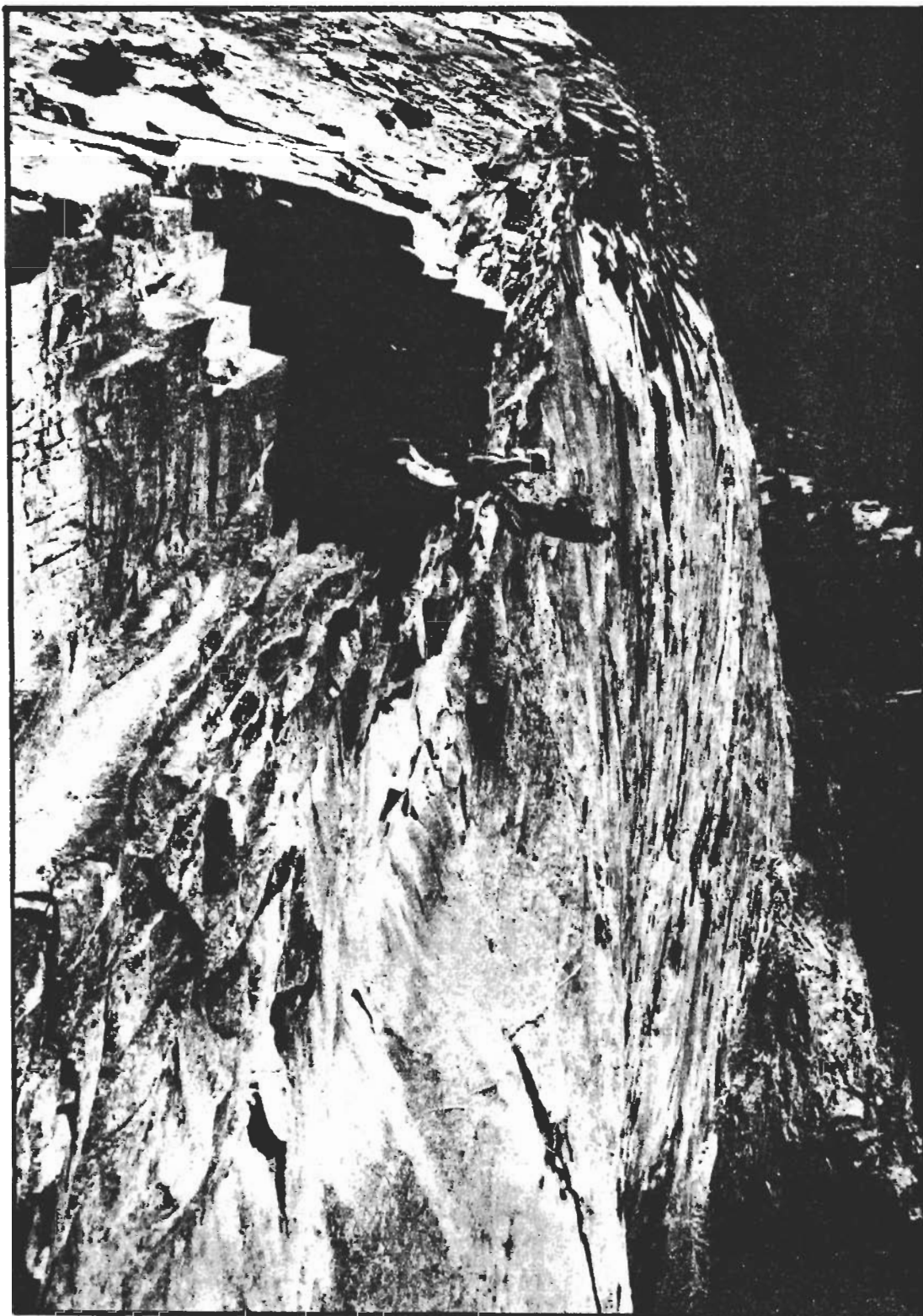


SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1981

ISSUE No. 5

BASETM MAGAZINE

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



"NEW BIRDS IN YOSEMITE . . ."

BASE AWARD

BASE #1	Phil Smith	TX
BASE #2	Phil Mayfield	TX
BASE #3	Jean Boenish	CA
BASE #4	Carl Boenish	CA
BASE #5	Mike Perron	CA
BASE #6	Sammy Ramos	CA
BASE #7	Dwayne Bruette	LA
BASE #8	Bradley Smith	CA
BASE #9	Andy Smith	TX
BASE #10	Dennis Murphy	CA
BASE #11	Peter Hart	CA

NIGHT BASE AWARD

NIGHT BASE #1	Phil Mayfield	TX
NIGHT BASE #2	Phil Smith	TX
NIGHT BASE #3	Andy Smith	TX

DOUBLE BASE AWARD

DOUBLE BASE #1	Jean Boenish	CA
DOUBLE BASE #2	Carl Boenish	CA
DOUBLE BASE #3	Phil Smith	TX

TOP TEN IN BASE

1.	Phil Smith	38
2.	Phil Mayfield	32
3.	Andy Smith	27
4.	Bradley Smith	26
5.	Carl Boenish	22
6.	Mike Perron	12
7.	Jean Boenish	10
8.	Dennis Murphy	9
9.	Peter Hammond	8
10.	Mark Sechler	8

NEW QUOTATIONS

DON'T FEAR THAT
YOUR LIFE WILL END,
BUT THAT IT
SHALL NEVER BEGIN.

LIFE IS EITHER
A DARING ADVENTURE,
OR NOTHING AT ALL.

NOTHING WORTHY
COMES EASY.

THE HIGHER THE TREE,
THE STRONGER THE WIND.

WE'LL JUMP THAT BRIDGE
WHEN WE COME TO IT.

A LITTLE BIT OF FEAR IS HEALTHY,
BECAUSE IT MAKES YOU CAUTIOUS!

TO LIVE LIFE IN YOUR OWN WAY. . .
TO REACH THE GOALS YOU HAVE SET FOR YOURSELF. . .
TO BE THE YOU THAT YOU WANT TO BE. . .
THAT IS SUCCESS.

IT IS MAN'S DESTINY TO CONTINUALLY TEST HIMSELF AGAINST THE UNKNOWN AND TO KNOW
HIMSELF BY HIS EXERTIONS.

It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man
stumbles, or how the doer of deeds might have done them better. The credit belongs
to the man who is active in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and
blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the
great enthusiasms, the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause. Who, if
he wins knows the triumph of high achievement, and who, if he fails at least fails
while daring greatly. . . so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid
souls who know neither victory nor defeat. (Teddy Roosevelt, address at the Sorbonne,
1910)

HOLD FAST TO DREAMS--
FOR IF DREAMS DIE,
LIFE IS A BROKEN-WINGED BIRD
THAT CANNOT FLY.



MOST OBJECTS

MOST NIGHT JUMPS

1.	Phil Mayfield	14	1.	Bradley Smith	15
2.	Phil Smith	13	2.	Andy Smith	14
3.	Carl Boenish	11	3.	Phil Smith	7
4.	Jean Boenish	8	4.	Phil Mayfield	6
			5.	Carl Boenish	6

MOST BUILDING JUMPS

MOST ANTENNA JUMPS

1.	Bradley Smith	15	1.	Phil Smith	19
2.	Carl Boenish	7	2.	Phil Mayfield	17
3.	Peter Hammond	6	3.	Andy Smith	15
4.	Mark Sechler	6	4.	Mike Perron	3
5.	Phil Smith	6			

MOST SPAN JUMPS

MOST EARTH JUMPS

1.	Phil Smith	7	1.	Carl Boenish	9
2.	Phil Mayfield	6	2.	Mike Burt	7
3.	Bradley Smith	6	3.	Terry Flint	7

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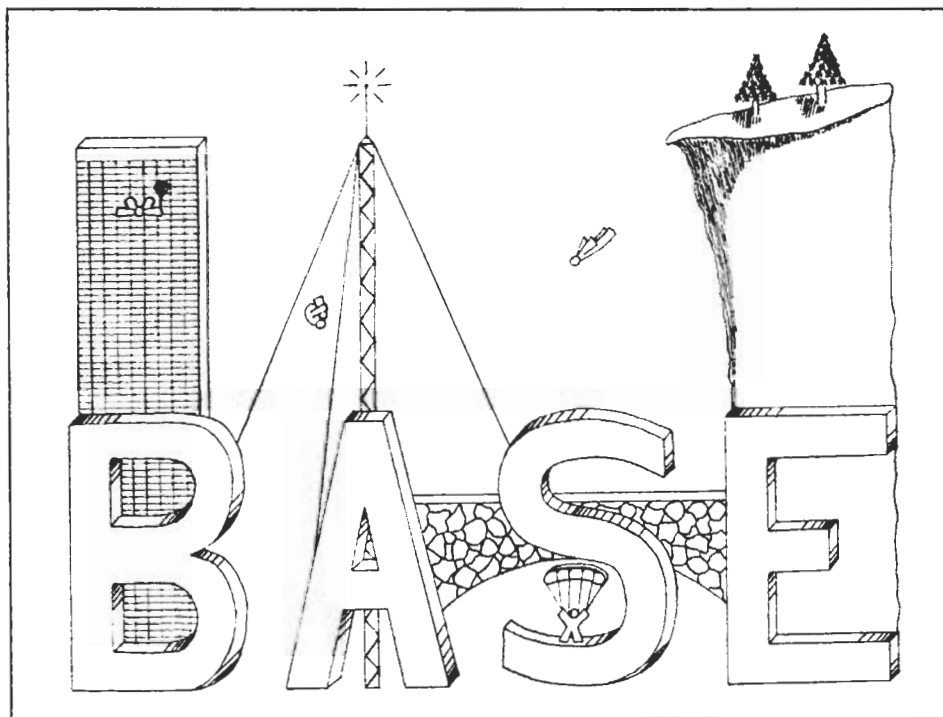
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BASETM MAGAZINE

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



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

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

QUOTATIONS... TO INSPIRE US BY...

