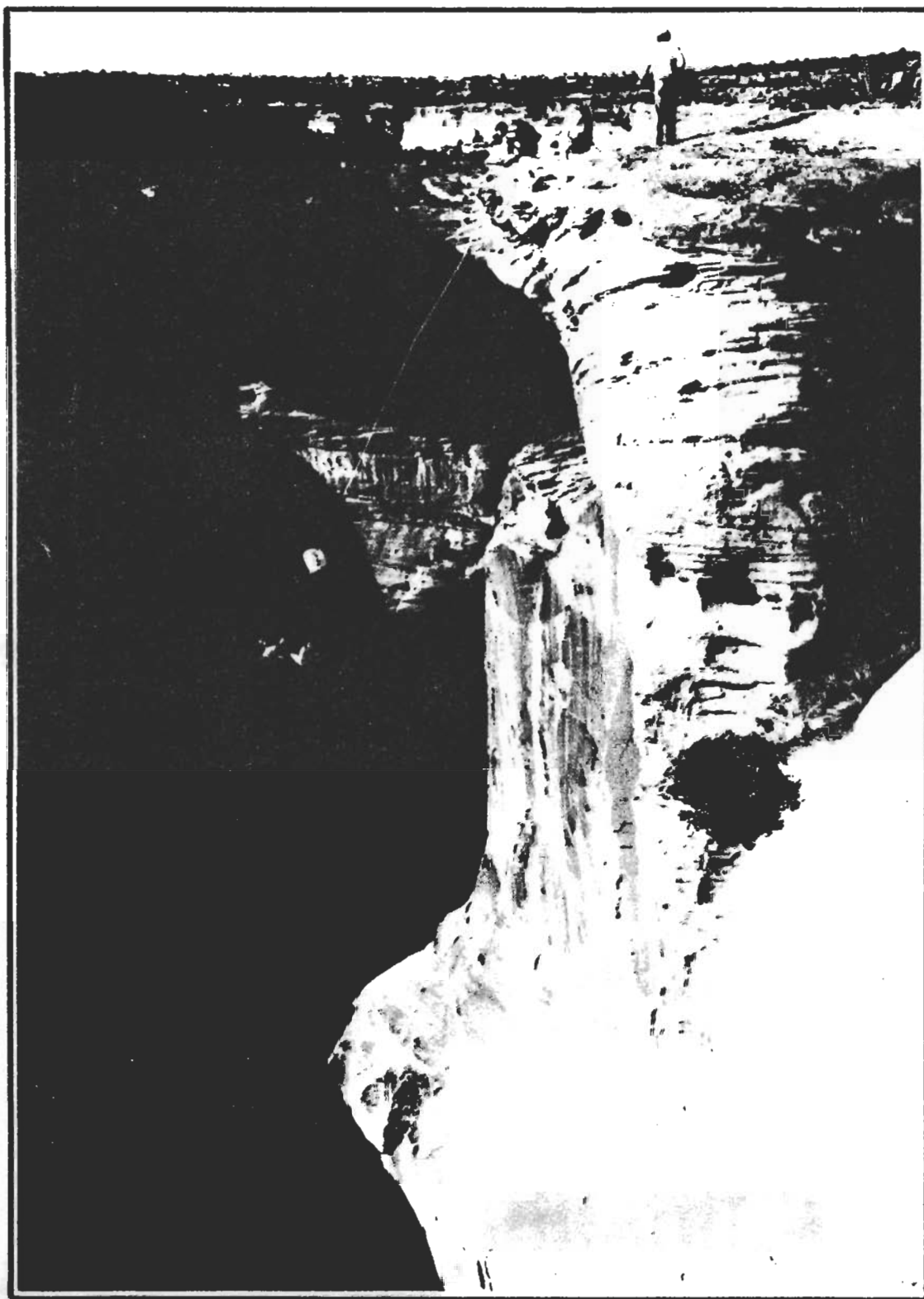


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BASE™ MAGAZINE

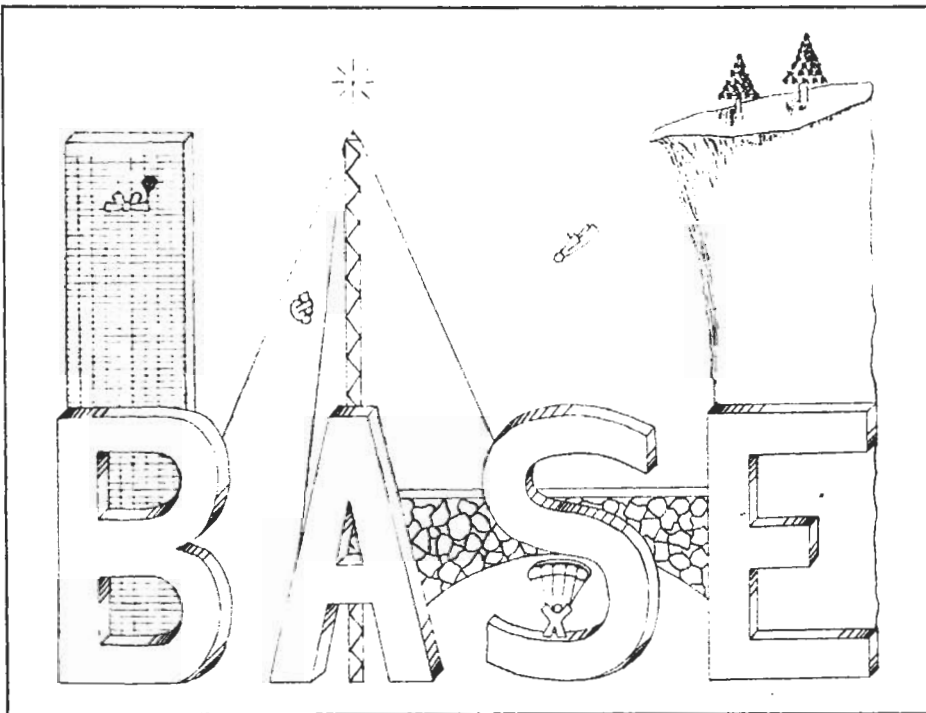
TO BENEFIT ALL MEN . . . TO HARM NO MAN . . .



FIRST CLIFF JUMPS FROM CANYON DE CHELLY, ARIZONA

BASE™ MAGAZINE

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



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.*

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."

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A certain portion of the skydiving community seems to be up-in-arms about the recent rash of cliff jumping, bridge jumping, object jumping—radio towers, buildings, etc. In my opinion, there definitely is a trend being set, a "knee of a curve," the birth of a new sport being ushered in. It makes a lot of us nervous: the old pro, the has-been, the average conscientious skydiver, the novice. The public, from what reaction I've seen, really doesn't care one way or another. To cite an example, recently eight skydivers, including two women, made 16 skydives from a new-found bridge 876 feet high over land and water. The weather was overcast and partly raining, otherwise they would have made 30 skydives. The jumpers would merely walk to the center of the span (about 3,000 feet in total length), step over the foot-high railing, put their hand-deploy pilot chutes in their hands, and leap—delaying four seconds in free-fall before letting go. These were the most exhilarating jumps of their lives, and either rival or surpass the joy of jumping El Cap. (Probably surpass, since