

BASELINE

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



Jerry Fee follows Randy Harrison off of the New River Gorge Bridge

Baseline (Tm) is a non-profit periodical published by Phil Smith, 1014 Shady Trail, Houston Texas 77038. Phone 713-931-7709. Baseline will be published four 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, incident/accident reports, and photographs. All due credit will be given and requests for anonymity will be honored.

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor: Phil Smith
Associate Editor: Ardy Calistrat
Contributors: Rick Harrison
Phil Mayfield
Jean Boenish
Rich Stein
Nick Feteris

ACCIDENT REPORTS

The last few months saw three people die due to Base jumping accidents:

Marilyn Ettma was killed while jumping from a 700 foot cliff in New South Wales, Australia. She had a bad exit, opened facing the cliff, and struck the wall. Further details were unavailable at presstime.

Ray "Fossie Bear" Foster, 38, an English born Australian citizen and veteran of more than 2500 skydives, was killed jumping a cliff near Trollveggen in Norway. According to a witness who claims ten jumps at the same site, Foster made such a weak exit that he never got more than a few feet from the wall.

After falling for ten seconds without tracking, Foster struck the cliff, opening both his main and reserve containers. It was believed to be his first Base jump.

Finally, Canadian born Rick Stanley, 22, experienced a line-over malfunction while making an unauthorized jump from the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia. He spun into a fast moving part of the river, without any flotation device, rescue boat, or ability to swim.

Stanley cut away his main after splashdown (as is recommended), but was swept into the rapids and disappeared. His body was recovered two days later.

BASE IN THE NEWS

ARIZONA BASE

J.D. Walker, Base 37, reports that he recently earned Arizona Base (as well as Arizona Night Base) #1. He also claims Base Arrest #1, a dubious distinction which may yet be challenged: has anyone out there been arrested jumping a Building, Antenna, Span, and Earth before February 2, 1985?

TROLL BOOGIE CANCELLED

Things quickly went awry for Christophe Lachoviez, of France, when he planned a late summer Boogie from Norway's well-known Trollveggen cliff. When the media got wind of Lachoviez's intentions, they circulated rumors that as many as 250 jumpers would show up. Fearing mass carnage, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice banned cliff jumping in Norway. At presstime, Lachoviez was still trying to get the authorities to compromise.

CLEAN GETAWAY

Texas Base jumpers Rick Harrison and Phil Smith were making an early morning day time jump from a new TV tower for pictures. Shortly before exit, their ground crew informed them by two-way radio that a passerby had spotted them on the tower, and claimed to have called the Sheriff. Sure enough, within minutes, the area was swarming with police cars, their cherry tops flashing.

Figuring they were already committed to the jump, Harrison and Smith altered their choice of landing sites, opting instead for a remote field which was inaccessible by automobile. The police had already spotted the ground crew, and were detaining them on suspicion of involvement, but no charges were filed.

The jump and landing went smoothly while the police watched helplessly. The jumpers scrambled into a forest and waited several hours before emerging.

USBA UPDATE

Jean Boenish reports that the Base numbers are up to 131, and Night Bases are up to 29. Mrs. Boenish, who is the organizer of Bridge Day jumping in West Virginia, has announced her intentions of limiting participation in this year's event to 200 people. Jumpers interested in reserving a slot must pre-register by mail, and will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. The registration form will appear in the September issue of Skydiving, and should be received at USBA headquarters no later than September 11, 1986 (U.S.B.A., 12619 S. Manor Drive, Hawthorne California 90250).

Jean also reports that Base ID cards are now available for all Base awardees. The plastic cards run for \$8. For more information, contact her at (213) 678-0163.



BRIDGE DAY CANCELLED

By Phil Smith

The very nature of Base jumping dictates that most of our jumps will be "clandestine operations". The reason is simple: permission is out of the question, and so you either "sneak" the jump, or you don't do it. Considering this, it may seem rather unusual to hear a Base jumper speak out against bandit jumps. But when the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia is concerned, I feel many jumpers should re-evaluate their thinking.

