

The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL



Builders of Quality BASE Gear

BASE Rigs
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WARNING:

Information related to BASE jumping in any aspect, whether on the ground or in the air, is informational only and readers are cautioned to exercise due care and restraint. The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL accepts no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of information printed herein.

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The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL

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OFF

THE LEDGE

ABOUT THE COVER

Nick Di Giovanni in freefall from Bungee Adventures' new hammerhead crane.

Photo by John Kockelman

The 1980s are gone, but the roots of modern BASE jumping will always be there. In 1981 a handful of jumpers had a dream and the backbone to turn that dream into a sport. Of the thousands of BASE jumps made in the last decade each was special to the person involved. A few had that extra touch of class. Some left us shaking our heads. They all made us grin.

Phil Smith, stepped off a catwalk 190-feet above the floor of the Houston Astrodome in front of 40,000 people. An Aussie named Nic Feteris reminded us what freedom is by launching from the Statue of Liberty. Bill Legg conquered the San Jacinto Monument and the George Washington Bridge.

Alan Heatherington sucked us down with a 9th floor building jump. Chuck Sweeney proved he was one of President Bush's one thousand points of light and drew gunfire from the Secret Service. Nine year old Casey Hoover made his first BASE jump. Mike McCarthy flicked off the Empire State Building and the Leaning Tower of Pisa. A 52 year old Brit adventurer named Eric Jones made his first BASE jump from the

North Face of the Eiger. Wow . . . thanks dudes!

Bridge Day 1990 went into the record book surpassing all others in terms of attendance. As usual, the majority thought it was the best Bridge Day ever while a few thought it the worst. We take a look at the event in a piece called, *The Trolls Are Us*.

A trip to Bungee Adventures, and the greatest Tinker Toy in the world, has yielded a report called *Going to Doomdom*. In *Sucking Wind*, Moe Viletto explains more than you'll probably ever need to know about BASE pilot chutes.

She's intelligent, she's strong willed, she's uncompromising. Yet, when the light is just right, you can still see the little girl in her eyes. She's Jean Boenish, BASE #3, and the subject of this issue's interview. *Last Off* looks at the question of organizing our sport (wonder who put that idea in my head) and the image of BASE jumping.

This is the first issue of the second volume of *The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL*. I want to thank those onboard from the beginning and gently remind you it's time to renew your subscriptions. We couldn't have done it without you and I've learned that people make this sport, not the other way around. I hope you've enjoyed our efforts and we look forward to your continued support.

Let's make 1991 a zero fatality year. That would be the best New Year's resolution of all!

C-YA
Nick Di Giovanni
Editor

Air Mail...

FOUND US

I'm currently skydiving and have been interested in BASE jumping for sometime but never pursued it. (A lot of negative attitudes around here). I was referred to The JOURNAL by Ursula of California Connections. It's nice to see a magazine with tips and opinions on mainly BASE jumping and equipment.

ROBERT HOLLINGSWORTH
LANCASTER, PA

LOW BRIDGE STUFF

Enclosed is a check for \$20.00 for another year of The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL. Enjoyed meeting you at Bridge Day and thanks for printing the article and photo of our Route 66 jumps. You did an excellent job on the "Splash and Dash" article. We started that low bridge stuff by trial and error. At first we had no boat, just a life line we could throw from shore. It worked okay until we landed too far out in the river. Once, three of us got stranded with the current pulling us down river. A man in a small fishing boat finally rescued us but we lost a Strato Star after it started to pull one jumper under. Since then, we've learned that water is nothing to fool with and always use a boat. I spent Bridge Day '90 on the bottom with a video camera and had a great time.

DON BOYLES
TULSA, OK

STEALING

"STEALING ALTITUDE"

I heard a number of people expressed interest in the film *Stealing Altitude* at Bridge Day '90. As you know, the University of Southern California expressly forbids us to benefit from any proceeds a USC student film may generate, so we can't sell copies. If enough people are interested however, we can work something out. Please don't pirate the tapes. I'd

rather see only quality copies go out. I will provide a VHS tape at cost for \$7.50 per copy. I would prefer cashier checks or money orders rather than personal checks. Send to: John Starr, 870 Adams #34, Los Angeles, CA 90007.

JOHN STARR
LOS ANGELES, CA

NEEDS BUILDING

Here's my \$20.00 for a subscription to The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL. In addition to seven years of skydiving and over a thousand paraglider flights, I've made two bridge jumps and two earth jumps on my Pegasus. These were both made with the help of J.D. Walker and Ken Noble about four years ago. I'm planning more BASE jumps this fall. We have a 585-foot smoke stack in Montana picked out as well as some antennas. I don't know where I'll find a building, but we will.

BLUE SKIES
KURT KLEINER
JACKSON, WY

SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR

I just received your JOURNAL today and it was great! Thanks for the free subscription. I was surprised to see you printed my letter. I'm definitely hooked on BASE jumping. Unfortunately there is nothing in the yard to BASE jump from, but just outside the fence is a good sized water tower, drool, drool!

BLUE SKIES/SEND HACKSAW
JOHN MYERS
#894743
INDIANA CORRECTIONS DEPT.

WE ARE!

I am an active BASE jumper in South Africa and want to subscribe to The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL. If you are interested in receiving

some articles and photos on BASE jumping here, let me know.

KEITH LARRETT
UNTATA, TRANSKE
SOUTH AFRICA

EXCITED!

Just wanted you to know I made my first BASE jump at Bridge Day '90, I thought it was great! I even made the landing area! I was in line to go again but unfortunately the line was going too slow. Two weeks later I climbed a tower with two friends. The climb was hell and we stopped at 1100-feet. I don't think I could've climbed down even if I wanted to because my arms were so tired. It was my second attempt at this tower and this time the wind was going the right way to avoid the guy wires. We did it, and everything went fine! Even after landing it was fun to hurry up and get away. I'm now halfway to my BASE number. The building is my biggest fear. BASE jumping is not like regular skydiving, that's for sure. I've found skydivers in general don't seem to understand BASE jumping either. Oh well, their loss. I'm excited about subscribing to The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL and take care all you BASE jumpers out there!

PAQUITA WINTERPACHT
OAKWOOD HILLS, IL

THE JOURNAL IN JAIL

Just thought I'd mention that it may not be in our best interest to send the JOURNAL to Mr. Myers or anyone else in the prison system. All mail going in or out of correctional facilities is screened. We wouldn't want The JOURNAL to fall into the wrong hands.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER
BASE #262
ABBOTSFORD, CANADA

Around The BASEs

"He'd probably write some cool songs about BASE jumping!"

tore from its frame and covered my head, I thought the whole airplane was coming apart!" Ralph credits his jumping experience in helping him deal with the problem. "Once I realized the wings were gonna stay on," he said, "it was just a matter of concentrating on flying the airplane. It was a lot worse than jumping without goggles, and man, it was cold too!"

C-YA LORD

If the "Good Lord" wasn't already aware of BASE jumping, he is now, thanks to the unidentified jumper who launched from the Whispering Gallery of London's St. Paul's Cathedral. Architecturally St. Paul's is renowned for being the first domed cathedral built in London. The jumper used the buddy assist method to accomplish the indoor 102-foot jump. The Reverend Cris Hill later complained, "The staff was very distressed, we had a suicide last year from the same spot and this stupid stunt brought back the horror of the whole thing." So much for the ingenuity of all God's creatures.

NEW BASE EQUIPMENT CATALOG

T&T Rigging has a new catalog that describes its full line of BASE related equipment. The ten page catalog features some interesting photos of T&T's gear in action. The mainstay of T&T's line-up is the *Reactor* harness and container system. Todd Shoebotham, owner of T&T Rigging, says the *Reactor* is a product of 3 years live research. In that time it has become cleaner, smaller and more comfortable. For a free copy of the catalog contact T&T Rigging at: 27475 Ynes Rd., Suite 200,

Temecula, CA 92390. Phone (714) 699-5206.

BASE NUMBERS

On January 18, 1981, Phil Smith was awarded BASE #1 for being the first person to make a parachute jump from all four categories of objects. On January 18, 1991, according to Jean Boenish, Earl Redfern has been awarded BASE #300, exactly ten years later!

THE BIG CHILL

JOURNAL publisher, Ralph Mittman, had a close call recently when the Cessna 172 he was flying over mountainous terrain suffered a complete failure of the windshield. "There was a loud bang and all hell broke loose in the cockpit," Ralph reported. "What was left of the windshield wound up in the right seat. The headliner

NEW DIRECTORY

Skydiving Magazine has published its first edition of *The Parachute Pages*. The directory lists more than 3,000 parachute related entries including manufacturers, suppliers, dealers, lofts, associations, publications, photographers, consultants and drop zones. BASE related advertising is welcome as well. To order send



A frame from the USC film, "Stealing Altitude."

Photo courtesy of John Starr

\$19.95 to: Skydiving Book Service, P.O. Box 1520, DeLand, FL 32721. Phone (904) 736-9779. FAX (904) 736-9786. For a 35% savings, use the coupon in the January issue of *Skydiving*.

