

BASELINE



A Letter from the Publisher

With this issue, our magazine has not only survived its second year in publication, but can also claim yet another distinct honor: BASELINE is now the longest-running BASE publication ever! We are very thankful to the BASE jumping community for its extensive support; without it, not only would this project not be worthwhile, it would not be possible!

Far from merely surviving, BASELINE continues to prosper in its second year. We have just started to realize a steady influx of contributed articles, stories, and photographs, and have built an extensive worldwide network of correspondents. Despite the recent steady growth and acceptance of BASE jumping, we have kept the name "Outlaw Publishing Company" as our own little jab at the USPA's continued venomous attitude towards our sport.

Two years ago, BASELINE began as an eight-page newsletter, typed and xeroxed on legal size paper. By the end of its first year, it appeared as a 28-page "magazine style" journal. In our second year, a sharp increase in subscribers, contributors, and advertisers has facilitated some much needed and welcomed technical improvements: the length was increased from 28 to 32 pages; the printing stock was changed from plain white to a heavy-weight, glossy paper; the typewriter was abandoned in favor of professional laser typesetting; the xerox machines were left behind to make room for a true printing press; and a new halftone process has greatly increased picture reproduction quality.

This issue marks the end of your second year's subscription. At renewal time last year, the subscription rate almost doubled. This time around, we are happy to say that advertising has absorbed the major portion of our operating expense increases; yearly subscriptions will be increased a scant \$2, to \$11/year. Canadian subscriptions will run \$14/year, while the rate for all

other countries is \$15/year (surface rate; air mail rates available upon request).

Enclosed with this issue is a renewal form and a short questionnaire. Last year, many of the response forms were returned with the following comments: "What have you enjoyed most? *Everything*. What have you enjoyed least? *Nothing*. What would you like to see more of? *Everything*. What would

you like to see less of? *Nothing*." While this is a great boost to our ego, it does little to help us plan articles, features, and layout to best accommodate your likes and desires. *Please* -- give us an honest evaluation of our rag over the past year, and try and suggest areas of change or improvement. We'd really appreciate it!

As the popularity and technical complexities of BASE jumping continue to increase, so does the difficulty of fulfilling our primary goal of reporting all news and information pertaining to the sport, controversial or not, in as free and unlimited a manner as possible. It has been a learning experience, and it would be impossible to adequately express our appreciation for the support of all our subscribers and friends.

1988 marks ten years since Carl Boenish fulfilled his lifelong dream, when he led an expedition of four skydivers on the first modern jumps from El Capitan. At the time, not even the most enthusiastic proponents of this radical new form of skydiving could have pre-

dicted the degree to which the sport of BASE jumping would evolve within a decade. Undoubtedly, the future holds many more great things.

Skydivers have long been fond of saying "The Sky's The Limit!" BASE jumpers have conveniently changed this to: "The Ground's The Limit." Reflecting upon the future, however, Carl's adage seems to hit closer to home: "There Are No Limits!"

BASELINE
1014 Shady Trail
Houston, Texas
77038

Dear fellow BASE jumpers,

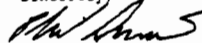
I would like your input on a project I have been considering for sometime: a newsletter for BASE jumpers. Its purpose will be for the dissemination of information: safety tips, new gear ideas, legal opinions, who's doing what, etc. The newsletter, which will be called BASELINE, will be a low budget, non-profit, quarterly publication which will be typed and copied on legal size paper. Initially its length will be 3 or 4 pages, front and back. Since it is a non-profit venture the only costs involved will be copying/mimeographing and mailing. I think a yearly subscription of \$5 for 4 issues should cover it.

The content of BASELINE will depend on you- the jumpers in the field. You are the staff. BASELINE will welcome your articles, opinions, anecdotes, accident reports, and cartoons. Photographs will have to be high contrast black and white glossies no larger than 5 X 7. All due credit will be given to the contributing author or photographer. Whenever requested, anonymity (of the author or the BASE site) will of course be honored.

The first issue of BASELINE will be mailed June 1, 1986. The cut off date for contributions will be May 10. Any material received after May 10 will be considered for the next issue.

Please feel free to copy this letter and pass it on to any interested persons. BASELINE will be accepting subscriptions immediately. Use the coupon below.

Sincerely,


Phil Smith

Please enter my subscription to BASELINE. Enclosed is \$5 for 4 issues.

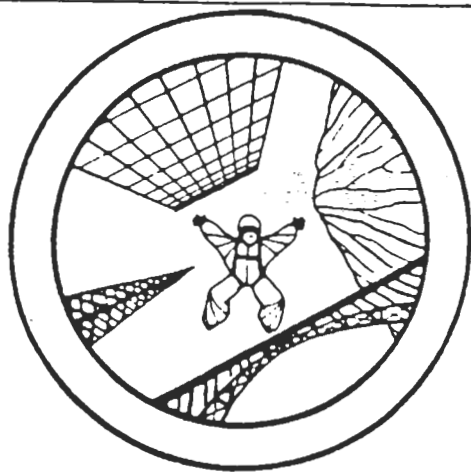
Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip code _____

Humble Beginnings: The letter that started it all.



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Cover Photo: Joe Walker snapped this shot of an unidentified jumper launching from a 300-foot cliff. "But I won't tell you where it was taken or who the subject was," adds Walker. J.D.'s article on spoiling sites begins on Page 22.

Editors

Phil Smith
Andy Calistrat

BASELINE Magazine (Tm) is a quarterly periodical published by Outlaw Publishing Company of Houston, Texas. Subscriptions cost \$9/year domestic, \$15/year overseas. BASELINE is sold by the volume, not year; readers subscribing in the middle of the year will therefore receive all back-issues bringing them up to date.

BASELINE is looking for jump stories, news articles, pictures, cartoons, anecdotes, letters, incident/accident reports, and editorials or opinions/commentaries. All due credit will be given, and all requests for anonymity will be honored.

Correspondents:

United Kingdom: *Nigel Slee*
Australia & New Zealand: *Nick Feteris*
U.S. BASE Association: *Jean Boenish*

Disclaimer: Any time a person leaves the ground, he is risking the threat of injury and even death. BASE jumping, like skydiving, brings along a set of inherent dangers. BASELINE is interested in accurately reporting all news and information pertaining to BASE jumping, controversial or not, in as free and unlimited a manner as possible.

BASELINE Magazine, its editors and staff do *not* advocate that anyone should BASE jump, nor that anyone should break the law in an attempt to make a BASE jump. Furthermore, we do not endorse or approve any BASE site or specific BASE jump. Any ideas, information, or concepts gleaned from this magazine should not be attempted by any reader, except at his own risk and sole responsibility. Beyond this, the ground's the limit.

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The Ground's The Limit!

BASE BITS

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The pair's final jump, from the crane atop Orlando's Sun Bank Center building, earned them an article and two pictures in the local paper *The Orlando Sentinel*. The article was quite positive until the last few paragraphs, which contained quotes from Orlando resident and retired Air Force colonel Joe Kittinger. "It's stupid ... I guess they think it's a macho thing," the paper quoted Kittinger as stating. "What is distressing is that they did it before and now they did it again. If it was the first time you might say, 'Okay, this was cute,' but this was not the first time," the retired colonel concluded. "They're going to keep doing it until they get killed or get someone else killed."

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The two were arrested on charges of trespassing, disorderly conduct, and "Skydiving in Shorewood," an act which is apparently specifically prohibited by a village ordinance. Shorewood Municipal Judge Kevin Mathews dismissed the disorderly conduct, but only after Kruse and Mayotte pleaded no contest to the remaining charges. The pair was fined \$248.25 each.

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Close Encounters of the Unkind

Those Mysterious, Disappearing Jumpers

Florida jumpers Randy Harrison and Rick Payne were topping the final staircase to the roof of a 600-foot building, when they looked up to see a uniformed guard peering over the edge. They hastily retreated, but not fast enough to avoid detection. As they raced down the stairs they heard heavy footsteps behind them, and the staccato chatter of the guard's two-way radio: "...two white males ... suspects heading

your way ... seal the south stairway ..."

Fully aware that descending to the ground floor would be walking into the arms of the law, the pair exited the stairs at the 30th floor and hid behind some construction material. Dumb luck was with them, for as it turned out the 30th was the only floor other than the roof or ground that had an access to the outside. They quickly donned their equipment and exited from the 350-foot-high terrace.

Harrison's jump ended uneventfully as he flew safely over an electrified monorail to the pre-designated landing spot in an adjacent parking lot. Payne's canopy, how-

ever, turned hard to the left on opening; by the time he got control of it, he had insufficient altitude to fly over the rail. Deciding that his better option was a freeway off-ramp, Rick quickly corrected, landed and gathered his canopy. A passing car ran over his pilot chute but, fortunately for Payne, did not catch it.

The security guards, in the meanwhile, apparently had not seen the jump. They were seen humorously patrolling the building roof and perimeter for the next two hours, vainly searching for the disappearing intruders!

VIEWPOINTS

"USPA rules of common sense have been violated"

Most jumpers have probably heard of Sherry Schrimsher. Although she only has a couple hundred skydives and is currently making one jump per year, Sherry is the one who judges RW competition and world-record formation attempts. Well, she must be doing her job well despite her inexperience at this sport, because she keeps getting re-elected.

But many jumpers may not have heard of Sherry's husband, Jerry Schrimsher. Jerry does have over 1,000 jumps -- although he's been skydiving for around 25 years! In 1982, Jerry held a USPA Instructor/Examiner rating, an Area Safety Officer commission ... and an attitude against BASE jumpers!

Consider the fact that in Sept. 1981, the

USPA adopted an official position stating that BASE jumping is not a part of skydiving. Not even a year later, Phil and Andy Smith made BASE jumps from the Reunion Tower in Dallas, and Jerry Schrimsher was quick to send the following letter to various officials of not only the USPA, but also the FAA!

To: Larry Bagley - President, USPA
Bill Ottley - Executive Director
Joe Svec - National Director
Eric Pehrson - Southwest Conference
Director
From: Jerry Schrimsher, IE 82
Copy: John Jarchow, FAA
Phil Smith
Andy Smith
Date: May 10, 1982 [sic]

The purpose of this letter is to notify all USPA officers concerned, that USPA rules of common sense have been violated and request that positive and immediate action be taken as defined in our USPA Constitution, By Laws and/or Part 75.

Specific charges are: On or about May 9, 1982, one Phil Smith and one Andy Smith, from the Houston, Texas Area, made a skydive from the 500 foot Reunion Tower Building in downtown Dallas, Texas. This information was received from the TV, Radio and Newspaper Press, and photo and film release

provided to the news media.

Mr. Smith and Smith did not have ASC approval for the skydive, and if any Instructor Examiner [sic] approved the skydive, I ask that USPA release his name.

The sneak in - jump - run - hide - massive press and film coverage of this type of skydiving activities by Mr. Smith and Smith, leaves the rest of the sport parachuting community in a very embarrassing position of trying to explain their action, and the problem if future legislation [sic] is taken by local or state officials to "prevent this in the future."

I request the following steps be taken:

1. If the above [sic] named Mr. Smith and Smith are members of USPA that such membership be suspended.

2. If the same individuals have any ratings or awards from USPA that such ratings and awards be canceled.

3. That the named individuals may not participate in the activities sponsored [sic] by, or endorsed or associated with USPA,

USPA affiliated clubs, or
USPA affiliated [sic] centers.

4. That the USPA BOD exercise its judgment regarding the time element of any and all of the above 3 steps.

5. That the USPA Board of Directors at it's [sic] next scheduled meeting take what steps necessary to change any wording or definition in the BSR's Part 100 to better cope with any future problem of this nature.

Sincerely,
Jerry Schrimsher
IE 82
ASO SW 3
FAA Accident Prevention
Counselor
Richardson, Texas

Comments and opinions regarding Schrimsher's letter should be addressed to BASELINE, 3202 La Quinta Drive, Missouri City, Texas 77459-3145.

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Letters

BASE Down Under

Having just made my first few BASE jumps, I consider myself lucky to live in a country in which the skydiving bureaucrats have not forced this sport totally underground.

As an experienced skydiver (500 jumps), I became interested in BASE jumping a few months ago. I had no difficulty at all in seeking out one of Melbourne's greatest proponents of the sport; I am eternally grateful for their expert tutelage and encouragement.

In two days in Melbourne, I was "bagged" off Westgate Bridge, and free fell "The Pylon" and the State Bank Building. This qualified me for my B, A and S. Unfortunately, there are no cliffs around Melbourne. Next ... a trip to Bungonia Gorge!

Steve Hickson
Albury, Australia

Bridge Day Corrections

Regarding your Bridge Day article in the last issue, I think a correction is in order. The story states that "the second four-way was much more cleanly executed, and two of the jumpers flew together a successful two-stack several seconds after opening." The second four-way was more like four "one-ways" as there were no grips taken. The two-stack was not much better. The bottom jumper (Mark Bailey) front riser under and pumped up to the other jumper (me). Mark's relative lift rate was much greater than mine, so I kind of got swallowed up in his canopy. He fell away cleanly and we landed without further incident -- and without a successful two-stack. Alas, there's always next year.

And by the way, tell Jean Boenish that if she's paying \$550 for the little plastic stands and chains, she's shopping at the wrong hardware store!

