

Summer 1986

Volume 1, Issue 1

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BASELINE

The newsletter for Base jumpers, by Base jumpers, and about Base jumping.

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Kevin Venell jumps San Antonio's Tower of Americas. Photo: Andy Smith

Baseline (Tm) is a non-profit periodical published and edited by Phil Smith, 1014 Shady Trail, Houston, Texas 77038. Phone 713-931-7709. Baseline will be published 4 times a year at the introductory price of \$5/year, \$8/foreign. Persons subscribing to Baseline in the middle of the year will receive back issues bringing them up to date. Baseline is looking for articles, jump stories, cartoons, and photographs. All due credit will be given and requests for anonymity will be honored.

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BASE IN THE NEWS

Base jumping has been receiving its share of publicity lately. In addition to the regular TV and newspaper coverage, Base has drawn the attention of several other media:

P.M. MAGAZINE covered Bridge Day 1985 and aired the segment several times during the year. They also filmed a midwest antenna jump and aired it May 27.

WEST 57th STREET, a national news program, ran an excellent story featuring Nick Feteris and Mark Hewitt jumping from a Los Angeles building. Also featured were Robin Heid and friends skydiving from the Royal Gorge Bridge.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED staffer Jack Mc Callum wrote a comprehensive article about Base jumping. The story centered around an Oklahoma tower jump by 4 men.

GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS. In addition to the longstanding records of Don Boyles and Herbert Schmidz, the 1986 edition lists two new Base entries: one for the highest cliff jump and one for the lowest indoor jump.

COLLIERS YEARBOOK, 1986 ran an article on Base jumping and other thrill sports.

The British version of PENTHOUSE featured a story about Nigel Slee, BASE 28, doing the circuit in England.

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Making the leap: "We heard the man say, 'Get off the fence,' so we did—we jumped"—into the arms of the police below

## Conquering the Empire

What kind of man parachutes off the observation deck of the Empire State Building? Someone young, headstrong and without much to lose, like Alasdair Boyd, 28, a computer programmer, or Michael McCarthy, a 25-year-old landscape gardener, both from London, who spent two months planning their jump (practicing on a 1,000-foot radio tower in Tampa, Fla.) and arrived in New York last week so short of cash that they slept the night before their jump in the bus terminal. How does he avoid getting stopped by the building's security force, which has foiled countless would-be suicides (and failed to stop at least 30 others)? "We heard the man say, 'Get off the fence,'" McCarthy said, "so we did—

we jumped off." The more serious danger was a traffic light, which entangled McCarthy's chute as he landed, attracting the attention of a couple of passing cops. After they helped unfoul him, they gave him a summons for reckless endangerment. What does it feel like? "When you actually go," said Boyd, "you don't have enough time to sit and relax and see where the art galleries are. You see the building flashing past, and the streets and buildings below you coming up. Then the canopy opens and you worry about your landing." Time for the trip: 60 seconds. Distance covered: 1,050 feet down, approximately two blocks south. Any final thoughts, Mr. Boyd? "I'd like to see more of New York."



J. P. LAPPYONT-SYGMA

SQUARE PARACHUTE LINE-OVER MALFUNCTIONS  
By Mark Hewitt

The most common problem that occurs on Base jumps that cannot be worked out on skydives is the line-over malfunction. The reason that you never see lineovers at the airport is that when the slider is up the grommets on the slider hold all four line groups together and in place, but when the slider is down the lines can go any direction upon deployment. In all of my experience with slider down openings every line-over was caused by a steering line. Now there are as many theories about line-over malfunctions as there are brands of square parachutes, but I have seen them happen to all brands with factory packs, trash packs, and roll packs using deployment bags, free stow, tail pockets, or stowing in the pack tray. When a line-over occurs, depending on the severity, it can pinch off over half of the parachute and keep it from inflating. What you have is a violently spinning 3-4 cell, and when you pull the riser down to stop the spin, you have a stalled 3-4 cell parachute.

A square parachute is a wing, and operates on the principle of lift; if you distort that wing it no longer creates lift and creates very little drag and you come out of the sky like a rock, helpless to clear the malfunction.

Now there are two things that you can do about it: 1. Minimize the chance of it happening by using a proper slider down proven pack job. An ideal pack job is one that opens like an accordian, when the nose and the tail open at the same time. To achieve this, I use a factory pack with the nose exposed or folded under and roll up the stabilizers so the first blast of air hits the center cell as opposed to the end cells. I flake the tail with the material towards the outside and the lines and seams toward the inside very neatly keeping both steering line groups coming together in the center, being careful not to let them slip around the nose. Also, I don't tuck the tail around the nose, but instead tuck it between the front and rear stabilizers purposely keeping it away from the nose.

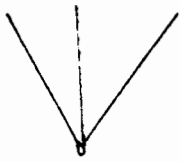
2. I have come up with a method to clear a line-over within two seconds of opening: it is a steering line modification which you to release a steering line and let it fly free, allowing the parachute to repressurize, reinflate, and regain lift, drive, and steerability.