they didn't have to put up with the eight-hour hike and the legal hassles.) Traffic on the bridge doesn't stop and spectators think it's great. Usually after 15 minutes the spectators split since to them it all looks the same and they have other things to see and do. The police are fully aware of the activity and are happy to let the participants govern themselves—as long as they don't injure themselves (necessitating rescues, etc.), endanger others nor public property. You can land on the shore or in the water. The first woman ever to jump this bridge—or any other bridge—had only 33 jumps, even though she was an intermediate jumper. She used a piggyback, a hand-deploy, and a quick-opening Piglet round. She delayed three seconds. Most use squares, but they pack them with the slider rubber-banded to the connector link and the nose not rolled over. Once that canopy hits the air, it rifles open. Most openings put everyone about 500 feet (376 feet to open in) and you probably never reached speeds greater than 60 mph. If you had a total, you'd pull your spring-loaded reserve and use it instead. If you had even a spinning malfunction, you'd get as much garbage out as possible and splash down in the water. You would never cut away. If you are a really conscientious packer, I don't see why you couldn't have 1,000 perfect jumps in a row. It's a lot easier on a canopy for it to be opened at 60 mph, "hand fed-out," than on a 120 mph terminal opening. Three guys even took off a 3-way open wedge, delaying 1, 2½, and 4 seconds respectively. All went perfectly.