LeRoy Gallenstein
Lexington, Ky.

As LeRoy states, only momentary contact was made before the jumpers broke off. The article should have read: "...two of the jumpers flew together a successful bi-plane several seconds after opening." The only other time that CRW contact was made after a BASE jump from the New

River Gorge Bridge was in 1983, when Kevin Vennel was pinned under canopy by a Louisiana jumper. Similar to LeRoy's and Mark's jump, Kevin was momentarily swallowed up in the other jumper's parachute for a brief bi-plane, then the pair broke off and landed separately.

As for the plastic stands and chains, everyone else is wondering, too! After first claiming that she lost over \$3,000 at last year's event, Jean has now decided to censor the Bridge Day '87 financial accounting from BASELINE, for fear that jumpers might "misinterpret" the way she spent the money!

--Eds.

Toggle Keepers, Bridle Lines

Enclosed are a couple of ideas for toggle release systems. I've never seen any before, so these may be duplicates of systems already designed.

"In the final analysis, it was Gyrsting's pilot chute, not his bridle line, which killed him."

I also have a question regarding bridles. How long is the ideal bridle line for a BASE jump, and is that length measured from end-to-end or end-to-pin? The fatality report on Steve Gyrsting stated "Pilot Chute: 36" with 8-foot bridle." Is that true, or was it a misprint? I thought an eight-foot bridle was fairly long!

Don Boyles
Tulsa, Okla.

Gyrsting did indeed have an 8-foot bridle attached to a 36" pilot chute. Most bridles that come with BASE pilot chutes are nine feet long, measured from the curved pin to the base of the pilot chute.

However, towed pilot chutes on BASE jumps most often occur because there is insufficient drag to extract the bagged canopy and lines from the container, not because the closing loop is too tight for the pin to be extracted. In this case, the significant length is that of the bridle end-to-end, plus the length of cord between the top of the

canopy and start of the bridle line. It is uncommon for this length to be 12 feet or more; Gyrsting's was only nine.

In the final analysis, however, even a five- or six-foot bridle would have probably worked had a 52" pilot chute been attached to the end of it. It was Gyrsting's pilot chute, not his bridle line, which killed him.

--Eds.

Second Time's a Charm

I would like to share a couple of my experiences, in the hope that others can benefit from them. Last August, while jumping from a 750-foot bridge, I had a line-over malfunction. I had no tertiary, line-release modification to my canopy and no time to cut away and deploy my reserve. I spiralled into the rocks below and broke my left femur, left ankle and right hip. [BASELINE #6] I spent two months in plaster and am making a full -- but painful -- recovery.

In January I made my first BASE jump since my accident. They were from a low 1,000-foot tower. On the second jump I had another line-over, even more violent than the first. This time, however, I was prepared. I had installed a brake line release on my canopy, so all I had to do was pull my brakes, let go and "presto," I had flying ram-air. I got my parachute under control and flew it in for a stand-up 15 feet from the target!

I shudder to think of the consequences had I not used the line release modification. I would urge anyone who jumps their squarerigger to install a release before going up again.

Bryan Scott, BASE 13
N. Miami, Fla.

The brake-line release described by Scott entails routing the steering line outside the keeper rings and the slider grommets. When confronted by a line-over (of the steering line), the jumper needs only release his deployment brakes and let the toggle fly free. The offending line will usually unwrap from around the canopy, thus allowing it to inflate fully; the jumper can then steer his parachute with the rear risers. More information on the line-release method

including diagrams on how to make the modification, appears in the article "Square Parachute Line-Over Malfunctions" in *BASELINE* Volume 1, Issue 1.

--Eds.

Keeping the Peace

I was happy to receive the latest *BASELINE* magazine last week, but was disturbed to see the growing tendency to fight among ourselves. This sort of in-fighting is common among skydivers, I know, but has led to the downfall of many associations. Sad as it is to say, I believe the onus is on you, as editors, to be totally objective in everything you say, rather than being swayed by your own beliefs.

Keep in mind, too, that the nature of "FREE BASING" is dangerous, and if you allow yourself to feel responsible for people who indulge in it, you only set yourself up for a lot of grief. I would suggest, therefore, that you attempt to stick to reporting only the facts.

Please do not take this as criticism of your efforts. I think you're doing a hell of a job acquiring and disseminating information -- but you can't set yourself up as a censor, or as anything more than a clearing house for information. Keep up the good work!

Rob "Skypuppy" Price
Ontario, Canada

Plissed Off

Let me just say that if you guys BASE jumped the way you wrote the story about my September 1987 BASE jump (Heid Again), you would have died a long time ago.

I did not "sneak" onto the roof when I secured written permission to use 1999 Broadway's property for a book signing. Authorized building personnel escorted two photographers and me to the roof (for the second time; the building engineer took my producer and I [sic] up three days previously to figure out camera locations). More than 30 people watched the jump, including a 10-person ground crew.

The police illegally arrested me two hours later. I was charged with trespassing and reckless endangerment. I am represented without fee by one [of] Colorado's top criminal lawyers. We are in the process of setting several national precedents regarding the conduct of city officials toward BASE jumpers. Accordingly, I hereby ask all

BASELINE readers to chip in a few bucks to let my lawyer know we appreciate him (cause the bottom line is: he is doing it for free, and he's having fun, but he'll pay even more attention if we show him we appreciate him). Please send \$\$!

***"If you guys BASE jumped
the way you wrote that story
about me, you would have
died a long time ago."***

Contrary to the high-school-hijinks image presented by *BASELINE*, the entire event, from building location to manner of dress to flawless execution and a complete still photo and video record, was designed to present BASE jumping as a classy, precisely controlled sport and demonstrate that it is not reckless *per se*. My conduct afterward reinforced for city officials that BASE jumpers are not necessarily selfish, wild-eyed maniacs.

Robin L. Heid
Denver, Colo.

As Robin points out, he was escorted to the roof by authorized personnel, and it was only the jump which was performed without specific permission; BASELINE regrets the error.

The city of Denver has seen fit to prosecute Heid on charges stemming from his September 18th leap; he will stand trial April 4th in criminal court on charges of criminal trespass and reckless endangerment. More information is contained in this issue's BASE Bits section.

--Eds.

Getting Around

On Sept. 6, 1987, I made my first BASE jump in southern Florida, from a 1500-foot antenna. I have 32 BASE jumps now, with some being pretty exciting!

On New Year's Eve, Steve Jester and I jumped a crane downtown Orlando at 12:30 a.m., right over the biggest party in town! We were apprehended by the law, but later allowed to go free. I still don't know why!

On New Year's day I made my first building jump downtown Miami with Rick Payne and Marlen Burford. Exciting! A few weeks later, Rick and I went to the Florida keys. While sailing with Randy Harrison, we came upon an unlocked 138-foot tall lighthouse a few miles off shore. A quick climb to the top and I made a brief free fall and uneventful splashdown.

But my last jump was the most interesting. I direct-bag static-lined from the 12th floor of an old folks home in Titusville, Fla. That was less than 120 feet over land! Well, that's all for now. Blue Skies!

Kevin Foust
Dundee, Fla.

BASE Jumper Directory

I would be interested in receiving a guide or list of BASE sites, both national and world-wide. If you can't provide this, can you steer me in the direction of someone who can? Looking forward to receiving my next issue. Blue Skies!

Mark Strayhorn
Orange, Calif.

BASELINE does not plan on publishing a directory of BASE sites. The availability of local jumps often changes quickly, and most jumpers don't want their sites publicized anyway. However, our upcoming BASE Jumper Directory will contain the names, addresses, and phone numbers of jumpers throughout the country. This guide will hopefully help the travelling BASE jumper locate fellow jumpers and sites.

--Eds.

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Comments and Compliments

I just got the Christmas issue of BASELINE, and gulped it down whole. Your mag is looking better every time! Let me know when subscriptions are due, and how much extra for air mail.

I'm afraid my survey sheet was destroyed, but I've jotted down some details and included them. Please feel free to give my name, address, and telephone number in your BASE directory -- and an open invitation to all BASE jumpers! (Limited accommodations but a good time guaranteed.)

I follow the equipment news in BASELINE with enormous interest. I have a few questions. I have never seen a line-over square, and I've done many slider-down jumps. Is my packing good, or am I lucky? I use the normal U.K. BASE pack, a nose-down refined trash pack without a bag. This has always given me and my friends good on-heading openings. However, now I'm starting to wonder. I would be most interested to know whether malfunctions have ever been known with the direct bag technique (as shown in last issue's picture of Dead Steve jumping a low building). It seems like a method with huge potential for the low objects to which most of us are confined (except in October). Although you miss those wonderful 2nd and 3rd seconds of free fall, you can at least be highly confident of having a perfect, quick opening.

Leafing through the pages, I would offer a few comments:

Page 5: Mike McCarthy. I was in Tokyo shortly after Mike's jump, for a TV show run by Nippon TV. We did elastic rope jumping for them, and if the city wasn't hot following McCarthy's unauthorized jumps, we could have done BASE jumps too! Permission could have been obtained, and by God! Tokyo is built up like New York. I came home frustrated.

Page 5: Angel Falls. The price is way over the top. If it is legal, can jumpers organize their own travel and chopper? Quite how they got insurance I don't know, it probably accounts for a lot of the cost. However, most of us are accustomed to jumping uninsured, and would rather save the money.

Page 9: Golden Gate Bridge. I was in Perris in 1981 when Spider McKenna, a friend called BK, a third, and an English jump bum did El Cap. All three Americans got caught and fined; the English jump bum didn't, because he was the only one who treated it as an illegal jump. I'm glad to hear Spider is still BASE jumping. I believe his Golden Gate jump was from up one of the towers.

**"Once is enough? Rubbish!
Once is *never* enough! Look
at jumping accidents every-
where. People keep on
making the same mistakes."**

Page 20: Once Is Enough. Rubbish! Once is *never* enough. Look at jumping accidents everywhere. People keep on making the same mistakes. It's human nature. If there's a Bridge Day next year, I'll bet you a lot of jumpers will turn up with ordinary small pilot chutes.

I agree with Andy that 42" is bare minimum, and personally I think it is best for the New River Gorge Bridge, given a delay between two and four seconds. My Cruisair is prone to end cell closure anyway, and the 52" monster doesn't help at all.

Page 24: Joy Burtis. Skydiving magazine is too polite to say why Burtis was given the boot by USPA. It would appear, however, that she has a very common attitude problem. In her letter she makes it quite clear: she knows her limits. What makes her cringe is the idea of other people who aren't similarly limited.

Page 31: Bixby Creek. A charming piece which makes me want to rush over and join in the proposed boogie.

Getting back to an equipment question, what exactly are the advantages of a velcro-closed BASE rig? I've never had the slightest problem getting my Wonderhog open. Is the force required to open velcro less than that for a pin? Does the canopy deploy better? Or is it simply easier to conceal under a jacket, being thinner?

Likewise, I am far from convinced about the value of a tersh. I can't think of a use for one at any of the sites I've jumped. Perhaps I'm cautious, but I like to open higher than the minimum possible (e.g. the New River Gorge Bridge) so I could get my full-size reserve out if necessary.

I'm sure all these points and more will crop up in future issues. You two do a great job for those of us who suffer long breaks between opportunities to jump. You help keep the dreams alive! All the best.

Martin Lyster
Oxford, England

A picture of a line-over malfunction was included on page 30 of BASELINE #6. The picture was taken by the chest-mounted camera of Bryan Scott, who received serious injuries from the landing. The same jumper later experienced another line-over but this time was prepared with the line-release modification (see previous letter). He cleared the malfunction and made a stand-up landing.

As for your packing, it would be difficult to say whether you are careful or just lucky. While certain packing methods encourage line-over malfunctions on slider-down squares, no one has yet come up with a foolproof way to eliminate line-overs in the first place. A proper line-release modification seems the best solution to the problem for the time being. (More information on packing can be found in the "Back Basics" section of BASELINE #6.)

A line-over from a direct bag has indeed been experienced, by Dan Conable last

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September. A subsequent investigation showed that the assistant may have dropped Conable's bag as Dan jumped, but it is not known for sure. (See the "Letters" section in BASELINE #7.)

As for tershes, their two primary advantages over "full-size reserves" are that they open a lot faster, and a cut-away is not necessary (even in the case of a high-speed spinning malfunction). And while a line-release mod is the quickest, most direct solution to a line-over malfunction, a tersh is also a good idea anytime a jump is made below a safe cut-away altitude. Furthermore, work is currently being completed on a ballistically-deployed tertiary reserve. Instead of having to throw a free-bag, the jumper simply pushes a button (similar to a photographer's release), and a high-powered rocket fires open the parachute. Safe deployment from as low as 100 feet AGL is possible with this system.

Finally, some responses to a few of your specific points:

Angel Falls. The Venezuelan govern-

ment has given permission only to Gonzales and Gerstl to run the jumping program; others could not simply charter a helicopter and arrange their own expedition. While many have complained about the high cost, this price does include all accommodations for an entire week, helicopter rental, and the insurance -- which is apparently a requirement of the Venezuelan government.

Golden Gate Bridge. McKenna's jump was indeed from the south Tower. His jump partner Ronald Broyles has written an article (included in this issue) on his first jump from the Golden Gate Bridge.