When it comes to the New River Gorge Bridge, the "show case of Base jumping", we must temper our selfishness with consideration for our fellow Base jumpers. We have been given permission to jump on Bridge Day every year since 1980, making it the longest running sanctioned Base program in existence. Negotiations are currently under way to legalize jumps there on several days throughout the year, and yet we are under the constant threat of losing everything due to a few individuals who see fit to jump at their leisure, usually without proper equipment, training, or water support crews.

Securing the right to Base jump from the New River Gorge Bridge once a year was no easy task: people like Jean Boenish invested many hours of work into convincing the "powers that be" that Bridge jumping is safe and that we can police ourselves. We are fortunate to have friends in high places, such as Doug Maddy, the organizer of Bridge Day, who continue to support us.

On the other side of the coin, is that there exists a certain group very unsympathetic to Base jumpers, including a few West Virginia legislators who are looking for any excuse at all to outlaw Bridge Day jumping. Whenever a jumper gets hurt, killed, or simply makes an illegal jump, we lose credibility with the authorities and add ammunition to their arsenal against us. It won't take long before we find the straw that breaks the camel's back, and it would literally only take one person to shut it all down for the rest of us.


So please, if you want to jump the New River Gorge Bridge, register for Bridge Day and take your turn. If you can't wait until then, jump somewhere else, and don't be the one to ruin a good thing going!

OFFICIAL N.R.G.B. JUMP NUMBER AND AWARDS ORDER FORM

Full Name _____ N.R.G.B.# _____
 Address _____ Phone (_____) _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____
 Date of Jump _____ Approximate time _____
 Witness _____

For number only, send S.A.S.E. to N.R.G.B. AWARDS to address below

| Items Ordered | Cost / Item | Number Ordered | Total Cost |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| ID Card | \$ 3.00 | | |
| Certificate | \$ 8.00 | | |
| *Patch | \$12.00 | | |
| *Decal | \$ 5.00 | | |
| *T-Shirt Transfer | \$ 5.00 | | |
| Total Cost | | | _____ |



*Minimum order, approx. 4"
Prices include shipping and handling
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery
U.S. dollars please

Make check or money order payable to:
N.R.G.B. AWARDS
P.O. Box 36194
Indianapolis, Indiana 46236-0194

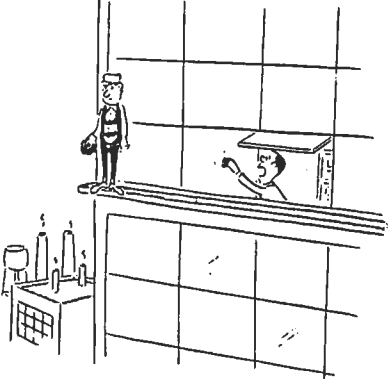
AT PRESSTIME

KALSKRATIND CONQUERED

Just before Baseline went to press, Mike Allen called in to report that Ohio jumper Butch Shields and Floridian Brian Scott successfully jumped from the 4700-foot Kalskratind cliff, near the Troll wall in Norway.

Allen, who is from Florida, was one of six people who showed up for the Trollvegan cliff jumping boogie (the media had circulated wild rumors that as many as 250 people would arrive). Unfortunately, the attempts by the Norweigen Ministry of Justice to close that boogie by outlawing cliff jumping were successful: Allen reports that it is illegal to carry a parachute anywhere near the popular Troll site, with the penalty set at 20,000 Kron (approximately \$2,000), confiscation of gear and (for foreigners) immediate deportation.

Fortunately, this applied only to the Troll Wall, and not to all cliff jumping throughout the country (as was first believed). Allen's group soon scouted out a new site called the Kalskratind, which boasts 4700 vertical feet from exit to landing, of which the first 1300 feet are sheer. With Mike filming, Shields and Scott successfully jumped the site (Shields exiting first). More details will be included in the



By Rick Harrison

The first rule of preparing your gear for Base jumping is to do what has worked best for you. However, I wish to mention a few things you may want to consider about sliders. Hopefully this will provide food for thought, especially among those of you who are just getting into Base and are not sure about packing.

The old advice about using sliders down on four second delays or less may not always be appropriate. It depends on the object, landing area, and your particular parachute.