"BANG, YOUR ALIVE" UPDATE

The number of saves officially recorded by BRS, a company that manufactures rocket deployed reserves, now stands at forty four. This number is comprised of hang glider and ultralite pilots. Although the feasibility of attaching a "Pocket Rocket" to a BASE rig is now being studied, no BASE jumper has actually deployed one yet. Second Chantz, the company involved in the BASE related testing, successfully deployed one of its rocket reserves passed a malfunctioning square canopy during a balloon test drop from 200-feet. BRS admits the units are expensive but cites reliability as the reason for the high price tag. To date, over four hundred rocket motors have been fired - in testing and actual use - with never a failure to ignite. This includes firing units subjected to heavy contamination by salt water.

WE'RE IN ANOTHER BOOK

A new book called, *Parachuting, From Student to Skydiver*, mentions BASE jumping in a congenial light. Author Jim Bates describes Bridge Day and correctly advises new BASE jumpers to get help from people with experience. It seems BASE jumpers have a penchant for getting themselves on book covers. Gary Wirth, BASE 146, was on the cover of Dan Poynter's book, *Parachuting, the Skydivers Handbook* and now the cover photo on

Bates' book features BASE jumper Nick Ricciardelli. The book's history section, which is a good one, again shows the prominent place fixed object jumping played in parachuting history. Tab Books, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17294-0850. \$16.95.

BASE VIDEO PACKING REFERENCE

Tailored For Survival has produced a video packing reference that can help new and experienced jumpers refine their BASE pack jobs. The tape features master rigger Moe Viletto packing a Precision Aerodynamics *Raven II* into *The Edge* BASE rig. The tape also details the use of *ZooMo* toggles and the rigging of the pilot chute, bridle and shrivel flap to the canopy. It also covers the various components of *The Edge* BASE rig and includes live test jumps from bridges, balloons and aircraft. The packing portion of the tape is well done and easy to understand. This tape is essential for the jumper mystified by the "black art" of BASE packing. The VHS tape is included with all TFS's BASE rigs or send \$26.95 plus \$3.00 shipping to: Tailored For Survival, 23480 Gerbera St., Moreno Valley, CA 92388.

"GOING RIGHT"

Last issue's cover photo of a jumper experiencing an off-heading opening resulted in numerous calls and letters to the office. "something doesn't look right," is what most said. Captioned, Ready or not BASE 107 is, "Going Right," the photo shows a jumper apparently not yet aware his canopy has opened 90 degrees to the right. A closer look at the risers seems to suggest the canopy is attached to the harness backward. We

haven't heard from Nigel Slee, who took the photo, but suspect the risers are indeed twisted, out of view, behind the jumper's back.

THE INTERNATIONAL BASE FELLOWSHIP AWARD

Created by Don "Jake" Jacobson, these awards recognize some of the sports more enthusiastic contributors. "Something I thought was long overdue" Jake says. The first IBF awards were presented at Bridge Day '90. "Jean Boenish received the first one for ten years of service to the BASE community," Jake said, "the second went to Aussie Jan Knox who traveled the longest distance to Bridge Day, 16,000 miles! The third went to *THE FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL* for excellence in publication. The IBF award will seek new faces next year to recognize for outstanding contributions to the fellowship of BASE jumpers."

BASE GOES ON-LINE

If you have a home computer and modem you can access a BASE jumping message base. This allows BASE jumpers to post messages from all over the world. The service is provided by GENIE and you must subscribe to gain access. GENIE costs just \$4.95 per month for its *Star Service* that includes the Aviation Bulletin Board Service (BBS). There are hundreds of aviation related topics on the BBS including BASE jumping, paragliding and skydiving. You can subscribe to GENIE by calling 1-800-638-9636 for a local access number. BASE jumping is on the Aviation BBS, Category 11, topic 21. Log on and say hello!

CHEEP SUNGLASSES

A British company has

patented and plans to market a new video camera that may prove popular with BASE jumpers. A tiny auto exposure lens is mounted in the bridge of a specially built pair of sunglasses. The color image is transmitted down a small diameter cable to a hip or pocket mounted 8 millimeter video recorder. A field of view target is incorporated into the right lens of the glasses and two stereo microphones are placed in the frames. The unnamed camera, which is said to produce as good an image as current camcorders, should hit the U.S. market this year.

BRIDGE DAY '90 VIDEO

Aerial Focus has released an un-edited video version of Bridge Day 1990. Tom Sanders and Jan Davis shot video and film from a cherry picker suspended over the bridge railing. Additional views are from a helicopter, the landing area and from the sides of the New River Gorge. Because they use professional equipment this, "right out of the camera," product is much better than most at an unbeatable price. The 95 minute tape is available for \$25.00 plus \$2.50 shipping from: Aerial Focus, 8 Camino Verde, Santa Barbara, CA 93103.

LIFE ON THE EDGE

In Sight, a large circulation newspaper of the California State University, dedicated most of the current issue to extreme sports. Land lugers, (one man sled on wheels), careen down asphalt highways. Sand boarders surf steep cliffs and mountain bikers tackle descents that would be tough on foot. Tandem skydiving is included, *how'd that get in here*, and of course, BASE jumping. The paper's

cover featured a spectacular color photograph of Keith Jones. He is shown making a night jump from the 49th floor of a downtown building with a glowing Los Angeles basin in the foreground. The article that followed is articulate and upbeat. Keith, no stranger to publicity after being featured in the movie *Stealing Altitude*, said, "I didn't let these guys get out of control. I told them we'd do it, only if I called the shots."

"WANNA BUY A HOTDOG?"

For some time the Yosemite Park & Curry Company has been criticized for the way it operates concessions in Yosemite Valley. Environmentalists have complained the company has damaged the valley with hotels, restaurants, mini markets, film and food stands. In December of 1989 the Curry Company was acquired by Matsushita, a Japanese electrical firm. Interior Secretary M. Lujan pressured Matsushita to sell the Curry Company back to an American interest. In a deal just struck, Matsushita has agreed to sell Curry Company to the non-profit National Parks Foundation for \$49.5 million. The Foundation said the Curry Company presence in the park will be cut back 17 percent.

TOWER DRAFTED FOR WAR!

Greg Chalfant and friends recently traveled to a well known and often jumped 286-foot microwave tower in Arizona. They arrived to find workmen preparing to dismantle the structure and learned the tower was being shipped to the Persian Gulf. They asked if they could make one last jump and the workmen were enthusiastic,

but a supervisor killed the idea.

BLAME IT ON IVANA!

Donald Trump's plan to build a 125-story building, which had local BASE jumpers salivating, on property he owned in Los Angeles has been called off. Trump agreed to accept 48 million dollars for the site that includes the Ambassador Hotel. The buyer, the L.A. School District, will use the location for a new high school. Trump was already having trouble with historical groups who said the Ambassador Hotel, scene of Robert Kennedy's assassination, was worth preserving. His decision to abandon what would've been the world's tallest building, was due to financial woes.

KNEW WHEN TO FOLD 'EM

The JOURNAL staff was surprised and amused when a call came in from the secretary to singer Kenny Rogers.

"Kenny's wife would like to buy him a BASE jump for his birthday," she said. Thinking she must have meant a tandem skydive we directed her to the Perris Valley drop zone. "No," she said, "I already talked to them and they said to call you. Kenny saw BASE jumping on TV and said it looked like fun!" We told her we'd get back to her. We discussed the idea and the conversation went something like this, "He's rich, we could charge him a bundle!" "He'd probably write some cool songs about BASE jumping!" "Look, if he makes it, fine, if he don't, we wouldn't be any worse off than we are now!" We finally got hold of ourselves, returned the call and explained what Kenny would have to go through to make a safe BASE jump. "Oh," she said, "I'm sure Kenny didn't realize it was all that involved, thanks anyway!"

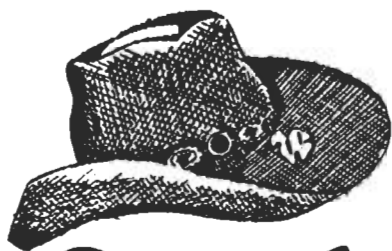
AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVE

On January 14, 1991, the FAA sent out another AD concerning the Security Aero Conical round parachute. This one calls for the PIA tensile strength test to be performed on canopies that have previously passed recertification. Compliance is mandatory for skydivers at the next scheduled reserve inspection. Some of these canopies found their way into the BASE community after an emergency AD was issued in 1988 concerning the acid mesh problem. Still in effect, is another AD concerning Pioneer rounds. BASE jumpers using these rounds should have the PIA tensile strength test done and thumb test the canopy prior to every BASE jump. Have your rigger show you the proper way to conduct the thumb test to avoid unnecessary damage to the canopy.



Scott Lillie, BASE 258, stretches one out in southern California.

THE FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL BOOK REVIEW...