Once is Enough. The U.S. Department of the Interior has just sent us its draft report on the Bridge Day fatality. One of the recommendations being considered is establishing a minimum requirement of 42-inch pilot chutes.

A velcro-closed BASE rig is for the most part a luxury for the occasional BASE jumper, and a real convenience for the die-hard. It is considerably lighter and less

bulky than a conventional tandem system. (Yes, it is easier to conceal under a jacket because it is thinner.) For jumps below cut-away altitude, a piggyback reserve is simply dead weight.

As for whether the canopy deploys better, the velcro rig usually offers more space than a skydiving rig, a plus when free packing and/or free stowing lines (not generally recommended). And some jumpers prefer the velcro-closed BASE rig because it has less moving parts -- in essence the bridle line and velcro flap are one piece. The "shrivel flap" feature also assures positive deployment even if the jumper is in extreme body positions.

Your pin-closed Wonderhog is perfectly fine for BASE jumps, especially if you have had consistent good results with it.

To answer your question about renewals, they are due with this issue; the air mail rate to Europe is \$20.

Thanks again for your kind letter.

--Eds.

VIEWPOINTS

Sir:

If BASE jumpers Phil Mayfield and Phil Smith make the "ultimate patriotic jump" from the Statue of Liberty torch during centennial ceremonies for the statue next July 4, they should be tarred and feathered and strung up from the torch!

As a national parachuting champion who made a safe and legal jump from El Capitan in 1980, I know my limits. I cringe every time I read about BASE jumpers performing crazy, stupid stunts off buildings, bridges and antennas. These people give the sport of parachuting a bad name and

hurt every parachutist's image. BASE jumpers are not recognized by and are shunned by our governing organization, the U.S. Parachute Association, and by most skydivers. In the future I hope you cover and promote the many aspects of the safe sport of parachute jumping, instead of bandit BASE jumping.

Joy B. Burtis

1985 Women's National Para-Ski Champion
Seattle, Wash.

Skydiving magazine is too polite to say why Burtis was given the boot by USPA. It would appear, however, that she has a very common attitude problem. In her letter she makes it quite clear: she knows her limits. What makes her cringe is the idea of other people who aren't similarly

limited.

Martin Lyster
Oxford, England

I know that parachute jumping from El

Capitan is illegal now, but I don't think it would hurt skydivers' or BASE jumpers' image if Joy Burtis were to ski off El Cap ... taking along only some tar and a few falcon feathers, that is!

Bill Legg
Baton Rouge, La.

The "Golden" Adventure

San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Under it, more than 40 percent of California's water flows, clashing with the Pacific tidal surge and creating waves rivalling an open sea squall's. Through it, winds funneled by the narrow mountain pass blow at speeds up to 60 miles per hour. And from it, nearly 1200 people have jumped to their deaths

since its 1937 opening.

So jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge is nothing new. But in 1984, Ronald Broyles added a new twist: he made the act *repeatable* by jumping with a parachute. He tells his own account of his historic leap, the first recorded BASE jump from San Francisco's world-famous span.

by Ron Broyles

At 1:30 a.m. on July 4, 1984, I walked from the deck of the 42-foot motor launch "Truth Ferry," and tried to find my car. The thick fog of the San Francisco Bay had engulfed the Toyota along with the vehicles of the other 28 members of the operations crew.

I had arrived from Los Angeles the previous day with three cameramen and \$50,000 worth of video equipment in order to shoot my first BASE jump. Our plane had landed at San Francisco International Airport in the heavy soup, and now I was slightly depressed and more than a little concerned. All our preparation and organization, not to mention money, were hanging in the balance. A clear day tomorrow, and we would film a great adventure; a repeat of today's weather would mean an abort; and I simply couldn't afford to wait an extra day for conditions to improve.

Not being all that religious, I found myself whispering a prayer as I searched for a blue sedan in the parking lot of the waterfront hotel where we were staying.

"It seemed like the perfect way to start off this sport of low-altitude skydiving I had been hearing so much about at Perris Valley."

Wandering about aimlessly in the heavy mist, my thoughts began to wander. A jump from the 746-foot north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge ... it seemed like the perfect way to start off this sport of low-altitude skydiving I had been hearing so much about at California's Perris Valley DZ. I had only been jumping since Jan-

uary, and this big leap would mean a parachute jump of any kind. But a legendary Carl Boenish had told me in one of our many conversations: "There's not a lot of comparison to skydiving. Armed with the reassurance of this ledge, and the gut feeling that I could execute all the instructions I had been given by several BASE veterans, I set out to organize a crew and scout the bridge in March.

I made two trips to San Francisco to check access and logistical problems. How could we get onto the top of the tower? a large, broadcast quality video camera, radios, and my rig -- all without being spotted? There was plenty of scouting about cameras and alarms and constant roving security patrols aimed at preventing suicide leaps. Security was the tightest any structure that had public access, I was told. Well, I've heard that kind of thing before. Having climbed six of the tallest buildings, including San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid, I knew a little about security and its weaknesses. Getting climbing equipment attached to a building at 4 a.m. and then ascending to a point beyond the reach of a 70-foot hook and ladder truck, between guard shifts, was training in silence and evasion! Consequently, I brought along several members of the team which had been with me on previous excursions, confident that they could calm the nerves of some of the adventurous of the crew. *No one was to get arrested!*

Our first trip was pretty fruitless. On the second scouting expedition we were extremely fortunate: a workman had the hatch on the eastern leg of the bridge base unlocked. The foundation of the bridge touched dry land on the Marin side of the river, and an access road



almost directly to it. Three of us scaled the 30-foot wall of the base, then entered the hatch wearing miner's lamps. The inside of the tower was fascinating! Eighty-eight cells ran the entire height of the tower; each one was 42 inches wide and all of them were riveted together. Only one of these cells had an opening at the top, so we prepared for the gruelling trial-and-error process which would tell us which one it was.

We spent parts of three days climbing and mapping routes that might lead out. The procedure was slow, and after climbing 750 feet eight or ten times, we began to wonder if we were making any progress at all! Steel ladders led us to dead ends time and time again. But finally, after having climbed 47 of the 88 cells, we got lucky. I heard one of the guys yelling about an incredible sight, and I knew he was there. Indeed, what a sight it was! The 700-foot high, 360-degree view of San Francisco and Sausalito has to be one of the finest of any metropolitan area in the world. We were elated.

Amidst our brief celebration came a dark

cloud on the horizon: what about the gear? There was the cameras, radios, and especially my rig: a rather bulky T-10 packed in an old Handbury container. How could we possibly haul all that stuff to the top, stopping every 15 feet to push it through the

*"The 700-foot high,
360-degree view of San
Francisco and Sausalito has to
be one of the finest of any
metropolitan area in the
world. We were elated."*

narrow 22-inch hatches that were inside the cells? Not being able to come up with an answer, we decided to return to the hotel and ponder the question further. On our way down, however, Lady Luck smiled on us once again. While squeezing through one of the hatches, I caught a glimpse of a steel cable several cells over. An elevator!

We made our way over to that cell and

followed the cable down to a small platform, which was no doubt used to haul painting supplies and equipment to the top. It was completely enclosed from our location, and we could see that the only place it opened was at the sidewalk on the roadway level. So close and yet so far! It was getting late in the morning, and we decided to leave in case one of the workers dropped by. They say work on the bridge never stops; as soon as they finish painting one end, they start all over on the other!

We left the structure with mixed feelings ... the elevator was our only hopes of getting all the equipment to the top, but how could we get inside? We certainly had no intentions to damage the thing. Fortunately, one of the team members was an old Navy buddy of mine. As we left, he said to give him a few days to ponder the problem, and he would see what could be done. I knew that he would come through; he had done so on several occasions before, and I guessed this would be no different. During our tour in the Pacific around the time the Vietnam War was winding down,



Ron Broyles, hanging under main and reserve canopies, drifts into the San Francisco bay after jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge.

my friend would disappear from the ship for several weeks, only to meet up with us at another port. He never explained these absences, and I always had the feeling that he was more than just a petty officer machinist's mate! At any rate, two days later he handed me a set of keys that he said would open the elevator door. Sure enough, they worked! We could not only ride to the top in style, but lower the elevator all the way to the base of the structure where we could load the gear without being seen. What a deal!

Our preparations culminated in the meeting of July 3rd on the command boat Truth Ferry. All 29 of us were discussing communications, film angles, pick-up approaches and emergency procedures. We resolved that three boats would be used for the mission: the command boat, a 16-foot Avon inflatable for retrieval, and a 25-foot motor sailboat as a backup. We were all well prepared as we left the pier that night, but the fog could ruin everything. With a scant five hours remaining, I resolved myself to the fact that only time would tell. I found the Toyota after several minutes, and drove off to get something to eat.

Crew call was at 7 a.m. the next morning, at the overlook on the Marin County side of the bridge. Our spirits rose dramatically as we approached the parking lot: there in the distance lay a completely unobstructed view of our goal! The sky was clear as a bell, and it was obvious to me that my prayer had been answered. I'd have to go to church again soon!

We drove in a caravan down the access road to the tower's footing, our spirits and anxiety both running high. Contact was soon established with each of the boats, and all was "go" for a 10 a.m. launch. Just as we prepared to climb the foundation, however, a concerned voice came over the radio: "Top Dog, this is number one. Don't look now, but it's the Coast Guard on parade." We looked across the bay, and were shocked to see a myriad of harbor patrol and Coast Guard vessels in the water, and police helicopters swarming through the air! There was instant relief a moment later when we realized that they were giving escort to what appeared to be a massive, floating antenna. Over 100 feet high and 300 feet long, it was lying on its side and slowly moving in our direction. Word followed that it was a deep sea oil rig that had broken from its moorings during the night. The authorities were towing it out to sea, and at a most inappropriate time for us! At

its present speed it would be directly under the bridge exactly at launch time; there was no question that if it was anonymity we wanted, we'd have to wait.

As we pondered our fate, my cameraman, an assistant and I slowly made our way into the tower with all the gear. No one said a word until we were on top. Once there, we set up communication with the boats again. Everyone was still in -- we had come too far to give up! So we waited. By 10 a.m. the rig had not even passed under the bridge, and the ominous fog began steadily creeping in. The base of the south tower was already invisible as we waited helplessly on top of the world. At about 3 p.m. the beast was finally out to sea, and the escort ships were back in their slips.

By this time the top of the south tower had completely disappeared in the fog, which was quickly encroaching on our end as well. Ground features became concealed as if by some giant liquid blob, and we realized that the jump must go soon. The camera was quickly set up and all units were given a five minute standby. The fog rolled in even more as I placed one foot on the catwalk railing, and the other on the massive saddle which supports the three-foot-diameter main suspension cable. All crews reported "ready" and we started the one-minute countdown.

The fog began wisping all around, and the lighthouse directly below me was visible only in short glimpses. Surrounded by razor ribbon, I hoped to have it in view at all times. Fortunately, there was a 20-knot wind which I hoped would keep me clear of the obstacles at the base. Ten seconds to launch. "We love ya, Ron!" yelled my cameraman. Five seconds. I saw the Avon circling below. "Now!"

I left the catwalk with a powerful lunge. For a few brief moments, I was truly free ... alone. It was a spiritual journey as much as a physical one. I delayed no more than 1-1/2 seconds before releasing my 52-inch pilot chute, and was quickly snapped upright by the deployment of my T-10 main canopy. In my excitement, however, I had also deployed my 17-foot cargo chute reserve. "Shit!" I looked above and saw the two canopies bumping, fighting for air, and then I attempted to steer the configuration into some semblance of an approach for landing. Seventeen seconds after stepping from the railing, I splashed down.

The wind caught my canopies, and they

began dragging me unmercifully through the frigid waters of San Francisco Bay. I porpoised along at 25 mph in the choppy swells. "Choppy! That's it ... chop the main!" My wild ride instantly turned into a controlled tow behind the 17-foot reserve. And now where's the Avon? I wondered. An instant later, I heard two splashes: the rubber boat was beside me, and the divers were in the water. Five minutes later I was aboard the sailboat and we were on our way to Sausalito. What a great adventure it had been! I looked up at the tower from which I had plummeted just moments ago ... the top was obscured in the haze, and it was obvious my jump had been made-at the last possible second.

Within a few minutes we pulled into the pier at Zack's restaurant, and the celebration began. We watched the video over and over, as we reveled in the success of a great team effort. And apparently no one of any consequence had seen us; we had done it "clean." I made a little speech thanking everyone on the support crew for a job well done. As we sat around toasting ourselves, the inevitable question was asked: "So, Ron, what's next?" "Well, to be honest, that south tower looked awfully inviting ..."

About the Author: *Hollywood stuntman Ron Broyles did eventually get to jump the Golden Gate's south Tower: on Sept. 8, 1984. Not all went as well the second time around, however: Broyles' main opened with several line twists, causing Ron to collide with the bridge's roadway level.*

Broyles began cutting suspension lines which were draped over and below him, then deployed his 16-foot cargo chute reserve. He was arrested by the Coast Guard and charged with trespassing on the bridge's superstructure and "having no identification."

In 1982 Broyles climbed Houston's 1,000-foot Texas Commerce Bank, using a camming device in the window washing track to hoist himself to the top. Half-way up, the police held a hand-written sign to the window, stating: "You are illegally trespassing. Get off the building immediately." Broyles continued his ascent was arrested at the top.

