

# BASLINE



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# PARACHUTING'S UNFORGETTABLE JUMPS III

By **HOWARD GREGORY**

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## PARACHUTING'S UNFORGETTABLE JUMPS

Jumping off the top of El Capitan, a 3,000 foot cliff in the Yosemite Valley in California was legal—for a short time in 1980. Then they banned it.

The following was reported in a front page article in (would you believe) "The Wall Street Journal" (Friday, June 27, 1986):

Sometimes the frustrated rangers stake out a jump site. One morning they caught Robin Heid, the Denver BASE jumper, atop El Capitan. "Out from behind the rocks pop 10 rangers," Mr. Heid recalls. "One of them said, 'All right boys, the game is over. You're coming with us.'"

Mr. Heid says, "I bowed to them, said, 'Gentlemen, have a nice day' and I jumped off." He was arrested by the rangers in a meadow at the base of the cliff.

\*\*\*

The above is only one of the legion of jump stories in the NEW "Parachuting's Unforgettable Jumps III" (A New Completely Revised Third Edition) A regular Who's Who of the celebrities of the parachuting world; professionals and sport champions are interviewed for their funniest, most unusual and most memorable jump stories.

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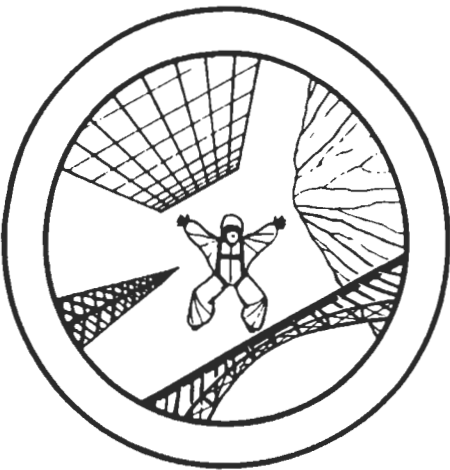
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# **BASELINE Magazine**

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**Cover Photo:** Andy Smith, BASE 9, used a rear-facing, helmet-mounted camera to catch this shot of his jump partner deploying alongside the New River Gorge Bridge in West Virginia.

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*"The Ground's The Limit!"*

BASELINE Magazine is an independent periodical published quarterly by OPC of Houston, Texas. Subscription rates are \$11/year domestic, \$15/year surface mail to all foreign addresses; air mail rates available upon request. BASELINE is sold by the volume only; readers subscribing in the middle of the year will receive all current back issues bringing them up to date.

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**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.



# BASE BITS

## BASE in the News

### Bridge Day Gets Positive Press

The BASE jumping portion of West Virginia's annual New River Gorge Bridge Day received some of the best publicity it has gotten in recent years. The Associated Press, United Press International, PM Magazine, NBC's Today Show and National Public Radio stations all gave positive national coverage to Bridge Day jumping.

Nick DiGiovanni, a BASE jumper from Oceanside, Calif., got ABC's Incredible Sunday interested in Bridge Day, and the program filmed and subsequently aired a well-produced 10-minute segment. The piece focused on first-time BASE jumper Janet Kelly, of Reading, Pa., and 43-year-old John Winkler of Akron, Ohio, who received no injuries after snivelling to impact into the New River. Winkler joined program hosts John Davidson and Christina Ferrari in the studio.

Additionally, Kentucky jumpers LeRoy Gallenstein and Mark Bailey managed to get Jim Warren, a reporter from the local paper *The Lexington Herald-Leader*, to fly to West Virginia to cover the event. Warren concentrated on several Kentucky jumpers in a well-written piece which included some spectacular photography.

Finally, a Friday-morning press conference resulted in some positive coverage by local West Virginia newspapers and TV and radio stations of the jumping activities.

### The Monitor Arrives

Jean Boenish introduced another publication into the BASE community Oct. 14 when she brought several hundred copies of her new newsletter, *The BASE Monitor*, to Bridge Day 1988. Copies were available free of charge to all jumpers attending the annual event.

The first issue of the *Monitor* was typed and photocopied on both sides of one legal-size page, and contained a lot of good information. A one-year subscription (three issues) is available free to any jumper who sends Jean a \$22 contribution.

Boenish also mentioned that *The BASE*

*Monitor* will primarily be a source to disseminate information about her ongoing negotiations with the National Park Service, and that the \$22 contributions will go toward that cause.

## People

### Railroad Blues

Mark Bailey, BASE 172, in October became the sixth person to earn his "Hobo BASE" by jumping from a moving train as it crossed a bridge. Bailey, along with visiting northern California correspondent Rick Payne, waited several hours for a train going the right direction across a 300-foot bridge in the midwestern United States.

The pair grabbed their rigs and began chasing a train when one finally came along, traveling in the right direction, but did not stop. Bailey managed to get on the rail car, but Payne, who was limping from a recent injury, fell after only being able to get one hand on the car. He tumbled on the rail bed, escaping with only minor injuries.

Bailey, meanwhile, rode the train until it crossed over the bridge, timing his exit so he could avoid striking either side of the narrow gorge. He took a short delay, and landed in the slow-moving, frigid river, without incident.

The first railroad BASE jumps were made in 1983 from a Southern Pacific train as it crossed the Pecos River High Bridge in west Texas.

### BASE Nightmare

Californians Mark Hewitt and Rich Stein, along with Arizonan J.D. Walker, reportedly cheated death in September when they had a canopy wrap, a freefall-to-canopy collision, three cutaways and two-and-a-half reserve rides! That's what Southwestern correspondent J.D. Walker reported to BASELINE Sept. 23.

According to Walker, the trio executed a flawless three-way exit from a 1600-foot cliff in the western United States, and Stein, who was to be the high man, threw his 52-inch pilot chute two seconds later. Stein reported that his eight-foot bridle

wrapped around either his pilot chute or his arm, preventing its rapid deployment. Stein got open, but in Walker's airspace, and the pair were soon tied up in a high-speed, spinning canopy wrap.

Walker reported that both he and Stein cut away and went for their reserves, but Walker, while still in free fall, struck low-man Hewitt's open canopy, deflating one side instantly. Walker and Stein got their round reserves open, and then, as Walker put it, "watched in horror to see Hewitt disappear into the 100-foot-tall pine trees with his reserve streamer behind him."

Walker and Stein apparently touched down in the trees and escaped with only a few cuts, scrapes and sprains, but both had to sever their reserve lines to walk away. Meanwhile, the legendary Mark Hewitt luck held true. According to Walker, Hewitt's reserve canopy never fully opened, but during his crash descent through the forest it caught enough timber to slow him down to a survivable speed. With his reserve trashed, Hewitt cut the lines and walked away unscratched.

The final twist came, according to Walker, when he and Stein could not locate Hewitt. "We didn't even know if he was alive," said Walker. "After a fruitless search, we finally decided to call the authorities. That is, until we got almost there, and then found Hewitt: at the bar, having a beer!"

The final tally was three lost mains and three trashed reserves, but the jumpers all agreed they were happy just to be alive.

## Places

### Europe's Tallest

European correspondent Jeff Dedijer reports that the Messeturm, which will be Europe's tallest building, is currently under construction in Germany.

"The building will be 250 meters [833 feet] tall when completed sometime in 1991," reported Dedijer, adding that the \$300 million structure will be owned by the U.S. company Speyer Properties. "What a great place it will be to jump; even the landing area looks good!" Dedijer said.

### Just "Deserts"

Saudi Arabian correspondent "Dead" Steve Morrell, an Air Force pilot stationed in Dharan, reportedly made the first BASE jump in Saudi Arabia when he recently free-fell the 500-foot sheer cliff "Raghead Point" in the Rub Al Khali desert. Morrell, wearing a velcro-closed BASE rig (and no reserve), took a two-second delay, opened on heading and had an uneventful 40-second canopy ride to a soft landing on the desert floor.

"The only drawback to an otherwise perfect jump," said Morrell, "was the hike out: a two-hour trek through steep terrain in the 100-degree desert heat, followed by a one-and-a-half hour climb to the top of the plateau." Morrell, whose water supply had been damaged, quickly dehydrated and developed slight heat exhaustion. Fortunately local rock climber and jumper Shawn Casey, who was along to assist with the expedition, started climbing down with water after Morrell began to sound "disoriented and confused" over the radio.

Morrell reports that Raghead Point, which affords over 300 degrees of opening freedom, is not accessible during the summer months because of daily 120-degree desert heat. However, he and Casey intend to return, weather permitting, for some more jumps and rock climbing. "And Casey will hopefully make his first cliff jump," concluded Morrell.

### "Fall" of the Roman Empire

Italian correspondent Tristano Caracciolo reports the BASE scene is alive and well in Italy. In September, Caracciolo jumped from a 288-foot castle tower, Torre del Mangia, in Campo Square, Siena, Italy. After a stand-up landing to the applause of an awe-stricken crowd, he scurried away while a policeman looked on in disbelief. Caracciolo reports that the lift ticket's price, \$1.75, was "very reasonable."

In October, visiting American John Carta and Caracciolo jumped a 300-foot bridge in northern Italy, and an 856-foot bridge near Calabria. Later, Carta jumped from the world-famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. (Mike McCarthy was the first person to jump the Pisa tower, earlier this year.)

Caracciolo reports that there are several towers like the one in Siena, plus a number of bridges in the 300- to 500-foot range in Italy. Additionally, there are some low cliffs over water in some islands which he

is scouting. He plans to have at least 10 good objects lined up by Spring, and will help any visiting BASE jumper if they contact him at Tiazza Dell'Oro, #3. 00186 Rome, Italy.

Caracciolo speaks fluent English, and is well versed on the American BASE scene: he spent last summer in California and earned BASE 215.

## Events

### Half Dome Fatality

Mitch Reno, a 31-year-old skydiver from Antioch, Calif., died Oct. 23 following a predawn jump from Yosemite National Park's 1800-foot Half Dome cliff. According to an unnamed source, Reno, the first to exit out of a group of three, apparently took too long of a delay, impacting the cliff's 45-degree talus without a fully open parachute. The two other jumpers successfully parachuted from the cliff, leaving the park and calling the rangers anonymously from a pay phone. Reno's body was recovered some nine hours later with the aid of a helicopter.

Reno, a member of the 1987 national four-way sequential CRW championship team, Slam Factor, was only the second person to die on a BASE jump in Yosemite in more than 10 years of jumping activity there. Californian Jim Tyler was killed in 1983, also on a Half Dome cliff strike, following what was described as a too-short delay and off-heading opening.

Half Dome's topography (1800 feet sheer with a 3,000-foot talus) requires at least an eight-second delay, but usually no longer than ten seconds. Although several jumpers have successfully taken 12 or more seconds, many of them came dangerously close to impact.

There is some speculation that this incident will hamper Jean Boenish's efforts to revive sanctioned BASE jumping in Yosemite. More information is contained in this issue's USBA Update section.

## BASE at the Movies

### Robo BASE

Last year's hit movie "Short Circuit," directed by John Badham, featured a robot-come-to-life named "Number Five." Dur-

ing one scene in the movie where the robot is being pursued across a bridge by a car, an ill-placed ramp sends Number Five flying into free fall over the side of the bridge.

A close-up scene then shows the robot reach in with one hand and pull a ripcord, followed by a breathtaking shot of the bridge, the robot, and the water below — and a canopy deploying off Number Five's back. When the tape is played in slow motion, the direct-bag deployment method is clearly visible as the robot is dropped off the bridge, pulling a Paradactyl-type parachute out of the bag.

The sequence ends with some contrived footage of the robot, hanging from suspension lines, steering over the Oregon countryside, screaming "Weeeee!" Number Five finally touches down on top of a moving truck and cuts away the canopy.

The recently-released sequel, Short Circuit II, contains a scene where Number Five takes a flying leap through a window in a tall New York building. The robot free falls for several seconds, then deploys a combination hang-glider/parachute contraption. After a brief flight over the city, Number Five comes in for a smooth landing in central park.

## Close Encounters of the Unkind

### Return of the "Living Dead"

Steve Jester and Jim Pettler, leaving a late-night party for an impromptu jump off California's 750-foot Auburn bridge, were in for more than they bargained. After successfully parachuting to a small, winding road below, the pair realized that they had not made any provisions for transportation back to the top.

Deciding to wait out the night at the bottom, the two wrapped themselves in their canopies to keep warm, and fell soundly asleep. Jester awoke early the next morning, repacked and hiked to the top for a second jump; Pettler was still asleep. Unknow to either of them, some whuffos who had witnessed the previous night's jumps called the police, who were by now swarming all over the bridge.

As he climbed out onto the catwalk, with Pettler clearly visible below, asleep on the road, wrapped in his canopy, Jester suddenly heard the cops calling frantically into

their police radios: "Sure enough, the parachutists were here. One body at the bottom. Parachute draped over him. Looks like he didn't make it. Better get an ambulance out here."