- *Happy are those who dream dreams, and are willing to pay the price to see them come true.*
- *I DO NOT CHOOSE TO BE A COMMON MAN. It is my right to be uncommon . . . if I can. I seek opportunity . . . not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dime. 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.*

BASETM Magazine is published as the need arises, but no less than six issues per year. Subscription rate is \$8.00 for any consecutive six issue period. For foreign air mail postage, please add \$8.00. Please make all checks or money orders payable to "BASE", 12619 South Manor Dr., Hawthorne, CA 90250 USA, Phone (213) 678-0163. The acronym BASETM, BASETM MAGAZINE, BASETM AWARD, YOSEMITE CLIFF JUMPER—EL CAPITAN AWARD, are trademarked, copyrighted, and/or owned exclusively by Carl R. Boenish, 1980, all rights reserved. The entire contents of BASETM Magazine is copyrighted, 1981, by Carl R. Boenish, all rights reserved. BASETM Magazine is edited by Carl R. Boenish and is the unofficial publication of the United States BASE Association. Articles, letters and photos are welcomed from the readership, but cannot be returned without a stamped, self-addressed envelope enclosed.

LETTERS

Dear Carl and Jean,

Just a quick thanks for the BASE Magazine. If it hadn't been sent we would probably still be wondering about El Cap numbers and patches.

I read BASE Magazine issue #4 from cover to cover with great interest. Last summer when my friend made his El Cap jump, I was on the valley floor, unable to jump because of my bum leg. I dream of the day I can make that "unforgettable jump." I'm hoping by next August (after the falcons do their thing), I can make an El Cap jump, too. I'll let you know if I do!

After reading your "QUOTATIONS TO INSPIRE US BY" it came to my mind that I feel is appropriate.

HOLD FAST TO DREAMS
FOR IF DREAMS DIE
LIFE IS A BROKEN-WINGED BIRD
THAT CANNOT FLY

Good luck in your future efforts toward acceptance of BASE jumping. Fly free and happy. Mary Todd
March AFB, CA

Hello Carl,

I recently read your issue #4 of BASE Magazine. It's good to see a magazine solely on the topic of fixed-object jumping.

Late last year a friend of mine and I jumped from a tower near Tampa, FL--we were #'s 2 and 3. Both of us are in no doubt that the dive was the biggest buzz of our lives to date. We have a few photographs but due to the fact that only one guy knew we were up there (our ground party), the photos are limited. According to one, the tower is 1400 feet tall but both Pete's altimeter and mine read 1150 feet--could be pressure change. We both used Sodafarms and Pegasuses and did 3-4 seconds free-fall. We wore our jumpsuits or the climb which turned out to be a good thing as it was a hell of a cold at the top. We stayed at the top for 1½ hours waiting for dawn. An article in your magazine said that the wind direction changes frequently--this is very true as during our wait the wind veered over a 180 degree area. When we lived off, the wind at the top must have been 25 knots but it was zero on the ground. Wind drift indicators are essential--we had to use bits of sticky tape that we had on our rings! Anyway, it was a great dive and as far as we know we think that we are the first Brits to do an antenna dive--can you confirm this? We are presently planning a span jump. Static-line 450 feet, approximately. Any advice would be welcome.

Here's my money for my subscription to your magazine. Just to let you know, there are a few Brits who are seriously interested in BASE so keep it up, Carl. Graeme Henderson, RVT#3
Buckinghamshire, ENGLAND

Hi Carl,

Frank Donnellan, myself and three others have just returned from one of the most exhilarating weekends. Very few people have been interested enough in BASE to make a hardcore commitment to go-for-it in England. That's not too surprising given the relative lack of decent fixed objects here. But the energy that has just started zapping around is fantastic! We went to see a TV tower and it turned out to be one of the most eminently jumpable towers

around--better than the ones in Tampa. I'll send you some pics. It is 1,000 feet tall, 120 degrees to launch into, no guy wire hassles, a 3-foot overhanging balcony launch, and we're going for it! Our BASE jumps are definitely going to be LALO--we may have a 245 foot bridge jump, a 573-foot cliff-jump static-lining off a cable to a lighthouse and a water landing (hard core!) and we are trying real hard to find a building. The most important thing is how much the five people are getting off on the energy. Frank is buzzing all the time, and the locals in our pub are getting very suspicious of the quiet little chats we keep having in the corner!

I lived in Spain for 14 months a while back building and test flying hang gliders. We had one really good flying site which I am convinced has a jumpable cliff. I've got heaps of pictures but none that actually proves its jumpability. I drove to the exit point once and looked over the balcony that is built there, and I launched off in my glider off a sheer cliff in no wind very nearby, and I'll tell you, man, that was freefall for a few seconds! I wasn't jumping then, so I don't recall ever thinking to myself whether it was jumpable or not, but rest assured we'll know soon.

Good luck, good jumps, see you at about the 75th floor one day. Enclosed is my subscription to BASE Magazine.

Alan James
Kent, ENGLAND

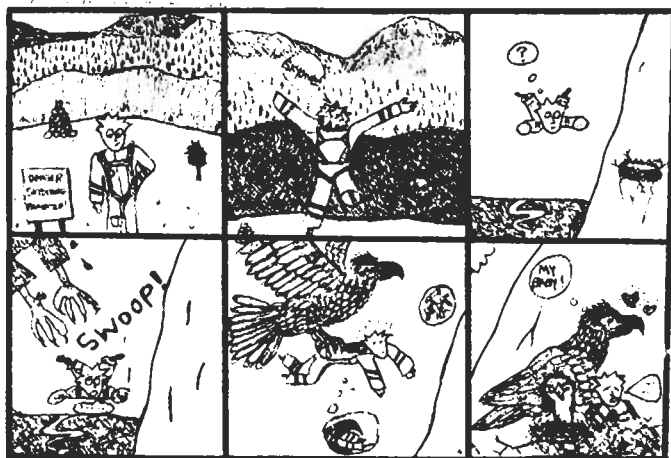
Dear Carl and Jean,

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I am sending you my subscription for the BASE Magazine. Last week I made the Skydive that has changed my life. Four British jumpers jumped a 1,000-foot mast, now making a total of a hard core of six Brits who have experienced GRAND RUSH! (the other two making their descent in Florida).

I am including a copy of a cartoon I made for my friends and seeing as I have made a whole new bunch of friends through the Joy of my first BASE jump, it seems perfect to send to you. It is inspired by the fact that Peregrin Falcons dive at 180 mph in order to catch their prey.

It has been a week since THE MOMENT and the rush is still as strong as it was then. Stay stable!

Nigel Slee
Herts, ENGLAND



Dear Carl,

Too much! An entire--and glossy!--magazine devoted to BASE-type activities. Well, I guess it's in keeping with these specialized times. There are now running magazines just for masters (over 40) and another just on ultra marathons (over 26.2 miles: 50 miles, 100 miles, etc.). Sure, I'll subscribe. Here's my big \$8.00. I mean, if every issue is going to blow my mind as much as the complimentary one you sent, what with tales of leaps off Half Dome and Glacier Point!!!!, how can I risk missing an issue? In fact, I noticed that the complimentary issue was marked #4. I would like to get copies of the first 3 to have a complete set, if that is possible.

Yes, the Half Dome and Glacier Point jumps really did knock me off my chair. Well, regarding the latter, I guess something was needed to replace the defunct firefall!

I'm astounded and impressed with the feats of your better half, Jean--please say "Hi." In a way, her record is similar (but more impressive!) than mine, doing those types of jumps with a very small number of total jumps to her credit. With the right person and good instruction, great things are possible relatively early in one's career, I believe.

I look forward to rendezvousing with you one of these days again. Take care and good luck.

Best regards, Rick Sylvester
Squaw Valley, CA

Thanks for you letter, Rick. It requires possessing a certain quality to perceive that quality elsewhere. Thanks for all the compliments! For the benefit of our readers, it should be noted that Rick is the one who skied off El Capitan several times ca. 1971 and who also skied off Mount Asgard in Canada for the James Bond film THE SPY WHO LOVED ME. Primarily, Rick is a mountain climber, skier, and marathon runner, in addition to a cinematographer. Prior to his first ski jump, he knew nothing of skydiving or parachuting. Being so determined about his ski jump, he made about 85 airplane jumps in a two-month period just in training for the ski jump. We'll have to set up an anniversary jump for you off El Cap, Rick, and you can try a foot-launch! Rick is El Cap - 3. --Ed.

 USPA ISSUES POSITION ON BASE JUMPING

At its board meeting in Tampa, FL on Sept. 26/27, 1981, the United States Parachute Association issued an official position which recognizes the division of sports between BASE jumping and skydiving. The wording of this statement, as we have received it from their office, is as follows: "USPA regards all BASE jumps as potentially very dangerous stunts which are not a part of sport parachuting. We urge our members not to participate in this type of activity."