Cowboy's Caravan

BY • TFOJ STAFF

It's been five years since skydiver/BASE jumper "Cowboy" Dave Williams was killed. He perished along with pilot Steve Wilson and sixteen other jumpers when their Cessna Caravan lost power at the Westwind DZ in Atlanta. The book *Cowboy's Caravan*, written by Robert L. Williams, is the result of a father trying to understand what happened to his son. Mr. Williams does not believe the crash was an accident nor does he believe Cowboy Dave was involved in anything illegal.

Just two weeks before the crash, skydiver Andrew Thorton, who was also a BASE jumper, was killed making a night airplane jump in

Tennessee. Thorton was found in the driveway of a Knoxville residence with 75 pounds of cocaine strapped to his body. He was also carrying \$4,548 in cash, survival equipment, night vision goggles and automatic weapons.

According to the author, the media linked these two events because Dave Williams and Andrew Thorton knew each other as skydivers. They also speculated the foreign substance found in the fuel filters of the crashed Caravan was put

there by Columbians in response to the botched drug delivery.

Because of the media circus that followed, the author says, his son was indicted on drug smuggling charges by Tennessee authorities. He points out that tampering with an airplane's fuel system is a very imprecise way to kill someone, especially a skydiver. Although this particular engine failure resulted in a fatal crash, a forced landing was more probable. He also disputes the testimony of Bill Leonard.

Bill Leonard came forward and confessed to being aboard the airplane with Andrew Thorton the night he was killed. He testified that when Thorton found they were being followed by DEA agents he told Leonard

they would have to jump. Leonard never made a parachute jump before but he allegedly exited at 7000 feet, at night, and successfully landed on an airport runway. The author contends the real accomplice was an experienced jumper who used proceeds of the cocaine he carried to pay Leonard to take the rap.

The book is an intriguing look into a story of which only bits and pieces have been told. Details of Cowboy's BASE jumping activities are also documented. An un-used Caravan lift ticket is included with the book, an eerie reminder of *Cowboy's Caravan*. Available from: Sky Spec Publishing, Airport Box 75171, Cincinnati, Ohio 45275, \$16.95.



Anne Rienerth, Todd Shoebottom and Troy Fink "ham" it up on El Capitan while a thunderstorm looms overhead.

Photo by Keith Jones

GOING TO DOOMDOM!

BY • NICK DI GIOVANNI

It looked impressive even folded up. The ultimate toy. Two hundred sixty feet of portable legal BASE jump. With real understanding neighbors you could put one in your backyard.

Ralph Mittman, Moe Viletto and I stood in a small Tracy, California valley with 150-foot hills on both sides. Hang glider pilots and their students were taking sled rides through the cold morning air and hot air balloons floated in the distance.

The low rumble of a sweet sounding diesel brought the machine to life. "Watch this!" Said a gleeful John Kockelman as the crane upsurged and ascended. The *Bungee Boys* scrambled around and through the steel tube mass like they knew their stuff. It was cold, but it was excitement that made us shiver.

Bungee Adventures has evolved into its third phase under the direction of John and Peter Kockelman. The purveyors of plunge began by slinging bungee customers off out of the way bridges. Next came a tethered hot air balloon. The long trek to the bridges and getting winded with the balloon became obstacles to running a smooth operation. Both problems are now neatly solved.

John invited us to come see his new plaything when we saw him at Bridge Day. He was there for his first BASE jump and was ready to

promise anything as long as we helped him pack. I showed him one pack job and Moe Viletto showed him another. He opened both pack jobs, found a secluded corner, and packed himself up a third time. We smiled, "You gotta like this guy!"

The staff quickly attached cables to load balls and fixed a man basket to that. The main tower, which carries a flying cab, rose as an American flag was raised on its aft section. When it momentarily stopped at half mast we all yelled, "Leave it there!"

The main structure hinged up to 90 degrees and telescoped four times its own length. On top was an extended boom that could be placed in almost any position. The crane's movements are fully hydraulic, hence the smooth operation and, "Yes," John said, "you only need to worry when it stops spewing hydraulic fluid."

Raised to its full height we walked around it. I pushed on it here and there, trying to see if it would fall over. We stepped back and looked up the two hundred and sixty feet. "That's just a number," Moe said, "let's go up for a looksee."

We climbed into the casket . . . er, basket, and were whisked up fast enough to cause grabbing for something. The basket did a slow spin as it climbed and when it passed the cab, about three quarters of the way up, it started look-

ing pretty good. "We're screwed now," Ralph said!

We traveled the last fifteen feet with John calling numbers over the radio to "Rickster," who was operating the hoist and is also the chief danger photographer. We wanted all the altitude there was, yet pulling the load ball over the top pulley can separate the cable. All we had going for us was being carabinered into the basket. They'd have found us in a neat little pile with the most optimistic on top.

Sure, people have jumped from this altitude and lower. But, it's site specific and only reality when you do it. These free falls would be personal lows for all of us. I have jumped lower, but as John Hoover once said to an unconvinced judge, "It was really safe. Christ, it was only a *direct bag*!"

On our way to the crane we took a side trip to Bixby Creek Bridge. The Big Sur landmark built in 1922 says 260-feet on it. Yet, we convinced ourselves, it appeared 68 years of tides flowing beneath the bridge has made it slightly higher. It looked good enough to fold our pilot chutes and do slightly more than gulp-n-throws.

By the way, if you visit Bixby Creek and jump late in the day, make sure to leave yourself at least 30 minutes of daylight for the climb out. The trail is faint, steep and mostly loose sand and rock.

Meanwhile, back in the basket something looked wrong. This was way lower than Bixby Creek. An accurate digital *Ball* altimeter said the floor of the basket was 240-feet. I hoped it was just perspective. Jeez, it looked one stop below too late junction already.

Most BASE jumpers will say they prefer certain types of jumps. It seems though, BASE jumping is 90 percent opportunity and 10 percent, "let's check it out!" Looking over the side of the basket, I mentioned that Jean Boenish would

Some testing would need to be done, but could it be buddy assist provides openings faster than direct bag? It seemed faster. The idea is to let go of the pilot chute as your buddy gets line stretch, but it's a hard point in time to hit. You are prone to releasing the pilot chute only after bottom surface inflation is well under way. That means your fall is basically stopped in the length of the bridle. With direct bag, you're still burning altitude during inflation. From 240-feet, using buddy assist, canopy rides were in the conservative 7 second range.

Moe's buddy assist jump was smooth and on heading. We packed for freefall. This time we secured the basket better and it felt solid when I climbed over the railing. I pushed off, delayed just long enough to get a good chill and pitched for all I was worth.

I knew something went wrong as soon as I felt one riser load up before the other. Opening shock seemed harder than normal and spun me around. I saw the crane in front of me and uttered the customary, "Oh Shit!" But wait, I was moving away, I was facing the crane but my canopy wasn't. Yahoo! A *sweet* 180!

One half twist and four and a half seconds later, I was standing on the ground soaking up the applause from a group of stunned bungee customers. I watched intently as Moe climb over the rail. Have you ever noticed BASE jumping is scarier to watch than it is to do? He did, what I thought, was a healthy delay from 240-feet and had another dead on opening.

The party that night was as good as it gets. John Kockelman was learning about BASE jumping and now had New River and El Cap in his log book. He was bristling with questions. We were driving through downtown San

Francisco when John asked the toughest question of all. "Where are you going with this type of BASE jumping?" We couldn't stop laughing, so John felt the need to answer his own question with, "You're all going to doomdom!"

That really laid us out as John

brought the car to a stop. We were hysterical as we tumbled from the car. The laughter finally drifted away and was replaced with awe. We had arrived. The Golden Gate Bridge glistened red in the sunset. But, that's another story.



Peter and John Kockelman of "Bungee Adventures."

Photo by Nick Di Giovanni

Sucking Wind

...BASE pilot chutes

By • MOE VILETTO

The pilot chute may be the most important component of the BASE rig system. This is where it all begins. The pilot chute serves two critical functions. First, it opens the container and second, it creates the necessary drag to initiate deployment of the canopy. Thoroughly understanding how pilot chutes are constructed and how they function is important when selecting the correct type and size. It goes without saying, you're betting your life on the pilot chute, and if it doesn't work, you're going for the big ride.

Let's start by looking at the basic parts of a common BASE pilot chute. Most consist of the following; The pilot chute fabric and mesh section, the load tapes and center lines, a reinforcement on the apex and a hole or opening at the base.

The fabric section is what creates most of the drag. The mesh allows the relative wind to pass through the base of the pilot chute. The load tapes provide a skeletal framework and add strength. Most pilot chutes also have some sort of reinforcement at the apex because this is the high pressure section. Attached to this reinforcement is

the pilot chute center lines. These run down the inside of the pilot chute and serve to pull the apex down.

At the base, the pilot chute will have some method of attachment for the bridle. The base of most pilot chutes are open and this hole will vary in size from manufacturer to manufacturer. Let's look at these parts in greater detail, put them together, and see what, in my opinion, works best.