Jester, thoroughly amused, screamed "three, two, one, **deployment!**" and leapt from the catwalk, making a perfect three-

second delay, on-heading opening and standup landing right next to Pettler. The cops, even more frantic, radioed in: "There's another one now! He made it! Get some units to the road, fast."

Jester quickly awoke Pettler, explained the situation, and the pair made a run for it. "The jumper and the corpse ... they're both

getting away!" screamed the cop. Pettler disappeared into some tall grass and was never apprehended. Jester, not quite as fleet footed, was arrested and spent several days in jail before being released. "But the cops still never figured out the disappearing corpse!" said Jester.

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## Book, Video & Equipment Review

### Tail Pocket.

**BASE gear from T&T Rigging, 2521-1/2 S. Vista Way, Suite 17, Carlsbad, Calif. 92008**

**\$15.00 plus \$2 P&H.**

Ever since BASE jumping led to altitudes which precluded terminal free fall, jumpers looked for ways to speed up their openings. Sliders were pulled down, larger pilot chutes and longer bridles were utilized, and some jumpers even discarded their deployment bags in favor of free packing.

Although free packing probably ensures the fastest possible deployment, it introduces new problems: loose lines whipping around, possibly snagging something; or an out-of-sequence opening. For those who prefer free packing, a tail pocket, such as the one made by T&T Rigging, is one possible solution.

A tail pocket is nothing more than a piece of material onto which small pieces of webbing are sewn, so that rubber bands can be fastened around them. The tail pocket is then sewn onto the top trailing edge of the parachute, and the suspension lines can then be stowed in the rubber bands.

Tail pockets, in general, counter the problems associated with free packing. They eliminate line whip and prevent out-of-sequence deployments by ensuring that the lines deploy from the risers to the canopy (see Mark Hewitt's article "Romancing the Rope" in *BASELINE* Vol. 2, Issue 1). On T&T Rigging's tail pocket, the last stow is done with the rubber band through a grommet which

locks the unit shut until the canopy is extracted and the lines are taught.

T&T's tail pocket, made of black parapak and bound by 3/4-inch ribbon tape, is 16 inches wide and 18 inches tall. Only the middle third (horizontally) of the tail pocket is sewn down, so that the other two sections fold in on the middle and are secured by velcro. The entire unit weighs less than four ounces, and adds less bulk than a pack of cigarettes. Its \$15 price tag makes it well worth the money.

### 1988 New River Gorge Bridge BASE Videos

**BASE Hits Productions  
c/o J.T. Williams. 1312 Fontaine Road,  
Lexington, Ky. 40502**

**\$18.00 plus \$3.00 P&H**

Perhaps one of the most difficult challenges in movie making today is to produce a sequel which surpasses — or at the very least equals — its predecessor. A few of Hollywood's most talented movie makers have done it. And so has J.T. Williams, producer of BASE Hits Production's new videotape "Bridge Day 1988."

Last year, BHP stunned the BASE video market with a truly unique product: 90 minutes of hard-core, back-to-back BASE jumps (off the New River Gorge Bridge) for the unheard-of price of only \$15. In our review of that tape, *BASELINE* stated: "This video could

easily sell for three times its price, and it would still be worth the money."

This year, what can we say except: "More of the same!" BHP's 1988 tape contains two hours showing 350 close-up exits, filmed from directly between the exit points on the bridge, and interspersed at times with landing shots filmed from below.

A 50/50 blend of popular music has once again been used, so that the sound of the jumpers, the crowd, and the crack of canopies opening can be heard along with a variety of "Top 40" hits.

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***"Last year, BHP stunned the BASE video market with a truly unique product ... this year, what can we say except 'More of the same!'"***

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The tape shows some of the day's most exciting and scary jumps, including Harry Rooks' and Kyle Bahl's tandem, the line-over malfunctions and John Winkler's spectacular "snivel-to-impact" (shown from both the top and bottom!).

As with last year, however, BHP's 1988 tape does have its shortcomings. Shot and reproduced on home equipment (instead of a broadcast-quality tape deck), the final product does suffer a few generations of signal loss. The image is a little fuzzy and shakes at times, although not badly.

And although the producers did do a nice job of editing out most of the dull spots between jumps, a color bar occasionally rolls across the screen where a splice was made, and there are still several scenes where a jumper stands on the ledge for a good while before finally leaping.

All things considered, however, BHP offers an outstanding product which seems to improve every year. For \$18 (plus \$3 shipping), it is not only a superb buy, but unquestionably the best bargain among Bridge Day tapes currently on the market. ■

# Letters

## Boys and Their Toys

I was shocked and disappointed to see the picture of John Hoover and his son in your magazine. I feel that this shows a great lack of good judgement on your part. By printing such a picture you are condoning and encouraging this kind of activity.

In my opinion it was a criminal act on the part of Mr. Hoover to endanger his child's life in such a manner. It's one thing for an adult to knowingly make a decision to jump from a 175-foot bridge, but a 9-year-old child has no concept of what danger he is in, or the possible consequences.

Gary Douris  
Elsinore, Calif.

When I was nine years old, I rode a bicycle and made model aircraft. Nine years later I took up motorcycling and jumping from real aircraft. As the old saying goes, "the only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys."

I enjoyed being nine, and subsequently going through all those experiences like static-line jumping, which eventually led me toward BASE jumping. I wonder if Casey Hoover will enjoy them as much, having started in the "deep end."

If you read BASELINE, Casey, write in and let us know about your jump experience. Have you participated in any other adventure sports? I'm interested in the views of people who came to BASE jumping without going through skydiving first, like the friend I introduced to it in 1984, who has only recently made his first skydive. These people can see our sport without a lot of preconceived ideas.

One idea that seems to owe a certain amount to skydiving is the United States BASE Association. Being dedicated to the "safety, advancement and positive image" of BASE is great, but what does it mean in practice? I'm not sure about being interested in an "esoteric aspect of an age-old dream." (I'm interested in not getting caught, personally!) The organization of Bridge Day is something we all appreciate, but the event is meant to be self-financing.

How about Phil Mayfield writing an article telling us more about the USBA; if it's good then I'll join. However, I wonder whether BASE jumpers really want to be organized

into an association, especially one that bears a superficial likeness to the USPA. In these early days of our sport, maybe anarchy suits us better.

I'm not getting at the USBA, but I feel uneasy about turning BASE jumping into another numbers game; it makes it look like getting an SCS. I like BASELINE because only those who have something to say write for it, only those interested read it, and only those who want it pay for it. There is no formality imposed on it (although sometimes I think it looks a little too similar to PARACHUTIST).

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*"I like BASELINE because only those who have something to say write for it, only those interested read it, and only those who want it pay for it."*

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All British skydivers have joined to the British Parachute Association, and that means a compulsory subscription to *Sport Parachutist*, which is full of boring articles and letters complaining about the last edition. If BASELINE ever begins to look like that, God help us.

By the way, I hope to be able to go to California again next year, and if I do I'd love to pay a visit to Yosemite. I wonder if anyone out there planning a little hill-walking trip would like the company of one more enthusiast?

Martin Lyster  
Oxford, England

*When Carl Boenish founded the USBA in the early 1980s, he never intended for it to be a formalized association with a constitution and a lot of rules. Rather, it was meant to be a front to give all BASE jumpers a unified voice, and to lend credibility to requests for organized jumping activities (such as the annual jump at the New River Gorge*

Bridge).

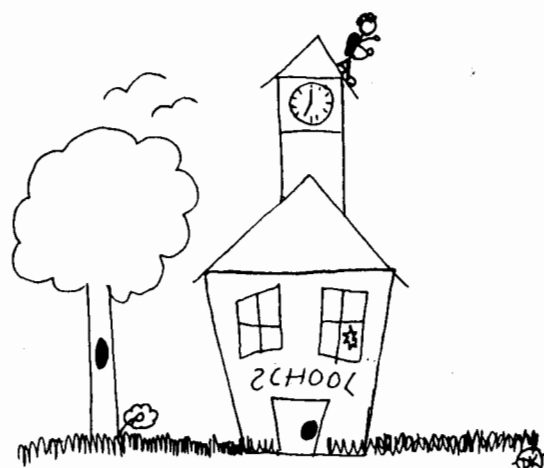
Today, BASELINE supports a USBA-type organization, and includes a "USBA Update" section, only to report on organized activities that pertain to all BASE jumpers in general. And although there has been interest expressed informally reviving the USBA, to include officers, dues and a formalized democratic structure, the results of BASELINE's last survey indicated that most jumpers agree with Lyster's view: they don't want to be organized into an association that bears a superficial likeness to the USPA.

—Eds.

## Pioneer BASE Jumper?

I am enclosing an old picture that appeared on the front page of the *Austin American-Statesman* a few years ago. When I originally saw it, I noticed the excellent exit and the cool no helmet, no shoes and, (unfortunately), no rig approach chosen by the jumper. Since he was exiting from about the 14th floor, I would say he was one of the pioneers of the ultra-low building jump!

I will be happy to contribute any worthwhile articles and/or picture to BASELINE. For now, here's a suggestion: Ask readers to contribute their best "almost-got-caught" stories or other funny BASE jump stories.



MY FIRST JUMP!

Publish one each issue. Adventure is best illustrated by example!

Walt Appel  
Johnson City, N.Y.

*BASELINE* prints an "almost-got-caught story" each issue under the "Close Encounters of the Unkind" section of *BASE* Bits, and a humorous story in the "BASELINE Update" section. Readers are encouraged to send material for either category—or both!

*Appel is a professional writer from New York who made his first BASE jump this year at Bridge Day.*  
—Eds.

**FitzSimons Did It!**

I would like to thank all the staff and jumpmasters at Bridge Day for their assistance and attention. I feel like a whole new world of adventure and companionship has been opened up to me. Everyone at Bridge Day was just great.

I am enclosing a follow-up article. Hope

you like it.  
Once again, many thanks! I had a great time!

Bill FitzSimons  
Flint Hill, Va.

*FitzSimons' article, "I Did It! I Did It!" appears in this issue.*  
—Eds.

**Fatal Inspection**

For over a year now, and especially at this year's Bridge Day, I have heard quite a few different opinions expressed on the Steve Gyrsting fatality regarding his pilot chute problem. As the jumpmaster at the time of the fatal jump, and as the FAA Master Rigger who inspected Gyrsting's equipment afterward for the National Park Service, I think it is time I expressed my opinion.

When Gyrsting made his fatal jump, the only fact known for sure was that his pilot chute did not inflate. The plastic handle on the top of the pilot chute *could* have caught in

the opening in the bottom, or the narrow bridle *could* have wrapped around it, or there might be yet another problem lurking out there that affects skydiving-type pilot chutes that we do not even suspect yet.

However, as my gear inspection report to the NPS stated, the cause of the pilot chute problem will always remain inconclusive due to the fact that the pilot chute was cut off by the rescue personnel, or by abrasion with the rocks in the river, and not recovered.

Instead of continuing to argue about the cause, we should learn from this accident and eliminate the problem at its source: skydiving pilot chutes and bridle lines were not designed or intended for BASE jumping.

If you are not using at least a 42-inch diameter properly-made BASE

pilot chute for short- to medium-delay BASE jumps, you had better be using a direct bag! Let us put Gyrsting's unfortunate accident to rest and find something else to argue about.

Larry Riddle, BASE 224  
Louisville, Ky.

*Riddle, the Master Rigger who inspected Gyrsting's gear for the National Park Service, and also assisted BASELINE in its investigation of the fatality, confirms what was stated in Gyrsting's fatality report in the Christmas 1987 issue of BASELINE: "There is simply no substantial evidence to suggest that the short plastic knob atop the pilot chute contributed in any way to this fatality."*

*More information regarding the Gyrsting fatality can be found in the editorial "Once is Enough" (No. 7, p. 20), and the special report "The Board's Report: What did it say and what did it mean?" (No. 10, p. 14).*  
—Eds.

**BASE In Britain**

I just returned from a week of R&R in England where I stayed with Rick Shillabeer and Mike McCarthy (British BASE #1). Mike had just returned from Italy where he jumped the 170-foot Leaning Tower of Pisa.