EL CAP JUMPERS -- Please pass the word. Anyone who makes a jump from El Cap should call Jean Boenish and give her the time, date, and exit order of the names. This information will be used to accumulate statistics in order to lobby for "NPS-authorized" cliff jumps, in the event non-regulation of cliff jumping activities doesn't prevail in time in the park. This information has nothing to do with the USPA or the NPS and will be kept confidential. It is the basis for the USBA-administered El Cap Award, including an individually-numbered El Cap patch, wall certificate and free I.D. card. Jean's number is (213) 678-0163.

Yosemite--mood of majesty and power--
Calmly she stands and watches,
Sensing every movement within--
Forever.

Living through all seasons--
Tempered with moderation--
Ever-changing, yet consistent in all her ways--
Forever.

Her shadows have a modest personality--
Quiet, shy, precious--
Stroked only by a cool breeze--
Sometimes.

She talks--softly--to anyone passing through,
Sharing--instantly--
Feelings of beauty, satisfaction, and life--
Being still.

Moving within, we see,
But admiring, stopping, watching--within--
We experience--
Life's beauty.

From barren, sunlit rocks above,
We pass down the granite side
Watching--silently--experiencing--
The Personality.

Flowing from rock into trees,
We perceive instantly
The whole of Yosemite--
Experienced--naturally.

Passing from shadow into warm sunlight,
Caressed gently
Underneath our light rock canopy--
Descending.

High above the middle of the valley--floating--
A slow turn reveals all:
Cliffs we know--intimately--
True beauty--Yosemite.

Silently, we descend--
Respecting, appreciating, grateful.
To experience beauty so free
Is to know--Yosemite.

HD-2



The Joys of Jumping El Capitan

EL CAPITAN

The following comments have been selected from several of the El Capitan Application forms to illuminate ourselves and others why we BASE jump.

The finest single experience I have ever had. The whole trip was orgasmic. A truly great experience.
EC-427

Awesome. On top, there was a great deal of anxiety and nervousness, but once my foot left the rock, a wave of calm swept over me. I launched in a frog, then dove for speed and swooped away from the wall--what a concept! I must say this was the most exhilarating, awesome experience of my life, for sure. Icarus lives! Also, I very much enjoyed the hike up. John Muir lives, too!
EC-434

I loved it! I cannot think of anything that compares to watching the wall in my track. Well worth any hassles from the Forestry Service. Watch out, Half Dome!
EC-428

Much safer jump than I thought. More respect for BASE jumping and beliefs of the organization. Thank you for your help.
EC-422

It is a sin that it is illegal. But as long as it is there, it will be jumped.
EC-423

One hell of a hike, but it sure was worth it. What a beautiful experience. I hope I get another opportunity some day to do it legally again. Blue skies, white rock.
EC-173

Will do it again but will find the correct route first. Would like to do a night dive next.
EC-87

Although I have probably never been so scared in my life, jumping El Cap is an experience I will always treasure. I hope the day comes when every jumper that so chooses will be able to make this once-in-a-lifetime leap without the additional fear of spending the night in jail or adding "fine" money to their budget. Thanks for the award, keep up the good work--we LOVE it!
EC-414

A tremendous experience. It is unfortunate that others will be denied this opportunity by the Park Service. If the Park Service continues to site the injury rate (4 in 400), it may be worth reminding them that the death rate of those who attempt to climb Mt. McKinley at Mt. McKinley National Park is 1 in 100, and has been at that rate for many years (last year there were 8 deaths in 800 climbers). The injury rate is much greater than this! Apparently the Park Service has decided mountaineering to be a more worthwhile endeavor than skydiving!
EC-373

In general, it was spiritually sensual, exotic, erotic, romantic, exciting, inviting and it scared me half to death! On a more serious note, in all the sports I have enjoyed and all the adrenalin I have pumped through my body, El Cap was the most outrageous experience of my life!!
EC-426

Really a terrific, nice and new experience. One of the nice gifts that skydiving have given me.
EC-187

This was the first jump on the first legal day and it was also my 50th birthday--a great way to start the second half!
EC-110

Breath-taking experience.

Thank you for making this available.
EC-185

ICARUS LIVES

"Five minutes," our friend said. The valley was almost sufficiently dark, our getaway driver was in place, and from our vantage point high above we were watching the sun settle into the horizon.

Mother Nature had made us work hard for this. It had taken two weekend trips and two six-hour hikes but we were finally perched atop El Capitan. My buddy and I were sitting back on the rock overlooking the cairn, feeling pretty safe about the whole concept, and our friend was standing anxiously on the edge, his hand on the cairn for security.

"Five minutes are up," my buddy said. Our friend gave us a last look, turned, then he was gone. The a profound realization came over me: I was next. I stood up, walked forward and peered over the edge. I was scared (breathless).

I stepped back, grinned nervously at my buddy and said, "WHITE ROCK," but he answered only with "GO!" In those three steps, my heart must have beat a million times and my stomach was turning style. But the instant my foot left the rock, a wave of calm swept over me; my skydiving instinct took over and my mind and body were at peace. I looked down and the wall was a beautiful red in the sunset. My arms swept back, my head went down and I felt myself accelerating quickly. Adrenalin pumping now, I rolled my shoulders, pointed my toes and was swooping blissfully when my mind realized the eighth second. I flared, pulled, and my canopy opened perfectly.

My buddy followed, and we all landed safely in the meadow where a group of locals had gathered to party. No sign of rangers, we jumped in our truck and sped off, cheered on by the partiers who even gave us a beer.

Icarus lives, John Muir, and we shall return.
EC-434

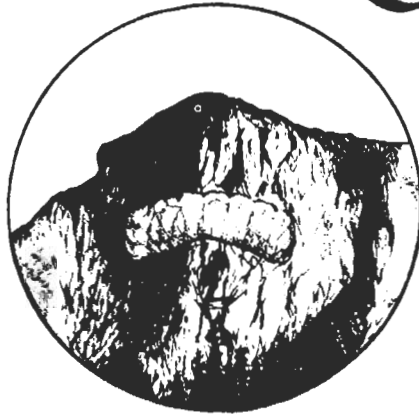
MY FIRST EL CAPITAN EXPERIENCE

After spending over 3 days with my experienced El Cap guide and traveling clear to the western part of this country, I now realize how serious BASE jumpers are about their BASE jumping. I have some definite impressions about BASE jumping, now that I have some first-hand information about it, having made my first El Cap jump.

First of all, a BASE jump takes much more preparation and physical effort than an aircraft jump. Secondly, BASE jumping can be done in relatively safe form with no damage or injury to property or individuals. Thirdly, a BASE jump has a launch rather than an exit. The pressure is different.

(continued on page 8)

Yosemite Cliff Jumper



*In recognition of a jump of excellence
made on*

August 15, 1966

Michael Pelkey

is hereby presented

El Capitan No. 1

*for outstanding achievement
beyond the realm of ordinary experience.*

Carl Boenish

Founder

JUMPING EL CAPITAN - CONTINUED

Forward speed in an aircraft necessitates a specific exit point which must be utilized at one time only while the launch from a fixed object can be done at the discretion of the jumper. Hence, the BASE jumper commands the launch while the skydiver is controlled by the spot. Fourthly, I can visualize the development and marketing of gear adapted to the BASE jumper; a maximum track jumpsuit, a square canopy that resists turns and twists on opening, and continued refining of the tertiary reserve. Fifthly, BASE jumping is going to encounter many difficulties with the legal aspects related to launch sites. Buildings, spans, towers and earth formations are usually controlled by a business or government. Persistence and the right attitude among the serious will prevail as time passes.

My jump off El Cap was not the most "exciting," "wonderful" or "exhilarating" jump of my life, but, it was the most beautiful, fulfilling and rewarding flight through air I have ever made. My guide's assistance, along with my friend's, gave me a time in my life I will never forget or regret.

EC-422

A RECAP OF EL CAP -- 1981

At the time of this printing, the 1981 summer season of cliff jumping in Yosemite National Park is essentially over. The cables on Half Dome have been pulled down for the winter season, and the road to Glacier Point will soon be closed down due to snow. The Park is still just as vibrant with life, just other shades of it. While a few minds may still be teeming with mental gymnastics as to what BASE jumps can be made in the winter, most cliff jumpers will rest through the winter and wait for the invigoration and rejuvenation that spring and summer will bring. Meanwhile, the staff and friends of USBA hope to meet with the Park personnel in hopes of working out some kind of cliff jumping program for the summer of 1982. Tremendous gains in BASE jumping have been made in 1981, and this new understanding and knowledge, in time, must thaw out the resistance to such grandios, natural acts of mankind's dominion over his environment.

According to our near-accurate yet unofficial tallies, we have the following statistics to date:

Jumps in 1981 at	EL CAP	46
	HALF DOME	4
	GLACIER POINT	2
Jumps to date:	El Cap	538
Jumpers to date:	El Cap	441
Night jumps:	El Cap	31

Of the 52 known jumps in Yosemite in 1981, none, of course, were made with written permission from the Park Superintendent. To the knowledge of the USBA, no one has challenged any of the Park's citations of "unlawful aerial delivery" through the end of court appeals. Many believe these citations violate the rights set down in the U.S. Constitution due to discrimination--namely, hang-gliding is permitted, cliffjumping is totally banned, cliff climbing is totally unregulated, as many feel cliff jumping also should be. Clearly, all three activities are closely related.