To do this, route your steering lines outside the slider grommets and the steering line keepers on the risers (the metal ring). See illustration following page. To properly stow them on the ring, Zoo toggles (the toggles with pins) are highly recommended because there is no chance of premature brake release and they release easily under heavy loading caused by a line-over. With this modification all you have to clear the malfunction is: A. Stop the spin with the opposite riser. B. Unstow the toggle to the offending steering line. C. Let it go free, thereby relieving the pressure holding the canopy closed. D. Steering with the rear riser like it was a toggle. Note: The rear riser is more responsive than a toggle so it doesn't have to be pulled down as far as the toggle on landing.

Your steering line just trails behind the parachute like the pilot chute. You should get a special pair of steering lines made even if you only plan to make to one slider down jump in your life, because that might be the one that gets the line-over. I had a line-over off a building and spent a month in the hospital as a result. If I had had this modification I probably would have walked away from it. Not only has it been tested, but proven by a friend who static-lined a 330' bridge, had a line-over, cleared it, and made a stand up in the landing area!

About the author: Mark Hewitt, BASE 46, is a prolific jumper from Southern California. With more than 70 building jumps he is the leader in that category and his 150+ Base jumps make him one of the most experienced. He is currently working on an instructional video on "how to" safely Base jump. For more information on the tape or details of the steering line modification contact Hewitt at (213)-316-6852.

When the canopy is laying on the ground, you pull the steering line down until the upper steering line passes thru the keeper on the riser and you can detach the lower steering line from the upper steering line by slipping it thru the loop, pulling the upper steering line up back thru the keeper and slider grommet and re-attaching the steering line on the outside of the keeper and the slider grommet. This allows you versatility on putting them outside or inside for slider- down or slider-up jumps in about 30 seconds without having to untie your toggles and monkey with your brake settings.



Loop large enough that toggle can slide thru.

Zoo toggle →

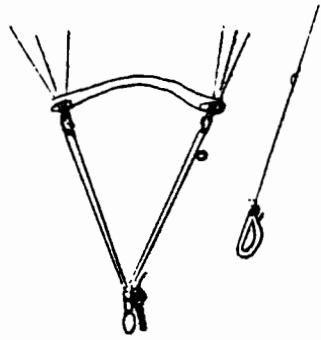


Diagram of a free floating steering line.

NOTE; Steering lines must pass thru slider for slider-up jumps.

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### TEXAS BASE

Andy Smith, BASE 9, reports that he, Dave White, Mike Wright, and Richard Castillo recently earned their Texas BASE numbers 1 thru 4 respectively. The qualifying object, which also qualified White, Wright, and Castillo for BASE 114, 115, & 116, is a 230 foot cliff in west Texas. Texas joins California and Colorado in having an all-state BASE award.

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### GORILLA MASTERS

Kevin Venell and Phil Smith made jumps from one of the legs of the Rowan Gorilla III, an offshore jack-up rig docked in Galveston. The pair landed in the ship channel and left the scene in their waiting boat without attracting attention of the authorities. The Gorilla III, with legs 600 feet tall, is claimed to be the highest jack-up rig in the world.

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### USBA REPORT

United States Base Association director Jean Boenish informs us that the BASE numbers are up to 117 and there have been 28 Night BASEs awarded.

Been arrested lately? Did you know your legal rights? Did your attorney "sell you out?" Are you planning another jump soon? If so, one of the things you must consider is avoiding arrest. As our Base activities increase so do our chances of getting caught. These are questions we should think about before the need arises. As an attorney and an active Base jumper, I would like to point out a few things which may help keep you out of jail, or at least prevent a conviction.

First, of course, plan your getaway as carefully as you plan your jump. Obviously, night jumops will provide the most cover for you and a conviction nearly always requires positive identification. The darkness also makes it easier to stash your gear and if you are arrested without it the prosecutor's office may refuse to file the case. I usually carry a dark colored garbage bag for this purpose and return for my gear later if needed. This may sound like a lot of extra work, but it is certainly better than being caught and charged with criminal trespass. Any type of arrest could end up costing a good deal.

Criminal trespass is the probably the most common charge with which Base jumpers are faced. Laws vary from state to state, but it is not unusual for this offense to carry a maximum of six months in jail plus a \$1000 fine. I suggest a visit to your county courthouse library. Ask the librarian to show you where to find the penal or criminal code. Rarely is jail time imposed, but you owe it to yourself to be informed.

To make an arrest the police need only what is called "probable cause". This is something like a 60/40 belief that a crime has been committed and that you are the culprit. For example, if a jump were reported and the police arrive within a reasonably short time to find you near the location with an unpacked rig, they may have probable cause. With this evidence arrest is possible even without positive facial identification. The district attorney, and possibly even the police, may try to bluff you into a confession. Never believe the police if they tell you a confession will make it easier on you. A competent attorney can make a conviction very difficult without a confession. Respectfully decline to answer until you have talked to a lawyer.