Right now the most common type of pilot chute fabric is F-111 or equivalent. It's pretty hard to beat F-111 for light weight and durability. There are new zero-porosity fabrics on the market like *Zee Pee* that supposedly holds its porosity longer. This may prove a good fabric for pilot chutes with the possible disadvantage of increased pack volume. Volume becomes important when you consider, a 52 inch pilot chute with its load tapes and all that fabric and mesh, makes quite a handful.

Mesh comes in various sizes and types. Due to the acid treatment problem, the ideal mesh should not have undergone the fire retardant process. Mesh can be made from nylon, dacron or polyester. All these seem to work

well because there isn't much load placed on the mesh.

The smallest mesh which has a very tight weave, like nylon stockings, has a very low pack volume but doesn't allow air to pass through very easily. The next size is the one familiar to most jumpers. This is the type found on most skydiving main pilot chutes.

The next size up is what I recommend for BASE pilot chutes. The hole size is increased to a quarter or even three eighths of an inch. This mesh seems to show good stability and is large enough to readily allow air to pass. Although it's available, I wouldn't go with holes larger than that. When sewing the mesh and fabric together there will be places where the stitching doesn't connect the two because the holes in the mesh are too large.

Another thing that effects the performance of a pilot chute is the load tapes. If installed incorrectly the pilot chute may wobble or spin. The load tapes, besides giving the pilot chute a framework, add strength. In the event of a tear, it would travel to and eventually stop at a load tape.

The center line, there could be one or more, that run from the top of the pilot chute to the base serve a most important purpose. They pull down the apex of the pilot chute. This allows for quicker inflation. It also gives the pilot chute its inflated shape and final surface area. Therefore, the pilot chute creates more drag.

Ideally a single center line is all you need, just make sure it's strong enough to do the job. I've seen some pilot chutes with as many as four center lines. This just creates the potential for entanglements. Keep it basic, keep it simple.

At the apex of the pilot there are two things going on. The load

tapes cross this section and the center lines are attached here. This is the highly loaded section and should be reinforced to help distribute that stress. Some pilot chutes have a grommet punched in the apex, to make an attachment for the center line, but it may not be wise to punch holes in the weakest part of the pilot chute.

A better way to attach the center line is by bar tacking it right to the reinforcement patch. One advantage is the stitching can be monitored to see if it is pulling out or has sustained any damage. Also using a grommet creates a hard spot, it's a piece of bulk that can foul or otherwise entangle the pilot chute.

For the same reason, the reinforcing patch on the apex should be round because you're dealing with a round pattern. There are some pilot chutes with square patches and hard corners. Again, there is snag potential. Also, a BASE pilot designed to be hand held shouldn't have a handle on it. Handles can entangle with bridles.

At the base of the pilot chute is the bridle attachment point. Generally this encompasses the load tapes and the center lines. On a well built pilot chute, the load tapes should run from the base across the mesh and fabric over the center reinforcing patch and back down the other side. Just like the lines of a cheap 28-foot round canopy.

There are various ways of attaching the bridle to the pilot chute. Some pilot chutes have the load tapes all sewn together at the base and incorporate a loop for the attachment. The disadvantage is this sewn area of two to four inches makes for a long hard spot which could entangle. The best method to attach the bridle would be to loop the bridle through the load tapes and the center line and bar tack the bridle back onto itself.

The only drawback is in order to replace or change the pilot chute the stitching has to be undone.

A more efficient way is to have a loop in the end of the bridle and route that through the loop made by the center line and load tapes. You can then run the bridle back through its own loop. This type of knot is called a larks head. The knot itself counts for a certain amount of bulk and a hard spot but not nearly as much as a long sewn section.

Construction wise, most pilot chutes are built inside out and turned right side out through the hole in the bottom. This hole itself can be good and bad. If the hole is large, say a diameter of 4, 6 or 8 inches than naturally the pilot chute will inflate quicker. The disadvantage, and again this is my opinion, is the larger the hole the more potential there is for pilot chute malfunctions.

Any part of the pilot chute can get blown into and through this hole. Even the bridle can get up in there. Additionally, the center line can come out of the hole and catch onto something. The best pilot chute configuration would have either no hole at all or a very small one. A small hole is nicely filled and protected by the bridle being cinched on. This is a very important reliability point. You certainly don't want any part of your pilot chute trying to invert.

There are some specialty pilot chutes available. Let's say you have small hands and need a 52 inch pilot for a particular jump. A pilot chute can be constructed without the load tapes to decrease the bulk. The smaller pack volume will fit your hand better. The disadvantage is it must be carefully inspected before every jump and has a less useful life. Also, without the load tapes a tear could be catastrophic.

Let's talk a little about pilot

chute size vs. drag. When you say you have a 48 inch pilot chute, where does that number come from? What does it really mean? Right now, there are probably a dozen or so manufactures of BASE pilot chutes. But the numbers that get throw around regarding size and drag are subject to a lot of misinterpretation.

The way to accurately measure a pilot chute is after it has been completely constructed. Measure the diameter across the load tapes, on the fabric section. This will give you a certain number. Yet, it's still easy to have a 48 inch pilot chute that creates more drag than a 52.

Type of fabric and mesh aside, the main drag variable is the center line and how far it pulls the apex down. The further the apex is pulled down the more the diameter of the pilot chute decreases. So even a pilot chute that measured out at 52 inches when flat on a table, will have a smaller diameter when inflated. So you can see the number of inches should only be used as a basic reference.

The amount of apex pull down is said to be the trim of a pilot chute. Generally, skydiving pilot chutes are trimmed with the apex about even with the skirt or where the fabric meets mesh. You can check the trim of a BASE pilot chute by holding it up side down. Make sure the base is even and follow one load tape down the mesh and fabric to the high point, this is where the load tape wants to turn back toward the apex.

With the load tape still in your hand, reach in for the center line and hold both under mild tension. Where the center line attaches to the apex in relation to where the fabric meets the mesh is the trim point. It should be in the plus or minus one inch range.

Bridle lengths generally run eight to nine feet. This is measured from the base of the pilot chute to

the pin or base of the shrivel flap. Bridle line is usually constructed of one inch wide type 4 square weave. Thinner webbing or suspension line is not recommended because of its tendency to kink or self knot. Also, it's not as easy to "S" fold and contain in your hand.

All pilot chutes have a certain effect on canopy performance. The larger the pilot chute the more drag it will exert on an inflated canopy. An extremely large pilot chute tends to hold back the center cells of the canopy and allows the end cells to out-fly them. If the pilot chute is very large and the brakes are set too deep there is potential for stall type openings. These type of openings tend to be more off-heading as well.

Let's talk about pilot chute deployment. There are many ways to hold, fold and deploy a pilot chute. A lot may depend on what type of jump you're doing. You always want to deploy the pilot chute in an orderly fashion. This means folding the pilot chute in a logical sequence. You want the fabric on top, followed by the mesh and finally the bridle. All three parts can be separately "S" folded and stacked neatly on top of each other in your hand. Leave enough slack in the bridle so you don't peel your shrivel flap or pull your pin as you launch. Too much slack floating around can get under your arm or under the corner of your rig.

Some people like to route the bridle between their thumb and pointer finger while others route the bridle out the bottom of their hand. Either way is acceptable, it just depends on how you hold your hand and throw the pilot chute while in freefall. Just remember, the bridle should go directly from your hand to the container.

Looking over the rail at Bridge Day, one can see many different methods of pilot chute deploy-

ment. One method observed that I don't agree with, is throwing the pilot chute down in front of you. Some say they like to watch the pilot chute inflate. The problem is while the pilot chute is going down the bridle is arching over and the pilot chute may go back up into the bridle.

I prefer pitching the pilot chute out to the side. Try to throw the pilot chute to the end of its bridle. If the bridle is nine feet don't throw the pilot six feet or twelve feet. Throwing too hard could possibly open your container before the pilot chute inflates or cause the pilot chute to recoil back into its bridle. Some people will let the pilot chute go without a pitch. Remember, any size pilot chute can hesitate if it gets into your burble. Ideally the pilot chute should be deployed, not just let go or thrown.

Some people hold the bridle and part of the mesh in their hands leaving the fabric fully exposed. This may be okay for doing go-n-throws but anything longer causes the pilot chute to partially inflate in the hand and may cause bad body position.

The serious BASE jumper should have an arsenal of differently sized pilot chutes. Personally, I use a 36 inch size with a plastic handle for terminal or near terminal velocity jumps. For jumps in the 300-foot and below range, I like to use a 52 inch type. The 52 definitely has a effect on the flight performance of my canopy, a Super Raven II. Although, at these lower attitudes the trade off is worth it because you're landing just about where you jumped anyway, you're basically just aiming for the planet. For the in-between jumps, I use a 45 inch pilot chute. If you must have only one pilot chute, I feel a good all around size is 48 inches.



Off The Wall

We call it, "going in the hole." Everybody says it's over real quick. But, I've seen enough junk fall off this building to know that's not true."

... Unidentified Mohawk ironworker, hanging steel on New York's World Center Building.

"We're physicians on vacation. I'm Dr. Stein, this is Dr. Viletto and that's Dr. Di Giovanni."