Of the 52 known jumps in 1981, three jumpers were unfortunate enough to have been issued citations for "unlawful aerial delivery." The jumps occurred around 6:30 PM at dusk in the Devil's Elbow Meadow. An off-duty ranger happened to be riding his bicycle in the area and spotted the canopies in the air. He issued 3 citations and the jumpers were not arrested. About a week later, their trials came up which lasted about half an hour before Magistrate Pitts. All three plead "guilty" in order--it is assumed--to "get the thing behind them" and to minimize their time committed to the case. They had no legal defense or attorney defending them.

The three received a \$500 fine each, with 15 months of "summary probation," which means that if they break any laws--federal, state, or local--then they are liable to face a portion of the remainder of their penalty--up to six months of incarceration. Magistrate Pitts' main concern with cliff jumpers seemed to be involved with unnecessary and sometimes dangerous rescues. He also stated a hypothetical case in which if a rescuer were killed in the line of duty attempting to rescue an injured cliff jumper, for example, the party could be liable for manslaughter. The same would apply, it is assumed, to other sports, too, though. Magistrate Pitts warned the three of the possibility of "serious periods of incarceration" if they were caught again for the same offenses during their probation period. On the other hand, their fines could be paid with a low down payment and \$50 per month, if they so chose. If cliff jumping were to be "legalized" next summer--even during their probation period--and if they obtained permits, they could jump again. It was reported that the fine money is applied directly to the "mountain rescue fund." The three report that the "fines will remain at the maximum."

AN ALTERNATIVE TO BREAKING THE LAW--PLEASE HELP!

Dear Park Superintendent and Chief Ranger,

I am writing to let you know that I jumped off of El Capitan, with a parachute, of course, within the last two weeks. I am not bragging about it, just wanted you and the Park Service to know that I felt strongly enough about my right to do it that I was willing to break the law in order to make the jump.

How can you, in good conscience, allow so many other people into Yosemite who (1) are not appreciative or respectful of the natural, unspoiled environment? (2) parade their ugly, noisy, smelly and distracting vehicles throughout the otherwise beautiful valley? (3) grace the surroundings with trash and "witty" graffiti on buildings, rocks, etc., while prohibiting our activity of cliff jumping?

Even the rock climbers that I have seen are sometimes slobbs, throwing equipment and trash to the bottom of cliffs and leaving their vehicles parked for days on end in conspicuous places, yet they are free from NPS regulations.

The truth is, no sport is free of slobbs or jerks and for the NPS to dictate that because cliff jumpers behave badly and are injury-prone (2% injuries), they are not allowed to pursue their sport, is so unjust that it is laughable!

Just like the "secret cliff jumper" who recently wrote to one of the skydiving magazines, I took only pictures and left only footprints, I landed in the valley with all I went up with, including sleeping bag and backpack, and it was the thrill of a lifetime!

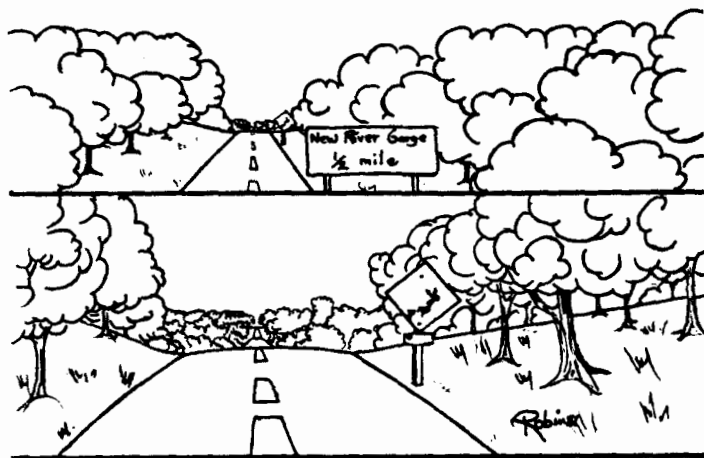
Hopefully by next summer, USBA will come up with a new idea or program that is workable, and I will be able to come again to experience Yosemite in my own way and legally.

I think that a jumping program could work well if run like the horse/mule rental concession. Put the good old "free enterprise" idea to work and put the concessioners in charge of leading me and my friends to the top of El Cap and Half Dome and make sure that our conduct and jump is beyond reproach.

Personally, I don't see any reason why cliff jumping can't exist unregulated--like cliff climbing is, but even if you come up with stricter rules and limit days or cliffs for jumping, at least then you will give us an alternative to breaking the law. PLEASE HELP!

Anonymous
P.S.: Five of my friends also made the leap last week.

BRIDGE DAY '81 by Carl Boenish



BRIDGE DAY '81 -- A DREAM COME TRUE

INTRODUCTION October 17, 1981 marked a day of celebration in the minds of at least 20,000 people --those who actually visited the New River Gorge Bridge in one form or another on that day. It was a day for a half-mile long bridge walk, antique car shows, swap meets, canyon tours, mini-raft rides, marching bands, square dancing, firework displays, endless concession stands, and much, much more. But it was also a day of gratitude, thanksgiving, celebration and outright "adrenalin rush" for several BASE jumpers who also participated in the day's festivities. It was a day of expansiveness in the minds and attitudes of the townsfolk and visitors who had the opportunity to view BASE jumping in progress and form their own opinions of the newly-founded sport from first-hand observations.

Talking about a "dream come true" might be a better way to start this article. It's been the dream of West Virginians living in this area since the 1900's to build a structure across the awesome New River Gorge that would give them much-added mobility, convenience, commerce and enjoyment in their daily lives. The first light of hope came in 1973 when plans were drawn up to start construction of the largest steel arch bridge in the world. This bridge, with a span of 1700 feet and a total length of 3,030 feet, was put into service 4 years later at a cost of \$37 million. There must have been great resistance in the minds of many to such a mammoth undertaking, albeit a majestic concept.

In a similar fashion, a great "mental catharsis" in the minds of many, and a "dream come true" for a few, took place on Bridge Day '81 at New River. A milling crowd of about 3,000 people who lined the east half of the entire span--over half a mile long, and sometimes twenty people deep--witnessed four BASE jumps at 10:30 AM, four at 1:00 PM, and five at 4:00 PM. Police, state and local officials afforded crowd control and any other assistance requested by the BASE jumpers. All jumps were sanctioned by the United States BASE Association. Actually, most of the ground work was done one and two months in advance by Phil Smith of Houston, Texas, Vice President of the USBA, and Doug Maddy, executive vice-president of the sponsoring organization, the Fayette Plateau Chamber of Commerce. All BASE jumpers signed hold-harmless releases and it was the responsibility of the USBA to insure all jumps were conducted in a safe manner by qualified jumpers.

FIRST JUMP: The first jump was a crowd pleaser and a heart-stopper--both at the same time. The first bridge jump was made by an experienced skydiver of 700 jumps crammed into 3 years, including 6 years of military training. This BASE jumper had one previous cliff jump with a delay of about 6 seconds and no other prior BASE jumps. The jumper exited with a hard arch, delayed an honest 3 seconds --as planned--came in and pulled a pull-out pilot chute (which opens the container manually at the same time the pilot chute is extracted and released), went slightly head down and back-to-earth, then stabilized out face-to-earth with a 3-second pilot chute hesitation (probably due to a rather short bridle line), then had a 2-second opening because the slider was left up! The canopy ride was an estimated 10-12 seconds from an estimated opening altitude just above 200 feet. An impressive standup landing was made on a giant boulder about the size of an automobile rising out of the water near the river bank in no-wind conditions. The hesitation and slider up is estimated to have added about 400 feet to the intended free-fall. All other jumps were made with 2-4 second delays with all opening altitudes about 600 feet above the water from a bridge height of 876 feet. (Note: 600 feet may sound low to the normal skydiver, but please keep in mind that the speeds involved at this altitude are only about 60 mph, or about 100 fps, about half of that at terminal velocity for the average skydiver. Hence, at these intermediate speeds, altitude is more effectively used than at high speeds.)

This whole incident taught all of us a very valuable lesson, and after careful reflection, suggested a logical guideline that hopefully all, or at least all new, BASE jumpers can consider following: all 3-second delays or less should be made using long-brided *hand-deployed* pilot chutes. The pilot chute and *all excess bridle line* should be grasped in the jumper's hand prior to exit. If the jumper were to have an unstable exit, he or she needs only to let go with his or her fingers--an instinctive reflex anyway, rather than be concerned with opening body position and/or groping for a handle someplace. Jumping from the New River Gorge Bridge is as safe a BASE jump as they come, and is an ideal place to learn and practice at, assuming you contend with either a water landing or a rather rocky landing area.

The above is not to say that pull-out rigs cannot or should not ever be used for 3-second delays. The deciding line is determined by a jumper's familiarity with his own equipment and in his confidence with his own ability. Both of these items come only with usage and experience and are rather invisible to outside observers. If there is any doubt, it is better to be too conservative rather than too game and use the hand-deployed pilot chute in hand on exit. On the other hand, however, one of the finest BASE jumpers in the country today uses pullout pilot chutes exclusively. (He has even made a 317-foot free-fall over water at night using a pullout with a one-second delay.) There is one other point very important on this topic. In handling one's bridle line, don't put all the slack in your hand along with the pilot chute, lest you "zap" yourself inadvertently or with a hard arch. Don't leave more than 6" to 12" of slack in your bridle line lest you wrap it around a post or snag it on something and treat yourself to an unexpected static line exit or "dangle job."