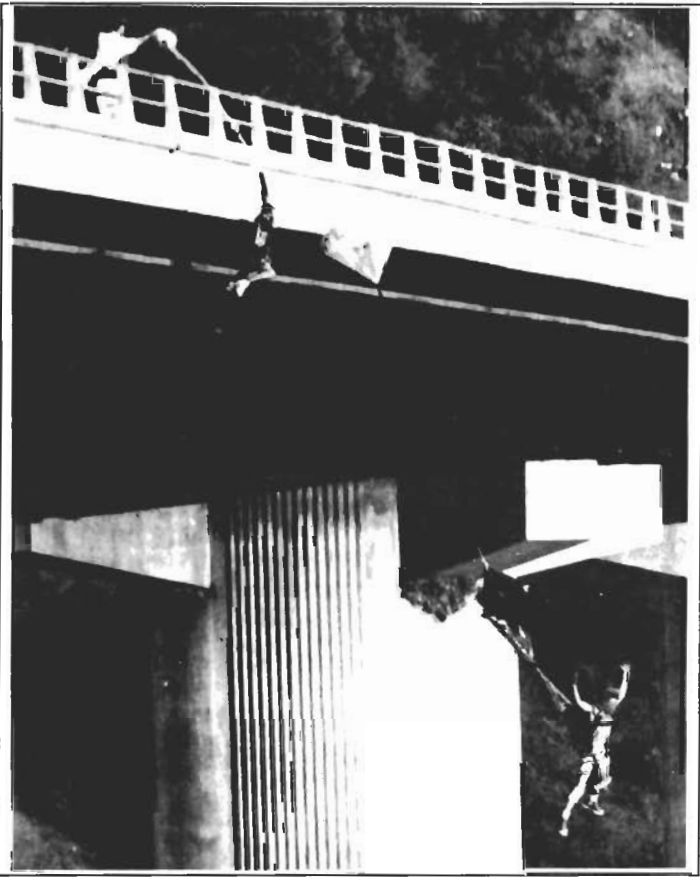
We made two jumps here in England. The first was from a residential tower block (260 feet), where we exited over the River Thames and then did a sharp turn inland to touch down on a large grassy area. It was the first time it had been jumped, and the great thing about it is that we had the key to the roof!

The second jump was from an electrical pylon which supports high voltage cables crossing a river. It is over 600 feet high and has two jump platforms, the first at 345 feet where a friend and I static lined off the gantry. We landed in a nice plowed field and watched the other three jumpers do three-second delays from the top.

I made both jumps using a velcro-closed BASE rig, a Fury main canopy and a 52-inch pilot chute which another jumper held until line stretch. It's a system we call "buddying." The canopy was packed using the refined nose-down trash pack and had perfect on-heading openings with full inflation in 60 feet.

That's news from the U.K., I hope to come to the U.S. next summer.

Andy Callender  
Cyprus



Parental guidance, or child abuse? Nine-year-old Casey Hoover follows his father (John Hoover, BASE 95) off the 175-foot Stevens Bar Bridge. Casey's direct bag is held by his grandmother, Claudine Hoover. The three-generation BASE jump drew widespread controversy in the parachuting community.



Although the "buddy system" of deployment usually ensures a fast opening, it is probably less reliable than the more popular direct-bag method. (See Mark Hewitt's article "Romancing the Rope" in BASELINE Vol. 2, Issue 1.) —Eds.

### Bridge Day Thanks

Now that my adrenalin is back down, I'd like to thank everyone connected with the 1988 Bridge Day at New River Gorge.

I was probably as terrified of making a fool out of myself (if not a flat mess) in front of all you experienced BASE jumpers as I was of actually making my first BASE jump.

I had this preconceived notion that the experienced people were probably too cool to help out the beginners. This simply wasn't the case.

The Staff at Bridge Day was helpful and patient with everyone's questions. And they must hear the same stupid questions over and over. But each Staffer politely said "no question is stupid" and took the time to explain everything thoroughly, as many times as some of us idiots needed. This kind of attitude is definitely the right way to introduce newcomers to the sport.

I'd also like to extend a special thank you to Nick DiGiovanni (the Eddie Haskell of BASE jumping) for his attention and patience. Yes, Nick, believe it or not, you do give respectability to this sport! (And you looked good on TV, dude!) Thanks for toning down the terror in me.

It's true that a lot of people get their start in BASE jumping at Bridge Day because of the perfect opportunity. And that opportunity exists for us due to the hard work done by Jean Boenish and the rest of the Staff. It's probably a pretty thankless job for the most part, but I think I can speak for most people saying it's greatly appreciated.

Those of you who haven't sent your note of support to the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce can still do it. And why don't you include one of those corny pictures of yourselves having a blast; I now you all ordered some!!

Janet Kelly  
Reading, Pa

The Fayette County Chamber of Commerce has a new address: 310 Oyer Ave., Oak Hill, W.Va., 25901-2641. Letters in support of Bridge Day in general and BASE jumping in specific should be addressed to Doug Maddy.

Janet Kelly is the jumper who was featured recently on ABC's *Incredible Sunday* making her first BASE jump from the New River Gorge Bridge. —Eds.

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***"I had this preconceived notion that the experienced people were probably too cool to help out the beginners. This simply wasn't the case."***

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### Attitude Adjustment

I've just finished writing to Jean to let her know what a success I thought Bridge Day '88 turned out to be; now it's BASELINE's turn.

I had a great time this year! What I can't get over is the difference in attitudes toward BASE up here in Ontario. When Mik Konefal and I first went to the bridge in 1984, we were branded as fools or assholes, depending on who was speaking. This year we closed the drop zone so everyone could come down! Those who wouldn't or couldn't jump it just came along to watch and have fun. What a change from four years ago!

One story I'm pleased to report: Frank Arkos, who has run the Coldwater Parachute School for the last 10 years, made his first jump in two years off the bridge. It was his third-ever square jump.

Finally, a question. Do you have any idea whether a canopy is more prone to malfunction (slider down) if free packed as opposed to deployed from a bag? It makes sense to me that a free-packed canopy would be much more likely to have a line over than a bagged one, but I can't recall anything specific being said on it.

Things have been pretty quiet up here this summer, but I'm sure that as the skydiving season winds down, thoughts will once again turn to elevators and stairways.

Rob "Skypuppy" Price  
Ontario, Canada

Although a bag generally provides the cleanest-possible deployment for square parachutes, there are no statistics which would indicate that there have been more line overs from free-packed canopies as opposed to bag-deployed ones. Even if there were, the validity of those statistics would be of questionable value: for example, they could indi-

cate that more people are free packing, or that those who do pack more sloppily!

The important point regarding line-over malfunctions is that no packing method is immune: deployment problems (including line-over malfunctions, off-heading openings, line twists and a variety of others) have been documented from bagged, free-packed and tail-pocket deployment methods. It seems that a combination of meticulous packing and good body position, not some variation in deployment method, is the best prevention of line-over malfunctions. —Eds.



**Over the Edge!** That was the title that the Austin *American-Statesman* gave this spectacular shot when they published it a few years ago. In submitting the photograph to BASELINE, Walt Appel (who now resides in New York) commented: "I noticed the cool no helmet, no shoes and, (unfortunately), no rig approach chosen by the jumper. Since we have exiting from about the 14th floor, I would say he was one of the pioneers of the ultra-low building jump!"

## The Bridge Day Bandit Blues

I have heard from friends in the Fayetteville area that since Bridge Day 1988 there have been a number of bandit jumps from the New River Gorge Bridge. The local media has published some negative editorials about these jumpers taking advantage of what we have been allowed to do legally on Bridge Day.

This annual sanctioned event has given us an unofficial convention where, as a group, we can meet and exchange ideas on equipment and techniques. Nowhere else in the world can we do this and learn so much from the 600-plus jumps made at Bridge Day under the organization of all the staff that work so hard to put this event together.

I am not opposed to bandit jumping *per se*, but to do so at the bridge around Bridge Day will cause this great event to be taken away by the local and state government. As a group we should try to protect this event by doing our bandit jumps elsewhere. As Jean said, "This is the jewel of BASE." Why should we

throw it away with a few bandit jumps?

Maybe through arrangements with the USB A and the local authorities, those caught jumping the bridge could be banned from further Bridge Day events. I hope those who have, or are planning, to bandit jump the bridge around Bridge Day will think about what we all have to lose by their selfish actions.

As John Hoover said, "An 876-foot bridge is a terrible thing to waste." Let's not waste it! See 'ya Bridge Day '89 ... hopefully.

Reggie Smith  
W. Monroe, La.

*Because the jumping portion of Bridge Day is not officially regulated, no one can prevent bandit jumpers who are caught from attending future Bridge Days. However, these jumpers will undoubtedly shut down authorized jumping for everyone else, sooner or later.*

—Eds.

'88 got the best of him. So anyway, I made the jump three or four months later with someone else and, as a result, subscribed to BASELINE and ordered a BASE pilot chute and Zoo toggles. I am also checking into a BASE rig and teresh.

By the way, that tower leap was my very first BASE jump! A nightmare, a dream, a success and a desire to do a lot more in the future!

Now that I've read BASELINE, I realize some major screw ups I made: there was only a small clearing in the swamp in-which to land, we had no ground crew and the wind was blowing directly down the guy wire at 25 mph! Fortunately everything worked out fine, except for the alligator I startled; I never realized I could run so fast!

Also, a way that you could improve your disclaimer ("Any time a person leaves the ground, he is risking the threat of injury or even death...") would be to change the word "ground" to "womb," because the greatest cause of death is life itself! (Ever seen a rock die?) Helen Keller seems to have summed it all up when she said: "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

Also, I know things in Texas are supposed to be bigger, but I didn't know they grew smaller, too. I'm referring to the 1900-foot tower that Alan Hetherington is jumping (No. 8, p. 20), and the 1750-foot tower which he is jumping on the cover of No. 10. Aren't they the same tower? Could this be a new type of elevator where the entire tower goes up and down? Just kidding.

But speaking of elevators, I recently climbed and jumped a 1900-foot tower in northwest Florida, and noticed that the 220-volt relays for the elevator were jammed closed with screwdrivers and such. This procedure can activate the elevator, but it bypasses every safeguard built in and can seriously damage the control panel, relays, motor, cable and last but not least the passenger. (Just think of the monetary cost of the damages, and what would happen if you were caught!)

When the elevator car reaches the top of the tower, the bypassed safety switch fails to stop the motor, and it keeps pulling until something gives. So be careful about using elevators!

Tracy Walker  
Memphis, Tenn.

## "Going Up?"

First of all, let me state that I think BASE jumping is dangerous, risky, immature and sometimes insane. Also, I can't wait to make my next one!

I enjoy BASELINE immensely and I have learned a lot, like:

Just say no to drugs. (#10, p. 18);

Just say yes to drogues. (#7, p. 20); and

Never use "J.D. Walker" as an alias in Yosemite. (#5, p. 24).

I met Bill Legg last year and found that we had used the same reconnaissance tactics, unbeknownst to each other, at a 2,000-foot tower under construction in Louisiana. We were supposed to talk a little more the next morning, but I guess Mardi Gras



Brad "Banzai" Buffington pivots past the "point of no return" as he executes a BASE launch from a 2,000-foot antenna tower in southern Missouri. Buffington calls this shot: "Committed!" Photo by Jamie Paul.

The towers pictured in Issues No. 8 and 10 are indeed the same one. The antenna is 1,909 feet high. However, Hetherington is exiting from the highest platform, at the 1,750-foot level. We regret the inconsistency.

More information about safely scouting, planning and executing antenna jumps is contained in the article "Antenna Jumping for Beginners." (No. 9, p. 17). —Eds.

### Stressed Out

Quickly allow me a quick line to say "thank you" for your interview/article on myself. It is indeed flattering to be recognized by your peers, even if you don't always agree with them!

On that note, allow me the fair, equal time to reply to your totally bogus conclusion to my accident report, last issue. I have stated that several times, you print or state in your articles (especially the accident reports), erroneous or uninformed ideas, remedies and concluding remarks. Your Troy Fink report was stupid, and Manny Gonzales' report bordered on sickening.

In both cases, you were not at either scene, and of course didn't get your information from the jumpers. In my case, unlike Troy or Manny, I choose to set the record straight, provided you have the guts to be criticized in your magazine.

Overall, your accident description was accurate — I concur that, and rightly so. However, your "conclusion," as in other cases, is so full of shit that it enraged me.

I don't mind the "bozo" label. I use it myself quite regularly, as you will see. Like when a jumper streamers 875 feet without using his tersh, on when a jumper free falls a 285-foot tower at night with a Strato Flyer for the first time.

P.S. — I chose to stay unnamed as I was still under investigation for trespass at that time. Obviously, the writer has never been in this situation before, or he wouldn't be so quick to judge the accident, as you do so smugly.

I will use quotation marks to outline your quotes, and then continue with the way it was — which you obviously don't know, or more likely, chose to inject your arm chair BASE jumper opinions in a way that I find asinine, and very insulting.

In the conclusion, "the jumper's own admission that he didn't bother to check his parachute until final approach," is really stupid. On a 375-foot free fall, you're on final when you get open — I did not check my 'chute instantly, but was worried about my position to my only landing area, a tiny parking lot to my left.

The time from opening to touch down, on a normal jump this high is only seconds — not two minutes as skydivers have. My 'chute check was delayed two to three seconds, the time to realize something was wrong.

It is wrong, indeed ludicrous, for you to judge me for acting "hastily" when I checked my canopy, "by firing the line mod," in "only

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***"Your Troy Fink report was stupid, and Manny Gonzales' report bordered on sickening. Your 'conclusions,' as in other cases, were so full of shit that it enraged me. Jesus, how idiotic can you be!? I seriously suggest that you drop that bull shit conclusion section altogether."***

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—J.D. Walker

a possible line entanglement." The time from canopy frap is six to eight seconds, not really enough time "to take the time to analyze the canopy's condition." I looked, I saw a line over (appeared to me), and I fired the mod. I would have bounced long before I would have made your "proper analysis of the problem." Only a real jerk can second guess my decision at that moment in time — a real big jerk.