To obtain a conviction, the district attorney needs to prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt". This is a much more difficult burden of proof than probable cause. Without direct evidence, such as your rig, something more is usually needed such as positive identification. Again, it will be harder for the authorities to obtain either at night. A word of caution here, in case you do have to stash your rig, it is advisable to leave out your reserve packing card or any other type of identification. Without positive identification the district attorney will realize it will be hard to prove his case and will likely move on to a better one. Leave the card at home but be sure to have your main and reserve serial numbers documented in case someone else gets to your gear before you. This way you will later be able to prove the gear is yours without actually admitting to making a jump.

In case of an arrest, I suggest that you ask a knowledgeable person, preferably a lawyer, to recommend a good criminal attorney. Better still, do this before your next jump so you will know who to call if you need him. Of course, you cannot tell him you plan on breaking the law as he would have an ethical duty to report it. You can approach him by asking if he would represent you in a trespass case if by chance you are ever arrested for a jump. Be direct and ask about his fees, this will not offend him. A good attorney may not be cheap, but it will be a lot better than paying less to a lazy one who might try to talk you into a guilty plea to save himself some effort. Do not hire an attorney who does little or no criminal work as he will not be nearly as effective. The district attorney will also deal better with a good criminal attorney, rather than one who usually deals in other areas such as taxes, etc.

If you absolutely cannot find or have a good criminal lawyer recommended check the yellow pages under attorneys or lawyers. Contact

several and talk to as many as will see you. Be sure they specialize in criminal law.

Finally, a few tips on how to act if you are confronted. Hard as it may be, remain civil to the police. Prosecutors cannot afford to let you off easily if you have infuriated the police. They must deal with them every day, and the politics involved between police departments and prosecutors are heavy. A prosecutor simply cannot ignore a mad cop if they have any case at all against you. Be polite, but never waive your right not to answer questions without an attorney present.

Plea bargains are the way of the world and can be a good thing if they have you cold with a clear case. If, however, their case is weak, with no positive identification, a good criminal attorney could probably force the district attorney to drop or alter the charge to a simple misdemeanor by demanding a jury trial. Remember, it will cost less overall to hire a good lawyer and have the charges dropped or reduced, than to hire a lazy one and end up paying a heavy fine and still have a permanent record. This is specially important if you plan to keep Base jumping.

Good luck, keep jumping, do not damage property, and enjoy this fabulous sport. Remember, criminals at heart we aren't!

For legal and ethical reasons, I am omitting my name.

About the author: The author, a veteran of more than 60 Base jumps, is a seasoned attorney who, in at least four cases, successfully defended Base jumpers (including your editor) against the charges filed on them.

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BASE NUMBERS

Baseline plans to publish the names and numbers of all who have earned the BASE award. We realize that there are some people who wish to remain anonymous so we are asking all BASE awardees to fill out the form below. After the first run of BASE numbers we will periodically update them.

Name ..... BASE # .....

Address ..... Night BASE # .....

City & state .....

I (do, do not) give my permission for Baseline to publish my name and BASE number.

.....  
(signed)

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BRIDGE DAY

New River Bridge Day will be October 11 according to organizer Jean Boenish. This year Jean will be requiring pre-registration to be completed by mid August. Registration forms will be available in a future issue of Skydiving. Jumpers are urged to send their forms in as soon as possible since slots will be given on a first-come, first-served basis and the number will be limited.

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IN MEMORIAM

Baseline regretfully reports the recent death of Mike Perron, BASE #5, in an Air Force C-130 crash near Albuquerque. Perron appeared in several of Carl Boenish's films, notably the four man diamond exit from El Capitan.

CARL BOENISH REMEMBERED

I recently received this letter:

A fitting tribute to:

CARL R. BOENISH

in acknowledgment of and gratitude for  
his contributions to mankind.

Dear Friends,

We are asking you to help by writing down how Carl has touched your life. Include anything you think might be of interest, whether it be personal or professional; technical or philosophical; serious or humorous.

We will organize the material we receive into an article for Parachutist Magazine, and we will be quoting in entirety or in part from the letters we receive.

If you know of someone who would like to be included in this tribute to Carl R. Boenish, please let us know and we will be glad to send a copy of this letter.

We're waiting to hear from you as soon as possible. Let the love line flow.

Yours truly,

Andy Ferraro  
22431 Lombardi  
Laguna Hills, CA  
92653

Carol Boenish Price  
23282 Caminito Marcial  
Laguna Hills, CA 92653  
(714) 859-1931

March 13, 1986

Mrs. Price has agreed to share some material with Baseline. Look in a future issue.

JIM HANDBURY

We were particularly saddened to hear of the tragic death of Jim Handbury in April. Handbury had been test dropping a parachute which became entangled with the plane's landing gear, rendering it out of control. Jim escaped, but too low to activate his emergency parachute.

Jim's contributions to the sport of Base jumping are many but most notable is his development of the chest mounted, hand deployed emergency parachute (tertiary). Jim was involved in many of Carl Boenish's film projects including the awe-inspiring hang glider ride from Half Dome.

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BASE RIGS

Greg Chalfant is making custom velcro-closed Base rigs. He will make the container to fit your canopy. Contact him at (602)-821-2021.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Baseline will feature Rich Stein's jump story, more cartoons, lots of information, and exciting photographs. Look for it around September 1.

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