Slider down openings are quicker and I have found that they open just as straight as with slider up. A quicker opening will, however, surge a bit more in the direction of opening and may cause you to travel further before getting your risers or toggles under control. On a short building (500-700 feet) with a short delay (1-2 seconds) you will be close to the object and might not have time to turn away in case of a 180° off heading opening. On the other hand, slider up may slow the opening more than you would like if the object is 700 feet or less. I usually go slider down on objects of less than 700 feet mainly because I am used to it.

It is becoming more evident that having slider down may result in lineover malfunctions, especially in high cross winds on exit. For land jumps, if altitude permits, a slider up will help the canopy open the way it was designed to, and help prevent a line-over. Canopies vary greatly in how fast they open with sliders. If your canopy often snivels on airplane jumps due to the slider, you probably do not want the slider up on land Base jumps of less than 700 feet. If the landing area is water, rather than land, you can jump lower and would more likely be able to handle a partial malfunction such as a line-over.

My experience has been that the lower aspect ratio canopies (5 cells and many 7 cells) often have trouble throwing the slider down on a short delay. Most 9 cells have a very high aspect ratio as does my XL Nimbus. It will slam the slider down to the connector links even on a 2 second delay. Nine cells may also be more prone to line-overs with the slider down, since the end cells are uncontrolled and so far out to the sides. Over good water this isn't so bad, and slider down enables super low water jumps.

For those of you with delicate legs or ankles due to injury, as I have, the thought of a line-over on land is scary. I have begun to use my slider more and more on land jumps in excess of 700 feet and on delays of over three seconds. Try your canopy both ways if you have a tower of at least 1000 feet. I would rather lose a half second on opening than to experience a line-over. I do not suggest trying sliders up at first, unless you are fairly confident that your slider will not hang up. Again, some 5 and 7 cells do not get the slider down as easily.

An important point to consider with sliders up is you cannot afford to spin on exit or opening, since a line twist below the slider can prevent inflation. The most you can do here is pack carefully and maintain a good, stable body position. Sliders are always suggested for delays of more than four seconds, due to hard openings which could damage your gear.

The main objective of this article is to get you to consider all factors before blindly following one rule of thumb or another. Your past experience with your parachute should give you the best starting point. Incidentally, if anyone is still using little pilot chutes, DON'T! This is not just my opinion, it is a fact. We all need large pilot chutes, 45 inches or more for delays of five seconds or less to have consistently fast openings. Do not spare expense here: a large pilot chute is probably the most important piece of Base gear that you have.

About the author: Rick Harrison, Base 38, is an active Base jumper from Texas whose laurels include being on the first night load from Half Dome and being one of only five people who have base jumped from a moving train.

In 1983, while making a building jump, Rick experienced a pilot chute in tow followed by a main/reserve entanglement. He spiraled into the sidewalk, shattering his right leg and breaking his left. After a long hospital stay, several operations, and a year of rehabilitation, he recovered

THAT'S FUNNY! IT DOESN'T
SEEM AS SHEER AS IT USED TO.



Last issue we ran Carol Boenish Price's letter requesting your thoughts and remembrances of Carl. We received this response which best expresses the feelings shared by all who knew him:

CARL BOENISH REMEMBERED

By Phil Mayfield

In July of 1984, the world lost a legendary and colorful figure, and those of us who knew Carl Boenish lost a dear friend.

For the dozen or so years that I knew Carl he always had a fresh, upbeat way of viewing the world, and an optimistic attitude that seemed to say "Prove to me that I can't do it!" He had the zeal and the curiosity of a teenager ... he was a perpetual student. Simultaneously, he was a superb teacher whose infectious attitude often spurred others on to extend their limits while pursuing new challenges. Witness the thousands who have willingly followed Carl off the edges of Buildings, Antennas, Spans and Earthen objects.

While the concept of Base jumping was Boenish's most recent innovation, his long time associates know that it was only the latest in a long list of achievements, not the least of which was pioneering much of what has become standard free fall camera techniques. Resigning from a promising career as an electrical engineer at Hughes Aircraft, Carl took what could have become a costly gamble to produce the aerial footage for a major motion picture, "The Gypsy Moths". Just as Bob Buquor did before him, Carl used much of his filming efforts to steer the direction of parachuting in the sixties, seventies and eighties.