... Rich Stein, BASE 74, to a suspicious waitress who saw too much of us at an Arizona roadside restaurant.

The Trolls Are Us!

Bridge Day
1990

BY • NICK DI GIOVANNI

If I thought I could get a decent job in Fayetteville, I'd move there. Instead, I travel cross country once a year just to play. That magnificent bridge is always unchanged, but Bridge Day is always something new.

The perceived problems of Bridge Day were voiced by many and are varied. "There are too many skydivers here!" "There are too many BASE jumpers here!" "I came here to BASE jump not spin donuts!" "The Chamber of Commerce should be paying us!" And, the ever popular, "we want our money back!"

Wait a second, is this a BASE jump or a skydiving boogie? It's really not that unusual for BASE jumpers to travel great distances, spending lots of time and money on jumps they never get to make. Politics, and the people who practice it, will always come and go. The fact is, over 300 people did BASE jump from the New River Bridge. *Doesn't anybody find that amazing anymore?*

Besides, the real price of Bridge Day isn't measured in money or inconvenience. As readily as the bridge will ignore our petty bickering it can be swift and hard in its judgment of our actions. That none of the injuries incurred this year

were life threatening is the real bottom line.

We first met Japan's Fumio Kubo the day before Bridge Day. He looked like a BASE jumper, he had that way of looking all ways at once. We laughed and drank and all was fine until I turned into the ugly American, "I've seen them using bamboo scaffolding on tall buildings where you live?"

"No brother, that's Hong Kong!"

"Oh, sorry," I even bowed a little. He avoided me for the rest of the night. The next day Fumio admitted to never BASE jumping before, "I never BASE jump, I know absolutely nothing!" He said. So much for it takes one to know one.

The next time I saw him was when he tapped me on the back at the launch point and asked, "Now BASE jump?"

"Yes, Fumio," I said, "now BASE jump!" With one foot on the rail and the other still on the wooden steps, he just Owen Quinned himself over side. He lost a toggle during opening but still made the landing area. Only at Bridge Day!

The keep out the whuffo tapes in the landing area were already up when staff member Don "Jake" Jacobson said, "Ya know, if we move this one tape back, we'll get another 30 feet of overrun."

"How you gonna move that crowd," asked another staff member?

"Easy," Jake said, "we'll just use psychology." He approached the crowd of over one hundred who already had staked out their ground with lawn chairs and beer coolers. "If you don't move back another 30 feet," he said, "you're all gonna get killed!" It worked and the extra room surely saved some injuries.

John Kockelman of Bungee Adventures, one of the most experienced bungee jumpers in the world, came to the launch point with a parachute. His show-room condition Vector gave away his skydiving experience but his thousands of bungee jumps ensured a face to earth deployment. We won't harp on his slam no flair stretch for the dry stuff landing. After all, that part was new.

Tom and Vivian King were married in a short ceremony on the bridge and became the angle of most media coverage. Instead of focusing on how crazy we were, it became how double crazy the groom was. Thanks, for taking the heat off us, Tom!

The scariest incident, next to the wedding, was one jumper who found himself just one second away from *Steve Gyrsting's Locker*. The skydiving pilot chute he towed for almost six seconds, for some reason, decided to inflate. Five seconds into his jump the staff was yelling, "watch it, watch it!" But, the jumper went well passed the point where he should have deployed his reserve. It just wasn't his time. There are still jumpers using small pilot chutes and short bridles at Bridge Day. Get real!

Bridge Day is a F-111 laboratory. The majority of deployments were uneventful, if not a little scary looking. It's a steady reminder of the soundness of basic parachute design. Deployment

bags seemed the popular option this year. A good thing, because there were numerous head down kick the bag deployments. On-heading openings were rare among first timers and some ballistic line twists were scored. Three line-overs were observed, two cleared themselves while the third jumper used the line-over modification.

There were many landing techniques utilized. Everything from stable accuracy approaches to the flail kick turn in, hoping for the best, method. One great, this should be good, landing belonged to Mike Allen. Mike arrived in the landing area with altitude in the bank and no where to go. He ended up bat-like, wrapped and suspended, up-side down in a tree just inches from the ground. That's how it's supposed to work, isn't it, run out of fun, altitude and BASE jump all at the same time.

The New River was swift and running over it's banks and this concerned the rescue boat personal. The main worry seemed to be the first set of rapids under the bridge.

The rescue boat personal came to the conclusion that if simultaneous water rescues had to be performed, the result would be the loss of one and maybe more jumpers to the fast running river. The Park Service, under advise of the boat crew, decided to issue the permit to land on park property with the condition that landings be made one at a time. In addition to banning multiple exits this meant if someone got wet, jumping was put on hold until that jumper was plucked from the river and safely returned to shore.

This caused long lines on the bridge all day and the staff at the launch point were inundated with requests to turn it up. Repeated radio requests to the boats always received the same terse reply. It

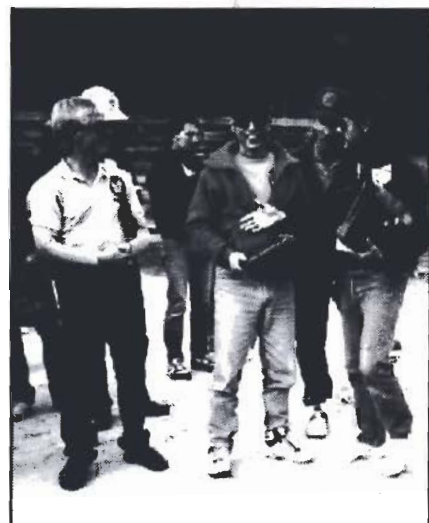
was one at a time or the permit would be yanked. It may be argued that jumping could have been speeded up, but it was hard to argue the danger posed by the New River.

It is safe to assume that many first time BASE jumpers believe the jump is the most dangerous part and tend to see a possible water landing as something they'll worry about when it happens. This was borne out when only a small amount of water gear was seen on the bridge. Many jumpers later mentioned they would have been goners without the boats.

It was estimated that as many as 50 jumpers were still in line when the deadline on jumping arrived. Those who jumped anyway were greeted in the landing area with shouts of "cutaway, runaway!" *The real BASE jumping had begun.* Rangers confiscated six rigs and cited seven jumpers who landed after the permit expired. Eighteen jumpers received tickets throughout the day for landing on the railroad tracks.

Through most of the day the cry at the launch point was, "hurry up man, I really gotta go!" It seemed standing in long lines made jumpers very susceptible to what British BASE jumpers call, "the nervous pees!" Someone at the post jump meeting logically suggested Porta-Potties on the bridge next year.

Due to the closure of Canyon Rim park, registration was initially held in the Fayette Memorial building. The "Gym" was also the place to pack and get help from the staff. Tables were set up and BASE gear was for sale. Todd Shoebotham, of T&T Rigging, reported brisk sales of BASE pilot chutes, bridles and mesh sliders. He observed, "Jumpers are finally getting the message, and even though most will only make this one BASE jump, they're investing



Nick Di Giovanni accepts the "International BASE Fellowship Award" on behalf of The JOURNAL staff from Don "Jake" Jacobson.

Photo by Moe Viletto

in the correct way to set up their rigs."

Tailored For Survival's Moe Viletto was also there with his full line of gear. Professional stuntman David Nunn jumped Viletto's newest BASE rig, called The Blade, under a white suit which caused quite a stir on the bridge from people who didn't realize David had a rig on.

The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL had a table and we really enjoyed meeting the people who stopped by. I kept looking for Bill Ottley because I saw his name on a list of checked in jumpers at the Holiday Inn. I should have know better, Jacques Istel was also on the list.

The meeting and packing area for Bridge Day '90 was the Rivers Camp Ground. Pick-up trucks shuttled jumpers back and forth. The long walk from the drop off to the launch point was a killer, but the Rivers proved a good site. It had facilities missing in Canyon Rim Park, which included a saloon that proved popular with jumpers. The post jump meeting and USBA elections were also held at the Rivers. Local photographers, who

Continued on page 18

Subterminal...

Photos from the field



Peer pressure, at
Bridge Day 1990!
Photo by "Tim"

Subterminal...



Bag holder Craig Phifer grins, but Rich Stein, BASE #74, is having all the fun.

Photo by Whuffo

must live for this one day, had everyone's picture proofs mounted on boards in the camp ground even before all jumpers had returned from the bridge.

A fight erupted at the post jump meeting during discussion of why so many didn't get to jump. Cutting the line was cited as one reason and some jumpers were mentioned by name. Scotty Carbone stepped forward to defend himself and came up with what was probably the best line heard at Bridge Day '90. "I made four jumps by accident!"

It sounded plausible to us. Actually, quite a few managed to make more than one jump, they just weren't as flamboyant as Carbone. One jumper in the crowd shouted Carbone down and called him an ass. Carbone responded, "Your wife liked it," and we thought he was making a comeback when the fight was stopped! I looked over my shoulder and saw the rangers smiling as they watched us self destruct.