I'm not trying to encourage or discourage such activities. For those for whom it's for and for those for whom it's not for, I merely want to inform. For the former minority it's such a beautiful rush, a true joy, such exhilaration, pure ecstasy, the point of meaningful life.

Bridge jumping can be relatively "safely" harnessed—as much as skydiving from a plane can be and has been—to be enjoyed by the masses.

Separate ground rules will have to be drawn up, but it's all not only possible, but readily feasible. I'm not saying there will never be fatalities in these activities—whether they're condoned or not, squelched or not, run rampant or not, the point is that man's free spirit must be allowed to abound, to seek whatever level it's ready to assume, depending upon the age it's living in. Mankind could have flown hang gliders from the pyramids 5,000 years ago using bamboo, linen cloth, and rawhide. All he lacked then was the idea! He had to go to the moon and back, develop stainless steel, aluminum and dacron before any so-inclined teen-age kids of today could soar for hours on end off any mountain thousands of feet high! What victory! What prowess!

As Andy Keech says, "Rules are for the obedience of fools, but the guidance of wise men. Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative."

A more extreme case of this discussion would include jumping out of an airplane without wearing a parachute. To date it's been done four times, to my knowledge, by three different people. The most recent jump was made by Jim Tyler in August, 1980. The first one was by Rod Pack in January, 1965. There were two in between these by Bill Cole of Canada. I definitely feel it's not for everybody. I still don't see what usefulness it has but perhaps someone will find one. Man's free spirit must not be squelched, by gravity or man-made bureaucracy. Organizations should modernize their thinking to the age of the time, and differentiate between the run-of-the-mill average skydiver, and the hard-core stuntman. What's safe or dangerous for the one may or may not be safe or dangerous for the other. One man's ceiling is another man's floor. Let us have different sets of ground rules for different activities. That both activities happen to use parachutes is coincidental. The bottom line is: don't jeopardize other people's lives or property. What you do with your own life is your own business, as long as you fully understand what you are getting yourself into. But please be careful. Don't be foolhardy, or impatient. Above all else, do your homework first! A baby falls when he's young and trying to learn how to walk, and from that type of experience he eventually learns how to skydive without killing himself. In essence, he learns "how to learn." His only barriers are time and nature herself, yea, his own imagination.

I personally remember ten years ago when relative work was the scourge and embarrassment of the skydiving establishment of the day—excuse me, the "sport parachutist" community. All man-made laws then supported what we "should do," not what we wanted to do. Isn't nature beautiful? She listens to nobody. She does what she feels like doing. As a matter of fact, she's boss. We do what she dictates, or perish! (Thank goodness she's LOVE, too.)

Anyway, the square was the laughing stock of 1971. So impractical. Radical. You weren't allowed on an RW load with one. Not 1½ of the chutes were square. Now, not 1½ are rounds. For a year, only "derelicts and crazies" could be seen performing canopy stacks. Now even recognized organizations even sanction meets

for canopy relative work.