His accomplishments notwithstanding, Carl remained to the end one of the most approachable, friendly and thoughtful of the "sky gods", although he would likely laugh at that label being applied to him. Certainly Carl had an ego, and was proud of his accomplishments, but he was an extremely modest man who would as soon talk about your interests as his.

Carl was also a generous man. On various occasions he would subsidize projects so that others could participate. I was one of many who profited both tangibly and intangibly from friendship with Carl and Jean.

Boenish, more than anyone else I've ever known, lived his life to the fullest, without giving in to fear of death or failure and with few (if any) contradictions in his actions and his beliefs.

I loved Carl and admired him as much as anyone I've ever known. He is sorely missed.

PS: I'll never forget Carl bouncing up and down on that silly pogo stick at the edge of El Capitan. He slipped and fell, laughing that kooky laugh of his, got back up and bounced off the cliff into free fall!

About the author: Phil Mayfield, BASE 2 and Night BASE 1, is one of the pioneers of BASE jumping. He appears in several of Carl's films, notably the sections on building and antenna jumping. A natural acrobat, Mayfield is the first person to exit El Capitan while walking on his hands.

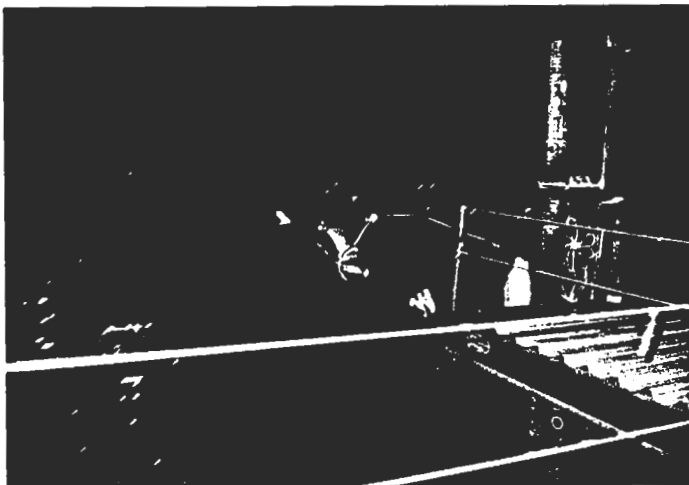


I thought I would write you about a local building jump my partner Greg Chalfant and I made last August. Greg and I took a few whuffo friends up in the building (upon their request) to watch the jumps and take some exit pictures.

We had made five previous jumps from the same building: Greg had two, and I had three. There are no security guards there that we have seen.

We began our 34-story ascent at 11:30 pm. We stopped at the tenth floor to check the wind, which was very critical to us since we were going to static-line round parachutes. Greg was jumping a 24-ft SAC, and I was using a 22-ft Piglet 2 which had the stabilizers removed to increase the opening speed. Our static lines were 15 feet in length, and we both used custom velcro closed containers made especially for BASE jumping.

We noticed a slight breeze blowing toward the building on the side from which we had previously jumped. Greg and I agreed that there was too much wind blowing on that side to



The author exits from the 29th floor. Photo by whuffo.

chance it, so we decided to take a look at the down-wind side of the building and see what kind of landing area we had. We were both pleased to find a large dirt field below us; the only obstructions were a couple of tractors and a fence surrounding a studio complex. We agreed that the fence would not pose any threat to our safety, and we would be able to easily steer clear of the tractors: Greg has a Tri-vent mod in his canopy, and my Piglet has a 12 mph forward drive. We broke the good news to our friends and continued our ascent. We stopped on the 20th floor to check the winds again. The breeze was the same as it had been on the tenth floor, about 7-10 mph. We wasted no time in getting to the top.

Because of the strange shape of the building, and the fact that it was still very much a skeleton, safe launch spots were hard to find. Because we were forced to jump a different side, we had to descend to the 29th floor before we found a place where we could execute a safe launch with a good push off the edge. The best we could find was a 3-inch steel lip on the outside of the safety cable which surrounded the perimeter of the floor.