Some constructive ideas were offered. One suggested that jumpers get a number during registration and that jumps be made sequentially. Another asked for an experienced launch point over the railroad tracks, he said, "I didn't really want to jump over that river anyway. I'd rather make three jumps from 600-feet than stand in line all day for one from 900!" A few others reiterated a need, they felt, for changes in the way Bridge Day is run.

Greg Cambell stepped forward, blissfully ignorant of the maelstrom he had wandered into. Greg had earlier looked over the rail, saw what he figured he needed to see, borrowed a rig and went for it. He was basically out of control for most of the canopy decent but managed a landing in the trees by the railroad tracks. He was full of



Photo by Aerial Focus

that after jump glow as he declared, "I just made my first parachute jump ever!" I thought the guy should have gotten a better round of applause, but the crowd was on a roll.

Suggestions for change didn't pan out when the USBA held elections that ratified a constitution presented by Jean Boenish. Phil Smith and Brad Smith were also

elected directors for two year terms. Jean Boenish said she'll remain executive director of USBA until next Bridge Day when the directors will appoint a new one.

The final numbers on Bridge Day 1990 were approximately, three hundred and seventy jumps, no hits, a few runs from rangers, and about 50 left on. C-YA next year!



The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL Interviews...

A Conversation With Jean Boenish BASE #3

"... if more people helped put out fires instead of starting them, everybody would benefit."

Mark Hewitt, 1990

For ten years, Jean Boenish has been telling us to show some respect. Respect for ourselves, respect for the sport of BASE jumping and respect for the planet we live on. We laughed at her. It was the 1980's, the "me" decade. Nowadays, even Andy Calistrat separates his bottles and cans for recycling.

Jean hasn't fully emerged from the shadow of her famous husband. You can still hear Carl Boenish in her words and ideals and that fact makes it very easy to underestimate this lady. Now and then, if you're watching, you'll catch a look, a phrase, a move. She could, if she wanted, black death it with the best of them.

We wanted a different side of Jean Boenish for this interview, but it was tough because Jean is always "on" and maybe a little gun-shy of revealing things her distractors might use against her. Yet, who can blame her? To anybody outside the sport, our treatment of Jean must surely seem cruel and unusual.

The 1990's may be Jean's decade. Though younger than most of us, we may be finally catching up with her. Jean is the playground monitor, the conscious of our sport. Always ready to tell us when we've gone too far, and she pays the price. History will be kinder to Jean Boenish than we've ever been.

The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL - For the benefit of newer jumpers tell us how the acronym "BASE" come about?

Jean Boenish - What lead to that was Carl devised a little plan for fixed object jumping. He saw a pattern to the jumps we were making. He suggested we call it TEBB jumping.

TFOJ - Tower, Earth, Building and Bridge?

JEAN - I'm not quite sure now, I seem to remember an "S" in there somewhere. He had it narrowed down to four categories, I think it was TEBS.

TFOJ - TEBS jumping?

JEAN - The first time I heard it, that's what I said, "Come on, TEBS jumping!" It really didn't sing.

TFOJ - You took a big chance including buildings, since none of you had actually jumped one yet?

JEAN - Phil Smith was hot for the Texas Commerce Tower. He knew he was gonna jump off that building. Besides, Owen Quinn had already done the World Trade Center in New York, so we knew it was possible.

TFOJ - Who first realized all objects would fit into just four categories?

JEAN - I guess it was Carl. We thought of as many objects as we could and they all seemed to fit.

But, we needed another vowel in the word. We finally narrowed it down to BEST and BASE. BEST was Building, Earth, Span and Tower. I liked BEST because it seemed more logical. You didn't have to call a tower an antenna. But, I knew BASE sounded good too. It had that structure aspect. Yet, I was a little concerned about the second definition, which meant evil and vile.

TFOJ - What decided it?

JEAN - As soon as the rest of the guys heard BASE, it was a done deal. I could see it in their eyes. They were going, "BASE jumping, yeah, that's it!"

TFOJ - Where are you from originally?

JEAN - I'm really an east coast girl.

TFOJ - What brought you to California?

JEAN - I came here to attend Pomona college.

TFOJ - How did you meet Carl Boenish?

JEAN - I met him in April of 1979 during my first year of school. A friend invited me to a party and Carl was there showing a film. It turned out to be *Skydive* and he was showing it for the first time and it was really neat!

TFOJ - It still is!

JEAN - Yes, and he was really enthusiastic, running around and

laughing that laugh of his and I was looking at him and . . . well, to make a long story short, we were two ships passing in the night at that point. We kept in touch by mail. I think it impressed him when I started skydiving. After that, he'd give me rides to Elsinore. He'd say it was on his way but it turned out to be fifty miles out of his way. The fourth time we went out together we became engaged.

TFOJ - Isn't it funny how life works. You could have moved to California and met Sammy Ramos!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Yes, my life certainly would have been different.

TFOJ - You were quite a bit younger than Carl?

JEAN - I was 19 and Carl was 38. We didn't realize it because he thought I was older and I thought he was younger. By the time we figured it out, it didn't matter anymore.

TFOJ - Where and how did you start skydiving?

JEAN - Skydiving was something I wanted to do, especially after I'd met Carl that one time. The "where" was in Roundup, Montana. The "how" was . . . out of an airplane, I jumped, the chute opened and I landed . . . it was all very simple and believable!

LAUGHTER

TFOJ - Montana?

JEAN - I was working for the U.S. Geological Survey and one day I went for a walk out to the local airport. On the way a pickup truck stopped and offered me a ride. There were all manner of parachutes hanging out the windows and doors. We were talking and I mentioned I knew Carl Boenish, only at that time, I was pronouncing it Bo-nish.

LAUGHTER

JEAN - "It's pronounced Ba-nish," they said, and I corrected them, "Oh no, it's Bo-nish!"

TFOJ - What year was this?

JEAN - This was 1979. I went to the airport and there was a small DZ and they asked if I'd like to learn how? Well, I thought, here was the opportunity, go for it!

TFOJ - How'd it go?

JEAN - Great! It was a round, old style, sunset load in the boonies and it was just beautiful. Bill Bishop, my jumpmaster, was buzzing me with his square. I was hooked!

TFOJ - When did it hit . . . well, maybe that's the wrong word there, when did you know you would also start BASE jumping?

JEAN - Oh, to me it was . . . at that point . . . it was neat because I landed in the middle of all this and it was all totally new. BASE jumping made perfect sense to me. My natural inclination was already toward things human powered and it seemed something I'd actually prefer.

TFOJ - You mean, instead of jumping out of carbon spewing airplanes?

JEAN - Exactly!

TFOJ - Where was your first BASE jump?

JEAN - New River Gorge Bridge in 1980. We were preparing to jump and almost went to Canyon de Chelly in Arizona. We all thought, however, it would be better for me to make a bridge jump first.

TFOJ - Is that where you developed the "hinge" method of launching?

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Boy, how long will that follow me around!

TFOJ - Why didn't Carl take you to El Cap for your first BASE jump?

JEAN - You have to remember my first BASE jump was only my 34th parachute jump of any kind. I had a very limited number of square jumps and there weren't piggy-back rigs for students either. People with 34 jumps just didn't

do the types of things I was doing. Besides El Cap, at that time, wasn't known as a beginner's BASE site like it is today.

TFOJ - Did you ever talk to Michael Pelkey, the first person to jump El Cap?

JEAN - Carl really tried to locate him but never could, nobody seemed to know where he was.

TFOJ - Did you check the penitentiary system?

LAUGHTER

TFOJ - Who was that other guy, who jumped with Pelkey?

JEAN - We've never been able to find out. He's always just been, "that other guy."

TFOJ - Tell us about your first building jump?

JEAN - We went to the Texas Commerce Tower with Phil Smith and Phil Mayfield. The conditions that day didn't really suit us so we decided to just film.

TFOJ - Did the concept of jumping a building frighten you?

JEAN - No, not really. We were too excited about what we were doing to be scared. Jim Handbury made us some special rigs, which turned out to be the forerunner to the BASE rig. It was a large container with a single pin. We went and did Cessna test jumps with those rigs and the 48 inch pilot chutes he made for us. I was more nervous about that than the actual building jump.

TFOJ - You jumped the building at night?

JEAN - Yes, the conditions seemed better at night. Less wind, less traffic. I guess it was a bit spooky. There were wires and other obstacles that needed to be avoided. The landing area was a parking lot with a wire running diagonally across it and I was jumping a round, a big man's piglet.

TFOJ - What an oxymoron!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Phil Smith was jumping a five cell Strato Flyer. The one you

called Para-Flite's Edsel! He already had a few hard landings with it and we'd kid him but he swore by that canopy. He jumped and just hammered himself into the asphalt. We ran to see if he was all right and he bounced up and said "I'm fine, I'm fine! There's nothing wrong with my Strato Flyer, it's the perfect canopy!"

LAUGHTER

TFOJ - Did anybody in that original group think BASE jumping would become as popular as it has?