During his trial, Broyles told the judge, "My camming device was designed to go up. Going up was the fastest and only safe way off." The judge pondered this statement briefly, and directed a verdict of not guilty.

USBA Update

BASE Numbers

BASE numbers are up to 196, and Night BASEs have reached 38. Nick Feteris reports that Australian BASEs are up to 24.

Bridge Day Fading

If BASE jumping is not allowed as part of West Virginia's Bridge Day celebration in 1988, it may well be due to a lack of support from the BASE jumpers, according to sources at the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce.

In response to a letter from Synthia Blake, Secretary to the Chamber of Commerce [BASELINE #7], only a handful of readers wrote to express their support for Bridge Day jumping. "I'm really taken aback by this," said Blake during a recent telephone interview. "We're fighting for the jumpers, yet we aren't getting any support from them at all."

Shown at the right is one of the very few letters which the Camber of Commerce received. "Some of the letters have been very eloquent," explained Blake, "but people don't realize that this is a numbers game. What counts is the *quantity* of letters we receive, not what they say."

Blake went on to explain that support for BASE jumping is expressed in terms of a "point" system ... each letter in favor of Bridge Day jumping earns one point. "Whether they send an extensive two-page letter or just the words 'I support Bridge Day jumping,' it still earns only one point. But the problem is that no one is writing!"

BASELINE has printed a sample letter which readers are welcome to copy and use. With Bridge Day only six months away, the final determination on whether BASE jumping will be allowed during the annual event will no doubt be made within the next few weeks. The importance of writing, and writing *immediately*, cannot be over-stressed. Please send your letter of support, as simple or eloquent as you like, and get everyone at the drop zone to write, too.

Financial Account Censored

Jean Boenish has decided to censor the Bridge Day '87 financial accounting from BASELINE, for fear that some jumpers might "misinterpret" the way she's spent

the money.

In the Bridge Day article in the last issue, Boenish reported that her expenses were roughly \$1,000 for the rescue boats, \$500 for truck transportation, \$550 for the plastic stands and chain barricades, and \$300 for magnetic BASE jumper logos (totalling \$2,350). Yet Jean also claimed to have come up \$3,000 short, and stated

that she was forced to pay this money of her own pocket.

Now Boenish has decided to keep her financial accounting away from the public but is still requesting that jumpers send contributions.

More information is contained in the related article, "The Road to El Cap," which begins on Page 18.



 **HealthNet**
Aeromedical
Services

Charleston Area Medical Center
PO Box 1383
Charleston, WV 25325
(304) 348-6002

February 25, 1988

Fayette Plateau Chamber of Commerce
214 Main Street
Oak Hill, WV 25901

Dear Sirs:

I would like to register my deepest admiration to your organization for its support of the Annual Bridge Day events including BASE jumping. I am the Program Coordinator for HealthNet Aeromedical Services based at Charleston Area Medical Center. As you no doubt are aware, we provide 24 hour state wide emergency helicopter transport services from our three bases. We typically respond to Plateau Medical Center in Oak Hill two to three times per month and to Fayette County accident scenes almost daily.

As the Program Coordinator of a vital West Virginia service with over 14 years emergency medical services experience as well as a skydiver with 12 years experience and nearly 1100 jumps including 4 BASE jumps (I am BASE # 52) I am well qualified to speak to the mentality of BASE jumpers, the risks and benefits. I made my bridge jump on Bridge Day, 1982.

Bridge Day provides much positive exposure for our beautiful state and BASE jumping is no doubt a large part of this. The U.S. BASE Association has established good and reasonable jumper guidelines. I have enclosed a copy of a ver positive article about West Virginia Bridge Day that recently appeared in the Smithsonian Institutions AIR AND SPACE magazine to illustrate.

Keep up the good work. Please contact me at the number above if I can ever be of any assistance.

Rick Davis, RN, MBA
Program Coordinator

Board of Inquiry Convened

A five-man board of inquiry convened on Jan. 28 in Fayetteville, W.Va., to "review the facts and circumstances" involved in the death of BASE jumper Steven Gyrsting. Gyrsting was killed Oct. 10 during a jump from the New River Gorge Bridge.

"A lot of people might think that we're trying to somehow regulate or curtail the BASE jumping ... that's not the case at all," said Jason Houck, chief ranger with the National Park Service, New River Gorge National River. "I'm basically meeting a bureaucratic obligation I have to investigate what we call 'recreational deaths.'"

Houck has forwarded to BASELINE the board's draft report, which consists of a very accurately-portrayed description of Gyrsting's accident, and several very reasonable recommendations to the BASE jumpers. "We recognize that the organizers of this event are volunteers, and the cooperation of the BASE jumpers is voluntary," explained Houck. "Therefore our recommendations to the jumpers and the BASE association will be just that: recommendations. I don't want to put my rangers in a position of having to check 'chutes or approve or disapprove of certain jumpers.'"

Houck has agreed to forward to

Mr. Doug Maddy
Fayette County Chamber of Commerce
214 Main Street
Oak Hill, West Virginia 25901

Dear Mr. Maddy:

I would like to voice my support for West Virginia's annual Bridge Day celebration, and for the BASE jumping activities which occur during that event.

Sincerely,

Type or hand-print a copy of this (a simple post card will do). Sign it, include your name and address, but do not date it. Unless the Chamber of Commerce receives 200 such letters within the next few weeks, BASE jumping may not be allowed as part of Bridge Day 1988.

BASELINE the board's final report. More information will be contained in a future issue.

Numbers Update

| Name | BASE # | Australian BASE # |
|--------------|--------|----------------------|
| Mick Kelaher | ? | 23 |
| Tevor Yates | 166 | 24 |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|
| Troy Fink | 168 | n/a |
| Todd Schoebotham | 169 | n/a |
| Daniel Doyle | 182 | n/a |
| Neal Deighan | 191 | 22 |
| Ralph Mittman | 193 | n/a |
| Amanda Tucker | 196 | n/a |

Comment

CAUTION: BASE Jumping May Be Hazardous to Your Health

"But let him not vow to walk in the dark, who has not seen the night fall ..."

-- Elrond to Gimli, J.R.R. Tolkien *Trilogy*

By Phil Mayfield

We live in an age of omnipresent warnings. Countless times nearly every day we are cautioned:

**DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE
BEWARE OF DOG
SLIPPERY WHEN WET
SWIM AT YOUR OWN RISK
WEAR HELMET ON
TAKE-OFF
FASTEN SEAT BELT
NO SMOKING**

These admonitions serve as surrogate mothers for us: "Now don't go in the deep end, Johnny" -- lulling us into a dependence on someone else's judgement rather than our own.

Gone is the need to establish personal limitations. Common sense is passé. Big Brother has removed the need for caution in unfamiliar situations. Don't worry about it, right?

Wrong! Possibly dead wrong!

Skydiving is inherently a frightening enough concept that the mere thought of it acts as a sufficient deterrent for most who

consider doing it. The aspiring jumper is also presented with other obstacles such as *where* to do it, *how* to do it, *who* to see for instruction, and so on. If the desire and initiative are great enough, however, this second round of roadblocks is easily surmounted.

Certain parachute regulations (such as minimum age requirements, Basic Safety Regulations, etc.) provide more checks and counter-checks. Finally, if the instructor, jumpmaster or pilot are skeptical enough

Continued on Page 30 ...

The Road to El Cap: *Hopeful progress or endless runaround?*

*"When you look at the sky at night,
you can see the stars and still not see the light."*

-- The Eagles

On January 11, 1988, California jumper Jean Boenish met with a contingent of three representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) in Yosemite Valley, California: Park Superintendent John Moorhead, Assistant Superintendent B.J. Griffith and Chief Ranger Roger Rudolph.

The culmination of almost two years of work, this meeting was widely billed as the one which would finally determine whether the NPS would once again allow BASE jumping from El Capitan. The outcome has been heartbreakingly disappointing: legal jumping from El Cap is nowhere near. And while Boenish feels that this latest blow is nothing more than just another bureaucratic roadblock, others have resolved that the NPS has absolutely no intentions of ever allowing parachuting within Yosemite, and that they are simply humoring the BASE jumpers by listening to Jean's proposals and presentations.

Consider some of the history of parachuting within Yosemite. Not even the most staunch opposer of the NPS's venomous attitude towards BASE jumpers can deny the 1980 events which led to the premature close of the legal jumping program. At the time, only two requests were made of jumpers: that they secure a permit, and stick to an established set of rules. During the test period, however, skydivers not only routinely jumped without permits, but also broke virtually every established rule. There were numerous instances of unauthorized night jumps, and bandit jumps being made both before and after established jumping times. Instead of maintaining a low profile, jumpers drew ever-increasing crowds to watch the leaps. Sections of the El Cap meadow were trampled, and according to the NPS, the already crowded park was crippled by worsening traffic jams. As if all this wasn't enough, skydivers drove into closed-off sections of the park, and spray-painted obscenities on the rocks. Complete disregard for established rules of safety (not to mention rules of common sense) resulted in an alarmingly high injury rate. On September 9, 1980, just five short weeks after the legal test period

began, the National Park Service abolished the jump program. In the past couple of years, two things have invariably been true: the NPS has wanted absolutely nothing to do with BASE jumpers, and Jean Boenish has continued to send in proposals and schedule meetings.

*"Their initial reaction has not
been great, but that's mostly
ignorance on their part."*

Unfortunately, old grievances are not easily forgotten. The NPS's current feelings towards jumping is perhaps best expressed in a letter written only a few months ago by W. Lowell White, Acting Regional Director for the Western Region. The letter was not addressed to a jumper or even Jean Boenish, but to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. It states, in part: "The [jumpers] received a test period in 1980 which was to have led to the legalization of parachuting from El Capitan. Legal jumping ended prematurely because the National Park Service was extremely concerned over the bad accident rate. Blatant disregard for the rules (even though the rules were determined by the parachuting organization itself) and the creation of an overwhelming spectator atmosphere which was encouraged and promoted by the jumpers themselves, were additional major considerations in the decision to shut down the program. Unfortunately, those who had the opportunity to set precedent and open the way for a new, accepted sport to be conducted routinely within Yosemite conducted themselves in a selfish, cavalier manner and with complete disregard for their responsibility to their fellow jumpers worldwide. In short, a unique opportunity was not just lost, but conscientiously destroyed.

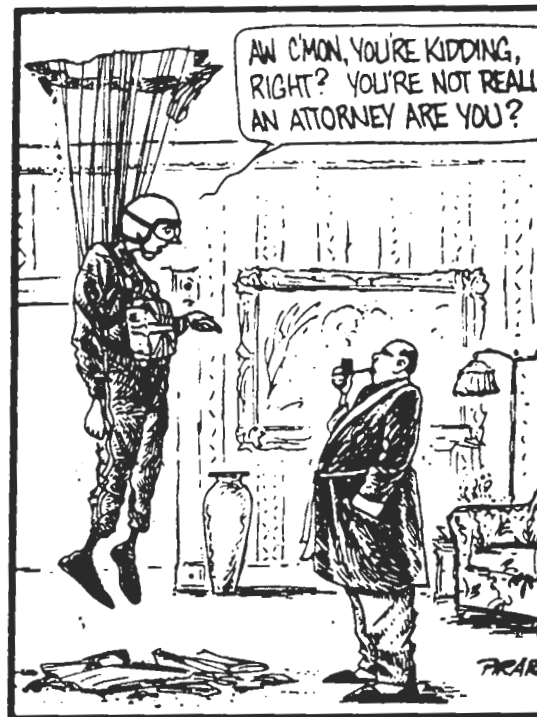
"During the legal period, para-

chutists established a clear record of safety, both by accident and design, and no illegal conduct. While ever-growing crowds assembled to watch the activity, later public response supported the prohibition of the activity as inappropriate for Yosemite because of its spectator attraction. Based on a review of this record, park management sees no basis today for reconsideration or further consideration of the proposal for parachuting in Yosemite.

"To further set the records straight, parachuting was illegal prior to August 1980, and has been illegal since September 9, 1980, as the Superintendent chose to issue permits under 36 CFR 2.17. This decision by park management in Yosemite regarding the prohibition of parachuting in Yosemite is firm and no further review is intended.

"We regret that this decision is disappointing to many enthusiasts, but we know that other locations exist where we can provide both the opportunities and the safety being sought by parachutists. Thank you for your interest in this matter."

Jean Boenish recalls her reaction when she first read the letter: "I just threw it in the corner and ignored it. I knew they could be serious considering the type of proposal I was sending them." And Jean continued to send the proposals, make the phone calls, and schedule the meetings; as park officials, park management had little choice but to listen. But that's all they could do.



At the meeting of January 11, however, the Park Superintendent found a new way around the issue: he told Jean that she must get a "written lack of objections" to cliff jumping, from *three* separate environmental groups: the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the National Parks and Conservation Association. According to Jean, the Superintendent has said this will be quite difficult.

At a preliminary meeting, Boenish discovered this to be true. "The initial reaction [of the environmental groups] has not been great," Jean commented, "but that's mostly ignorance on their part." Ignorant or not, the problem lies in the fact that these groups will not attempt to determine whether jumpers will hurt the environment, but whether their motives for wanting to cliff jump are clean and pure. In other words, they can deny us permission for no reason at all, and as Jean stated: "I got the distinct impression that they are going to give us a 'litmus test' as far as what our motives are as jumpers, and that they are going to possibly object or approve of us according to what they feel we reap internally from the benefit of going and appreciating the park."