As Greg and I geared up for the jumps, our whuffo friends became very scared. In fact, one guy wouldn't even go near the edge. Greg insisted that he go first, since I made the first jump our last time here. As much as I wanted to go first, I agreed. As Greg crawled under the cable and prepared to jump, I was making a good street check for police. It was 12:45 am: the streets were empty, the camera man was in position, and the static-line was tied to the cable. As I help the cable to look over the edge, I told Greg he was 100 per cent set, so "we're ready when you are." I heard Greg say: "I'll see you guys on the ground! 3 - 2 - 1 - Deployment!" as he sprung into the darkness. I watched the canopy deploy off his back and pounce open about 30 or 40 feet from the side of the building, but facing 90 degrees to the right. Greg buried the left rear riser and turned the canopy immediately back on heading. The cable which I was holding got pulled down from the tension of the 106-pound break cord, then snapped back up, whipping me in the hand.

As Greg landed below, a guard unlocked the gate and moved to apprehend him, but Greg got his gear and ran before the guard could get to him. The guard then walked back inside the gate and locked it behind him. Thirty seconds later I jumped, saw the camera flash on my outstretched arms, and fell into the dark expanse of this beautiful warm summer night.

My special view of the countless, colorful city lights and floors of the building rushing by was rudely brought to an end just three short but unforgettable seconds later, when my harness tightened around my relaxed body. I heard a loud WHACK and looked up at my fully inflated Piglet, then looked back and saw the awesome steel structure directly behind me moving further and further away.

I was under canopy at about 150 feet and was getting a little more forward drive than anticipated: I was heading right for the tractor. I noticed a cement barrel off to the right, so I promptly hauled in the left rear riser. I easily cleared the tractor and prepared for landing. About 10 feet off the ground I flared both rear risers and had a perfect stand up just 40 feet away from the security guard.

I slowly and calmly gathered my canopy, as the guard quietly unlocked the gate and began to move towards me. As soon as I had everything securely in my hands I ran, and could hear the guard behind me calling "Hey you! Stop right there!" I was already behind the tractor, and in no time made it around the corner of the building. Once I got to the other side, I climbed a stack of wooden pallets and jumped over an 8-ft fence. I ran across the street, up an embankment, and under a small bridge overpass, where I took off my gear and stuffed it in the corner. I then climbed to the roadway above the overpass and strolled down the street as if nothing had happened.

About a minute later I met Greg, and he said he heard my canopy open and saw me floating down as he peered through the skeleton structure of the building. We walked across the street, and suddenly saw three or four cars driving slowly towards us with no lights on. Sure enough, as they got closer, we noticed they were police cars. They quickly pulled over and pointed their guns at us and ordered us to the ground with our hands in the air.

The cops asked us if we heard any gunshots in the area in the past ten or fifteen minutes. We said "no", but we had seen two parachutes that opened quite loudly off that big building over there. They immediately asked us:

1. What did they look like?
2. How many were there?
3. Which way did they go?

Greg and I confidently replied:

1. One had a blue and white chute, the other a solid white chute.
2. We only saw two of them.
3. One went that way, the other went that way.
4. Those guys are crazy, jumping off buildings with parachutes.

Just then, the police helicopter swarmed on top of the building, shining its spotlight inside the floors as it circled around for a good twenty minutes. The police continued to question us for that time, and then let us go, but not before they found all my gear hidden under the overpass.

We escaped arrest, and waited nearly an hour for our scared friends to gather the nerve to come out of the building. We later found out that while everything had been going on, our friends had been hiding in the stairwell between floors.

After talking to Jean Boenish and a couple of lawyers about this incident, we came to the conclusion that the police were holding my gear for one of two reasons: as found property, or as evidence to a crime. Since no arrests were made at the scene, there was no "crime", and therefore my gear had to be in the found property department. I filed a lost property report, and walked in the police station two weeks later to claim my rig.

Fifteen minutes later I was stretching out and inspecting my canopy on the grass in front of the police station. What a mess! Some day, I'm going to have to show those officers how to handle these wonderful works of art.

Two days later, I was free falling that exact gear off Burro Creek Bridge (370 feet). At this writing, I am nursing a broken left hand as the result of a bad landing, but I expect to be jumping again soon.