JEAN - When Carl showed the El Cap film at the 1979 Nationals the response was definitely positive. I won't say it caused a mad rush but the genie was out of the lamp. Jumpers began going to El Cap but it was pretty much only the most experienced skydivers who were doing it. The growing popularity really was evident by the time of the first legal season there in 1980.

TFOJ - What made Carl start *BASE Magazine*, the first BASE publication?

JEAN - He saw the need to get safety information out and to have a forum for the positive growth of the sport. But, to use his own words, it was mainly, "A labor of love." He put a lot of time and money into that project.

TFOJ - Did the rift that developed between skydiving and BASE jumping bother Carl?

JEAN - Ya know, Carl was such a good natured fellow, it never did. We knew it was USPA that turned against BASE jumping. Carl wasn't getting any flack from skydivers. I think jumpers, his friends, knew he was really a nice person and could see what he was trying to do. He was just the jolly filmer. That was the beginning of the idea for the USBA. We knew we needed an organization of our own.

TFOJ - What would Carl have thought about getting the USPA Achievement Award?

JEAN - I'll tell you right now, Carl would have looked at that . . . as something for the rest of us who are still here. He was always respectful of the awards and in fact I think he was more interested in numbers and awards than he would have confessed. He would have been proud of it and it probably would have embarrassed him a bit. Getting that award was nice for another reason. It gave the rest of Carl's family the memorial service they never had.

TFOJ - Have you ever been arrested for BASE jumping?

JEAN - No. The closest brush was the lawsuit from Crocker Center.

TFOJ - What did the suit ask for?

JEAN - They wanted \$100,000 for potential damages and a restraining order against us. The judge also wanted us to turn over the subscription list of *BASE Magazine*. They knew it was essentially a list of BASE jumpers.

TFOJ - What was the outcome of the suit?

JEAN - It was eventually settled out of court. They dropped everything but the restraining order. We were ordered not to discuss the settlement. Over the years however, I've ceased not discussing the settlement.

TFOJ - So the restraining order is still in effect?

JEAN - Yes, I'm the only person legally banned from jumping off the Crocker Center building.

TFOJ - So, how many times have you done it since then?

LAUGHTER

JEAN - I'll never tell!

TFOJ - What's been your most memorable BASE jump?

JEAN - The most beautiful was Half Dome. The jump I thought most electrifying was the Troll Spire.

TFOJ - Tell us more about that?

JEAN - It was a 17 second freefall and a real mind blower. It's very satisfying from a BASE jumping

perspective. Can't you just imagine it?

TFOJ - I think, I'd go to sleep!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - A most astounding thing happened on that jump. I had always counted, not out loud but in my head. On this jump I was taking in the view and everything rushing by and the count was pushed into my subconscious. Time really slowed down and after a while, I actually heard this little voice come back saying 15, 16, 17! It was something I thought about a lot afterward. I felt I had reached a new level in my BASE jumping. I didn't know if other people experienced that on shorter jumps?

TFOJ - Well, just the other night at the Hazard Center building, I was bagging from 145-feet and counting in my mind and . . .

LAUGHTER

JEAN - I think it was just nature's way of communicating. A natural high velocity close-proximity form of communication!

TFOJ - Go Jean, you're on a roll!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Sorry, it's just that I find so much about BASE jumping so amazing.

TFOJ - What's been the weirdest phone call you've ever received from someone requesting a BASE number?

JEAN - That's easy, I don't remember his name but this one fellow had a portable phone and called from the top of El Cap. He said, "I'll bet you can't guess where I am?" The connection was amazingly good and he wanted to know what the next available BASE number was, so I told him!

TFOJ - Did you also tell him, "If you don't call back in three minutes, you're deleted?"

LAUGHTER

JEAN - All the people who call for a BASE number are just bubbling over with enthusiasm, it's just wonderful to be able to share in

that.

TFOJ - How do you feel about people who start BASE jumping with little or no skydiving experience like Greg Cambell at this year's Bridge Day?

JEAN - It seems most have some kind of accident before realizing the value of a skydiving background. Greg Cambell, who just borrowed a rig and went for it at Bridge Day seemed an intelligent fellow. I think if he knew more about BASE jumping he would have realized he just squeaked by. I heard he recently made some tower jumps, so he probably knows better already.

TFOJ - Do you think it's inevitable we'll start to see more of this?

JEAN - Well, you could put someone up in a paraglider to learn canopy

control and there are the wind tunnels to train in. But, there is no place like skydiving to learn emergency procedures. I think all the people who started BASE jumping without skydiving eventually reach a level where they either begin skydiving or stop BASE jumping.

TFOJ - What are you going to do with all the early BASE rigs and equipment you have? Do you think all that stuff should be preserved.

JEAN - Of course it should. In addition to the BASE gear, there are things like the bat wings from the movie *The Gypsy Moths* and all the films and historical stuff. I've thought about this for a long time. I have something in the works and some interest has been expressed but I really shouldn't talk about it until it's firm.

TFOJ - How do you see the future of BASE jumping?

JEAN - I know BASE jumping is here to stay, you've already shown

it has a colorful past in your writing. As for the future, it will change, but people will always jump off things. It has changed in just the past few years. It has taken a course, that I understand but don't necessarily agree with. Some folks play up the outlaw image in a humorous way, but the really crude and nasty BASE jumpers are just . . . well, a drag to be around sometimes.

TFOJ - So where are we going . . . doomdom?

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Well, not necessarily all of us!

LAUGHTER

“...this is really going to come back and haunt me.”

JEAN - It will depend on the type of people the jumpers choose to follow. In the beginning it was simple. There weren't many BASE jumpers and we all communicated well. We all knew what the goal was. Today, with so many BASE jumpers, there seems to be a loss of that accurate communication and common goal. That's why I feel organization has become even more important. Especially if we want to open up more legal sites.

TFOJ - Is that what you think jumpers want?

JEAN - Well, you can try to follow the advice of jumping and not telling anybody. But, I think in all this time, I know of only two people who jump and never tell anybody.

TFOJ - No you don't!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - See, you're right, I guess I don't! But, to have 5 people go and jump El Cap ten years ago was no big deal. Now you have hundreds who are interested in doing it.

TFOJ - Yes, but the majority know how to be low key and avoid getting caught. A lot of them will say they don't want El Cap turned into a skydiving circus.

JEAN - I feel BASE jumping is a legitimate sport and an important one as well. No one wants to turn it into an artificially regulated circus. It should remain as natural as possible. But, I think we need to be organized so that the sheer numbers of people doing it can be responsible. I know some people are tired of me preaching environmental concerns but we are no longer small enough to ignore it.

TFOJ - What about climbers who

pretty much do what they want?

JEAN - Climbers are spread out. I know organization is a word that

seems to scare BASE jumpers and maybe coordination is a better word. Climbers have that coordination. They have their little route books that show what is expected of them, what each pitch is, and it's not overly organized.

TFOJ - How about the jumpers who like BASE jumping just the way it is?

JEAN - Well, if they like not having access to sites, and they like people going up to sites without complete information and they like it that more people will be hurt, then I don't know, because I don't understand that. Sure, I know some people really like the excitement of getting away with it, heck, I understand the "thrill" of the chase. But, with organization we can work out what aspects of BASE jumping we want to retain and which ones we want to drop or improve.

TFOJ - Have you ever woken up in the middle of the night thinking BASE jumping was really insane?

JEAN - No, but it sounds like you have!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Let's see, I did look at some things I knew I wouldn't do again. I won't jump an antenna again unless the tower is turned off. The radiation is a real concern to me. To answer your original question, no, I've never thought BASE jumping was insane. But, it is intense. I do feel I need to take breaks from it sometimes.

TFOJ - Is that what you're doing now?

JEAN - Yes, I know there are people running around saying, "Jean Boenish doesn't even jump anymore," but my rig is out in the car, you never know when you may want to do something. If Moe would re-pack my reserve, I'm ready!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - I don't think it's fair to ask anybody if they've stopped BASE jumping. If people really feel the need to get on their high horse about it, I'm the type to not say anything if I do jump again.

TFOJ - Do you think BASE jumping would have held Carl's interest this long?

JEAN - This is his wife talking and informed speculation on my part, but I know Carl was ready for a change when he died. Yet, like many jumpers, he had a terrible time getting away from it.

TFOJ - Do you mean the whole parachuting scene?

JEAN - He'd pretty much stopped jumping from aircraft at that time. He'd only do it for work, the movie type jumps. Skydiving just didn't hold any interest for him anymore, he never said that in public, but he said it to me.

TFOJ - What do you think Carl would have done next?

JEAN - Believe it or not, and he told me this a number of times, he wanted to teach 8th grade math. But, like I said, I know he would

have had a very hard time quitting. Look at the way people criticize me with, "why isn't she jumping?" Carl couldn't have faced that. If he had stopped jumping, I don't think the issue would have ever been completely settled in his mind, and to have jumpers, people he considered family, coming up to him and saying, "you sold your gear and you don't jump anymore," would have really hurt Carl. It's the same with me and probably most others as well, I think very few people ever say, "that's it, I'll never jump again!" Jumping is too much a way of life.