I tell you, we have some very talented, creative, courageous, admirable pioneers ushering in a new wave of skydiving, namely fixed-object jumping—buildings, bridges, radio towers, cliffs. Why should we outline a million rules? It's everyone's joy that's in the balance. Let's do whatever we do with seriousness, patience, safety, one small step at a time. Let's educate everybody. Let's not squelch untested ideas—clearly things not meant for the masses—by ostracizing and/or imprisoning the people doing the R&D (research and development) for these ideas. The only thing we ask is that the R&D'ers don't hurt others' lives or property in the process. Don't forget, unfortunately, it took several American and Russian lives to put man on the moon. What man has done in the field of skydiving in the last ten years couldn't have been dreamed of ten years ago! The only way we could have put it on film then was via a cartoon. And not even then, since we still didn't even have the idea! "The highest mountain peak receives the early morning sunlight first, followed eventually by even the valley, at noonday." Why, then, is it hard for various established organizations to visualize that every Sunday morning, between 6 AM and 8 AM, the police will cordon off a two-block area, and 50 skydivers will take the elevator to the top of the 1350-foot high World Trade Center in downtown New York City, and with "permit in hand," they will jump off at 90-second intervals. Even the press won't show up, it will become so commonplace and uneventful. But why not? Man is showing his purpose for life—happiness. Man doesn't have to enslave his mind and his body by a rigid lifestyle of "cannots," war, disease. Let's hold off building the next war jet or atom bomb and instead, build a ten million dollar tower 5,000 feet tall for cliff jumping. Carefully thought out and constructed, we could play with it for a hundred years.

"Let him who has never had a close call in skydiving cast the first stone!"

FOUR SKYDIVERS JUMP FROM 74-STORY BUILDING

Two intrepid skydivers got up at 3 o'clock on a Sunday morning, drove into the city, and parked their car. Then, by 4 am, they put on their parachutes, walked a block away to a building that is under construction, and entered the stairwell. It was still dark, so, using their flashlights, they climbed for an hour and a half, resting every 10 or 15 minutes until they came to the end of the stairs. They had climbed to about the 60th floor, and from then on they had to use the wooden construction ladders to reach the top. By 7 AM, they had climbed as far as they could-- 74 stories, at just over 900 feet high. The wind was blowing hard at that altitude, but they knew by walkie-talkie radio from their friends on the ground that it wasn't too strong

down there. They could see for miles around from this vantage point-- the highest building in the whole city.

The two jumpers, Phil Smith and Phil Mayfield, now had to wait until the sun got high enough in order to get some good photographs. It looked like it might rain. Waiting for an hour and a half was the hardest part of the whole ordeal. By 8:15 AM the three ground cameras were ready, and at exactly 8:30 AM another friend showed up in his helicopter. Phil Smith then threw a yellow streamer to get a last-minute indication of wind direction and speed and to give the final 10-second count-down. "O.K. Here we go. 5-4-3-2-1-Go!" Phil Smith left first and started falling, becoming "weightless", and Phil Mayfield was right on his heels. Each one had a movie camera and a still camera mounted on his helmet, "Smitty's" looking up and Mayfield's looking down. What a "RUSH" (expression for "total excitement"). Each jumper held his "hand deploy" pilot chute so that when he wanted to open his parachute, all he had to do was "let go". After two seconds, Mayfield's "round" parachute started opening, and after four seconds, Smitty let his "square" chute open. Both chutes completely inflated at about the same time. WHAP! During free-fall each jumper had drifted about 80 feet away from the building, and once under canopy the wind immediately began carrying them even farther away. Both parachutes were steerable, so the jumpers chose their landing sites. After 35 to 40 seconds, Smitty landed on the lawn of a local park, and Mayfield "made a standup" in the parking lot a block and a half from the building. They had each made it without a hitch, and everyone involved had a great time.

Carl and Jean Boenish film skydiving nearly full time, and they had wanted to jump, too. But the strong wind the day before concerned them and, as usual, they were shorthanded with friends to use cameras, and they felt they could be better used as camerapeople rather than as two more jumpers. But they were to get their wishes, too.

Carl discovered that at 4:00 in the morning it was usually a dead calm on the ground. Furthermore, the parking lots were all empty, and the city street lights made everything almost as bright as day. Well, why not jump at night?