About the author: Southern Californian Rich Stein, Base 74, has the rare distinction of having made 98 Base jumps and NO airplane jumps. At 19, he was the youngest person yet to earn his Base.



"Our next speaker will talk on the importance of performing building jumps at night."

LETTERS

Baseline welcomes letters from its readers. Anonymous letters are not generally published, but requests for anonymity will be honored. Send correspondence to 1014 Shday Trail, Houston Texas 77038.

LINE OVER ADVICE

I just received my first issue of Baseline, and loved it! Not since "Base Magazine" has there been such a clear, well written and informative source of information for Base jumpers.

I especially enjoyed Mark Hewitt's article "Square Parachute Lineover Malfunctions". The lineover and slider-up-or-down issues are hot topics for debate, and I imagine I'll be seeing many more articles and letters on the subject in future issues.

Hewitt seems to have a basic good idea with his steering line modification for slider-down jumps. I just wanted to add a few points which your readers might want to consider:

1. When jumping with this modification, remember that any time you let go of the steering line while under canopy, it will escape and trail behind you, out of reach. It is very important to have a firm hold of your toggles from the time you release the brakes until the time you land.
2. If you do need to clear a line-over malfunction using this method (or if you inadvertently let go of one of the toggles), then I suggest you let go of the other toggle as well, and fly the canopy using only right and left rear risers. The rear risers are much more responsive than the brake lines. Trying to steer with one toggle and one rear riser would be difficult; trying to flare a landing that way would be next to impossible.
3. If you let go of one (or both) of the toggles, remember you will be trailing suspension line behind your canopy which is potentially twice as long as your bridle line! This is a worthy consideration when flying around obstructions or into tight landing areas. Also remember to gather the lines in carefully after landing, so they do not snag on something as you are running away.
4. Finally, it is very important to do a good line continuity check before each pack job: with the steering lines trailing free, it is deceptively simple to overlook an entanglement in the remaining line groups.

Thanks again for a great publication! I look forward to my next issue.

Blue Skies,

Greg Trumbly
Austin, Texas

Thanks for sending some good points well worth considering. You are certainly right about the line-over issue being a hot one (see Rick Harrison's article "Sliders: Up or Down?" in this issue). Greg Chalfant has prepared some more material on the subject, but it did not arrive before our press deadline. Watch for it in a future issue.

— Ed.

BRITISH BASE SEMINAR

Thanks for getting the first copy of "Baseline" out to me so promptly. It's good to see a regular Base publication coming out. Our "Jump!" is good reading, but rather sporadic. Nigel is too much the perfectionist! (or too busy).

We recently ran a full weekend Base seminar for five novice jumpers over here. Videos, slides, exit drills and packing were all discussed, and state of the art kit examined. Finally we organised a balloon jump to practice exits and try out the pack jobs for real. Unfortunately this last part was weathered out and had to be postponed. However, we did get permission (!) to drop test a rig off a nearby 70' building. It opened on-heading halfway down and gave us great confidence. Since then a 1000' mast and a new 150' bridge site have been jumped by people on the seminar. Perhaps more important is that several jumps have been aborted due to unsuitable sites or unfavorable conditions, using knowledge gained from the seminar. We have to keep the sport safe, and a correct decision not to jump when everything is not perfect is as important as a successful jump.

Go Carefully,

(name withheld by request).

A "Base seminar" sounds like a great idea! California jumper Mark Hewitt is currently preparing an instructional Base videotape (Baseline, issue 1)

Quotes to inspire us:

"We're just sportsmen and this is our sport" Mark Hewitt during interview on WEST 57th STREET.

"If you're going to be stupid, you'd better be tough" Mitch Decoteau

"I like to think that if you're not scared, you're not having fun" Jim Bridwell

"Can't you just feel the altitude?!" Rich Stein said while driving over Burro Creek Bridge (altitude 370 feet) at night.

"Good judgement comes from experience - usually experience which was the result of poor judgement" Chas Macquarie, Climbing Magazine, Nov. 1979.

"I don't speed, I don't drink and drive, I'm a good citizen" Mark Herndon during P.M. Magazine interview.

"BASE jumping is going from 0 to 70 mph in 3 seconds" Robin Heid, West 57th Street.

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