MANIFESTING: Smitty was in charge of manifesting. About 15 BASE jumpers were expected, but only six showed up. Carl and Jean Boenish showed up from California. Phil Smith, Andy Smith, and Rick Spigarelli showed up from Houston, Texas. Doreen Connally travelled from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

BRIDGE DAY '81

(CONTINUED)

(continued from page 2)

After releases were signed, USBA pretty much had a free reign to conduct all bridge jumping as it saw fit. If we had been better organized and more experienced, as USBA hopes to be in the next year or two, we probably could have handled fifty BASE jumpers and 150 jumps. Our only restraints were to self-regulate the activity safely, start no earlier than 10:00 AM, and finish no later than 4:00 PM. As it was, it was great fun.

CROWD REACTION: Crowd reaction to our activity was pleasing and favorable, but not necessarily in a manner that we could have predicted in advance merely from a survey poll or from our abstract conjecture or from our wishful thinking. In other words, we learned more about crowd reaction by observing people in the process of observing us in the act of jumping off a bridge than we could have by asking them in advance what they thought about someone jumping off a bridge. In other words, people really do not seem to have fully developed opinions unless they have actual experience and data upon which to base them, not just hearsay, or others' impressions on the subject. In other words, it is hard to appreciate a description of *gold* when you are discussing it in a hot room.

At any rate, crowd reaction to our activity was an interesting learning experience. It just about ran the complete gamut of possibilities as did the types of people represented there: infants, children, the elderly, the invalid, the poor, the affluent, the businessmen, the unemployed, etc. Even though there were a very few who didn't care to watch, no one directly opposed us or our activity. A few were disinterested, a few uninterested, some mildly interested, some intensely interested, but basically, most people had a mild sense of curiosity and anticipation that we *could* succeed in our announced challenge, and that we *would* succeed, and that they would just like to stick around and help us out with their moral support. I personally believe, however, that every single solitary person in that crowd felt that the activity would not have been allowed by those in charge of Bridge Day if there were the slightest doubt that all of the jumps could not be done with complete safety and with total success. And we proved them right.

Probably most in the crowd had trouble comprehending our sport because they could not imagine themselves participating in it. A few would not even look over the edge of the bridge, let alone watch us. A few could not even or would not even walk across the bridge, whether they were mentally or physically disabled from doing so. Some people thought we had "guts," others admired us, some called us "crazy" and "foolhardy." Without a doubt, however, we were center stage. Hundreds waited patiently 15 minutes and even half an hour just to "see our act." And they weren't disappointed, either. And all of us BASE jumpers weren't disappointed, either. Whether we watched or jumped, our souls were truly rejuvenated. In my mind, I could hardly believe it was possible what we were doing. In fact, it actually seemed easier to do it than it did to imagine it! It all seems so incredible. It really is a mind boggler, but fortunately not a body-boggler! The jump itself is truly a piece of cake if you are willing to follow the already established safety guidelines. A 1,000 jumps out of a 1,000 jumps can be performed perfectly if you pay great attention to detail! That is the name of the game in BASE jumping. I also personally feel that there wasn't a soul there who didn't think we had the right to pursue this activity--especially on Bridge Day--under the auspices of the law enforcement, etc.

PROPOSAL TEST PLAN: Probably the single most important victory for BASE jumping will come when BASE jumpers at large will have a permanent, convenient, hopefully year-round fixed-object from which to jump, day or night, totally uninhibited by the fear of denunciation by a society of well-wishers. There has already been serious talk by BASE jumpers about either leasing or purchasing an existing antenna tower and setting it aside exclusively for BASE jumping, especially adapting it with certain overhangs, abbreviated guy wire systems, electric elevators, etc.

Another proposal would be to work with the West Virginia Department of Highways, the Fayette County Police Department, and the local Chamber of Commerce. Collectively, we could designate a specially painted pickup truck owned, let's say, by a local resident, especially equipped with large flashing lights and a sign to the effect: SLOW MOVING VEHICLE--PASS ON LEFT. The truck would have a special waiver allowing it to spend, say, several minutes, parked in the parking lane at the mid-point of the span, during which time a load of BASE jumpers could launch their jumps. Each time this waiver were utilized, the local Police could give their prior consent by telephone in a similar fashion that jump pilots radio in to the FAA at some control towers prior to dropping their loads of skydivers. Furthermore, the local newspapers and news media could make it common knowledge that such bridge jumps are frequent and authorized. Signs could even be posted in and around the bridge areas depicting this activity.

OTHER USES OF THE BRIDGE: I was filming the second load of bridge jumpers from a turnout in the roadway underneath the bridge when a woman pulled up in her car and asked me when "they were jumping." I told her "in five minutes" and she happily pulled over so she and her friends could get out and watch. After the jumps, she proudly told me how it is very common, year round, during the week and on weekends, to see the local mountain climbers practicing their fine art of repelling the 876 feet from the center of the undercarriage of the bridge down to the river bed. I thought that information was especially illuminating in view of the fact that I had heard that some anonymous jumper had gotten "busted" for "criminal trespass" when he or she had jumped from the undercarriage of the superstructure some time back. But I also recalled another story I had heard describing someone who had reported a bridge jumper as a bonifide "suicide" because he had seen only the exit and not the parachute or the safe landing. The local rescue squad wasted several hours of seven men trying to recover the alleged body that didn't exist. To make matters worse, the rescuers respond so quickly that one of the rescue vehicles got involved in a minor traffic wreck. Putting everything into perspective, I personally can see why the judge and the local townsfolk were more than a bit irate with the phantom "suicider" when they finally caught up with him. None of this would have happened had there been open communication between the BASE jumpers and the law enforcement and the public.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: My bridge jump on Bridge Day was a very special and personal one for me. It was my 19th BASE jump over a period of 3 years. But I had barriers to overcome unlike any prior BASE jumps. I wasn't used to the carnival-like atmosphere--almost like I was a freak, or side because of this "sixth-sense," I almost chose not to jump. But then I realized that I shouldn't denied this privilege, either. I had come a long way for this opportunity. I mustered up my courage, squelched my personal inhibition, and told a lot of kids following me around, "Hey, you wanna

re and see something really neat?" They all
 ed enthusiastically and off we went. I passed
 than 500 people standing on the bridge as the
 nd I walked to the launch point. By this
 the people on the other half of the bridge
 getting wind of the impending jump and were
 ring to witness it. Finally, when I got all
 I could see that my motives were pure and that
 made the right choice. All those people would
 amping with me, too, at least in their minds.
 an inspiration that must have been to their
 pt of life. Then, as I carefully--almost
 ndly--climbed up over the railing and stood
 on the far side of it, I heard numerous
 as: "Ahhhs" and "Oh, no's." Then, a power of
 less swept into my mind, and I asked the crowd,
 "I've heard Roger Nelson say a hundred times
 as various skydiving Boogies, "Are you all having
 d time?" Cheers and yeahs were exalted from
 crowd. Then, after more words, I said to them,
 erely, "Well, so am I." And then, a la Robin
 , I concluded, "Well, you all have a nice day.
 be at the bottom in about 30 seconds, and I'll
 over and feel the water and tell you if it's
 or not." With that, I was off! As I exited,
 first second of falling gave me a momentary
 ing that I was out of my element--like a fish
 of water, like wow, you sure start falling fast,
 t you? There is a physical sensation once you
 start to accelerate that is hard for the body
 omprehend and accept, both physiologically and
 ionally. It's the elevator feeling, the bottom-
 pit feeling. But, paradoxically, at almost
 same instant, a great feeling of relief swamps
 body and its senses and says, "Yahoo, I'm flying
 and everything is under control". That second
 nd is the most enjoyable because it gives one
 eling of total power and freedom--you feel like
 re Superman and there's nowhere you can't fly.
 he third and fourth seconds, the jump slowly
 sforms itself into a normal skydive, and even
 gh I really like to skydive, it is a relative
 down.

In retrospect, my BASE jump on Bridge Day '81
 one of the easiest, safest and most enjoyable
 jumps I have ever made. It is an experience
 human being on this planet should ever be denied.
 It is his or her choice to experience it. It
 this spirit of worth, freedom, dominion, success,

power, fulfillment that binds all us BASE jumpers
 together, not a BASE Association, organization,
 a magazine, articles, or opinions. For this very
 reason, it can never be squelched, now that it is
 discovered and founded. But let us treat it carefully,
 even sacredly, and feed and nourish it patiently
 and continuously, lest we trip over our own feet
 and minimize its progress. We have to meet our
 own needs as well as the needs of our society and
 fellow man. We are on the mountain peak first (at
 least in this one, esoteric department of life),
 and we can see what others cannot see yet, the early
 morning light faintly. Everyone else is sleeping
 in the endarkened valley below, but we can't hold
 that against them, for they are very good, too.
 As the sun begins to rise of its own accord, we
 must be patient and carefully educate our fellow
 brothers and sisters who are just starting to wake
 up on their own, lest we startle them and make them
 mad and have them--who outnumber us--persecute us
 and cast us out as crazy, until finally, at noonday,
 we smile at them, and they smile at us, and we hear
 them tell us in all sincerity, "We knew it the whole
 time anyway. Of course you can jump your cliffs, and
 bridges, and towers, and buildings. We know its
 safe ... if you pay attention to detail. Just don't
 stop the traffic."