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***"I was at 150 to 200 feet, with a malfunction, screaming to the pavement. What would you do in that situation — how much time did I have under three to four spinning cells to analyze? Surely, our God-Editor of BASE should be able to tell us all — three, four, five seconds?! Huh?! What!?"***

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I was at 150 to 200 feet, with a malfunction, screaming to the pavement. What would you do in that situation — how much time did I have under three to four spinning cells to analyze? Surely, our God-Editor of BASE

should be able to tell us all — three, four, five seconds?! Huh?! What!?

Although I stated that the mod caused the spin to worsen, that is only hindsight. I saw a line over, or what appeared to be one, and took action. It's real easy to second guess the proper assessment now. But you're a jerk to judge my assessment of the problem in a past-now situation, and you know it.

You then go on to state that "the important factor any jumper should consider before corrective action is whether or not the parachute can be landed safely." How idiotic can you be!? Jesus, if I could have landed it, I would have. I was in straight and level flight only with opposite braking, and even then I would have hit the building across the street

provided I cleared the jungles of power lines up both sides of the street, also providing you can land in three to four cells without busting your ass!

I did state that if I could have flown straight I might have landed easier — probably just pounded the asphalt rather than hammering it. But since you weren't there (couldn't tell by your conclusion,

though), you obviously don't know that the only landing area was a tiny parking lot to my left — which I made.

So, I believe that you should rewrite the last paragraph to read: "All these things point to pure theory and conjecture by the editors. We really tried, but we weren't there! From the editors' failure to realize the true time span and reaction time of a low-altitude function, and the need for 'hasty' reaction, to the idea that we assume you will always correctly identify the type of function in three to four seconds, to our arm chair analysis of the 'proper action' to be taken, 'the bottom line is, this editor 'is a bozo!' "

I suggest you start showing people in accidents, and otherwise reporting about, some respect they deserve.

As a business man, and a half-smart one, that, I know that you "should not bite the hand that feeds you!" I seriously suggest that you drop that bull shit conclusion section, altogether, or make a serious attitude change. "Shit happens" is very true in this sport, but that section does nothing to help matters.

Thank you for your guts to print this.

Respectfully,

J.D. Walker, BASE  
Chandler, Arizona

Respectfully??

—Ed



Sherman Gillogy begins to extract his canopy and lines as he leaps from a 170-foot-high bridge during a direct-bag jump. Photo by Mike Allen.



# The Instructors' Responsibility

by Steve Morrell, BASE 175

*"In our sport, any BASE jumper of even moderate experience should consider himself an 'instructor' and not take that responsibility lightly."*

When a person decides that he wants to try skydiving, he usually goes to a parachute center where he is put in touch with a qualified instructor, run through a detailed first-jump course according to a syllabus, and well supervised until he has at least 20 to 25 jumps. This is, most will agree, the way it should be, and is largely responsible for the outstanding safety record of the sport.

BASE jumping, however, is quite different. Due to the "clandestine" nature of our sport, information is hard to come by, and there is no formal instruction available. SKYDIVING Magazine is the only major skydiving publication that publishes information on "how to BASE," since the USPA refuses to accept reality. (Oddly enough, many BASE fatalities and injuries involve USPA members making some of their first fixed-object leaps, and they screw up the basics only because they "didn't know" about slider down, line releases, the importance of big pilot chutes, etc., etc. Truly a sad disservice to their membership!)

Because information is limited, and there is no formal instruction, most BASE jumpers' training is grossly inadequate. Many are given their "first jump course" on the way to the object, and often from persons that have limited experience themselves in the fixed-object discipline. The result of this is that many jumpers are needlessly injured or killed, people are arrested, and good BASE sites are ruined.

In our sport, any BASE jumper of even moderate experience should consider himself an "instructor" and not take that responsibility lightly.

So let's say that you are at your local drop zone, and someone comes up and says he heard you BASE jump, and that he would like to make one. The first thing you need to do is evaluate his experience level. How many jumps does he have? Is his accuracy any good? How good? Does he appear "heads up" and aware? Needless to say, all of these

will be very subjective decisions on your part.

If you refuse to lend your help, the prospective jumper may well find someone else who will teach him, or even worse, may just go do it on his own without any training or help at all. So, if you don't think the jumper is ready, be positive and recommend how to prepare and train.

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*"Due to the 'clandestine' nature of our sport, information is hard to come by, and there is no formal instruction available."*

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You may want to recommend some balloon or helicopter hover exits in order to practice going into dead air. Accuracy practice may also be needed, and unless the prospective student claims to be getting 100 percent on-heading openings, you may want to recommend experimenting with new pack jobs until consistently-good openings can be achieved.

If the student does seem to have his act together, plan to make a jump with him and try to steer him toward an easy object for his first BASE jump. This means a site with a good landing area and as much altitude as possible. Also try and choose one with a low "bust factor."

Bridges are most often the best objects for new BASE jumpers, as they can usually be done in daylight, the bust factors are lower, and an off-heading opening isn't as serious. Try to pick an object that you have done before and are familiar with. Plan the jump for dawn, when the winds are low and there is

less of a chance of being seen.

For the initial training, stick to the object to be jumped. Stress stability! This is the one thing most commonly screwed up by new BASE jumpers. If your student is an experienced skydiver, he'll probably say, "yeah, no problem," but anyone who has ever been to Bridge Day has seen skygod after skygod flip over onto their backs.

Take the jumper to a swimming pool and practice feet-first, head-high entries. The quickest way to get hurt on a BASE jump is with a malfunction, and opening unstable greatly increases those odds. Practice running starts and standing starts, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each. If you're looking to jump a cliff with lots of loose rock or shale around the exit point, a running start may not be a good idea.

Next you should discuss malfunctions. I personally believe that on any jump above 500 feet, the reserve option exists. Over the



**BASELINE BASE Jumping Tip #47:** When performing a "rock drop test" to determine the height of a building, use an appropriate-sized rock!

last five-and-a-half years of BASE jumping, I have pulled my reserve handle three times on BASE jumps (and hence my nickname, "Dead Steve"). Two of those times were high-speed malfunctions on free falls from a 700-foot bridge, and the other was a cutaway from a spinning malfunction after a nine-second delay off an 1800-foot cliff. In each case my reserve opened below 100 feet AGL, but the important thing is that it did open.

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***"Most skydivers think of any BASE jump as a 'one chute show,' and it's important to stress to an aspiring BASE jumper that this is not the case."***

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Most skydivers think of any BASE jump as a "one chute show," and it's important to stress to an aspiring BASE jumper that this is not the case. Just like skydiving, however, you need to be aware of the basics: where you are, how long you've been falling, and how long until impact. *[It might also be a good idea to discuss the pros and cons of round versus square reserves as they apply to specific sites, under what circumstances a square reserve should be packed slider-down, and the merits of a chest-mounted tertiary reserve. —Eds.]*

The most common BASE malfunction is the line-over on slider-down jumps. For this mode of jumping, the steering lines should be routed outside the slider grommets and riser keeper rings. This way, in case of a line-over involving the steering line, the toggle can be released and the malfunction will usually clear.

There are all types of ways to do this but I won't go into detail here. Suffice to say that if your student will be making a slider-down jump and you let him do it with his steering lines through his slider, you shouldn't be instructing anyone, and are subjecting him to risk he doesn't need. *[Editors' Note: Using the line-release modification without certain types of toggles keepers will result in a main parachute with significantly changed flight characteristics. If the jumper is not accustomed to this mode of flying his square, it may well cause him to miss the landing area and/or misjudge his flare. The student who wants to use the free-line brake mod should ideally first practice free-line flying at the drop zone. Additionally, several people are independently researching toggle keepers for use in conjunction with the free-line mod. Although none have yet been perfected to where they are practical for use, an ideal keeper would allow normal flight characteristics if the re-*

*lease is not activated. BASELINE will publish periodic updates on these people's progress. —Eds.]*

Along the lines of slider-down openings, you should go over the reasons as to why or why not. This is a hotly-debated issue, but in my opinion the slider should be left down on freefall jumps of less than four seconds and under 1,000 feet.

An important note to emphasize here is the extra stress put on the canopy by slider-down openings. The chance of a blown

seam is a lot higher, and a good canopy check is important. Although I know of no hard data in this area, I did see a friend's new square (used exclusively for BASE) blow up on the 20th jump (all slider-down openings).

If your student's parachute is several years old and/or has a lot of jumps on it, have a rigger look over it before the planned jump.

The bottom line on malfunctions, line-overs, blown seams, off-heading openings, or any type of a problem on a BASE jump is awareness. The reaction time available on most BASE jumps is significantly less than what we are used to on skydives. For example, a skydiver at terminal velocity at 2500 feet has 13 seconds to impact. With three seconds for his main to open and two seconds for a reserve to open (after activation), he has eight seconds to figure out what's wrong and initiate his reserve sequence.

A BASE jumper leaving a 700-foot bridge, on the other hand, has seven-and-a-half seconds to impact. If he does a two-second delay and his main takes two seconds to open (slider down with a big pilot chute), and his reserve takes an additional two-and-a-half seconds to open (since he's subterminal), that leaves only one second to react! For any BASE jump, these basic calculations should be made beforehand, so that the jumper will know where he stands and can act appropriately and in a timely fashion in case of a malfunction situation. Go over and stress this point with your student!

Next comes the jump itself. Assuming your student exits stable and opens on heading, the jump is still only half over: good canopy control is essential to a safe dive! Explain that most objects have tricky landing



A pool is a good place to practice head-high, feet-first BASE exits, as demonstrated by 3-year-old Rachel Van Hoven.

areas: they are usually small, rocky or concrete. Other factors, such as poor visibility at night, squirrely winds, turbulence and short setup times can make a difficult landing even more complex.

Skydivers are used to having several minutes to set up for a large drop zone. Most BASE jumpers have between 10 and 30 seconds from opening to touchdown in the tightest of DZs.

Eddies around buildings or cliffs are notoriously dangerous, and no-wind, gusty-wind and downwind landings are frequent. Stress using half-brakes for gusty or turbulent conditions. Accuracy can be practiced on skydives at the drop zone. If your student's canopy control isn't good there, it isn't likely to be any better on a BASE jump.

The next thing you should discuss with your prospective BASE jumper is gear. Slider up, or slider down? Mesh slider? Pilot chute size? Don't let your student make a jump

below 1,000 feet (or any jump with less than a four-second freefall delay) with his skydiving pilot chute! Borrow or buy a proper BASE pilot chute. This is one of the single most important things you can do to assure him of a safe jump.

The actual size is debatable. Personally, I use a 54-inch for free falls below 350 feet, and a 48-inch for free falls above 350. If the

object is very high (1500 feet or higher), normal skydiving gear and packing techniques will "usually" be good. Stress that excessively-long de-

lays should not be done with a big pilot chute. Two seconds for a 54-inch and four seconds for a 48-inch is usually about the maximum. Longer delays can result in damage to the top skin of the parachute.

Static-line techniques should also be discussed, so that your student will have a working knowledge of how they are used and when they are appropriate. For static-line gear setups, recommend that a rigger be present. Several BASE

jumpers that were experienced skydivers have died from improperly rigged static lines. Most skydivers are not used to setting up a rig for a static line, and it is extremely easy to do this wrong!

Certain BASE sites are better suited for rounds than squares. Discuss the characteristics of such sites, and when each type of parachute is appropriate.

The final area of gear that should be discussed with your prospective student is the wearing of protective "body armor," such as a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads, etc. Lots of skydivers don't wear helmets while skydiving at the drop zone (or wear "Frappe Hats," which offer no collision protection at all), and it is admittedly a personal decision and an individual

choice.

However, it is probably a good idea to encourage your student to wear at least a helmet for his first few BASE jumps, even if he doesn't intend to do so later. As the "Instructor," you are trying to remove as much risk from your student's first jump as possible, and encouraging him to wear a helmet just makes sense.

As for me, I wear hard plastic skateboard knee plates and elbow guards in addition to a helmet on most BASE jumps, and they've saved me from serious injury more than once. A helmet, at the very least, is a good idea whenever an object-strike is possible.

An injury can complicate a BASE jump tremendously. I cracked a rib and sprained my foot on a cliff jump once, and then had to walk eight miles in steep terrain, lugging most of my gear with me. Injuries frequently lead to arrest by slowing your getaway and attracting attention.

This brings up the next point: the getaway. The most likely person to mess up and get a group of BASE jumper arrested is usually the least experienced. By no means do I want to encourage anyone to break the law, but many BASE jumps fall into a grey area legally. If you're caught or someone is injured, you can bet the police will try to charge you with something. It is important to stress this point to your student.

