative of the skydiving community as a whole." Though Svec did not mention BASE by name or refer to the fact that he himself had jumped from El Capitan, he lamented the publicity being devoted to the building jumpers while the United States Parachute Team was being virtually ignored by the media. The team, of which Svec was leader, later won a world championship meet against 24 other national teams.

The day after the *Chronicle* published Svec's letter, Phil Smith and Andy Smith went on trial in municipal court for the charges related to the Loop 610 bridge jump. The charges of walking on the freeway were dropped when the prosecution's only witness failed to appear, but assistant city attorney Danny Easterling went ahead with the trespassing charges, basing his case on the testimony of the arresting officer and a Port of Houston security

guard. However, the defense counsel, Walter Reaves, put Phil Smith on the stand to testify that there weren't any fences or No Trespassing signs along the waterfront from which the divers had entered the port property and that their entry had been made on Sunday, which was visitors' day. The jury deliberated the case for more than two hours. Mindful of Easterling's closing argument that the case should be used to discourage others from attempting similar stunts, the six-member panel leaned toward conviction. But the jury also realized that the Port of Houston had not posted the proper notice to forbid trespassing. At 2:13 p.m. the jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

Before they had left the courtroom, Smitty and Andy were already whispering plans to jump the Texas Commerce Tower again the very next day. As it happened, that jump had to be postponed so that Smitty could watch Nolan Ryan pitch the Astros past the Los Angeles Dodgers with a no-hitter. But the BASE jumpers continued to plan more fixed-object jumps for the near future. Although many of their jumps would require illegal or extralegal entries, they now tried harder than ever to get official permission for at least some of their projects. Phil Mayfield, for example, wrote to Texas Commerce Bank chairman Ben Love requesting permission to jump the tower on its opening day. Smitty wrote West Virginia state officials for permission to jump the New River Gorge Bridge.

The letter writing produced some unexpected results. Although Mayfield never got a response from the bank, Smitty did manage to persuade West Virginia officials to let him jump New River Gorge. On October 17, he and four other sky divers made a total of thirteen successful bridge jumps in West Virginia before a crowd of 20,000 people. The BASE jumpers also made 35 jumps off the Crocker Center in Los Angeles. In the meantime, however, the sport of fixed-object jumping claimed another life when a sky diver from Oklahoma crashed from the Black Canyon formation in Colorado.

Despite the tragedy, Carl Boenish continued to promote BASE jumping with mounting zeal. In a newspaper interview shortly after one of the Texas Commerce Tower jumps, Boenish had predicted that BASE jumping would one day become a recognized national sport and that within five to ten years police departments in major cities would routinely cordon off two-block areas around selected buildings so that up to fifty sky divers could make jumps. Boenish now worked to make his prediction come true by spreading the gospel according to BASE wherever he could sell or hand out copies of *BASE Magazine*.

Boenish's unflagging optimism notwithstanding, all indications are that his

vision of a world of legal building jumps is a pipe dream. Ben Love has told friends that the jumps have provided free publicity for his bank and has joked that while bankers are usually the ones jumping out of tall buildings, "our loan portfolio is strong enough that we don't have to do that." But he opposes the jumps. Meanwhile, Turner Construction Company officials have tightened security around the building and have vowed to prosecute trespassers with or without parachutes. Criminal trespass has recently been upgraded to a Class B misdemeanor punishable by both a fine and imprisonment, which provides a stiffer deterrent to prospective building jumpers than the old law.

BASE has also incurred the opposition of the United States Parachute Association. "The USPA regards all BASE jumps as potentially very dangerous stunts which are not a part of sport parachuting," the USPA's official statement reads. "We urge our members not to participate in this type of activity."

The USPA's position leaves Boenish undeterred. "They are officially recognizing the difference between the two sports, and we're happy about it," he says. "I think it'll add credibility."