Logo designed by Fayette Countess
 JUANITA H. AKERS

BASE JUMPING MISHAPS

We have had our first cliff jumping fatality in Black
 on, Colorado in October, 1981. Apparently a party
 six cliff jumpers jumped from the newly discovered
 60-foot sheer walls. The second jumper slipped
 exit, didn't track, opened without immediately
 ering his canopy and apparently ran into the
 l, out of sight to the others on top due to the
 al topography. The rest of the party correctly
 med that he was in need of help and was either
 ured or dead. The remaining four jumped without
 ident. Apparently the site is a difficult one
 jump safely, unless a BASE jumper is very experi-
 ed and patient to wait for perfect weather. The
 ther is said to change drastically in small time
 ervals enhanced by the fact that the site is
 box canyon."

Authorities were notified within an hour to begin
 ir rescue attempt. The balance of the total
 ty of eleven didn't know how to react or what
 do in the situation, primarily because it was
 to them and they were all unqualified to assist
 the rescue attempt. Press coverage of the accident

was virtually all negative, and essentially accused
 everyone in the party of abandoning their dead friend.
 This account, however, paints entirely a false account
 of how everyone felt about the loss of their close com-
 panion. The Park Service had next to no cooperation
 and information from the remainder of the party,
 other than a rescue attempt that was urgently needed.
 Most of the jumpers were interested in not incriminating
 themselves in an obscure law untested by the courts
 that requires permits to be issued from the Park
 Superintendent for all contemplated cliff jumps.
 Had this been a mountain climbing accident, most
 likely no lack of information or cooperation would
 have been withheld by the remainder of the party,
 since mountain climbing is totally unregulated and
 no incrimination would have loomed over their heads
 regarding the accident.

It is hoped with the passage of time that cliff
 jumping, like cliff climbing, will be totally un-
 regulated and self-controlled. The dissemination
 of knowledge--to the uninformed public and the would-
 be cliff jumper--is the key to this happening. Numer-
 ous articles have been written as to what extent
 government should protect its citizens from themselves.
 It is noteworthy to mention that the death rate
 of those who attempt to climb Mt. McKinley in Mt.

(continued on page 10)

Meet those daring young men on downtown's 'skydiving circuit'

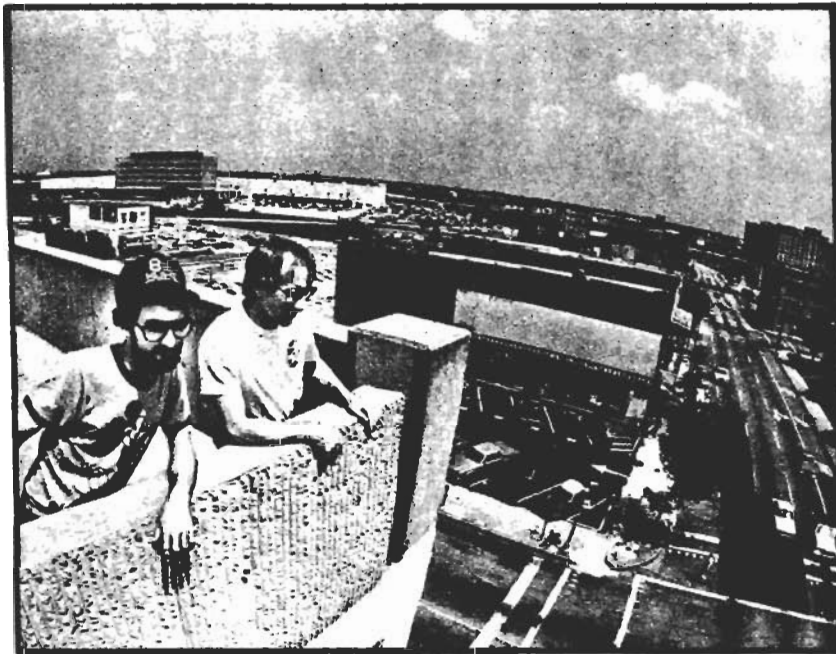


Photo By Steve Ueckert, Chronicle Staff

Andy Smith, left, and Phil Smith gaze out over a view of the city. Both men have sky-dived off the 75-story Texas Commerce Bank Building and say they'd like to do it again if building officials would give them permission.

BY BARBARA KARKABI
Chronicle Staff

PHIL SMITH HAS skydived from more buildings, bridges, TV towers and airplanes than even Walter Mitty would have dared to dream about.

Yet, without his skydiving gear, when he stands at the top of a high place and peers over the edge, Phil Smith says that he feels as queasy as anyone else.

And even with it on, there is always a second — right before he jumps — when he says he feels absolutely terrified — although obviously not terrified enough to stop him from making five parachute jumps off the 75-story Texas Commerce Bank Tower in downtown Houston.

In all, Phil Smith claims to have made 17 different jumps around Houston — five from the TCB building, 11 from a TV tower in southwest Houston, and one from the Houston Ship Channel Bridge, for which he and fellow skydiver Andy Smith were arrested recently.

Although they jokingly refer to themselves as "The Flying Smutties," the two men are not related. They are close friends and belong to a group known as BASE, an acronym for Building, Antenna (tower), Span (any bridge, arch, cable or dome) and Earth (any cliff or natural formation).

Phil and Andy Smith were two of the four men who jumped off the TCB building last June (one of the jumpers in that group, Dwayne Bruette, was also arrested).

Phil Smith shrugs and says: "Well, one arrest out of 20 jumps off TCB is really not a bad record."

Both men vividly recall their first jumps off the building, which occurred on a cold, sunny morning last January.

"The impact visually was more than any other BASE jump I've ever made," Andy Smith says. "First of all, you're standing up there looking over the edge and the whole city is spread out underneath. You see the buildings, the streets, the cars — it's a pretty incredible panorama. And whether you jump during the day or night, there is just so much more to look at than when you're sky-diving out of an airplane. All you see in that case is the horizon."

Phil Smith recalls his fear. "Up until a few minutes before I made the jump I was just a bundle of nerves. I'm always real edgy before I jump anyway," he says. "We usually have a countdown so that everyone leaps off at different times. That's because some of us carry cameras to record it."

"Anyway, when I start counting out, that's when I usually begin getting myself under control, and I become something of

a machine. Then it seems like I have more control over my body and emotions than at any other time in my life."

He leans back in his chair.

"Maybe it's the adrenaline, I don't know. I do know there's an incredible rush of it when you're free-falling. God, it's like being shot up with something," he says. "And later on, I can flashback to it and recall everything. Like when I'm driving down the freeway, I can look up, see the building, and it all comes back to me."

If they think about death, it is only to admit that "it adds to the thrill of the jump."

"Besides, it's better than getting in a wreck and dying on the freeway. There's a lot more flair to it," says Phil Smith.

The BASE group formed about one year ago and so far has some nine members spread out all over the country, both men say.

"We skydiving people usually get around a lot because we'll go far to find exciting and challenging jumps," Phil Smith says.

Phil Smith has been skydiving for about 11 years, and Andy Smith has been at it for six. Since they call themselves "thrill-seekers," both Smiths say they were always looking for a more exciting and challenging jump to tackle than simple skydiving — something they both do every weekend.

The driving force behind BASE is a free-fall photographer named Carl Boenish, who lives in California. Phil and Andy Smith say that Boenish and his wife, Jean, got them involved in jumping off El Capitan where both men say the whole thing really began.

Phil Smith gets a faraway look in his eye.

"El Capitan is a very tall cliff in Yosemite National Park that's about 3,000 feet off the valley floor. For about six weeks last year, California allowed people to jump off the cliff, and it was great," he recalls. "We all went out there, and I made several jumps — one of them was from stilts to make it even more exciting."

Eventually, Phil Smith explains, California stopped the jumping — not, they stress, because of any injuries, but because "it was getting trashed up. That's one thing BASE really stresses. We feel it's very important to leave everything as it was, when you jump from a building or whatever," Phil Smith says.

"Anyway, after I came back from that trip, I had a taste for forbidden fruit, so to speak; and everything else became pretty boring."

It wasn't long before another of Phil and Andy Smith's jumper friends came up with an idea — he had discovered a television tower in Houston that looked like a possibility.

After testing the jump with 50-pound weights, to see if their chutes would open in time, Phil Smith and two other skydiving friends jumped off the tower.

"We never got caught at it, but we sort of feel like the tower people might be looking the other way... that's why we don't want to tell where it is," Phil Smith says.

"Once when I was jumping off the television tower, the police came driving up. All they said to me was, 'Don't do it again.' That seems like the right attitude to me... I mean we're not hurting anybody, and if we injure ourselves, we certainly won't sue," says Andy Smith.

After the first Houston tower jump, the core group of what was to be BASE went to Dallas and skydived from five or six different towers there. Phil and Andy Smith pinpoint that weekend as the actual formation of BASE.

"We'd had the concept for a while, but

it just all came together then," Phil Smith says.

Phil Smith says that an individual becomes a BASE member when he or she has made jumps from all four BASE categories. There are also different awards for night BASE jumps, he says.

Neither Phil or Andy Smith can understand why people might look askance at their hobby.

"Like it says in BASE magazine (a newsletter the group publishes "as the need arises"), 'One man's ceiling is another man's floor.' We really believe that."

And although they would love to jump from TCB again, they realize that it's impossible now.

"The security is just too strict. We wouldn't be talking to you at all if we had

plans to do it again," Andy Smith says. "We'd love it if they'd give us permission, and we've written a number of letters to different buildings asking for that, but so far no one has replied."

Both men believe that the general public secretly "gets a big kick" out of such feats.