Considering the nature of such criteria, many jumpers have been skeptical that the environmental groups will automatically disapprove of BASE jumping. Jean seems to agree. "The problem is that these people tend to be lobbyists, and their lives consist of disapproving of other people's use of the

park. So if you present an idea to these people and say, 'Do you approve or disapprove of this use of the park?' the tendency naturally will be for them to find some reason to disapprove."

Jean maintains she will continue to work with the three groups, confident that she can convince them to give an okay. "I think what I need to do is regroup mentally in order to know that they won't disapprove. It all boils down to how it's presented to those organizations."

"This whole thing reminds me of the Wizard of Oz sending Dorothy to steal the witch's broomstick before he will send her home ... it's ridiculous!"

Other jumpers, in the meanwhile, have expressed amazement at the injustice of the situation. "If we're not hurting the environment, then that's as far as it should go where the environmental groups are concerned," commented one BASE jumper. "This whole thing reminds me of the Wizard of Oz sending Dorothy to steal the witch's broomstick before he will send her home. It's ridiculous; plainly obvious that the Superintendent has chosen an 'impossible mission' because he doesn't honestly intend to ever allow jumping."

Jean disagrees, however, maintaining that the park management is sincere in their efforts to help us get BASE jumping back in Yosemite. She feels that the latest set-backs are merely a part of the "bureaucratic red tape."

Let's say, however, that Jean completes her 'impossible mission,' and somehow miraculously manages to convince all three environmental groups to give the "thumbs up" to BASE jumping. Will the Superintendent then click his heels together twice and suddenly allow jumping from El Cap? No. If Jean comes up with three letters stating a lack of objections from each of the environmental groups, then the Superintendent has only promised to write a memo to his superiors in Washington, asking if they have any objections to cliff jumping. Jean has already met with the

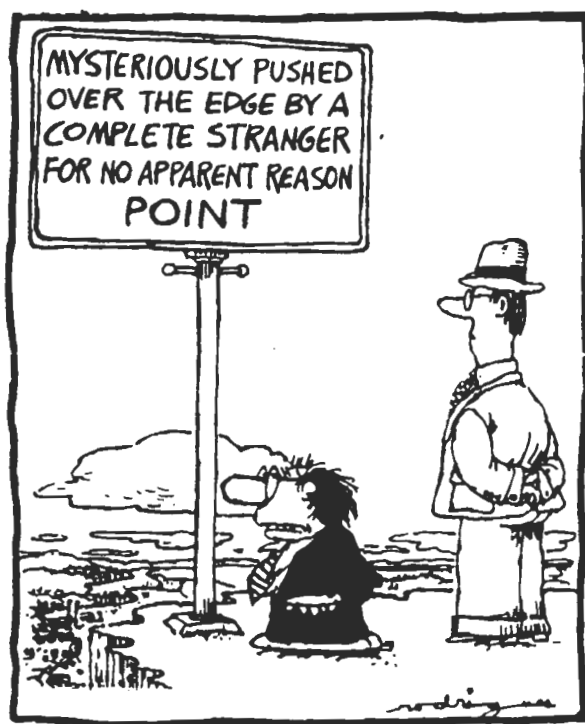
Washington officials, however, who always state the same thing: it's up to the Superintendent.

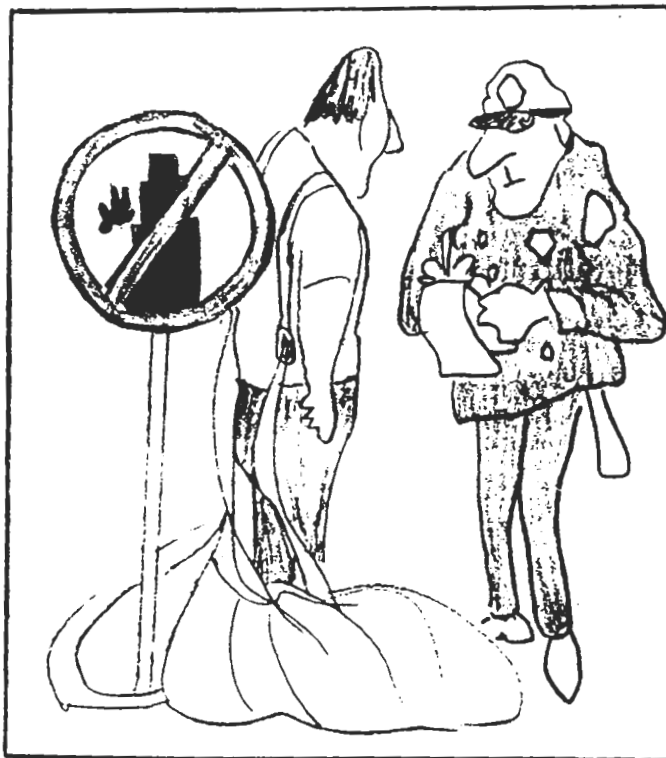
This seemingly circular logic is well recognized by Boenish. "The thing is there's this Catch-22 bureaucracy stuff going around and around," she explained. "They [the Washington officials] will drop it back in the Superintendent's lap, and the Superintendent will say, you know, realistically that he can't do anything if his superiors are going to object, which is true. But the superiors are always going to say, 'Well, it's our Superintendent's decision.'" Asked if she thinks this is meant to keep us going in circles and keep us from jumping, Jean replied: "No, it's all part of the red tape. I think they're sincere in their efforts to help us. They're not overly anxious, to be sure, but definitely sincere."

Overshadowing the entire issue is the fact that the "Compendium" will soon be finished, and contains the dreaded "Yosemite BASE Prohibition" mentioned in BASELINE #5. The Acting Regional Director has made the following comments on this issue: "We intend to prohibit BASE jumping under the relatively new regulation 36 CFR 1.5 which allows the Superintendent to set use limits and closures for the protection of the park and maintenance of safety and scenic values. These use limits and closures will be compiled in a document called the 'Compendium.' Such regulations for specific areas, conditions, activities, etc., are written for/by each park at the discretion of the area manager, and is a legal addendum to the broader Code."

According to this statement, the person responsible for the "use limits and closures" is the Superintendent. This is none other than John Moorhead, with whom Jean met on January 11! And the person responsible for writing the "Yosemite BASE Prohibition" portion of the Compendium is the Chief Ranger. This is Roger Rudolph, the other person with whom Jean met on the 11th! These are the same two men who Jean said are being sincere in their efforts to help us get BASE jumping back in Yosemite.

Jean reports that when she asked Rudolph to see the Compendium, he replied that he did not have a copy. When she asked him what he had written as part of the BASE prohibition, Rudolph claimed that he could not remember, since it had been too long since he wrote it. He did admit, according to Jean, that "it was not





too positive," and promised to mail Boenish a copy. Jean, in turn, agreed to forward a copy to BASELINE; as of this date, we have not received anything. But the park officials were quick to explain that the Compendium has already been written, and nobody can remove the BASE Prohibition part of it.

"I foresee this as being a problem," said Jean. "That is another reason that I regret seeing this time lag being put on us because of this environmental association thing. Because when the Compendium is finished, and the prohibition is entered as an official ruling, I don't think we're going to have as strong a leg to stand on with our presentations to *anybody*. Before it's entered, we're still in good shape." When asked if she thinks the "environmental association thing" was deliberately introduced to stall us until the Compendium is finished, Boenish replied "No, I don't."

In the meantime, Jean has again complained about dwindling funds. She noted that all of her trips to Yosemite National Park and Washington D.C. have been made at her own expense, and further complained that in response to an ad in BASELINE #5 (requesting that jumpers send Jean contributions), she did not receive a single check. Boenish has purported to have lost as much as \$3,000 at this year's Bridge Day; during a recent telephone interview, however, Jean stated that the amount she actually lost was significantly different from the figure she

first reported, but she would not explain the reason for the discrepancy.

Jean has further declined to send in her Bridge Day '87 financial accounting, stating that "I'd rather not see it published in BASELINE. I think some of the readers might misinterpret the way I've spent the money." Jean did promise that she would personally mail individual copies of the financial accounting to every person registered at Bridge Day '87, and also mentioned that jumpers may personally request copies by writing to her. "But if I receive requests from people who weren't at Bridge Day," Jean cautioned, "then they better have a

pretty good reason for wanting a copy."

Such controversy over monetary issues has prompted some to question the precise role that the United States BASE Association (USBA) plays in activities like West Virginia's annual Bridge Day celebration, and the ongoing effort by Jean to legalize jumping at El Capitan. Jumpers want to know the exact nature and extent of the mystical "USBA."

When Carl Boenish founded the USBA in the early 1980s, he did not intend for it to be a formal organization. He repeatedly referred to it as a very loose group of people, and established "BASE magazine" as the USBA's unofficial publication. When Carl died in 1984, the USBA was essentially dissolved. It is today an "association" with no charter, constitution, by-laws, members, or authority. Although there is a group of "officers" left over from the days of BASE magazine, these people are never consulted (and have no say)

in matters regarding the business of the USBA.

Boenish currently uses the name "United States BASE Association" as a front for three activities: organizing the annual Bridge Day jumping event in West Virginia; sending proposals to the National Park Service, and maintaining the log of the various BASE awardees (BASE, Night BASE, etc.). In recent months, there has been much interest expressed in formally reviving the United States BASE Association. Jumpers have been wanting to establish an association, complete with members, officers, and a democratic structure. The new organization would allow all BASE jumpers to have a vote and a say as to what the association does and how its money is spent.

BASELINE is anxious to hear from jumpers who would be interested in such a program. A short section on the BASELINE renewal form is reserved for collecting jumpers' opinion on the topic, or simply write or call us in regards to this "USBA revival." The next issue will contain more details on the proposed project.



Alan Hetherington and George Roso begin to track after jumping from a 1900-foot antenna. Photo: Tim Addison.

BASELINE Update

Lost & Found

If anyone lost a bandana at last October's Bridge Day, Andy Calistrat has it. Please call (713) 437-0323. Also, BASELINE is trying to locate two subscribers: Brad Smith (last known address in Witchita, Kan.) and Ron Sirrull (last known address in Orange, Calif.). If anyone knows how to reach either one, please contact us.

BASE Jumper Directory

The response to BASELINE's "Who Are We?" survey has been overwhelming. Only a handful of surveys have not yet been returned. In order to make the results as accurate as possible (and the directory as complete as possible), we will hold off on printing both until the next issue. Please ... if you have not yet returned a survey form, fill one out and mail it in.

Renewals Due

This is the last issue of Volume 2 of BASELINE. To renew for another year, please fill out the enclosed renewal form, and mail it along with \$11 in the envelope provided.

SIMON SAYS "JUMP!"

Two Australian jumpers had almost completed a Christmas-morning ascent of a 1,000-foot antenna, when a passing-by police officer happened to notice them and drove to the base of the tower. Not knowing that the pair were jumpers, the cop began yelling into his bullhorn: "Come down immediately!"

This sparked a disagreement between the jumpers. "We better climb down," said one, "and maybe he won't be so mad." "We're going to be arrested anyway, mate," replied the other, "so we may as well make the jump." Unable to come to an agreement, the first jumper began the long climb down, while the second leaped from the tower.

The cop was understandably surprised as he saw the man go into free fall and then deploy a parachute. The jumper flew in for a stand-up landing, then put out both hands as if ready to be cuffed. But the cop instead vigorously shook his hands, declaring: "Merry Christmas, mate! That was fantastic! Isn't *he* going to jump, too?" "No," replied the first jumper, "you told him to climb down, remember?"

The cop quickly picked up his bullhorn again, and declared: "Go ahead and jump. It's alright!" Figuring this to be a trick, the jumper continued his slow climb down. "Jump you wimp! Jump!" declared the cop more loudly. This had no effect either. "Camon, you pussy! Jump, chicken!" the cop yelled into his bullhorn.

The verbal abuse continued for another half an hour, while the cop tried vainly to convince the man to jump, the jumper continued his slow climb down, and his buddy sat laughing hilariously the whole while.

When the second jumper finally reached the ground and began walking towards the police car, the cop told the first one: "I don't think your mate is going to want to face me after all that name-calling. Tell him I said Merry Christmas!" and drove off. The dumbfounded second jumper reported that he was too tired to climb back up and seize his missed jump!

Book, Video & Equipment Review

From a plethora of amateurish Bridge Day tapes, Cindy Dragan's Bridge Day Video (BDV) emerges as a professional production. BDV is the first tape we've seen since the October festival featuring more than one camera point-of-view or using music other than the same old tired Top-40 hits.

The BDV camera on the bridge caught exits and followed through nicely to opening. Aided by a telephoto lens, the ground unit also recorded exits and openings, and then zoomed back in to film landings. Sadly missing from BDV, however, is any footage shot from either the scenic overlook or by a helmet-mounted camera.

BDV's sound track might remind some viewers of a hard-core porno movie, but it

is a pleasant change from the overused "Jump" by Van Halen, or the song by the same title from the Pointer Sisters.