So, one week later, the two Phils, Carl, and Jean decided they would give it a try AT NIGHT. This time, they started climbing at just after 2 AM. As predicted, there was no wind, and the conditions were absolutely perfect! WOW! Everyone was excited. As they got about 10 floors high, a gentle breeze started blowing from the south. The climb was short and sweet because the resolve to succeed was so intense! By the 40th story, the wind had picked up to 15-20 m.p.h. Huddled in their warm clothes, the four leaned over the edge and received assurance over their trusty radio from their friend at the bottom that, no matter how hard to believe, there was still no wind on the

The problems with fixed object jumping seem to be social rather than technical. There have been perhaps a million military jumps using only one parachute between the years 1940 and 1958.

Therefore, low altitude jumping without space for a reserve is nothing new... it is just new to us. The crux of the situation is that the authority in control of these fixed objects feel that to sanction the activity implies bearing the responsibility. It is therefore, simpler to refuse permission.





Jean Boenish, on only her 64th skydive, but with careful tutelage, is shown above making her first building jump at 4:00 AM from a 75-story skyscraper under construction, earning her BASE #3.

FLIGHT TO FREEDOM

*by Jean Boenish
BASE #3*

Still unfinished, but a thousand feet tall,
A building stood and to us did call,
"Come, come to my highest beams,
And tonight we'll fulfill your fondest dreams!
I see my brothers have closed their doors
While they have not even half my floors.
But I am young and have no fright
Of people taking what I have inside.

"No glass in my windows, no doors in the way;
The workers long through with their jobs for the day.
Come, climb, and see; you will be out of sight;
The night is dark though my lights are bright.
My stairs are not many; my floors are not few;
Your reward at the top -- a spectacular view.
Let me share with you the sight that we'll see:
A bright full moon in a black canopy
Of star-studded night that drapes to the ground
Met at the bottom by the lights of the town."

Intrigued and guided, we tip-toed near;
Our hungry young spirits wanted more to hear.
Determined to partake of a thought so free,
We climbed steps and ladders tirelessly.
The ascent was not hard, and the time was not long;
We knew that our motive was good and not wrong.

Emerging from the staircase into an envelope of dark,
We saw that our venture was not just a lark.
The building stood silent and swayed to and fro
In time with the wind at our backs that did blow.
As we stood on the edge and viewed the expanse,
Knowledge told us we were not there by chance.
Now we did share that powerful feeling
Of that freedom of thought that had seemed so appeal

At once, struck by surprise that such freedom could be
We leapt from our perch of security.
We fell and then glided back down to the ground;
The moment was brief and we made not a sound.
The landing was hard, but with spirits unbroken,
We remembered the freedom of which we'd heard spoken
We dusted our seats off and smiled up at what seemed
A building of which we had only dreamed.

ground. The jumpers looked down the 960 feet and saw people that "looked like ants" and vehicles like "little toy cars". After 30-40 minutes of resting and "fiddling around" with their equipment, they were as ready as they were ever going to be. Mayfield was the "wind dummy". He would go first; after all, he had over ten years in the sport and well over a thousand jumps, as did Carl and Smitty.

Mayfield jumped off. He bobbed a little, at first, but then stabled out and let his chute open in 2½ seconds. WHAP! Carl, Jean, and Smitty could see him drifting over the 5-story "Chronical" building. Then, all of a sudden, his parachute started "bouncing all over the place". It looked like Kleenex that was thrown out of a speeding truck. WOW! Where and how was he going to land? About 20 seconds later, his chute settled down, he drifted over the proper landing area, and he made a perfect standup landing!

"O.K., Jean, your turn," Carl said. But Jean didn't flinch. She was cool. She was ready.

Jean had only been skydiving for a year and a half and had only 63 jumps to her credit. But she was "hard core". A while back, Jean made an 876-foot bridge jump over water on her 34th jump. Then she made a cliff jump-- using a static line-- from only 580 feet. And a few months back, she even made a 1300-foot antenna tower jump. She was ready for the night building jump. They all were!