TFOJ - What bothers you the most about BASE jumping today?

JEAN - Gee, I can see this in black and white, this is really gonna come back and haunt me!

LAUGHTER

TFOJ - Trust us!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - Oh boy! I think the main thing I don't like is BASE jumpers limiting themselves by digging this trench and saying, "this is how BASE jumping should be!" When BASE jumping began we were trying to break limitations. In my observation the sport has hit a plateau, which is bound to happen. But, we should continue coming up with new ideas, gear and techniques. A new upswing will come if jumpers just remain open and receptive to it.

TFOJ - How specifically, have we limited ourselves?

JEAN - By saying BASE jumping has to remain underground, that it can't be organized. That just stops the sport from progressing. There are exciting things in the future. However, a lot of things aren't realistic without organization. We need more authorized sites. People are settling for what they can get out of BASE jumping right now, they don't have a dream for the sport.

TFOJ - What makes some people

who make a BASE jump turn into Joe Outlaw right away?

JEAN - It may be an overreaction to the freedoms they find when coming from skydiving.

TFOJ - How do you think Bridge Day 1990 went?

JEAN - We are close to having Bridge Day just right, so the flaws left are standing out more. We have simply reached a point at New River where so many are working for the common good that the whole event has become extremely popular. But, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing, and there is a maximum number of spectators and jumpers the Bridge Day event can handle. All the groups we work with are wonderfully supportive. Most jumpers don't realize, we couldn't really ask for more.

TFOJ - Are you still having a good time at Bridge Day?

JEAN - It hasn't been much fun lately because of these personality problems that have been created. It's like the Mark Hewitt situation, when so many people seemed to turn on him. That whole thing was manufactured and stirred up into a big mess. Those people involved were all friends and if they would just stop and think for a moment they would realize they still are. I don't know Mark closely, but I like him, and I won't let anybody sway my thinking. Most of the people who come to me with complaints don't see the big picture and don't realize they are being manipulated by others with ulterior motives.

TFOJ - Care to mention someone in particular?

JEAN - Next question please.

LAUGHTER

TFOJ - What would you like to see happen?

JEAN - I want people to express on the outside what BASE jumping has done for them on the inside. I want people to be able to grow, learn and enjoy the journey

through BASE jumping. I think everybody should be afforded that opportunity. When I see people with just a few BASE jumps already embroiled in the politics, it makes me sad. If people would only let themselves enjoy the experience and help nurture the activity we'd keep going in the right direction.

TFOJ - What does Bridge Day mean to you?

JEAN - To be in line and make a new friend or two. To see the gleam in their eyes, to hear the truly sincere excitement and curiosity in all the voices around you . . . that is the beauty of Bridge Day. It's too valuable an experience to just throw by the wayside.

TFOJ - Do you think you are an easy target for criticism?

JEAN - Yes, but I'm not above criticism. I'm not perfect and I do listen to what people say. The hurtful and mean spirited criticism doesn't bother me too much when I consider the source.

TFOJ - How do you feel about the Yosemite Skydiving Association and their attempt to get El Cap legalized?

JEAN - It's a good step. I do think it was foolish for that group to jump in the middle of the day like that, but I respect their decision to fight. It's also good because it lets the Park Service know again, that, yes, we remain serious about cliff jumping.

TFOJ - Isn't El Cap a big loose end in your life?

JEAN - Yes, it's been a long fight for just one point of contention. But, I'd like to see it decided the right way. Even after a judicial decision it won't be over. If the decision is favorable there has been the threat of some type of backlash from the Park Service. You must remember what a sore spot jumping is with them. If the decision is against us, that won't change the truth of the matter and we will go on fighting. On a personal level, I have actually set it aside this year because of the YSA, but I'm ready to hit them again or help set up a legal season, if that's the way it works out.

TFOJ - What projects did Carl leave unfinished?

JEAN - There is a book he started on BASE jumping I intend to finish. It's historical, an examination of what BASE jumping is rather than a "how to" book.

TFOJ - Was Carl planning a film on BASE jumping?

JEAN - Yes, he was working on a BASE film since 1979. He was filming all the BASE jumping he could. He just never stopped long enough to put it together.

TFOJ - Will

you run again for executive director of the USBA?

JEAN - I won't be eligible next year.

TFOJ - Who do you see as your successor?

JEAN - It's too early to tell.

TFOJ - We're backing Scotty Carbone for the job!

LAUGHTER

JEAN - I tell you this, the USBA will never get on it's feet without an infusion of support. There is no money right now to do anything.

TFOJ - What do you say to Johnny Jumper who gets out his little calculator and says, "Gee, 344 jumpers at \$30 apiece, what does Jean do with all that money?"

JEAN - If he thinks 344 people paid \$30 he's way off. There is an accounting available for any registered jumper to look at for the last three years. I just finished paying the bills for this year and the 1990 accounting will be ready soon.

TFOJ - What about the Scotty Carbone incident?

JEAN - Scotty was in violation of the permit, but so were other people. Scotty just made a spectacle of himself. The Park Service is working on sending Scotty a citation. It would be unprincipled and unfair especially to the other jumpers who followed the rules, for the USBA not to go along with it. I just wish there was a peer way to get his attention, a censure by the jumpers. I don't want anybody to get a ticket or get arrested, but I do want them to have fun. I hope Scotty had *that* much fun.

TFOJ - What was the last thing Carl Boenish ever said to you?

JEAN - Hmmm . . . that's between me and Carl.

TFOJ - Is there anything else you would like to say?

JEAN - No, I'm probably in enough hot water already!

TFOJ - Let's go jump?

JEAN - Let's go dude!



Last Off...

Psst! Hey Buddy, Wanna Organize?

At some point, many BASE jumpers make a startling discovery. They are really parachute jumpers! Skydiving was just their only way to make a parachute jump. Then a funny thing happens. Some start spending less time at the DZ. A few stop going there altogether.

These are people who spent years deeply involved in skydiving. Some taught, some rigged, others competed or fun jumped. This says a lot for the sport of BASE jumping. These were people who would have bet the house they'd be hard-core skydivers the rest of their lives.

BASE jumping was something they did for themselves. As a group they learned the dangers of turning just anybody on to BASE jumping. They learned to use peer pressure to keep all but the most lame from blowing sites. They learned how to keep from killing themselves. Not bad, for a loose band of brothers.

Skydivers, being dependent on others, must be organized and present a positive image. BASE jumpers, on the other hand, needing no permission or support can do what they want. They can wear the skulls and bones, snicker at the last luckless soul who screwed the

pooch and generally delight in the black humor of it all.

People who BASE jump like their independence. This is why the organizational question remains up in the air. Organizing sounds good, but it carries a lot of baggage with it.

"...many BASE jumpers make a startling discovery. They are really parachute jumpers!"

What will organizing do for us? Simply put, it will help bring about more sites, better gear and safer jumping. What will organizing do to us? Not much, I think. If you like BASE jumping the way it is, it will surely remain the same underground network of cool people you've come to know and love. Just because we organize isn't going to turn BASE jumping into skydiving.

How do we organize? Well, we have to organize before we can figure that out. We need to pick somebody and send them a twenty. Your money buys you one vote. The first question is, should we organize? If the answer is no, the left over money is equally refunded and that's that. If the consensus

BY • NICK DI GIOVANNI

is yes, we can go on from there.

BASE jumpers have historically shown they have problems with stuff like this. If you look closer you'll find it's not because we're a bunch of juvenile delinquents. It's

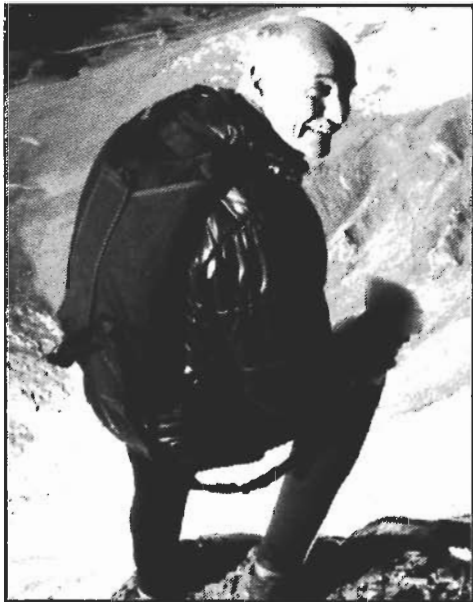
because although we know there's nothing inherently evil about BASE jumping, we've had to fight a prejudice that arbitrarily tried to squelch BASE jumping. I think that battle is over. BASE

jumping is here to stay.

The next logical step is to build something out of our victory. How we handle the organizational question will reflect on BASE jumping's true character and we should decide the issue one way or the other. It would spare us the infighting that occurs while the pot lies simmering.

We may be outlaws, in the best sense of the word, but sometimes I feel we're guilty of believing our own bad press, which I know isn't true. I've met too many "quality" BASE jumpers. We have the chance to do something really special here. We could have an organization that keeps us on track and still flies the Jolly Roger! We could have it all!





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