A couple of the more memorable moments in BDV are Mark Sharp's beautifully executed full gainer, and Rick Payne's high speed, spiralling "Black Death" descent and

"From a plethora of amateurish Bridge Day tapes, Cindy Dragan's Bridge Day Video emerges as a professional production."

impact. BDV's producers tastefully chose to leave out footage of Steve Gyrsting's

fatal jump, although they did include a protracted discussion by several staff members after it happened.

One of BDV's weaknesses is its lack of good interviews. It included a discussion with a South African jumper who claimed that the Bridge is the best BASE site in the country, and in the next breath reveals that he's only been to "a few places" in America. The interviewer was unsavvy about the sport, asking participants such questions as, "How are flying conditions today?" and, "Did you have a good flight?"

Everything considered, BDV is a worth the \$15 price tag. Its 18-minute running time will keep most whuffos interested, and all but the most jaded jumpers at the edge of their seats.

Don't "Burn Your Bridges"

Nothing's new about jumping off fixed objects. Countless scores of people commit suicide every year by leaping from buildings, bridges, and yes ... even cliffs and antennas! Wearing a parachute, however, makes the act repeatable. Well ... a parachute makes the act *survivable*. Whether or not it is repeatable depends on how you have treated your site: Were you seen? Did you get arrested? Did you get your picture in the paper? Or even worse, did someone get hurt, attracting unwanted media and law enforcement attention?

There is undoubtedly a fine line between keeping your jumps discrete, and taking BASE jumping totally underground. In this first-of-its-kind article, veteran BASE jumper J.D. Walker provides some useful advice on how not to "burn your bridges." And Walker is also ideally suited to pen such a piece ... as he told us: "Make it clear to your readers in an editors' forward that I am the biggest violator of everything I am writing here, so as M*A*S*H's Frank Burns would say, 'I oughtta know!'"

by J.D. Walker

So, the guy you met at the DZ is a reporter. "You do *what*?" he asks. "Jump off buildings?" Next Sunday you take him to the killer high-rise and he films you and your buddy hopping off. He gets a great interview. The story airs on the six o'clock news, and by next Sunday you're a hero. The reporter thinks you are truly cool and the story was very positive. Next Friday, however, two other jumpers get nailed by the police as they enter the building ... it seems they have an extra security guard now.

You and your buddy are experienced skydivers and BASE jumpers. Nick (a pseudonym), however, has only 50 skydives and has never made a BASE jump, but has talked you into taking him to the local cliff. Well, you figure he can handle it; after all, he's already been on the eight-point 40-way, right?

Your jump and your partner's go great, but Nick hits the wall. Seems he had a 180 and failed to turn in time. He remains stuck on the wall and needs the sheriff's mountain rescue team to get him down. All of you are then cited for "illegal powerless flight." On the next trip out, everybody is stopped at the docks by the boat rental people. It seems the cops have tipped them off as to the "idiots who are trying to kill themselves."

A nationally-syndicated sports magazine calls you up one day and says they're doing a story on BASE jumping. They want to know if they can come along and shoot some of your jumps. You take them to a nearby 2,000-foot antenna and they get a good story and some great photographs. Before long the magazine comes out with a great story, complete with the pictures ... and the name and location of the tower. Within a week, the tower owners have filed

charges against the jumpers, and an extensive audio/video security system goes up. So much for the 2,000-foot tower!

"In each case, a 'harmless' ego-stroke publicity stunt ruined an object. You are a twelve-letter cuss word to the local BASE jumpers."

Well, there you have it. Each of these stories is basically true. In each case, a "harmless" ego-stroke publicity stunt ruined an object. Sure, it was great, it was fun, and you are your own legend; but now, you've ruined everybody *else's* chance of jumping the object. You are a twelve-letter cuss word to the local BASE jumpers.

So how do you keep from spoiling your sites? Well first off, let's get a few things straight. I am a perfect little BASE jumper who has never done any of this. I don't seek publicity and I have never ruined a site. Also, I've got some swampland in Florida I can sell you.

The truth is that I am being a real hypocrite by writing this article. No long-time BASE jumper can honestly say that he is innocent of ever trying to get publicity for some of his jumps -- usually innocently, and always with regrettable hindsight. I sure have, and more than once. So rather than chastise past mistakes, let's look at some of the ways of spoiling sites, and how to avoid such errors.

Understandably, we all need attention. It is a basic human desire. But there is a big difference between wanting to share with the world the joy and exhilaration you get from BASE jumping, as opposed to

only making such jumps to get your name in the papers in the first place! And while the motives of most BASE jumpers are good, no sport has a monopoly on publicity hounds.

Unfortunately, the actions of even good-intentioned BASE jumpers can sometimes have sour results. My good friend Carl Boenish was *sued* by the general contractor of a Los Angeles building in 1981 - '82 as the result of a front-page story in the L.A. Times. It seemed like a logical step at the time, exposing the world to BASE jumping, but it backfired in the worst way possible. The building owners asked for hundreds of thousands of dollars in punitive damages, and subpoenaed Carl to turn over the list of BASE jumpers. They even went so far as to ask for "future damages" of the expected future jumpers!

Eventually, Carl was slapped with a "cease and desist" order banning him from jumping the building again. In the meantime, though, he had risked jail and his financial security, not to mention the embarrassment of the jumping community. Carl was not alone in his innocent effort to let the world know about BASE jumping, but he took most of the heat. Some story, huh? For Carl, it was a nightmare.

Turning your BASE jumps into front-page news, whether done innocently or maliciously, is only one way to ruin a site. Just as harmful is the practice of bringing new, possibly inexperienced skydivers along on your jumps. If someone wants to learn how to jump out of an airplane, they look up the nearest USPA-affiliated drop zone, take a standardized course from a rated instructor, and make the jump under the supervision of a licensed jumpmaster. If the person gets himself injured or killed, an ASO investigates the accident and PARA-



This photograph of Rick Payne jumping from a crane alongside Orlando's Sun Bank Center building appeared recently in the local paper *The Orlando Sentinel*. Such publicity can ruin a site, and should only be sought when the building has nearly reached completion and may soon no longer be jumpable. "That was the case in this instance," said the cameraman, Bryan Scott.

CHUTIST writes it up.

With BASE jumping things are a little different. There are no ratings and no first jump courses. Any time you take along a new, unfamiliar person, you have to be the judge of his experience level and capabilities. And if the person gets himself injured or killed, the *cops* investigate the accident, the remaining jumpers usually end up in jail, and the site is ruined.

We learned this the hard way at Burro Creek Bridge in 1984. We took along a relatively inexperienced jumper: he had only a few BASE jumps, and had never jumped out of an airplane! He did great on his first jump, but the next morning at 6:30 a.m. he brainlocked and flew a Crusair into a rock outcropping, crushing his ankles. Imagine our horror as we scamp-ered up to him, perched on a 50-foot ledge, with both ankles showing bone through his high tops.

After an eight-hour rescue requiring ropes, a team of climbers and a helicopter, he was taken away for the first of two surgeries. Having used my shirt as a bandage, I was badly burned in the 105-degree Arizona sun. When the helicopter finally lifted we hiked out, only to be arrested for our "misdeeds." The cops did not assist in the rescue, they just waited calmly at the top to make sure the "culprits" did not get away. It cost us \$500 in attorney's fees to beat the rap. And the injured jumper, a well-known big wall climber in Yosemite, was out of commission for over a year.

The site also became instantly hot: three of the next six trips there ended in arrest for those caught. I personally paid the price, being arrested *two* more times myself, and told never to return. Today it takes extreme care, almost commando-style, for jumps made at the site. And all of this because we took along a jumper who had absolutely no business being there in the first place. So the moral is, carefully consider who you take along on your BASE jumps, and when necessary, don't be afraid to "just say no."

Well, if all of this makes it sound like I'm advocating that BASE jumping should go totally underground, with nothing ever written or published about it, I'm not! With BASELINE, we have a great vehicle to keep our thoughts and ideas amongst ourselves, and we can always share the joy of BASE jumping with the skydiving world through publications such as *Skydiving* magazine and the *Southwestern Skies*.

Still, care must be taken, as publicity even in an esoteric publication can backfire. A classic example is El Capitan in Yosemite Valley. When the National Park Service allowed a trial period for BASE jumping, PARACHUTIST magazine hopped on the bandwagon: rules, requirements,

"Care must be taken, as publicity even in an esoteric publication can backfire."

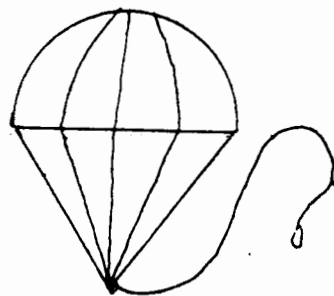
how-to articles, photos, etc. All that this accomplished was to attract *everybody*, good and bad. Within three weeks they had 12 infractions and arrests, and the jump program was shut down for good. The USPA, in its infinite wisdom, reversed its position 180 degrees, and declared El Cap jumping to be a "potentially very dangerous stunt which is not associated with skydiving." Great! So much for "USPA Is Us"!

Just because the bureaucrats can't see the light doesn't mean that the publications of the parachuting world have closed their

eyes. You can still get your BASE jump picture in *Skydiving*, which I love and support for their editorial attitude, but you should never divulge the name of a site. You can give a host of other information, even identify the jumper, but don't give away the object or its location. The only exceptions to this would be publicly-legal or one-time prearranged jumps, such as the Cotton Bowl Parade building jumps in 1984, the jumps from the roof of Houston's Astrodome stadium, or of course the bridge in West Virginia.

A recent issue of *Skydiving* contained Steve Morrell's picture of John Owens jumping a cliff. The story was printed without identifying the location, and the "story" doesn't suffer in the least! Thanks, Steve!! That's the only cliff in this area, and we are on thin ice as the sheriff's office knows of us. If some 8,000 readers of *Skydiving* found out the location of the cliff, we might risk a flood of BASE jumpers, and maybe even an unqualified jumper getting himself hurt or killed (it is a difficult site requiring boat support, and suited for experienced BASE jumpers only). Needless to say, such an event would shut

BASE PILOT CHUTES



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down the site for good.

All this might sound selfish, and in a way it is. But as you gain enough knowledge and experience to scout and jump your own objects, it will piss you off when someone you don't even know wrecks your site for everyone else. This isn't to say that you should not help out a friend who wants to get into BASE jumping. It's just that fixed-object jumping requires a fair amount of experience: canopy control and general awareness which can be gained through skydiving at the drop zone, and BASE experience which can be gained at such legal, high-profile sites as the New River Gorge Bridge.

Still, every trip to the DZ I'm approached by some guy with 100 skydives and one jump off the bridge, and they want to try a cliff or a building. Don't feel bad about turning down such people. As an activity that is generally not accepted by the media and law-enforcement agencies, we do what we must to keep our jumps low-key.

The final way of ruining a site is through arrests. Sure, jail is no fun (not to mention that it's expensive), but it also usually means that the object is then ruined -- for you and for everybody else. Don't jump during the daylight, use a ground crew when necessary, and generally follow all those other standard BASE jumpers' rules of "silence and evasion."

The ultimate bummer is being arrested before you even get a chance to make a jump, and the easiest way to do that is through loose lips. Work on a need-to-know basis only. Make sure that your ground crew (and fellow jumpers) are reliable and can keep a secret. And if you want to come back to a site, then don't talk about the jump after the fact, either! Don't send pictures to the local papers, or if you do then don't name the site. And if it's a local object that's easily recognizable, then definitely don't send pictures in the first place.

Now, having written all this gooey stuff, I have to tell you that I'm currently involved in a TV documentary on BASE jumping! Hah! But this is very different. We scouted a totally new, completely isolated cliff. We found a small, insignificant 285-foot tower which is identical to dozens of others around the state. We used stock building footage from a site in a different area. We jumped a bridge that was already exposed after having many arrests at the site.

Get the picture? We hopefully did not

ruin any site. Besides, there were no names or locations given anyway. I hope that we can have the best of both worlds with this documentary; it remains to be seen.

Well, these are a few of the ways to ruin sites. I have made a lot of mistakes over the years, and others have paid the price for my egotism. I hope you will be able to avoid my mistakes and keep your sites

"Having written all this gooey stuff, I have to tell you that I'm currently involved in a TV documentary on BASE jumping!"

clean. Don't publish the names or locations of your sites. Be leery of the people you take along; don't risk the possibilities of rescue and harassment by the law, or your loudmouth ground crew giving you away. Don't jump objects in the daylight, unless they are in remote areas. Otherwise, you may be seen and then ruin the site, just because you *had* to do it for video in the day. Think about it.

Lastly, I'll leave you with a classic example of a "perfect" media coverage setup that went sour on me. For over seven years, we had a legal cliff. It doesn't matter where, just to say that we had almost five hundred jumps there with no serious injuries or accidents. And no media coverage, either ... until our *last* trip (nothing personal meant to my friends Kenn or Len).

It started when I was approached by a local news helicopter pilot who was genuinely interested in doing a BASE jumping story. We invited him to cover our jumps the next weekend from the legal cliff. The area was (believe it or not) in the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and the only rules were that the pilot couldn't land in the jumping area.

Next weekend came and things were going great as the pilot filmed the first jumper. Everything went fine from exit to opening to landing. The second jumper then exited, and things went wrong as soon as he opened. His steering lines jammed, fouled by a friction knot which would only turn the canopy in one direction (regardless of which toggle was pulled): towards the cliff.