Like a veritable "hinge" Jean merely leaned forward, almost without using any spring or push off. Perfect stability. Three seconds later, "WHAP!" and her all yellow round Piglet canopy opened, and she started drifting to the parking lot. Carl had a "hard act" to follow.

Carl knew he could do the same, but his "human senses" told him, "Anyone who would throw himself off into a dark abyss at night had to be crazy. Why?! Jump off a 1,000-foot building at night? In wind like this? You have to be kidding!" But Carl knew it had to be a "piece of cake", too. He had just seen two people prove that you wouldn't hit the building and that it was a dead calm on the ground. Carl knew he couldn't believe only what seems to be. He knew he had to act on what he knew, even though his life was on the line. "O.K. Here goes". And that mental imagination of what it must be like-- that dream-- became an actual experience, a reality. "One-2-3, let go, one, WHAP! I'm open. Quick, turn left; I'm running parallel to the building! O.K. Good. Boy, you sure get bounced around a lot. WOW. Am I going to land on the Chronical building? I had better head for the street over there in case I can't make it to the parking lot. WOW. This sure is happening fast. I can't believe I'm almost ready to land already. WHOOPS. Got to miss that street light." In the last five seconds, like clockwork, Carl's chute quit bouncing around, steadied out, and he then made a perfect landing, for him, right on the target. Mayfield congratulated him as he helped him gather up his chute. And now for Smitty.

Smitty had taken up a still camera and flash and had taken one shot of each of the other three as they left. He now stuffed the camera and

flash down his jumpsuit and prepared to go himself. Jean had "flown" the radio down. Smitty waited a good five minutes, then "went". Everything went perfectly!

"Anyone who says these jumps aren't a certain amount scary isn't telling the truth", Mayfield insisted. Carl agreed. "They are, but they bring such an incredible amount of joy and satisfaction that it's truly an indescribable experience. It's one thing to know theoretically that you should be able to do something, but quite another thing to actually do it! Now, that's what I call 'life'."

Carl Boenish is the one who popularized jumping off the cliff at El Capitan in Yosemite National Park two and one-half years ago. He felt that if it could be done, and if he could do it, anybody "so-inclined" could do it also. So far, time is bearing him out. Since then, 408 skydivers from all over the world have gone to El Capitan to jump off. Carl and Jean know, because they are issuing very special patches to anyone who has made the jump. The U.S. National Park Service has finally been convinced to issue permits during the summer months to all those qualified to make the jump. Skydivers are hopeful it will be authorized again this year for the summer jumping season.

The last year or two has ushered in a new era in skydiving. Some call it "fixed object jumping". Probably 50 or more bridge jumps have been made, over 400 cliff jumps, maybe another 50 tower jumps (radio towers), and now, six building jumps. There have only been a couple of building jumps in the prior five years: Owen Quinn and Van Rafuse have each jumped from the New York World Trade Center, and a couple of others.

Carl and Jean Boenish have just established an award for the fixed object jumper. It's called the "BASE" award. The term "BASE" is an acronym derived from "Building", "Antenna tower", "Span" (all bridges), and "Earth" (any natural formation). Any fixed object jump should fit into one of these four standard categories. Any person who makes at least one jump from each of the four categories receives his BASE number. To date, there have been four numbers issued: BASE 1 - Phil Smith, BASE 2 - Phil Mayfield, BASE 3 - Jean Boenish, BASE 4 - Carl Boenish. Carl thinks BASE will have up to 100 or 200 members in three years. He remembers when everyone told him cliff jumping would never catch on, that they would never "legalize" El Capitan for cliff jumping.

Some criticize the idea of BASE jumping because they think it's too dangerous; for them maybe it is. But for those who do it, it must not be, or they literally couldn't continue. But even the devotees know it's not for everybody, nor ever will be. However, for the ones that it is for, it brings such incredible joy and satisfaction that it truly is incomprehensible except by experience. As Tim Braine says "All of us envy this ecstasy, but only those who dare, can share it". How true.