"Look, I would never enjoy rafting on white water, but I love to read about it or watch it on TV," Phil Smith says. "I think it's the same thing with what we do. I don't think the TCB people were upset at our jump. We sent some pictures to Gerald Hines' office, and I understand they were passed all around."

But they are quick to agree that such jumps are not for everyone — both men stress that all BASE members have had

years of experience as well as top-notch skydiving equipment.

"Lots of people have called and asked us how to do it. If we think they're a little loony, we'll try to discourage them," Phil Smith says. "But, we can't limit ourselves because of what someone else might do."

Phil and Andy Smith say they are not likely to stop their jumps no matter what happens.

And as for the illegality of it all, Phil Smith looks at it this way. "Sometimes you have to break a law to get it changed. We're looking for the day when it will be completely legal to skydive off any building we choose. Now that may never happen, but we're still going to dream about it. Anyway you look at it, I'm getting a lot of good photos," he smiles.

Parachutists jump into ship channel

By JACK DOUGLAS
Post Reporter

Two members of a group of skydivers who jumped from atop the downtown Texas Commerce Tower June 28 were arrested Sunday morning for again practicing their sport by parachuting off the Loop 610 bridge into the Houston Ship Channel, one of the jumpers said.

Phil Smith, 30, of 1014 Shady Trail, and his jump partner Sunday, Andy Smith, 28, of 1350 Somercotes, were apprehended about 8:30 a.m. after their leap off the bridge, which stands 168 feet above the channel.

Phil Smith said in a telephone interview that he and his companion were arrested by police after they were fished out of the water by friends and had gotten into a van near Dock 31.

Both men were ticketed for trespassing and for walking on the bridge and were ordered to appear in court Sept. 8, Smith said. He said they spent about 2½ hours in the city jail before paying fines of \$200 for the trespassing violation and \$40 for walking on the bridge.

Smith said he and Andy Smith were among the parachutists who sailed down from the top of the 75-story Texas Commerce Tower on Main Street almost two months ago. A skydiver at that time was arrested after he floated in front of several surprised police officers.

Smith said one of the arresting officers Sunday was irritated because the original report was that two people were attempting suicide.

Smith said they were driven in a van to the top of

the bridge and then picked up by four friends who were below in a boat. Smith, who would not identify the others involved in the incident, said he and Andy Smith were the only ones to leap off the bridge.

He said they apparently were spotted before the jump at the top of the bridge by someone who then notified police.

Smith said he didn't understand the trespassing charge since it was visitor's day at the Port of Houston Authority and people were allowed in. "They (the police) say by coming in through the channel rather than through the gate we broke the law," he said.

Smith said he would not encourage other skydivers to jump from the bridge unless they were experienced and went through the same lengthy preparations he and his partner had gone through.

★ The Houston Post/Wed., Sept. 9, 1981

Courts/police Bridge parachutists enter pleas

Two men arrested Aug. 16 after they parachuted from the Loop 610 bridge into the Houston Ship Channel pleaded innocent Tuesday to charges of criminal trespassing and walking on the freeway.

Phil Smith, 30, of 1014 Shady Trail and Andy Smith, 28, of Channelview, members of the BASE (Building, Antenna, Span and Earth) Divers parachuting group, were arraigned in municipal court Tuesday.

Both men said they did not feel they were guilty of any wrongdoing when they sailed down the bridge into the channel. They were arrested after being fished out of the water.

Both men said they regretted the Saturday jump from the 75-story Texas Commerce Tower in downtown Houston in which parachutist Richard Davis, 25, of Austin was injured.

Andy Smith said that several months ago he at-

tempted to discourage one of Davis' friends from making the jump because he felt the man and Davis lacked the experience to successfully perform the feat.

Davis' friend later decided against making the jump, but Davis remained resolute and in fact asked him to make the jump with him, Andy Smith said.

The trial date for the Smiths, who are facing the identical misdemeanor charges, was set for Sept. 25 in Municipal Court No. 3. The two men are not related.

Jury finds 2 men innocent in parachute jump from bridge

By JIM CARLTON
Chronicle Staff

Phil Smith and Andy Smith felt they were in the right all along.

The two men, who are not related, were found innocent by a Municipal Court jury Friday of misdemeanor criminal trespassing charges stemming from their 168-foot parachute jump on Aug. 16 from the Houston Ship Channel Bridge on Loop 610.

The five-woman, one-man jury deliberated two hours before dismissing the charges against Phil Smith, 30, a truck driver, of 1014 Shady Trail, and Andy Smith, 28, a machinist, of 1350 Somercotes.

The men were charged with trespassing on Port of Houston property after they climbed out of the ship channel following their jump, which they said was part of an exercise of their small parachutist club BASE, an acronym for Building, Antenna, Span and Earth.

Both men said they have also jumped from the 75-story Texas Commerce Tower, Houston's tallest building.

BASE was formed in January, with both Smiths becoming the first members, and the requirements for joining are parachuting off of a building, an antenna, a span structure and a naturally fixed object such as a mountain or cliff.

The men said they did not know it was illegal to get onto port property because there were no signs warning against trespassing and they crossed the property on a Sunday, which is visitors' day.

"At the time, I thought it was owned by the people of Harris County and I knew it was visitors' day on Sunday," Andy Smith said. "We had no intentions of harming any property or anyone. They should have put a sign up. Or they could have told us to stay in the water."

Smith said there were port security guards on the channel bank who could have ordered them not to come ashore.

Phil Smith added, "I don't deny that we made the jump or entered the port property, but I don't think by entering the property we trespassed because that belongs to the public and we were there on a day when visitors are allowed."

However, assistant City Attorney Dan Easterling said "common sense" should have indicated to the men that they couldn't lawfully enter the port's property from the water.

Easterling also said that although visitors were allowed to tour port facilities that day, the tour does not mean citizens can walk anywhere they want on the property. He said the visitors' area is 300 yards from where the Smiths allegedly trespassed.

Easterling said the men should be found guilty so others would be warned not to take parachute jumps off the ship channel bridge.

"If you're going to parachute, do it out in a field somewhere," Easterling said. "Don't do it on a bridge where police are going to investigate."

If found guilty, the men could have been assessed maximum fines of \$200 each.

Both men said they didn't regret the jump and would be willing to do it again. However, Phil Smith said they probably would select another place besides port property to go ashore.

Viewpoints

News stories promote the skydiving outlaws

From Joe Svec, secretary, United States Parachute Association, 721 W. 38th St.

I wonder why the media in this city is suddenly interested in skydivers after ignoring them and their competitions for years. Is it because the recent "fixed object" jumps are more sensational than thousands of skydives made each year in and around Houston by mature, responsible skydivers, or is it because the jumpers are breaking the law?

Any weekend hundreds of skydivers make safe, sane jumps from aircraft in accordance with the basic safety regulations of the United States Parachute Association. These jumps take place over Houston Gulf Airport in League City, Houston Skydiving Center in Hockley and Galveston Skydiving Center in Hitchcock. In the five years I've been involved in this sport, I haven't seen one reporter at any drop zone.

DeWayne Bruette, who was arrested following his jump from the Texas Commerce Tower (Chronicle, June 29), is not representative of the skydiving community as a whole. After the extensive news coverage, I felt responsible skydivers were due equal time, as they got tired of being asked, "Are you one of those crazy guys who jump off buildings?"

Instead, just when the publicity over the building jump had died down and we thought the concrete circus was over, two of the troupe who believed they hadn't received enough publicity decided to jump from the Houston Ship Channel bridge. Channel 2 news obliged with full-color coverage — exclusive films of skydivers breaking the law. Many of us wonder if Channel 2 would have made similar arrangements with a bank robber to enhance ratings.

But the publicity didn't stop with Channel 2. The daring duo emerged from 61 Riesner St. as heroes in the eyes of Chronicle reporter Barbara Karkabi in her half-page article (Lifestyle, Aug. 27).

A skydiver then decided to glean some media limelight in the middle of downtown on a Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately, fate was not kind to Richard Davis (Chronicle, Sept. 6). There were no stories about how dar-

ing and wonderful he was, only how bloody and broken he was after the jump.

Levying a \$75 to \$200 fine on a skydiver who needs his ego caressed is not going to work, as it is a small price to pay for the publicity it generates. There is no easy solution to the problem, but those of us who feel a responsibility to this sport and to the safety of skydivers and the general public will seek a solution.

In the meantime, I find it disheartening that these few skydiving outlaws received more coverage than the 1981 U.S. Parachute Team that is presently training for the 1981 world championships to be held in Florida Oct. 8-19. The U.S. team will compete against teams from 23 nations, defending its world title won in France in 1979. I have the honor of being the team leader. It sickens me to see publicity bounds receiving more attention than young men who have practiced for months at great sacrifice to compete.

Editor's note: A Chronicle editorial ("No sport in this," Sept. 19) referred to such stunts as a "dangerous and unnecessary nuisance" that should be handled as such by law enforcement.

Viewpoints

BASE parachutists not always outlaws

From Phil S. Mayfield, president, United States BASE Association, 1219 Moore Terrace, Arlington.

Much has been printed regarding recent parachute jumps from various BASE (building, antenna, span and Earth) objects. In a recent letter (Viewpoints, Sept. 24), Houston skydiver Joe Svec attacked BASE divers as being "skydiving outlaws" who need their "egos caressed," unlike the "mature, responsible skydivers" who "make safe, sane jumps from aircraft." Svec also criticized the publicity afforded these "outlaws."