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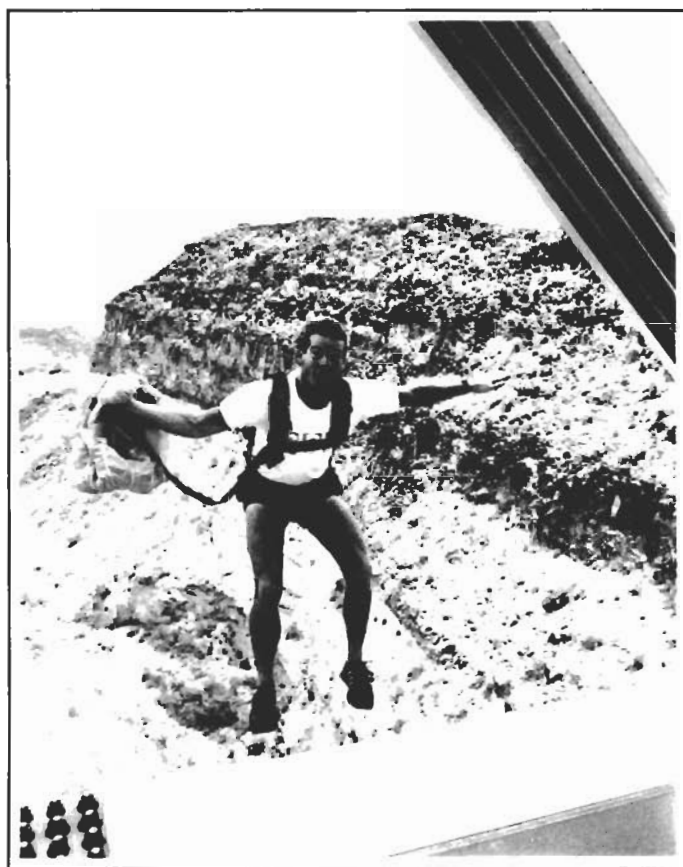
***"Almost every experienced BASE jumper I know has been arrested at least once."***

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An error in this area is usually expensive. My last "BASE bust" cost me \$8,000 and 15 months of probation as part of a plea bargain to get the charges dropped. Almost every experienced BASE jumper I know has been arrested at least once. Avoiding this means good planning, and it should start well before the jump.

Encourage your student to be part of your ground crew for your next BASE jump, so that he can see what's involved. Make sure he knows where the security guards are, when they change shifts, and what type of alarms and video cameras are around. If that last door to the roof has an alarm on it, make sure your students has all his gear on and is mentally prepared for the jump before he opens the door.



Mark Hewitt, BASE 46, performs a "floater exit" from an Arizona bridge. Photo by Todd Shoebottom

Know what routes to the landing area the police will take if they are called, and have your ground crew keep a sharp watch on those streets. Two-way radios are a big help on any type of BASE operation. As John Owens once told me in Yosemite, "It's not paranoia when they're out to get you!"

Stress to your student the value of a good experienced ground crew. Having a BASE jumper in the ground crew is optimum, but always try to at least have a skydiver. Make sure they know what to say if questioned, and what to do in the event of an injury or a fatality. Make sure your student knows what to do, also.

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***"As John Owens once told me in Yosemite, 'It's not paranoia when they're out to get you!'"***

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Each group has to make their own decisions on this, but I recommend that if someone is injured, give assistance, hide the gear and have a made-up story ready for when the cops arrive (he fell climbing, etc.).

If someone is killed, leave the scene immediately and then call the authorities anonymously. This may sound cold, but standing around and getting arrested is not going to bring your friend back — period! If the jump was illegal you might be charged with "accessory to manslaughter," and that is very serious.

When you make the phone call, you don't need to identify yourself as a jumper; just go to a pay phone, call 9-1-1, state that you saw someone die while jumping off a tall object, give the location, and then hang up. If the authorities or the press get any inkling that you were a jumper, the media will go wild with stories of skydivers "leaving their comrades to die in the streets."

The fatality will generate enough bad press by itself: you don't need to worsen the situation. *[Editors' Note: Following this advice may have yet other negative effects. For example, a whuffo may report to the police and media that he saw more than one parachute, and the story will hit the press regardless. Furthermore, if the police are tipped off this way and finally catch up with the jumpers, a host of other legal charges may then be filed.]*

The bottom line is not getting arrested is planning. Imagine every possible "what if ..." you can think of, and make sure you, your stu-

dent and the ground crew know what to do. And after the jump, give your student a positive, constructive critique on how he performed in every aspect of the dive.

The last point you should cover is a little more of a philosophical one. Try to make your student a responsible BASE jumper. Stress the importance of not endangering anyone else, not damaging property, littering, or leaving graffiti behind (as skydivers are sometimes prone to doing). Encourage him to make his jumps low profile. Don't attract attention and think twice before inviting the media. Many good jump sites have been ruined by the increased surveillance and security that follows most arrests or media coverage.

Encourage your student to contact local-area BASE jumpers before trying a new object. They may have some good information on the object that will help keep him out of jail or the hospital. And after your student's first jump, be sure to discuss the idiosyncrasies of the other three categories of objects, in case he decides to jump them on his own at some point in the future when you're not around to help him plan. Also encourage him to keep in touch on any future jumps he wants to make, so you can offer advice and assistance.

Most of all, remember that when you teach someone how to BASE jump, your first responsibility is for their safety. When anyone gets hurt in our sport, it impacts us all in the long run. So take the responsibility seriously and spend the time to see that the new BASE jumpers gets detailed, thorough training and quality supervision.

*About The Author: Foreign correspondent "Dead Steve" Morrell, BASE 175, is an Air Force officer currently stationed in Saudia Arabia for 18 months. A longtime skydiver and veteran of over 60 BASE jumps, Morrell is also a frequent contributor to BASELINE; more of his articles will appear in future issues.*



George Roso gets line stretch mere feet above San Pedro Harbor after performing a "rodeo style" static-line jump with Alan Hetherington. Photo by Hilary Moules.

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# Canoeing and the Absurdity of Risk

by S. Peter Lewis

*“Risk translates to just one word: fun. But why?”*

**R**isk. Ah, such a sweet word. For those of us who feel compelled to spend our lives clinging to thousand-foot faces, screaming over waterfalls in little plastic boats, jumping off cliffs with garbage bags or tromping through steaming jungles in search of feuding natives, risk translates to just one word: fun. But why?

Why don't these things scare us enough to not do them? Is it hereditary? Something in our genes? Something our parents handed down to us? Of course not. Why, the closest my father will ever get to a cliff is when he takes a leak off the back porch. Is it psychological? Physiological? Who knows.

One day, while we were skateboarding halfway up the slabs on Whitehorse Ledge, a friend of mine who was watching that knows a lot about this stuff told me about a portion of the brain called the limbic lobe. The limbic lobe is responsible for making us feel anxious about certain things; sort of a self-preservation gland. “As far as I can see,” he said, shaking his head, “you guys don't have any limbic lobes.”

Just think of your average white collar guy, mister eight-to-five. Here's his idea of risk: “You know Irv, we've been having lunch here every day for almost six years, and I always get soup.” He pauses, takes a deep breath, and then blurts out, “I think I might just go for the pastrami today.”

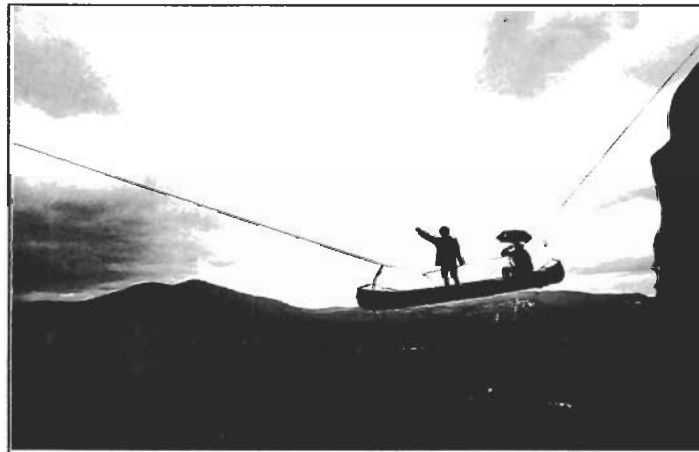
Webster's defines risk thus: “Ridiculously unreasonable exposure to danger.” If you analyze it, there seem to be several distinct categories of risk. They are, in ascending order:

1. You risk embarrassing yourself.
2. You risk your reputation/dignity.
3. You risk your money.
4. You risk someone else's money.
5. You risk your life and limb.

And finally there is that gonzo, somewhat hazy category labeled simply: “risking it all.” In this last group are: dog-cat-dog

stockbrokers, Hollywood stuntmen, politicians, fire eaters, BASE jumpers, night watchmen at nuke plants, short and wimpy inner-city high school teachers, and anyone who rides the New York subway because, according to them, “at least it doesn't rain in there.”

As children, we were innocently capable of risking just about anything. Remember the phrase, “I dare ya”? How many of us have jumped out of second story windows, stuck our fingers in light sockets, eaten worms, climbed trees during lightning storms,



thrown snowballs at the principal, snuck dad's car out late at night or chain-smoked cigarettes in a closet? Sure, these things were childish, but don't forget, we were children when we did them. And this brings us to the

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*“Boys, the world is full of idiots, and it's my job to protect them from themselves,” said the cop, pacing back and forth.”*

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biggest risk of all, the one thing adults are most afraid of — acting like children.

Well not me, I haven't grown up, and I never will. The rules have changed: I don't get off on spit balls and whoopee cushions as much as I used to, but that wonderful, child-like urge to play has never waned.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, when I

was just a little boy (August 1986), I came up with a great idea for an adventure. I got my friend Davey to come over, and he called up Mrs. Brewer and asked if Jeff could come out and play. (I would have called personally, but Jeff's mom was still mad at me for what I did to the cat they used to have.)

Davey and I filled our knapsacks with all the stuff we'd need, then went over and sort of borrowed this other kid's canoe. (If he'd caught us sneakin' off with it, we certainly would have asked him.) Sweating, we dragged the canoe through the woods until

we got it to the edge of the cliff, where Jeff, a whiz at figuring out things, immediately set himself to the task of rigging the ropes.

It worked great, you should have seen us. Just like Washington crossing the Delaware, except without the water or the white wigs. Four hundred feet off the ground, in a canoe. Three little kids, laughing and pushing, rocking the boat and spittin' over the side (too bad none of us had to go to the bathroom). And just when it looked like rain, Jeff pulled out an

orange umbrella and we all laughed some more. After a short while, three or four hours, we got bored and started to pull ourselves to “shore.”

Then the cops showed up. “You know, boys, that little trip of yours just cost your daddies 250 bucks.” As usual, when in the face of authority, I was terrified.

“He looks fat,” Davey whispered, “I bet we can ditch 'im.”

“I bet we can ditch 'im.”

Jeff giggled. “Nah, let's give him a ride and see if he'll wet his drawers.”

“But m-m-mister,” I stammered. “It's really not too dangerous, ... um ... we got ropes and all,” I said, pointing.

“Yah I see the rope boys. Now how 'bout if you come over here and tell me your names.”

Sweating, I swallowed hard and looked at Jeff and Davey. They looked calm and cool — bored even. “What's your name,

son?"

"My name's John, John Smith," Jeff replied without so much as a stutter.

"And yours?" He pointed at Davey.

Always creative with these things, Davey just stared him straight in the eye and said with conviction, "Orville M. Scheszinski, and the 'M' stands for Myron, and my daddy just happens to be the aid to Gov..."

"OK, OK that's enough, what about you?" He fixed his cruel eye on me (he had a patch over the other one, I swear it). Horrified, I just blurted out my real name, and felt faint. Davey and Jeff just shook their heads.

Fortunately, God was smiling on us that day. It turned out that the cop had a sense of humor after all and instead of a fine, all we got was a darn good tongue lashing. "Boys, the world is full of idiots," he said, pacing back and forth, "and it's my job to protect them from themselves. Now you all may know what you're doing, but we let you get away with this, and first thing you know, *everyone* will be trying it. Now just suppose somebody saw you guys doin' this today, so they come back tomorrow with some clothes-line and a bathtub, fall off and kill themselves. Now just whose fault do you think that would be, huh?"

"Theirs, of course," Davey said with a grin.

The cop wheeled around. "That's just the kind of back talk that's gonna get you boys jobs pickin' up trash in the park every weekend, do you understand me?" I elbowed Davey in the ribs and he started to giggle. "Why we'll have people comin' across this cliff in outhouses..."

He went on and on, but I wasn't listening anymore. He'd given me an idea. I'll come back someday with an outhouse. Care to join me? What's a matter — ya scared? Come on, I dare ya. I double dare ya! ■

**About the Author:** Peter Lewis is a freelance photographer, writer and lecturer specializing in outdoor adventure. He contributes to several national magazines and does calendar and advertising photography. Lewis is the photo editor of the New Hampshire Spirit, a regional magazine which deals with non-motorized outdoor sports. He also travels throughout the Northeast lecturing on outdoor photography.