The building should be near completion in three to six months. All the construction workers, the building contractors, the tenants,

the mayor, the city officials, etc., plan to have a gala celebration to commemorate the completion of such a veritable monument to mankind's free spirit -- a 999-foot free-standing skyscraper. Carl, Jean, Phil, and Phil plan to meet with these people, too, to show them the movies and stills of their building jumps. The four jumpers would consider it a supreme honor and privilege to help in the gala celebration by staging a special opening ceremony jump for all the dignitaries, the

national press, the news media, etc. The high rise steel workers would tell the skydivers, "Hey, there's no way you'd catch me jumping over the side of that building". And the skydivers would tell the steel workers, "Hey, there's no way you'd catch me working near the edge of that building without my rig (parachute) on". It reminds one of a famous saying from Shakespeare: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

CANYON DE CHELLY

During the fall of 1980--October 2--four static-lined BASE jumps were made from the magnificently overhanging 80-foot cliffs found in Canyon de Chelly located on an Indian Reservation near Chinle, Arizona. The exact site is called *Canyon del Muerto*--"Canyon of Death."

The impetus behind these four jumps was the cable television network "Home Box Office" (HBO) out of New York City. They wanted to capture on film something really exciting for their television viewers that had never been done before.

The one-hour special was entitled "Thrill Sports" and dealt with world-record snow speed skiing, hang-gliding in Hawaii, and cliff jumping. The underlying theme of the program was to explore some of the reasons why some people put themselves in high stress and high risk predicaments. (HBO's premise is very similar to Rick Ridgeway's as stated in his book The Boldest Dream:

"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 sport.")

BASE jumpers have learned a lot about themselves and their activities by being filmed and studied by an independent party which was not caught up in the fervor of the activity itself. Had it not been for the resolve to satisfy the goals of their commitment to HBO, perhaps the jumps would not have been made from such a low altitude of 580 feet. (The cliffs were originally thought to be 1,000 feet!) It was such a relief and breakthrough for the BASE jumpers to be held in awe and treated as heroes instead of kooks, foolhardy adventurers, or even criminals.

HBO secured permission for the 3-day filming session several weeks

in advance from the Tribal Council of the Navaho Indians. A Bell Jet Ranger helicopter was used to scout the entire area to locate site possibilities. About 10 Indians were hired to supply transportation, logistics, etc. Everyone's support for the effort was viewed as a personal adventure and held with enthusiasm.

A day was set aside for testing. A seven-cell ram air parachute was first static-lined which opened about one-third of the way down but opened facing the wall. (It was later believed that the test dummy was inadvertently flipped upside down on exit which caused the 180° heading shift.) The chute clung onto a rock outcropping and was difficult to retrieve. It was thenceforth decided to back a *sure thing*--meaning to jump a round canopy. The Par-Innovators' Piglet 23-foot main canopy was selected. It, too, opened about a third of the way down on its test, but on heading with no line twists. It also had much less forward speed than a ram-air canopy which, for this particular landing area, was an asset. The Piglet took about 250 feet to open in. This distance possibly could have been cut down to about 100 feet had the canopy been made of lighter material (e.g., F111 material) and had the stabilizers (*snivelizers*) been cut off of the canopy. It has been said that the stabilizers were an original part of the canopy design not so much for canopy stability once deployed but rather to dilute the opening shock and G-forces of terminal velocity delays.

Jean Boenish, on only her 34th jump, decided that she wanted to be first. She exited head high, very stably, and was fully opened in about 3-4 seconds. (The static line was attached directly to her pilot chute via 100 pound break cord which pulled out a single curved pin attached to the bridle line. A diaper was used to stow the lines on.) The canopy ride lasted about 15 seconds.

Jean was followed by her husband, Carl Boenish. After repacking the same two rigs, Phil Mayfield exited third and David Blattel exited fourth.

All four were truly elated by

their jumps and HBO was well satisfied with their photo-story.