I suggest that to a large segment of the population, jumping from an airplane has as little to do with maturity, safety or sanity as jumping off a cliff or other object. I enjoy both sports because of the challenge and thrills, not the headlines or the ego aggrandizement.

The truth is, some sports are more dangerous than others. Downhill skiing is more dangerous than cross-country skiing. Likewise, some sports are more visible than others and are more likely to attract attention. Headlines, after all, are not goodwill gestures but news items.

Svec seems to have three pet peeves: BASE jumpers in general; illegal BASE jumpers; and publicity hounds, even though he has sought publicity for his own activities.

Certainly no sport has a monopoly on fools and egotists. Parachute jumping has its share. I do not defend those who break the law, but there are numerous places to make legal BASE jumps. Nor do I promote BASE jumping or even roller skating for those who are unqualified or unprepared. Good judgment cannot be legislated, and there will always be people who bite off more than they can chew.

Svec also criticized Channel 2 News for covering "skydivers breaking the law" by jumping from the Ship Channel Bridge. However, neither jumper was found to be guilty of any crime on his day in a Houston courtroom.

Motorized gliders could be key to improved mobility

From Edward J. Lebeau III, 9586 Windswept Lane.

In a recent letter about motorized gliders within the city, the writer complained of the noise and probability of a crash into a home or into traffic (Viewpoints, Sept. 10). He suggested that these gliders not be permitted to fly within the city limits.

Had the attitude prevailed throughout the last 100 years that anything noisy or unsafe should be prohibited, the horseless carriage would still be a novelty. When introduced, it was more of a threat to safety than the motorized glider is now, plus the contraption scared the horses.

If, rather than fighting something new, citizens would keep an open mind, maybe motorized gliders could be used for individual transportation, thus revolutionizing mobility as the horseless carriage did many years ago.

REBUTTAL: "THIS IS A SPORT?" (ca. 1958)

It's becoming something of a national pastime. A barnstorming daredevil sees an airplane and decides he just hasn't lived until he's jumped from it. It's happened several times now throughout the midwest.

It seems like good, clean fun, but it isn't. For one thing, it's against the law, or more precisely, several laws, federal, state, and local. Not only that, it's also potentially dangerous to both the daredevil and the unlucky folks who might happen to get in his way. The skydivers, as they call themselves, jump out of perfectly good airplanes and unnecessarily put their lives on the line every single jump, let alone the lives and property of the innocent

public down below them. Before you know it, they'll want to practice their "controlled suicide" over our populated cities, too, claiming that they can control their fall and steer their parachutes in the wind. Then, they'll probably want to "join hands" in free-fall, or sit on each other's parachutes as they glide down, or sit in their harnesses upside down, or in the nude, or something. Next thing you know, they might even try to land on buildings, or bridges, or PRETEND THEY ARE SANTA CLAUS! If you'll listen to them, they'll have you believing that their "mass suicide attempts" in the air will be looked at as a new-found sport, to be condoned and accepted as such by the public.

McKinley National Park is one in a hundred, and has been for many years, whereas the injury rate of cliff jumping from El Capitan in Yosemite National Park has been about one in a hundred, with little safety information disseminated to date. It is unfortunate that the Park Service seems to have decided that mountaineering is a more worthwhile endeavor than cliff jumping.

Unfortunately, another BASE jumping accident occurred during the same month, this one directly attributable to a lack of dissemination of knowledge. Apparently a local skydiver from the Texas area heard that the Texas Commerce Tower in downtown Houston had been jumped on numerous occasions and he decided to give it a try for himself. He attempted to contact certain BASE members for information about the jump--the do's and the don'ts--but could never seem to get through on the telephone. Finally he apparently decided to go ahead on his own without talking to anyone. He didn't realize that a modern skyscraper--whether completed or not--is like a sophisticated and expensive computer owned by a large university or business. It is almost always in demand and about the only time you can "book time" on it is in the middle of the night or early each Sunday morning. From 6 AM until midnight something is nearly always going on. The object is to make use of the beautiful monument when it will not interfere with people's daily activities. Anyway, he decided to go for it on a (busy) Saturday afternoon when there must have been plenty of traffic below and typically gusty wind conditions. At any rate, he bounced into the side of the building, knocking off a piece of granite facing that nearly hit a workman below. Then, he bounced a couple of times off the building across the street. He was reportedly knocked unconscious and received cuts and broken bones. Happily he is recovering and will be in full strength soon. We hope he and others will have the opportunity to make many safe BASE jumps in the future. The secret is patience and understanding.

MY RIGHT TO BASE JUMP

by Phil Mayfield

To begin with, when the original designs were drawn for the parachute, there were no such things as flying machines. That left only two applications--buildings and earthen formations (such as cliffs).

Then came various aircraft starting with balloons and ultimately space capsules, any of which could provide various uses for the parachute.

The subject of this article is non-aircraft jumps (also called "platform" and "fixed-object" jumps). To the best of my knowledge, all non-aircraft "launching pads" can be classified into 4 categories: (1) Buildings, (2) Antennae (TV and radio towers, usually anchored with guy wires), (3) Spans (bridges and cable cars), and (4) Earth (cliffs, canyons, gorges, mountains, craters, etc.). I'll call jumps from these things BASE jumps for simplicity.

I feel compelled to set the record straight on a few things concerning people who choose to make BASE jumps. I've never likened myself to a member of an outlaw motorcycle gang, for example, just because I choose to assume extra risks for myself. The obvious difference in an outlaw motorcycle gang and "Billy Bridge Jumper" is that while both may violate society's notions of normal behavior (and common sense), the former often inflicts damage, mischief and death on others, whereas the latter is risking only his own skin, generally speaking.

Some people believe that all who make these BASE leaps do so either out of an egomaniacal attraction to the "bright lights" of the media, or because their

jump is more macho than last month's death defying stunt. I totally disagree. There is at least another category or two into which some of us may fit. One is the group of folks who simply get off on the same adrenalin rush that most who read this got off on when they made their first static line jump. Granted, most people probably don't admit to enjoying scaring themselves, but some actually feel more "alive" or "alert" when the juices are flowing. I suspect that this is the very reason why many jumpers made more than one jump. This group also consists of those who have found a new way to challenge themselves. For some, this adrenalin rush/challenge/fear is the stuff of nightmares, for others it is what casts a magic, magnetic spell.

The second group is made up of those who chronicle that which is strange, new, exciting, albeit dangerous, and unique--the recorders, the picture takers, the writers. I've seen quite a bit of well-thought-out rhetoric about many controversial innovations in the last decade (riding motorcycles without helmets, jumping without helmets, piggy back rigs, square canopies, relative work, canopy relative work, cutaways, etc.). Perhaps the silver lining of this controversy is the way it has stirred the creative juices of both pro and con contingents.

I dare say that Carl Boenish has documented not only BASE jumping more completely than any other photographer, but every other facet of skydiving and hang-gliding as well. Some photographers, such as Boenish, will risk their necks despite their fears and misgivings, for the sake of recording something on film that, in the end, benefits us all for purposes not only of entertainment but also evaluation.

The whole issue of stunt-type jumps revolves around a few very basic questions: (1) Does freedom of choice still exist or should we have a number, a rule, or a regulation for everything? If it does exist, does it also mean freedom to do what society considers foolish? After all, millions of people think that just flying in an airplane (let alone jumping out of one) is a form of Russian Roulette. The fact is, any human endeavor has some degree of risk, and everything we do is a compromise of intended gain versus acceptable risk. For this reason, it seems ludicrous to me for a person to say, "Yes, I skydive and hang-glide and rock climb and ride motorcycles and scuba dive because those are acceptable avocations, but you shouldn't jump off that bridge because I think that's too dangerous!" Why does one person want to impose his own limitations on everyone else? One man's ceiling is another man's floor.

Basic Question #2: Should I refrain from a harmless (for me) activity because someone else might, as a result of seeing it or hearing about it, try it and get hurt? Or, in other words, should the pace of the class be no faster than the slowest student? I've never been able to completely embrace this philosophy. I will be my brother's keeper only so far. I've never tried to talk a friend, relative, or acquaintance into making a parachute jump of any kind. I have dissuaded several from jumping activities, however, even to the point of refunding one student's training fee when I became convinced he could not hack it. I don't make it a practice of calling the news media, all my friends, or the local TV station each time I decide to make a BASE jump. I try to temper my enthusiasm for the jump with my legitimate concern with "image" by making a clean, quiet getaway, if at all possible. Though I've made these jumps for my own enjoyment and/or for film, I do have a healthy skydiver's ego and I consciously have to exercise restraint in conversations with other jumpers. After my first El Capitan leap, I was ecstatic with joy and awe. I felt like beginning every conversation with "Guess what I just did!" But to do so would invite accusations of irresponsibility. I am certainly not a Pied Piper of dangerous stunts.

People have been jumping off BASE "objects" for at least 15 years now, starting with the first guy who jumped off the Italian Dolomites around 1963. To expect people to cease this activity now, considering developments in the last two years, is as unrealistic as prohibition of alcohol decades ago. I think that a more realistic policy would be to illuminate the real dangers and concerns of BASE jumping, rather than lumping all BASE jumpers together as targets for an emotional attack by less than well informed detractors. Doomsayers often lose credibility when issuing blanket reprovals for pernicious deeds to a whole group, rather than a few "bad apples".

To sum up, we should all make an effort to be constructive, for we're all in this together. A wise man once said, "Negative input seldom results in a positive goal."



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Carl Boenish

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