What both sides of the BASE controversy repeatedly overlook is the possible redeeming social value of the fixed-object jumps. By testing the lower limits of parachuting, the BASE jumpers may have opened new approaches to lifesaving equipment for tall buildings. Two workers were killed during the construction of the Texas Commerce Tower because of falls from high places. Had they been attached to their work sites by static-line parachute rigs, their lives might have been saved. The BASE jumps may also have implications for preventing the *Towering Inferno* nightmare of people jumping off the top floor of a burning skyscraper to certain death on the pavement in order to avoid perishing in the flames. The Texas Commerce Tower jumps have shown that chutes can be opened as low as forty stories above the ground, a building height becoming increasingly common in Texas cities. If quick-opening parachutes were stored at the top of a building, evacuees might have at least a chance of saving their lives.

Smitty, for his part, does not regard BASE jumping as anything but a personal obsession. One of his goals is to jump the 1454-foot Sears Tower in Chicago, which is the tallest building in the world. But his burning desire is to make ever lower and more difficult fixed-object jumps. "Last year, we didn't know we could jump a building less than a thousand feet," he says. "Then we jumped a bridge that was only one hundred and sixty-eight feet. Who knows how low we can go? One hundred and fifty feet? One hundred feet? The only thing we know for sure is that the ground's the limit." ♦

SNAPS

After many successful BASE jumps by the boys from Sacramento, we were besieged by a rash of bad openings. Although these were not malfunctions, they were nonetheless potentially as dangerous. The openings consisted of canopies opening facing backwards, or with right or left turns. Fortunately, they all occurred while we were making bridge jumps. You can just imagine the possibilities, had they happened while making a building, antenna, or earth jump. After experiencing two consecutive free-falls with openings consisting of right turns, we decided to do a little investigating. We found that because of the low speed of the opening, it was very possible for one of the snaps on the riser flaps of the container to hang up, even if only for a second or two, and cause a turn. We have since made 8 BASE jumps leaving the snaps undone, with excellent results. So, the word is: IF YOU HAVE A RIG WITH SNAPS, LEAVE THEM UNDONE!

Blue Skies 4
Forward Openings
Dennis Murphy
NIGHT BASE #4

(Continued from page 16)

en't too excited about us being there. But, in the end, all they did was give us a ticket for stopping on a bridge."

While Phillips, an Emerich Manual High School grad, doesn't mind talking about this, he did admit not everyone in his group wanted his name used in this story because BASE is widely considered an outlaw-type organization.

"I'm afraid we're going to get into too much trouble before we can complete all four jumps for membership in BASE but we're going to give it a try," Phillips promised. "Next, we'd like to jump from El Capitan, a cliff in Yosemite National Park. About 500 persons have made that jump but now it's illegal."

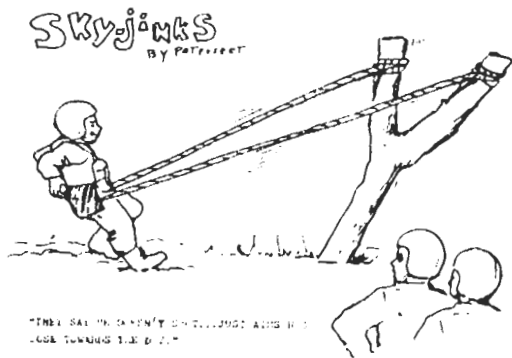
"As for the building jump, about the only places this has been done by BASE members is in Houston and Los Angeles where I understand they landed in streets. Maybe we can find a skyscraper tall enough in the Midwest."

NEWSFLASH!

We got a postcard from Tim Mace and Graeme Henderson. On the front of the card are pictured four modern bridges in the green countryside of Austria. The postcard is stamped "Innsbruck." The cryptic message reads: 0845 30.12.81 Video and photographs. A real nice one!

If that means what we think it means, congratulations!!! How about sending us a picture or two for our readers.

-Ed.



Sky Diver Magazine

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