Lewis has never BASE jumped. "I don't really want to," he told BASELINE, "but find me a bungee cord and it might be a different story."

"Canoeing and the Absurdity of Risk" was reprinted, with permission, from Rock and Ice magazine.

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# Bridge Day 1988

by Andy Calistrat, BASE 124

**M**ore than 300 jumpers from throughout the United States and as far away as Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain, Norway and Sweden made more than 645 BASE jumps Oct. 15 from the 876-foot high New River Gorge Bridge near Fayetteville, W. Va. The jumps took place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. as part of Fayette County's 10th annual Bridge Day celebration.

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***"There was great relief among the Bridge Day staff Friday afternoon when jumpers began pouring in with large pilot chutes, mesh sliders, flotation gear and, more so than ever before, tertiary reserves."***

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The day passed with few incidents and only minor injuries, and drew record crowds to enjoy the festivities. John Witt, chairman of the Bridge Day organizing committee, later commented that the event "was as smooth an operation as we've ever had. There were no serious accidents and people seemed to have a good time. I feel great about it." Similar sentiments were expressed by almost every regulating agency involved in Bridge Day, from the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce to the West Virginia state police.

## A "Pivotal" Year

This year's event was seen by many as being pivotal in light of Steven Gyrsting's fatal jump at Bridge Day '87. There was great relief among the Bridge Day staff Friday afternoon when jumpers began pouring in with large pilot chutes, mesh sliders, flotation gear and, more so than ever before, tertiary reserves.

Another major area of concern was relations with the local media. Gyrsting's fatality led to some very negative editorials, and the usual legislation being introduced before the

West Virginia legislature to ban parachuting during Bridge Day.

Fortunately, an early-Friday-morning press conference helped greatly to improve relations with local newspapers and TV and radio stations; Saturday's nearly-spotless safety record completed the job.

## The Jumps

As usual, jumpers were let onto the bridge around 9:30 a.m., about a half hour before the official opening of Bridge Day. Almost one-third of the jumpers strolling onto the bridge would be making their first BASE jumps. The scene was set with warm weather, gentle winds and one of the largest sandbar landing areas yet.

The day began with a flawless jump by John Mjoen, an experienced BASE jumper from Oslo, Norway. A steady stream soon followed, averaging one jump every 33 seconds for the entire six-hour period.

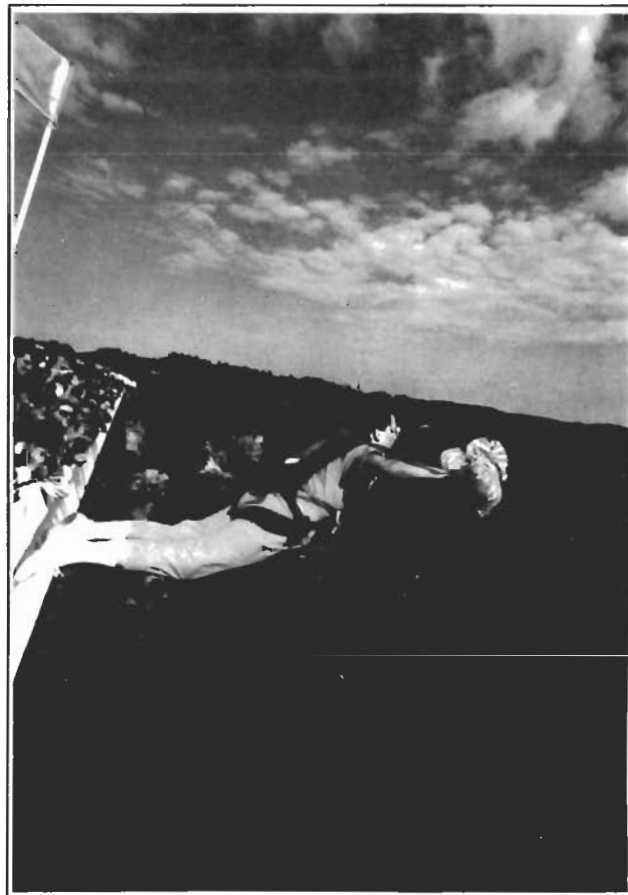
Most group exits were limited to two, although a handful of three-ways were launched. LeRoy Gallenstein and Mark Bailey, both from Kentucky, executed several two-ways, and were able again this year to fly together a momentary bi-plane before setting down for smooth landings on the sand bar.

A flawless tandem jump was performed by 48-year-old Harry Rooks of White House, Tenn., and passenger Kyle W. Bahl, 25, of Virginia Beach, Va. Rooks, an experienced skydiver, BASE jumper and tandem master, used a Strong system packed slider-up, and a hand-held standard 52-inch BASE pilot chute.

The pair made a good exit, and after a three-second stable delay, opened with a 120-degree left turn. Rooks quickly turned the canopy around and flew the pair to a soft landing on the rocky beach. The jump was the third tandem BASE on record, and the second-ever from the New River Gorge Bridge.

## Incidents & Accidents

Four jumpers were treated and released from the Plateau Medical Center in Oak Hill. Dean Hielden, Francine Shaw, Dave Kotowski and John B. Young received injuries ranging from bruises and sprains to minor



Jean Boenish, the organizer of Bridge Day and the United States BASE Association's treasurer, leaps from the New River Gorge Bridge during Bridge Day.



breaks, all from apparently landing on the rocky shoreline. Kotowski, the worst of the injuries, hit a large rock after performing a low hook turn to avoid hitting a spectator.

Several line-over malfunctions throughout the day cleared immediately upon opening, or shortly thereafter. Two, however, did not. In the first case, an unidentified jumper spiralled uninjured into the New River under his malfunctioned main. In the second case, 32-year-old Jeff Fazenbaker, of Laurel, Md., executed a successful canopy transfer onto his Phantom 26 round reserve, landing without incident in the water. Both jumpers were swiftly picked up by the waiting rescue boats.

John Winkler, of Akron, Ohio, experienced a still eerier incident: a main which sniveled until impact. Winkler, an experienced skydiver and veteran of several jumps from the bridge, had just installed a mesh slider on his Cruisite so he could pack it slider-up for BASE jumping. The slider, which Winkler later described as being "several inches smaller on each side than the one which comes with the parachute," may have held the line groups close enough together to where the canopy could not immediately inflate.

Winkler, who was wearing a chest-mounted tertiary reserve, deployed his conventional round skydiving reserve after several seconds. The canopy either did not have time to sufficiently inflate, or somehow entangled with the streamer main during inflation. Winkler hit the water in excess of 60 mph under partially-inflated main and reserve canopies, receiving no injuries from the impact. (Winkler's incident report is included in this issue.)

### Emphasis on Safety

Aside from the few incidents and injuries, the emphasis of Bridge Day this year was on safety. Holds were put on jumping whenever a train passed underneath the bridge, when a water rescue was taking place, or whenever three or more canopies were in the air at the same time.

Almost all jumpers used the minimum-recommended 42-inch pilot chute. Several slow inflations of homemade drogues brought to light yet another fact about pilot chutes: it is not only the diameter which is important, but the *proper construction*. Several of the homemade 42-inchers seemed to create less drag than skydiving 36-inch pilot chutes.

As in previous years, two rescue boats, operated by Wildwater Expeditions Unlim-

ited, rescued many jumpers from the swift New River. Although winds were low throughout the day, jumpers made water landings after taking too-long delays, packing slider up, or using small pilot chutes (and experiencing slow deployments).

### Follow-Up

By 3 p.m. Saturday, several of the Bridge Day organizers were hoping for "just one more hour" without incident to top off a perfect day. The last hour of jumping went as smoothly as had the other five, and the day ended in a new record for most BASE jumps in a single day: 645 recorded in a mere six hours.

The event received positive coverage from local newspapers, radio and TV stations, and national coverage from the Associated Press, United Press International, NBC's Today Show, ABC's Incredible Sunday, and P.M. Magazine, among others.

Although the day went smoothly, officials at the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce speculated that legislation would once again be introduced to ban parachuting during

Bridge Day. "We certainly appreciate all the letters of support we received earlier this year," stated Synthia Blake, "but we could sure use some more letters now, after Bridge Day." The organization has a new address: 310 Oyler Avenue, Oak Hill, W. Va. 25901-2641.

Chamber of Commerce director Doug Maddy, who organizes the annual Bridge Day event, predicted that the numerous bandit jumps made around Bridge Day would soon shut down authorized jumping for everyone else. "The bandit jumpers are taking advantage of the generosity of everyone who allows Bridge Day jumping to take place," said Maddy, who also noted that local papers printed several articles making light of the bandit jumps from the New River Gorge Bridge—and several other local-area spans.

Next year's Bridge Day is scheduled for Oct. 21, 1989. BASE jumping will tentatively be allowed between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Although no quotas or registration limits will be imposed, jumpers interested in attending are asked to preregister by mail.

Application forms will be mailed with the Fall 1989 issue, or are available by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to BASELINE.



One issue of controversy in previous years has been the ever-increasing "donation" amount, which for the first time topped out during Bridge Day '88 at \$20. Here, Jean Boenish accepts a donation from a registrant as other jumpers look on. Boenish, who serves as the United States BASE Association's treasurer, recently submitted her financial accounting for Bridge Day '87. (See this issue's "USBA Update" section for details.)

# USBA Update

## The United States BASE Association

The United States BASE Association (USBA) is an organization dedicated to the "safety, advancement and positive public image" of BASE jumping. Membership in the USBA is extended "to anyone interested in the concept of man jumping off fixed objects, an esoteric aspect of man's age-old dream of self-flight."

**BASELINE Magazine** is not a publication of, under the control or direction of, or in any official way affiliated or associated with the U.S. BASE Association. Our "USBA Update" section, and the information contained herein, is presented as a public information service to our readers. Contributions to this department are welcome.

## Board of Directors

The United States BASE Association is governed by a board of directors consisting of the following people:

### President

Phil Mayfield  
Arlington, Texas

### Vice-President

Phil Smith  
Houston, Texas

### Treasurer

Jean Boenish  
Hawthorne, Calif.

### Board Members

Andy Smith  
Fredericksburg, Texas

Brad Smith

Wichita, Kan.

## New BASE Awardees

No.	Name	State
163	Mike Allen	Florida
216	LeRoy Gallenstein	Kentucky
217	Tim Sell	California
224	Larry Riddle	Kentucky

## Boenish Banquet a Success

USPA Western Conference director Gary Douris reported that the Sept. 23 banquet in honor of Carl Boenish, the father of BASE jumping, was an overwhelming success. "The event was remarkably well attended," said Douris, adding that people "were coming out of the woodwork," including such notables as Garth Taggart, who worked with Carl on the MGM movie *Gypsy Moths*.

The banquet celebrated the USPA's post-humous presentation to Carl of their 1987 Achievement Award. Only a handful of jumper have ever won this award, and it is generally regarded as the USPA's highest non-competition honor. Carl's mother, Robbie Stewart, accepted the award on Carl's behalf. ■

## Half Dome Fatality a Potential Roadblock

Mitch Reno's Oct. 23 fatal jump from Yosemite's Half Dome cliff may well have a negative impact on current jumper negotiations with park officials, although sources have disagreed as to the exact extent.

"Before this accident, I would say that their chances [of obtaining jump permits] were between slim and none. After the fatality, slim is not an option anymore," said one official within the park service.

However, Jean Boenish, who has been spearheading an ongoing effort to get jumping within the park re-authorized, did not agree. "To give a fatality too much weight would not be proper," Boenish said. "There will be no change in the way the Park Service approaches my proposals as a result of this

Where did the money go? USBA treasurer Jean Boenish submitted the following 1987 Bridge Day expense account, which is shown along with Jean's 1986 report.

Item	1986 Cost	1987 Cost	Net Change
Telephone	\$227	\$539	+137%
Secretarial	378	101	- 73%
Supplies	173	173	—
Printing	496	415	- 16%
Postage	242	257	+ 6%
Radio Batteries	—	269	—
Truck Signs	—	330	—
Air Fare	389	240	- 38%
Car	217	420	+ 94%
Lodging	245	718	+193%
Barriers (Plastic Chains)	—	556	—
Steps	—	10	—
On-Site	40	67	+ 68%
Boats	1,000	1,000	—
Trucks	250	433	+ 73%
Staff T-Shirts	350	—	—
Office & Equipment	700	—	—

*"This whole thing boils down to whether or not BASE jumping is deemed to be an appropriate activity within the park. And we don't believe that it is. I think that we should continue to not allow it based on reasons that it creates a public spectacle and that it's not an appropriate activity in a national park."*

— Roger Rudolph, Chief Ranger  
Yosemite National Park

*"To give a fatality too much weight would not be proper. There will be no change in the way the Park Service approaches my proposals as a result of this accident."*

— Jean Boenish, Treasurer  
U.S. BASE Association

accident."