Having jumped an overhung wall, the jumper managed to stay clear of the cliff, but slammed his right heel into a huge slab of rock about 30 feet up. He crashed heavily and lay still for a long time -- too long

for the helicopter pilot. Using his judgement in what was obviously a bad situation, the pilot landed and offered his airlift assistance. Unknown to him when he touched down was that the jumper had only broken his heel -- that was it.

The park authorities investigated both the injury and the helicopter landing. They accepted our story, were satisfied, and jumping resumed. We made two more loads that day. What we didn't know, and were never told, was that the original jumpers at the site (many years ago) had agreed to no publicity or commercial photography. That was the prerequisite for continued jumping (and as I said, legal jumping had continued for over seven years). But I was never told.

That evening, with excellent footage, the accident story was aired on the local news. It was fair and objective -- but it had also violated the agreement. This, combined with the worst accident in seven years (a broken heel), convinced the regional office of the NPS that an end had to be put to BASE jumping at the site. I was informed the next day.

Now, some think that the Park Service shut down BASE jumping so that they wouldn't be in a hypocritical situation with regards to Yosemite. Still others thought it was the accident itself. But *everybody* was shocked and outraged that I had broken their longstanding agreement. Well, nobody had ever told me; that's why.

In review, however, it doesn't matter. It was a legal cliff and we were in a good place for a story. It was my own ego and desire to get on TV. Nobody is to blame but me. Throw in a few unpredictable circumstances, and I ruined the best cliff situation in the country!

Now, imagine how I felt. Put yourself in my state of shock and disbelief, hurt and alienated by fellow jumpers. Spend a few minutes revelling in this, before that newspaper load or the nightly news trip. Someone might sand on that ledge some day, with a rig on their back and a pilot chute in their hand, and thank you for something you *didn't* do!

About the Author: Arizona BASE jumper and equipment manufacturer Joe Walker, BASE #37, is indeed currently involved in a TV documentary project covering BASE jumping. His scouting of a 1400-foot cliff near the Grand Canyon (BASELINE #7) has led him to write another article, which will appear in an upcoming issue.

Sheer Section Discovered on Mt. Everest

World Record RW Formation to be Built on BASE Jump

by Sloof Lirpa

*"There it was, staring me right in the face ...
29,028 feet of pure altitude!"*

My name is Lirpa ... Sloof Lirpa. I am a Brazilian working for an American mortgage banking firm in Chicago. Most of you, however, will probably better remember me as the man who last year pioneered legal BASE jumps from the Sears Tower.

That program has been going remarkably well, by the way, with numerous jumps and a spotless safety record. The manifest started to get so crowded, as a matter of fact, that Phil and Andy effectively stifled the program by spreading unfounded rumors that the entire affair had been an April Fool's prank! Now, this seems kind of selfish, if you ask me, especially since those two rascals are up here themselves at least twice a month jumping off this beautiful building! Then again I suppose I shouldn't complain too vehemently, as I am making as many building jumps myself as suits my fancy.

The Sears Tower program had indeed been a monumental achievement, and I soon began wondering what other grandiose BASE jumps were out there. And that's when it happened. Opening my just-arrived issue of *Parachutist*, I was stunned to see a full-blown article on some guy slope soaring off Mount Everest. Now I know that the USPA takes a hard-line policy against all BASE jumps, but slope soaring is about the closest you can come without actually going into free fall first!

And then another part of me got to wondering: *Mount Everest*. Why not?! It is well known that Everest is the highest peak in the world, and maybe, just maybe, there was a sheer section somewhere on the face of that beautiful rock. I just happened to be in Nepal on business the following weekend, and decided to check it out. We spent the first two hours circling aimlessly about in a helicopter, cruising near the base of the mountain, trying to locate sheer drops. We finally stopped to rest on the Khumbu Glacier, and in the middle of eating my lunch I had a most unnerving

realization: we were at sea level!

My pilot was as dumbfounded as I was, for it was commonly known that the base of Mount Everest was over 17,000 feet above sea level. Our altimeters were quite correct, however, and I soon had another revelation: if we were at sea level, then the peak of Everest must be ... well, I couldn't even think of it. I turned my gaze slowly, disbelievably upward, and sure enough there it was: towering 30,000 feet in the sky, barely visible in the haze, but definitely sheer the whole way, there was the peak of Mount Everest!

We both threw down our lunches, and as my pilot fired up the whirly bird, I began frantically plotting out our location on the topographical map, trying to pinpoint where the exact exit spot would be. After a lengthy ride to the top, I was so anxious that I almost forgot my oxygen bottle! Walking back and forth fruitlessly for almost ten minutes, I actually started to think the whole thing might have been an illusion after all. And that's when I noticed a small section obscured by some brush. Walking behind it, I stumbled right up on the very ledge. I was awestruck. There it was, staring me right in the

face: 29,028 feet of pure altitude!

I was shaking with nervous excitement as we got back in the helicopter and flew the path of the drop. It was on the south-east side, where a long ridge dropped into the South Col, below which was a basin called the Western Cwm. This damn thing was actually under-cut, and we were getting farther from the wall as we went. Finally, some 30,000 feet later the drop ended up



Sloof Lirpa stands on the point which will soon be used to launch 142 people for a world-record BASE jump.

right on the Khumbu Glacier, a landing area so large that 150 people could touch down simultaneously!

I wasted no time in grabbing my rig and heading back to the top. It had been a long weekend and I was tired, but I was on an incredible adrenalin high. When we reached the top my pilot helped me clear the brush out of the way. I took one last suck on my oxygen bottle, thought to myself "yahoo!" and ran off the edge. The initial acceleration in the rarefied air at 30,000 feet was phenomenal. I had made over 50 jumps off the Sears Tower in the last year, but I suddenly felt like I was making my first BASE jump all over again.

I tracked for a full minute, my hand unconsciously wanting to reach in and dump just about every five seconds. After a full minute, I broke out into glorious laughter: the wall was several hundred feet behind me, the ground still 12,000 feet below me. I turned around, tracked for the mountain, and spent the next 7,000 feet doing no-contact RW with the face of the cliff! Finally, after better than a two minute delay, I reached in and dumped: I was safely open at two grand. A couple minutes later I made an easy stand-up on the large glacier.

Back in my office in Chicago on Monday, I was unable to concentrate on work. My mind kept reliving the jump, while another part of me wondered what I could make of this. A legal cliff jumping program from Mount Everest? Unlikely. The Nepal government would never go for it, and most jumpers probably couldn't afford to fly out there on a regular basis. Besides, even if things did work out, I feared that your illustrious editors try to stifle this program, too, by claiming the whole thing to be just another April Fool's joke!

All at once, an idea hit me that had as much grandeur as Mount Everest itself: if the glacier at the bottom was large enough to accommodate 150 people on landing, then the 30,000 feet drop was surely enough to accommodate 150 people in free fall! The largest formation to-date has been in the 130s, so I stamped out a nice little 142-way.

This jump would certainly go down in the record books: not only would we build a new RW formation, not only would it be on a BASE jump instead of from an aircraft, but it would be built using *exclusive-ly certified BASE jumpers!* My theory was simple enough: with almost 200 people so far qualifying for the BASE award, surely there must be 142 out there who are current

and experienced enough to be on a formation of this size. (Or, as USPA director of safety and training Mike Johnston pointed out, "If you can find 142 of them that are still alive!")

Finding an organizer for the event has been difficult. I first approached Roger Nelson, who readily agreed; however, not wanting to have anything to do with BASE jumping, Nelson insisted that he be allowed to jump out of a helicopter hovering near the exit point, and swoop the formation. When I explained that this would invalidate the BASE-jump aspect of the world record, Roger respectfully declined.

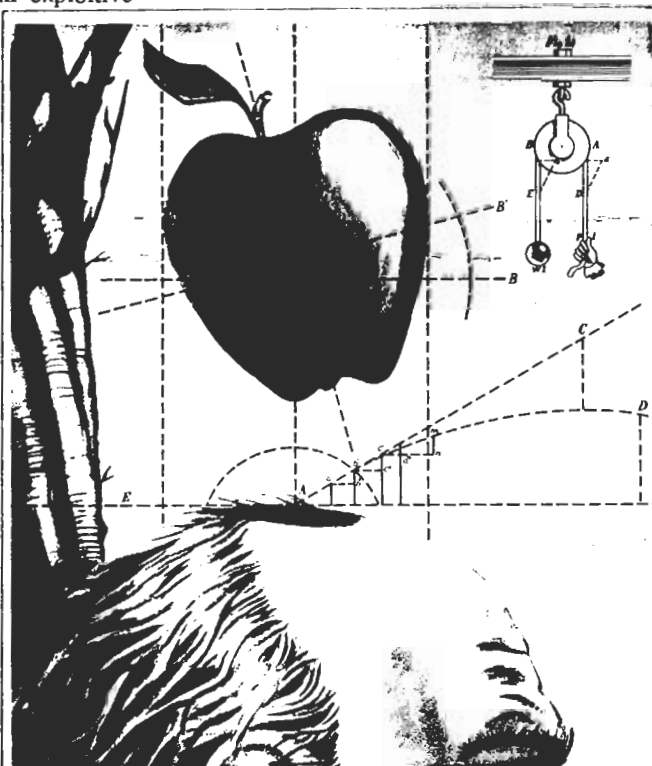
Reaction from the USPA, in the meantime, has understandably been less than favorable. USPA President Larry Bagley has written a letter to the Nepal Commissioner of Baseball, requesting that none of us be allowed to attend or make demo jumps into the local games. Bagley also mentioned that we might have a strange tendency to want to rob the local banks while wearing our rigs, and stated that they should not be offended by this as we are all exploitive daredevils just looking out for ourselves.

USPA Executive Director William H. Ottley, steadfastly sticking to the Board of Directors' long-standing policy, declared: "We consider this to be a potentially very dangerous stunt which is not a part of sport parachuting." It was not clear, however, whether Mr. Ottley was referring to launching from a fixed object, or trying to get that many people in free fall at the same time.

In all seriousness, however, I would like to dedicate the jumps to the memory of my dearly departed friend Andy Tucker. My involvement last year with city officials and the like kept me from returning Tag's phone calls, but he was indeed a close personal friend of mine, and I'll really miss him.

At any rate, I am currently in the fourth week of planning, and am still trying to line up sponsors for the event. I'm also looking for jumpers to fill the slots.

Despite Phil's and Andy's attempts to convince anyone to the contrary, this effort *is* real and the jump will take place! Anyone interested in being a part of it should send me (c/o BASELINE Magazine) their name, BASE number, skydiving experience level, and a non-refundable application fee of \$50 (please make checks payable to me, Sloof Lirpa). I'll see y'all next year!



Gravity.
It isn't just a good idea.
It's the law.

Reports in this section are compiled from information obtained from jumpers in the field. They are printed here for their educational value, and are divided into three categories: incident reports involve any BASE jumping mishap ending without injury, which others might profit from reading about; accident reports detail BASE jumps which resulted in injury to the jumper; and fatality reports involve any person who was killed as the result of making a BASE jump. Names are generally included with all

reports; however, anonymity will be granted to any subject who specifically requests it.

Please help us insure that the reports in this section are accurate as possible: if you are involved in, or are witness to, a type of a BASE jumping mishap, contact us with the pertinent details. All it takes is a phone call to (713) 437-0323 or 931-771 or simply jot down the essential information on a post card and mail it to us.

Accident Reports

Name: Greg Gasson **Age:** 22
BASE Jumps: 12 **Skydives:** 220
Main: Cruislite **Reserve:** None
Container: Velcro-closed BASE rig
Pilot Chute: APE 48"
Object: Cliff **Altitude:** 320'
Delay: 2 seconds
Type of Jump: Day-time, solo exit.
Nature of Accident: Object strike
Extent of Injuries: Broken right arm, facial lacerations.

Description

The jumper performed a stable exit and two-second free fall. Upon deployment, his canopy opened facing 90 degrees to the left, but with a 180-degree line twist. Gasson, now thinking that he had actually opened facing right, took corrective action by making a 90-degree left turn. This swung him directly into the cliff face, and the impact left him stuck on the wall. Greg was rescued with help from the Arizona State Police over an hour later.

Conclusions

A fundamental rule of BASE jumping is that immediately upon opening you should check which direction your parachute is facing, not which direction you are facing. Because line twists are always possible, a jumper may well be facing a different direction than his canopy; in case of an off-heading opening, knowing the heading of your parachute can make the difference between an effective, timely correction and an object strike.

The jumper in this accident later contacted BASELINE to report that the initial details may have been incorrect. According to Greg, pictures taken by the ground crew reveal that a true 180-degree opening may have taken place, not a 90-degree opening with a 180 line twist. In this case, the proper correction technique would have

been to haul in on both rear risers, thus stalling the parachute, producing a backslide, and providing rapid horizontal separation from the object. Either way, the important thing is to look up at your parachute on opening, in order to assess the situation.

Name: Withheld **Age:** 35
BASE Jumps: 50 **Skydives:** 1000
Main: Cruisair **Reserve:** Round
Container: Wonderhog
Pilot Chute: 36"
Packing: Free-packed slider down.
Object: Building **Altitude:** 500'
Delay: 2 seconds
Type of Jump: Night-time, solo exit.
Nature of Accident: High-speed spiral-ling impact.
Extent of Injuries: Shattered right tibia and fibula, broken left heel.