It has proved valuable to study the motives and actions of these adventurers years later to re-live their *moments of truth* to try to uncover the source of their exhilarations--to jumpers and non-jumpers alike!

The initial cliff jumps from Canyon de Chelly were a little ahead of their time due to the very low altitude with which the jumpers had to contend. It was originally believed that the site would be inundated with cliff jumping activity but that hasn't been the case. No known jumps have been made since. It is now known that under the correct conditions, static-lined squares and some rounds can open within 50-100 feet, not 250 feet! Under very specialized and stringent conditions, even freefall can be mastered from these altitudes.

Future cliff jumps from this site will need to be done with permission from the governing Indian body. Although it is lawful and convenient to drive and hike directly to the launch point, it is required by Indian law to have an Indian escort while hiking in and around the bottom of the canyon itself. The road leading out from the canyon area is about 5 miles long.

Some of the points learned from the Canyon de Chelly cliff jumping experience can be summed up from quotes lifted directly from the HBO script:

(1) *They have each thought it through a hundred times, always arriving at the same conclusion. If the chute opens as it should, they will make it; but if not, there is no time for a reserve chute. This truly is a leap of faith.*

(2) *The jump lasted a mere 15 seconds; the feeling will last a lifetime.*

(3) *They have experienced a feeling that most fear to contemplate, and they have lived to share it.*

(4) *Film can only record the outside of a person; for us mere mortals, what's inside these "death defiers" --the anxiety, the thrill, the incredible joy--is beyond comprehension.*

(5) *All of us envy this ecstasy, but only those who dare can share it!*

STUPIDITY PERSONIFIED?

OR

WALLS CALL 4

We jumped off a cliff today;
It wasn't very tall--
Six hundred feet, a static-line, a Piglet,
That was all!

A dummy drop with Piglet,
It opened very fine;
Dummy didn't turn it
And snagged the wall with lines.

A square went next for testing,
With a tumble it did fall;
One-eighty when it opened,
flew into the wall.

The round we saw was best here;
A freefall not to be;
We static-lined each jumper,
The first one would be ME!

A little flag for throwing off
Exited my hand,
And seven seconds later
Plopped down in the sand.

This morning it was calm enough,
And I in jumpsuit stood,
KNOWING my chute would open,
At least, feeling that it SHOULD.

I looked down at the target,
And looking up at me,
Were five expectant people,
Whose FACES I could see!

Two steps backward I did take;
The countdown had begun;
My heart had ceased its pounding
As the countdown went past "ONE."

"GO!" and then my feet took over;
Off the edge I ran;
I looked out into the air,
And there I saw the SAND!

"One thousand one, one thousand two,"
A little jerk I felt;
It must have been the static-line;
I hoped it all went well.

My heart had forgotten its purpose
As I looked up to see
Outstretched lines and CLOSED-UP skirt
On a shaking canopy.

It LOOKED like it would open;
One second had flown by,
Accompanied by a fleeting thought
Of a reserve that was useless to try.

A second anxious second--
All I heard was flap;
Watching, watching, waiting,
Rewarded with a "WHAP!"

Barbed wire fence below me;
Behind a little stream;
I turned in towards the sandbar,
Where happy voices screamed.

Not fifteen seconds later,
The ground had touched my toes--
A perfect three-point landing,
Completed on my nose.

Excited jubilation,
Not limited to me,
For I was to be followed
By the other jumpers three.

The next went fine through opening
One steering line he broke;
The turn was not too serious.
But the landing was a joke.

The third, who came from Texas,
Flew down with hoops and hollers;
His stand-up on the target
Upstaged previous fallers.

Finally, a jumper
Who proved it to be true
That if he tracked away from the c
He could open higher too.

Four flawless jumps and we had don
What we set out to do:
To jump a cliff, to have some fun,
And to share it with others too.

Happy, laughing, grinning,
Four stick-together friends,
We looked back up and wondered,
"Would we ever do it again?"

--CC#1
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FIRST CLASS