Boenish has also stated that the Park Service "is at least partially to blame" for Reno's death, because their refusal to grant jump permits forces skydivers to make clandestine leaps, often without proper knowledge or training, and in less-than-optimum conditions.

But Chief Ranger Roger Rudolph did not agree. "To me, that would be like saying that people take drugs anyway, so we may as well allow it," he said. "I don't buy that." Rudolph also added that although Boenish's proposals have been "reasonable," it is his opinion that "this whole thing boils down to whether or not BASE jumping is deemed to be an appropriate activity within the park. And we don't believe that it is. I think that we should continue to not allow it based on reasons that it creates a public spectacle and that it's not an appropriate activity in a national park."

Rudolph also stated that he is aware that bandit jumps have occurred from various cliffs in the park throughout the summer, but added that the rangers by no means "intend to look the other way. If we see a jump taking place and are in a position to make contact, we will definitely apprehend the people involved."

Two skydivers reportedly jumped after Reno, calling the park rangers anonymously to report the fatality. "We're still investigating this," said Rudolph. "As far as we're concerned it was an illegal jump, and we're still in the process of trying to find out who the two others were. We're looking for them."

When asked about what charges the two might face, Rudolph replied: "Well, there's quite a number of things they could be charged with. From conspiracy to commit a crime, to illegal jumping, to creating a hazardous condition. There's quite a number of regulations that could be used." Because of

the Park Service's approach, the two jumpers involved may never surface.

Boenish, meanwhile, has now received firm negative responses from all three environmental groups which park superintendent Jack Moorehead named during their Jan. 11 meeting. Still, Boenish told over 300 jumpers at the Bridge Day debriefing meeting that

"the El Cap project is going extremely well, despite what you may have been reading recently." She went on to mention that she has almost convinced one of the three environmental groups to "change their minds," and hopes to be able to do the same with the remaining two.

*Continued on Page 26 ...*



# BASELINE Update

## Christmas in March?

Christmas doesn't often come in March — unless it's the Christmas issue of BASELINE, which, as many readers have probably noticed, is several months late. Sorry, folks, but your editors are BASE jumpers too, and BASELINE sometimes gets put on the backburner. Well, BASELINE does; our responsibility to our readers doesn't. One-year subscriptions of four issues will of course be honored.

The spring issue of BASELINE will arrive sometime around the end of April or the beginning of May; the summer 1989 issue is due in mid-July, and the fall issue should arrive a few weeks before Bridge Day (October '89). And then — hopefully, at least — we'll be back on schedule by Christmas 1989. Thanks for your understanding!

## BASELINE On-Line

Our expanding computer network now allows us to receive articles, stories and information directly via computer telephone modem. Contact Andy Calistrat at (713) 437-0323 for more information. A "fax" number is also available.

We are also able to use computer disks for the Apple, Commodore (Vic-20, C-64, PET and SX-64), Macintosh (Word, MacWrite and PageMaker) and IBM-PC (Word, Wordstar, Wordstar 2000, Wordperfect and all ASCII files). Or, of course, you could just write it down on paper ...

## Lost Issues?

Having kept careful track of all "lost issue" complaints since starting BASELINE, we have noticed some definite patterns. Here are a few tips that may be helpful:

- By far the largest number of lost issue complaints involves post office boxes. In most cases it turns out that the box itself is not large enough to accommodate an 8.5 x 11 magazine. "In this case, the postal workers are supposed to leave a notice in the patron's box, and store the magazine behind the counter," said a postal employee contacted by BASELINE. He also admitted, however, that this is not

always done, or that issues get lost or outright thrown away.

BASELINE guarantees the post office return postage on all undelivered issues; however, they are not always sent back to us. If you have experienced troubles in this area, or are concerned about the reliability of receiving mail at your P.O. box, then we suggest listing a home address instead. Remember, BASELINE's mailing list is kept strictly confidential.

## Good for your sex life?

Mark Albers, a Zionsville, Ind. skydiver, was detained by local police briefly following an early-morning Oct. 16 parachute jump from a construction crane on Indianapolis' 520-foot Bank One Center. Albers, 23, freshly motivated by his Bridge Day success, raced back home, assembled his ground crew and exited the crane at 3:30 a.m.

The jump, videotaped by a friend, was also witnessed in part by Indianapolis Police Patrolman Ralph C. Smith, Jr., who first noticed Albers as he flew in for landing. "As soon as he hit the ground he grabbed the chute and ran over to one of the cars," Smith said. "I think he saw me coming. He kind of hustled."

Within minutes the scene was surrounded by no less than four police cars. Says Albers, "The first words out of the cops' mouth was: 'Don't try and tell me you jumped out of no airplane, boy!'" Fortunately, the police were more friendly than they initially appeared: one wanted a copy of the video tape, one was almost talked into signing up for a first-jump course, and one just wanted to take Albers' picture.

Albers was released and thought the incident was over, until the next day, when his "mug shot" appeared with a news story on the front page of *The Indianapolis Star*. "Apparently the policeman had an ulterior motive for taking the picture," Albers said. "He sold it to the paper."

Bank One officials were considering pressing trespass charges against Albers, until hundreds of people rallied to Albers' defense by calling local radio talk-show programs. "If you press charges against the jumper, I'm withdrawing every red cent of my money," seemed to be the message most of the people tried to get across to Bank One.

As BASELINE went to press no charges had been filed, and, according to Albers, more than one good thing came out of all this: "Old girlfriends have been coming out of the woodwork calling me," he said.

- Other complaints of lost issues involve subscriptions which are sent to a person in care of a drop zone, or to an apartment shared by several jumpers. Subscribers sometimes call to ask where their issue is, only to find out it was mailed months ago. They finally manage to locate it — well read, torn up, and laying on the drop zone magazine rack or in some bathroom. Once again, please be sure to specify an address where mail addressed to you will actually reach you.

- Many undelivered or lost issues are the result of unreported change-of-addresses. There is no advance time required to warn us that you're moving: even if you phone in your change-of-address on the morning that we mail BASELINE, we'll ensure that your issue is sent off to the correct place. However, you *must* tell us.

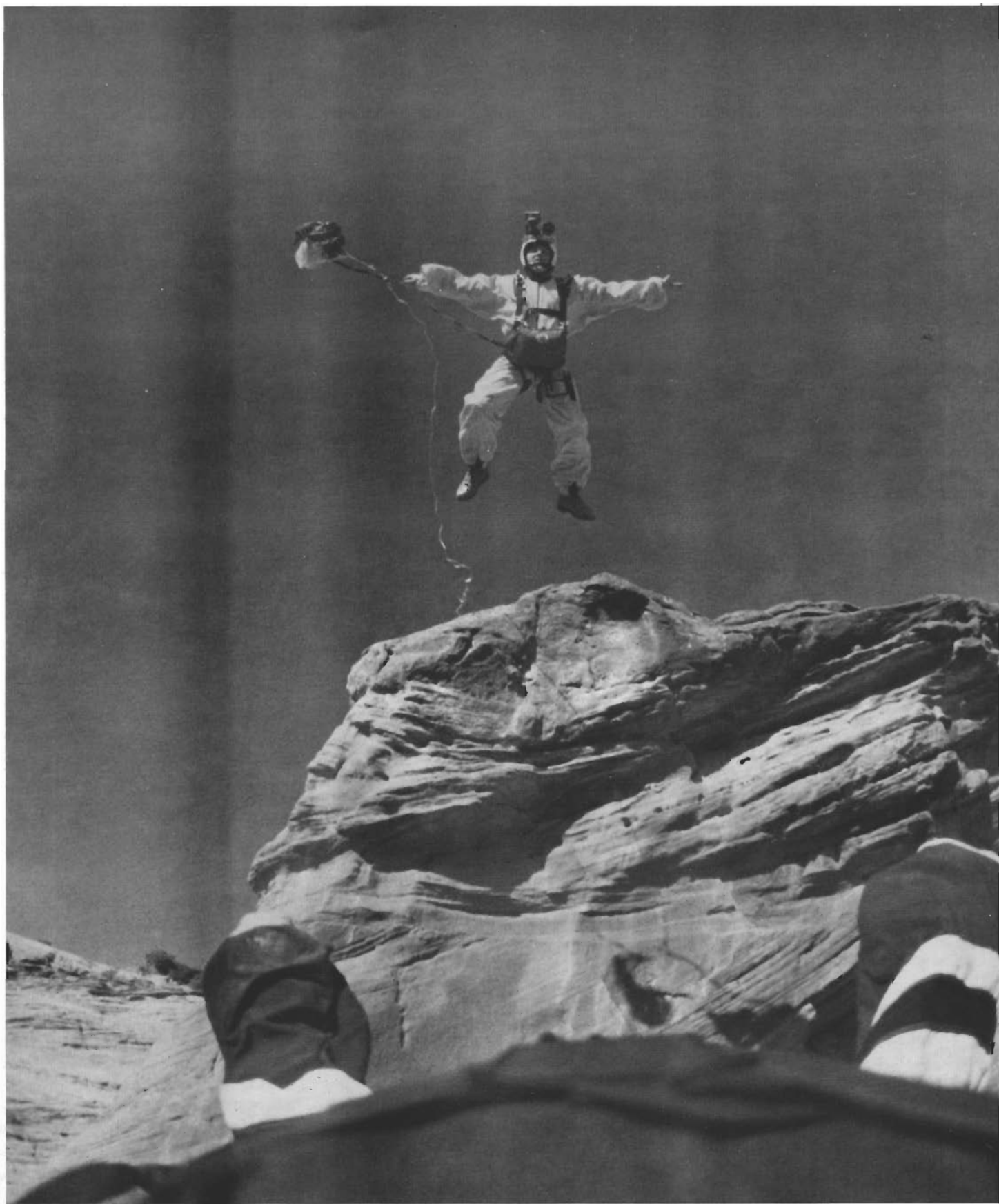
BASELINE also guarantees the post office forwarding postage; still, issues are sometimes lost or misrouted. At the very least they will be delayed for several weeks. So please, if you're planning on moving, drop us a postcard or a line and let us know your new address.

- Finally, as has always been our policy, your annual subscription fee guarantees that we will put an issue in the mail four times per year. Unfortunately, we cannot be responsible for what the post office does with it after that. We'd like to be, but financially we simply cannot afford it. We will, however, try to replace lost issues as quickly as possible, upon request.

## Name the "BASE"

Most jumpers know that the acronym BASE stands for Buildings, Antenna towers, Spans and Earth formations, representing the four





Carl Boenish, BASE 4, performs a static-line-assist jump from a 600-foot cliff. This photo was taken with a rear-facing helmet-mounted camera.

categories of objects from which a skydiver must leap before earning the coveted BASE award. Many combinations were explored before deciding on BASE, such as "TEBB" (Towers, Earth, Building and Bridge); even today, BASE is sometimes misrepresented as "Bridges, Antennas, Structures and Earth."

Some people, however, have purposefully changed the acronym BASE simply for the humor of it: for example, Beyond All Safety Expectations, or Ballistic Asshole Seeking Earth. Upon hearing these, we couldn't resist printing them and asking for more—and so, a "Name the BASE" contest. Jot down and send in your most humorous definitions of the acronym BASE; we'll publish a few each issue.

### Watch Your Footing!

While making a jump from a 600-foot building in early September, I broke two metatarsals in my right foot while scaling a four-foot retaining wall. Not watching my footing, I tried to use a small steel

hook to throw my weight on. The result was a painful exit and landing ... and six weeks in plaster.

At first, this accident hardly seemed worth a mention in BASELINE. After all, it didn't happen on the jump, so wasn't appropriate for an accident report, and the advice "watch your footing" seemed like plain common sense.

However, after talking to several people at Bridge Day who had had similar experiences, it suddenly occurred to me how prone some BASE sites are to potentially-dangerous areas: antenna towers may have old, rickety ladders or unsafe platforms; cliffs may have unstable ledges or loose rocks or gravel around the exit point; bridges may have weak or damaged guard rails; and buildings (especially ones under construction) may have a host of objects such as tools, nails, screws or pieces of construction material laying around.

Don't let the fact that you have a rig on give you a false sense of security on top of tall objects: be aware of potential hazards, and "watch your footing!" — Andy.



*The Wall Street stockmarket crash of 1987 led to several humorous cartoons involving free fall.*

**... continued from Page 23**

Rudolph, however, seemed to deny Boenish's allegations. "The park superintendent could issue a permit for BASE jumping at his whim; the only thing keeping him from doing it is pressure from various environmental communities that think it's an inappropriate activity."

If Boenish does get all three groups to give the "thumbs up" to BASE jumping, Moorhead has agreed to write a memo to his

superiors in Washington, asking whether he may proceed. When asked what he thinks their reply might be, Moorehead stated: "That's not my position to say. However, they basically feel the same way about it that we do." Moorehead, like Rudolph, has stated that BASE jumping is an inappropriate use of the park, adding that it would probably be easier for him to disallow rock climbing in Yosemite than to permit BASE jumping there.