Description

The jumper performed a stable exit and two-second free fall, then threw his undersized pilot chute. Getting caught instantly in the burble, the pilot chute began to tow helplessly. Rapidly losing altitude and unable to clear the problem, the jumper dumped his reserve. At this point the main container also opened, both canopies came racing out at the same time and a nasty main/reserve entanglement ensued. The jumper spiraled in and shattered his right lower leg (pulverizing the bones), broke his left heel, and spent several months in the hospital and over a year in rehabilitation.

Conclusions

At the outset, it might seem as if the conclusion to this report is straightforward: "A BASE pilot chute would have prevented this accident." Upon further inspection,

however, there are several valuable lessons to be learned:

1. *Importance of a qualified ground crew.* As our jumping activities increase so does the difficulty of finding someone willing to continually volunteer their time as ground crew. As a result, many people have instead begun jumping with partners, figuring that if one of the two were to get hurt the other could call for help, and that would be unlikely that both jumpers would be injured.

However, in case of a serious injury mere minutes (or even seconds) could make the difference between life and death. Had the waiting getaway car not been standing by to whisk the jumper in the accident away to the nearest emergency room, he may very likely have bled to death.

2. *Need for a tertiary reserve.* In all but the rarest of cases, a conventional skydiving main and reserve will entangle if the reserve is deployed into some type of malfunctioned main. Had the jumper tossed out a tertiary once confronted with the pilot chute-in-tow, he would never have had to worry about his main spilling open at the same time. Even if it did, though, the very design of a tertiary makes it almost impossible for it to entangle with a main.

Granted, had the jumper used a proper size pilot chute he would have never had the need to go to a tertiary in the first place. However, even a BASE pilot chute can tow for a variety of unusual reasons; for example, if a jumper goes radically head-low and entangles the bridle around his wrist or leg.

Regardless of what causes a total malfunction on a BASE jump, a proper tertiary reserve deploys quickly, much more rapidly than a conventional skydiving reserve and is safe to use even at terminal velocity.

3. *Need for a BASE pilot chute.* Lastly, and most importantly, is the source of the problem. Although a lot of high-tech, expensive gear is available to deal with almost any BASE jumping emergency, some very simple, inexpensive gear can be used to

prevent those problems in the first place: a BASE pilot chute.

Had the jumper in this incident used one, he would have been spared the need for a ground crew, a tertiary reserve ... and several months in the hospital and a year of rehabilitation!

Name: Marlen Burford Age: 28
BASE Jumps: 30 Skydives: 900
Main: Fury 220 ft² Reserve: 26' Lopo
Container: Racer Pilot Chute: 55"
Packing: Free-packed slider down, line-release modification but no toggle keepers.
Object: Antenna Altitude: 375'
Delay: 1/2 second
Type of Jump: Day-time, solo exit.
Nature of Accident: High-speed spiralling impact.
Extent of Injuries: Cracked pelvis, two compressed vertebrae.

Description

After a stable free fall and clean opening, the jumper got his canopy under control and flying straight away from the tower. He then attempted to release his

deployment brakes, which were routed outside of the slider grommets and riser keeper rings. However, the jumper had failed to install either proper toggle keepers or Zoo toggles, and the right-side brake line jammed. This put the canopy in a hard spiral turn, and the jumper impacted before he could regain control of his parachute. He cracked his pelvis and compressed two vertebrae.

"Had a waiting getaway car not been standing by to whisk the jumper to the nearest emergency room, he may very likely have bled to death."

Conclusions

The jumper had installed the line-release modification in hopes that if he had a line-over malfunction, he would be able to clear the problem and land without injury. It is ironic that the jumper experienced a normal canopy opening, and because of having the line-release modification, ended up spiralling into the ground anyway.

The last issue of BASELINE contained an extensive two-page article which explained the nature of line-over malfunctions, line-release modifications, and the importance of proper toggle keepers. Yet this jumper elected not to use either toggle keepers or Zoo toggles ... and he paid the price.

It would seem that injury in this accident could have been avoided if only the jumper would have corrected for the jammed brake line using the opposite riser or toggle. However, this assumes that there is enough time to recognize the problem and formulate and execute a solution. Confronted with a radically spinning canopy at less than 200 feet AGL, the jumper admitted that "I hit the ground before I even knew what had happened."

The success of line-release modifications cannot be argued. It is a good idea which has admittedly cleared line-over malfunctions in the past. However, technology must be used properly if it is to work; this is perhaps best demonstrated by this accident.

AT PRESSTIME

Crash, Boom, Bye!

A 26-year old man escaped serious injury last March when he struck a moving car after jumping from Chicago's 47-floor Leo Burnet Building. The jumper, who requested anonymity, inadvertently snagged his right steering line on a light pole as he prepared to touch down on an extra-wide sidewalk. "I swung like a tether ball into the path of an oncoming BMW, and bounced off its hood," the jumper reported to BASELINE. "I injured my foot, but was able to scramble into the getaway car and make a clean escape." The jumper's right steering line and parts of three cells were ripped from the canopy and left hanging from the pole.

A witness to the jump reported the getaway car's license plate number to police, and the getaway driver (a jumper himself) soon received a visit from two plainclothes detectives. "These guys knew their BASE jumping," it was reported to BASELINE. "When they walked into my apartment they noticed pictures of some antenna and bridge jumps, and then said: 'Looks like you have your "A" and "S" here. Who was the guy

who earned his "B" two days ago?' " The getaway driver reported to police that the jumper was a distant acquaintance who he had met at the Free Brother's convention several years ago, and vaguely remembered his name to be "Rick Lean." The police bought the story and soon issued an arrest warrant on charges of trespassing and criminal damage.

Meanwhile the driver of the BMW, a 47-year old Nigerian chemist, granted local newspapers an interview during which he stated that he was only interested in being reimbursed for damage to his car. Upon reading of this, "Rick Lean" made an arrangement through an attorney for an anonymous payment to the driver, in exchange for the dropping of criminal charges.

Although the driver is happy, local police are still hot to catch the mythical "Rick Lean," who is now travelling the country in search of new adventures.

Blron Lives

Researcher and Ph.D. candidate Joseph Biro, who almost two years ago began work on drawing

psychological profile of BASE jumpers, called in to report that his study is at a standstill, but has not died.

Biron informed BASELINE that he has been granted a one-year internship at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md., and new impositions on his time have forestalled his BASE jumper study. "But support from the jumpers has been overwhelming," said Biron. "I have been receiving postcards, letters, survey forms and even videotapes from BASE jumpers across the country." Biron also added that this study constitutes his doctoral thesis, so he has every intention of completing the work; he further promised to forward all results to BASELINE as soon as they become available.

Jumpers wishing to communicate with Biron can reach him c/o the Department of Psychology, Bethesda Naval Hospital, Bethesda, Md. 20814.

Images of Free Fall

The March 1988 catalog of The Sharper Image, a San Francisco mail-order company, featured a cover photograph of two jumpers in free fall over New York City. The caption under the picture reads: "Hands-free communication for adventurers."

That the pair had not jumped off a building, however, is as obvious as the fact that the jumpers are not really in free fall. "The picture was meant to entertain," said photo stylist Kimberly Peregrin, an employee of the company. Peregrin posed in a studio along with professional model Shawn Cady, wearing student Wonderhog Vectors borrowed from the Air Adventures DZ in California. Neither has actually skydived before, "but I'd be anxious to try" added Peregrin.

about a student's readiness, any of them can forestall his skydiving career.

Once the novice gets 40 or 50 jumps under his belt, he stands the greatest chance of becoming a statistic. He has overcome most or all of his initial fear, and may be over-confident to the point of being lax and careless. If he survives this period, he becomes an "experienced jumper" or possibly even a "SKYGOD!" In hang-gliding, the term is called "intermediate syndrome." The majority of aspiring BASE jumpers seem to come from this group.

It does, in a sense, seem logical that once the skygod has gained mastery over aircraft jumps, he must surely have inherited dominion over all parachute jumps -- including out of or off of anything! It is this assumption that constitutes the most grave danger to any BASE jumper. In

other words, the ignorance of the critical differences between BASE jumping and skydiving.

This lack of respect has been the foremost cause of all BASE-related accidents that have occurred to-date. Most who have this attitude will nevertheless make their BASE jumps without an accident because, although these leaps are more dangerous than most skydives, it still usually takes more than one mistake to result in an accident.

Unfortunately for those of us who seek to legitimize the new sport of BASE jumping, accidents invariably find their way to the headlines. This harms both BASE jumping and skydiving, as the public naturally lumps all parachute jumps together.

Considering all of this, it is in the best interests of everybody related to parachut-

Copies of the catalog are available for \$1. by writing to The Sharper Image, 650 Davis St., San Francisco, Calif. 94111.

New Site In Venezuela

Venezuelans Rodolpho Gerstl and Pedro Luis Gonzalez, who are currently running a commercial jumping program at Angel Falls, called in to report that they are planning a jump from Kukenam, another Venezuelan cliff believed to be over 1,400 feet sheer. The pair did not specify any other details of the new site, nor did they state whether they plan to incorporate it as part of their ongoing commercial venture. An upcoming issue of BASELINE will contain more details.

Date May Change

West Virginia's annual New River Gorge Bridge Day may be held on the third Saturday of October this year, according to officials at the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce. Although the event has traditionally been held on October's second Saturday, a pending proclamation from the governor might change this.

"It's still not definite," said Chamber of Commerce secretary Synthia Blake, "but jumpers should contact the local hotels and make reservations ahead of time. If you tell them you want your room for Bridge Day, they will accommodate you depending on when the final date is set."

Jean Boenish has promised that application forms for registering for the 1988 event will be ready in time to be mailed along with the next issue.

ing, and especially all prospective BASE jumpers, to seek education and illumination of everything involved with making a BASE jump. BASE jumpers do not generally try to encourage skydivers or anyone else to make BASE jumps. All of us, however, should encourage safety in BASE jumping as well as lobby for widespread acknowledgement of the rights of those so inclined to pursue this sport.

People will continue to injure and kill themselves in parachuting sports, as well as many other types of sports, despite the best efforts of safety-conscious individuals and organizations. The least we should do to limit the number of accidents is to provide a source for information pertaining to the safety and advisability of prospective BASE leaps. So please ... remember to look and learn before you leap!

Photo-Finish



BASELINES

As the popularity of BASE jumping increases, it shouldn't be surprising to find references to our sport in popular music. We're sorry we missed our traditional "BASELINES" section in the last issue, and to make up for it, we present a special edition: **MUSICAL BASELINES!**

"If I should stumble, catch my fall."

Billy Idol

"Catch me now, I'm falling!"

Pretty Poison

*"If you walk through that door,
you better look before you leap, boy!"*

Susie Q.

*"Nothing much good ever happened on Chalktown
Ridge, and now Billy Joe McAllister has jumped off
the Tallahatchee Bridge."*

Bobbie Gentry

"God helps those who fight their fears."

Kenny Loggins

*"Maybe you will frap, maybe you will splat, maybe
you will bounce, maybe you will die!"*

Joe Walsh

"The ride with you was worth the fall."

Whitney Houston

"Life is but a dream..."

Traditional

*""Out along the edges, always where I burn to be.
The further on the edge, the hotter the intensity."*

Kenny Loggins

"You're getting kind of nervous,

I can see it in your eyes.

*Your heart is beating faster,
And your throat is getting dry,
But once you've tried it, baby,
it's the only way to fly!"*

Bardeaux

"You might as well Jump!"

Van Halen

"Jump, jump, jump, jump!"

The Pointer Sisters

"You belong to the city, you belong to the night.

Living in a river of darkness

Beneath the neon lights."

Glenn Frey

"Another one bites the dust ...

And another one's gone

and another one's gone."

Queen

*"There's two kinds of trouble in this world:
living ... and dying!"*

Lindsay Buckingham

"You got me under pressure."

ZZ Top

"Have mercy on the criminal."

Elton John

"Oh mama, I'm in fear for my life

From the long arm of the law."

Styx

"That's where my fate lives... Down on Main Street

Bob Seger

"Makes me wonder how the other half die"

INXS

*"I might jump an open drawbridge,
or fall from a tall building."*

Lee Majors

"Stand or fall!"

The Fixx

"How low can you go?"

The Drifters

"Ünté gliben gläuten glüben."

Def Leppard

Your last issue?

This issue of BASELINE marks the last in Volume II. Here's a "sneak preview" of what awaits in the year to come: Joe Walker's El Cap "horror story"; Antenna Jumping for Beginners; Leaping Tall Buildings in a Single Bound; How to get arrested; Flying cameras on BASE jumps, and many, many more. Upcoming sections of Back to "Basics" will detail how to handle off-heading openings, deal with object strikes, and fold a BASE pilot chute. Our foreign correspondents have filed regional reports: Nick Feteris tells of an 1100-foot cliff in Australia, Rob "Skypuppy" Price tells what's new on the Canada BASE scene, and Nigel Slee provides an update on BASE jumping in London.

Keep up-to-date on BASE around the world: the news, people and information. Send your renewal form and check for \$11 today.