Boenish has also stressed that jumpers

who would like to read the "official" word on the El Cap project can subscribe to her new newsletter, *The BASE Monitor*. Three issues will be sent free of charge to any jumper who gives Jean a \$22 contribution. Boenish pointed out that this money will go directly towards the El Cap project, adding: "I can only continue with this until my financial resources run out, and it would be a shame to see this project killed for financial reasons. Don't you think it's worth \$22 to be able to jump El Cap again?"

# I Did It! I Did It!

by Bill FitzSimons

*"Words are totally inadequate to describe my feelings ..."*

**B**ridge Day '88 has come and gone. I made a jump from that West Virginia monster, and I'm still alive. This is probably no big news item for all you BASE jumpers out there, but it's all the talk of the FitzSimons family, some of whom actually showed up to witness my demise. Were they disappointed? Maybe.

One thing's for sure: I wasn't disappointed in Bridge Day. Quite the opposite, in fact.

Those of you who have been reading *BASELINE* will remember that I have, in past issues, expressed, well, mixed emotions about the whole notion of BASE jumping. The story continues.

So there I was, driving south on Interstate 81 with Lois, my supportive, if less-than-enthusiastic, wife at my side. As we rolled along, that beautiful Friday morning before Bridge Day, I tried to visualize what the events of the coming day would be like. Would total disorganization reign? Would the jumpers be Hell's-Angels-type death-wish loonies? Try as I might, I simply could not get a clear picture in my mind. Especially, not a picture with me in it. I mean, skydiving is one thing. Hell, skydiving is tame; skydiving is Sunday school. My lingering misgivings, combined with an increasing sense of terror (*I knew* I was gonna jump off that bridge!), were only partially allayed, as we rolled across the state line, by the official West Virginia greeting: *Welcome to Wild, Wonderful West Virginia*.

I had to smile at the thought that this trip would be nothing if not wild and wonderful. But I must confess I still had my doubts.

Well, I was in for a pleasant surprise. When I arrived, I was greeted by a sane, organized and professional staff of BASE jumpers, enthusiastic in their help and support. I was surprised and reassured to see a number of my skydiving acquaintances. My gear was carefully checked, and my good friend Andy Calistrat personally taught me how to pack for the bridge. Jean Boenish

gave two articulate and thorough briefings prior to the jump, and by the time I was poised for the leap, I was thoroughly prepared, if still terrified.

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*"I mean, skydiving is one thing.  
Hell, skydiving is tame;  
skydiving is Sunday school."*

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As I climbed up and over the guard rail, I

became aware of a strange illusion: from the river's edge, the bridge, in hazy aerial perspective, had appeared to be over a thousand feet high, more than enough for a safe parachute jump; however, looking down from above, the available "altitude" (to me, at least) seemed to have shrunk! On reflection, I think maybe this is because, looking down, the river is the only thing that is actually eight hundred and seventy-six feet below. Everything else in the landscape gets progressively higher in your peripheral vision; so, your mind, in a futile attempt to talk you out of the jump, averages everything out and comes up with a height above the river of, maybe, 85 feet. At least, that's what happened to me. And then, I thought, maybe the damned bridge *isn't* 876 feet high! Maybe they had made a mistake. Had anybody checked recently? Probably not! Doubts, doubts, and more doubts!

But, like I said, I did it. I concentrated on doing everything just the way Jean and Andy had advised, and my jump went perfectly: I took a three-second delay, I did not go head down (which I was sure I would), I opened on heading, and I even made the beach.

Words are totally inadequate to describe my feelings as I gathered up my parachute, down there in the shadow of the beautiful New River Gorge Bridge. Before the jump, I had felt like an outsider, an intruder into this strange new society of BASE jumpers.

## sky•div'ing

by Bill FitzSimons

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AND MISCELLANEOUS FOLLOWERS OF THE SPORT

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**El Capitan** - A religious shrine in California. Every faithful BASE jumper must make a jump from El Capitan at least once in his life. The mountain is also a shrine to the U.S. Park Police, who must arrest at least one BASE jumper to qualify for their retirement pension.

**BASE Jumping** - A new sport derived from skydiving, the purpose of which is to make skydiving seem relatively sensible. "BASE" is actually an acronym. To qualify for a BASE number, and be certifiable, BASE jumpers must make at least one jump from four different locations: a balcony (B), an apple tree (A), a staircase (S) and an emporium (E).

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Having made the jump I felt perhaps I had earned just a little acceptance, at least in my own mind. Now, if I could just figure out how to walk, with three quarts of adrenalin pounding through my veins! I couldn't remember when I had had so much fun.

Then, a thought struck me: I haven't had this much fun, skydiving, in a long time. Why? Well, obviously, this was something new, and any new jump is going to be exciting, and fun. But there's more to it than that. I have come to the realization that, even though I still enjoy skydiving, much of my joy is lost by the sense of competitiveness that pervades the skydiving environment today. I mean, every skydive has to be planned as if it were a rehearsal for international competition.

*"I have come to the realization that, even though I still enjoy skydiving, much of my joy is lost by the sense of competitiveness that pervades the skydiving environment today."*

Now, I am not the world's greatest skydiver. I will never compete in the Nationals. I will never be on a "dream team." I will never make a movie, or do relative work above an Olympic stadium. Hey, folks, I don't go to the DZ to compete, or to try to prove how good I am. I go to the DZ to have fun, to relax, to visit with friends, and to get my juices flowing.

I don't need and I don't want a lot of competitive pressure. I get enough of that

trying to earn a living, for Christ's sake! Sure, it feels good to perform well on a skydive, but I somehow dread the modern jump. Because I know that no way is it going to be a "fun" jump. It's going to be an extravaganza, more complex than a Broadway musical, and everyone is going to be Fred Astaire, except me.

As soon as we land, everyone is going to run over to the clubhouse to watch the video replay, and a poor performance on my part may ruin the jump for all these goal-driven, A-type skydivers. The message I get is: if you're not a champion skydiver, or you're not working toward that goal, you're not welcome at today's DZs. I hate that.

I know, some wise guy is going to write in and say something like, "Hey, FitzSimons, get your ass in gear, get out to the DZ and work on your technique, and then you'll fit right in." Well, save your postage, because I don't go to the DZ to work. I go for recreation. I go to play.

I mention all this because I recall a letter to BASELINE, in which the writer expressed an interest in having an accuracy meet at Bridge Day. I would hate to see this happen. I mean, I would hate to see competition of any kind take hold of the sport.

It's fine to get a BASE number, and accumulate a lot of different, interesting BASE jumps. And, some BASE jumpers will, in the course of events, excel, and they should certainly take pride in their accomplishments.

Don't get me wrong. I accept that competition is a valid human trait, and certainly should exist for those whose egos drive them in that direction. If some skydivers and BASE jumpers want to compete, well, hey, isn't that special? Just leave some room for the ordinary soul who finds simple recreation in the sport.

I'm still an outsider, I know, and my future participation in the sport of BASE jumping will probably be limited; but, for me, one of the nicest things about Bridge Day was the lack of all-out, driven competitiveness. It seemed enough for most of the participants just to make the jump. Sure, some did better than others, but there was a sense of shared experiences and learning, and, unless I just imagined it, a lack of the ego indulgence that one finds at the DZ.

Perhaps in the future, BASE jumpers will sneak up to the top of a 150-foot building, set

up a diving board, and do Olympic dives, getting points for style and difficulty, and how low they open. Maybe creativity in dealing with the authorities will win a patch. Or for \$55, you'll get a BASE "Pro" rating. And, maybe a lot of people would like to see this happen. But, for me, it would become another fun activity turned into work, a "sport for champions." Certainly the simple charm of Bridge Day would be lost.

*"There was a sense of shared experiences and learning, and a lack of the egoindulgence that one finds at the DZ."*

Now, before I climb off my soap box, I would like to thank Andy Calistrat, Jean Boenish, and all the staff at Bridge Day for making the event so thoroughly enjoyable, and one I will certainly never forget.

And I will look forward to seeing you all next year!



Bill FitzSimons, exhibiting flawless form, makes his first BASE jump, from the New River Gorge Bridge during Bridge Day 1988.

FitzSimons, a professional writer and wing walker, recently combined his talents with those of Florida jump pilot Wayne "Walt" Pierce to put together a "complete barnstorming package featuring parachuting, wing walking and aerobatics." More information can be obtained by contacting their business manager, Walt's daughter Chandelle, at (813) 655-0200.



# BASE Abroad: BASE á la Française

by Laurent Le Cleac'h

**I**n early June I finally made my first BASE jump. It was from a 180-meter-high (600-foot) bridge near my home in the South of France. The jump was also the first ever from this bridge.

My 52-inch pilot chute worked well, despite a little snivelling due to a too-early "throw away." Thanks to all the good information in recent issues of BASELINE, I was able to achieve a fast, on-heading opening, and generally had a very safe first BASE jump. Thanks!

The line release mod is all right, but offers a flare much different than normal, and this made me somewhat nervous. But the jump was so fantastic that I have done ten others from the bridge, and also a jump from the 170-meter-high Artuby Bridge in Verdon, in the southeast part of France.

My next step is an antenna, but when I scouted one out, all I saw were high-voltage security fences! So I am working on an

"E" just beside my bridge. The access is uneasy, but the wall is so sheer!

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*"When I showed him my  
parachute equipment, he  
panicked, yelling at me: 'No!  
You are completely mad!  
Don't do it!'"*

---

The picture was taken on my first BASE jump, and shows this century-old little bridge. The place is wonderful, but after landing you must follow down the stream to get back, needing special equipment to cross a little falls, including a wet suit and a flotation device. For the latter, I used my canopy folded into a water-proof bag, and this worked quite nicely. It is best, however, to jump the bridge during "dead water time," that is, all during

summer and the first part of winter.

As for packing, I used a "factory refined" slider secured down pack job, with the line-release mod, and the canopy folded into a bag and the lines rubber banded. I used the same pack job for a jump from the 122-meter (400-foot) bridge over the Garabit river. This jump, by the way, has to be made at dawn, so as not to be seen by people riding the train which passes over the bridge. It also seems that this bridge has been jumped already by a static-line device, with the water offering a good landing area in case of a line-over.

So, what else is new on the French BASE Scene? Not very much compared with the "industrial jump ratio"! But we're definitely keeping up our activities.

The last issue of "Hommes Volants," a French periodical, contained the headline: "Exclusive! Height of the Jump: 82 Meters." Although this is 270 feet, the article went on to say that it was the lowest jump ever made.

The story was about a few leaps from the Namur Bridge just at the Belgian border. The jumpers used a static-line device with the "good old time" break cord system. After a five-second canopy flight they had a good landing in the river, with TV cameras filming from the shoreline.

In a new periodical called "The New Adventurers," Frenchman Alain Poirier, an American named "Scott" and two other unidentified jumpers tell of how they got the BASE award in 1983. Pictures accompanying the article are of a truly international flavor, showing jumps from a 180-meter-high bridge in Germany, a Swedish antenna tower, the Trolleveggen cliff in Norway, and the Montparnasse Tower here in France. The four jumpers are also publishing a book in Sweden called "Our BASE Adventures."

A year ago, a French periodical



Laurent Le Cleac'h makes his first BASE jump from a 180-meter-high bridge in the South of France. Photographer anonymous.

called "ParaMag" edited a BASE article on "classic BASE leaps" such as Bridge Day, the Troll Wall, El Cap, etc.

But the common point between all these articles is that no details are given about the way to pack, where to go, to whom to speak, etc. And this brings up the subject of the rules regarding skydiving and BASE jumping over here. The French rule about opening height is 800 meters (2600 feet).

Fortunately, BASE activities are largely hidden by rubber-lined jumps (bungee jumps) from local bridges. I recently met someone who did such a jump, and he told me that it was allowed two days per month during the summer. However, since the organizers did not have the authorization to stop the traffic on the bridge, the cost for such a jump is about \$60.

Just before I jumped the Artuby bridge early one morning, I saw a man fixing a rope on top of the bridge. When I asked him the reason, he told me that it was for an association called "Out of Limits." It is a sort of weeklong seminar for staff chiefs who are sent by their enterprises in order to fight their

daily stress. All they had to do was climb down the bridge along the rope.

So when I warned him that I intended to do a leap, he asked me how: Rope? Rubber link? Net across the canyon? When I showed him my parachute equipment, he panicked, yelling at me: "No! You are completely mad! Don't do it!"

As the members of the seminar began to arrive, I finished gearing up and took off for a two-second delay. A half-hour later when I arrived back at the top, they were all waiting for me: fully amazed, silenced, nearly religious! I asked them if they had ever heard of BASE jumping before, and it appeared that the few who had only knew about a "big rock in the U.S.A."

"Why?" one of them finally asked me. "Are you American? Is that why you jumped?" No, I'm not American. And I told them that I didn't really know why I jumped, but it certainly wasn't to reduce my "daily stress" at the office!

When I heard the cost of their weeklong seminar, I told them that for the same price they could all fly to the United States and

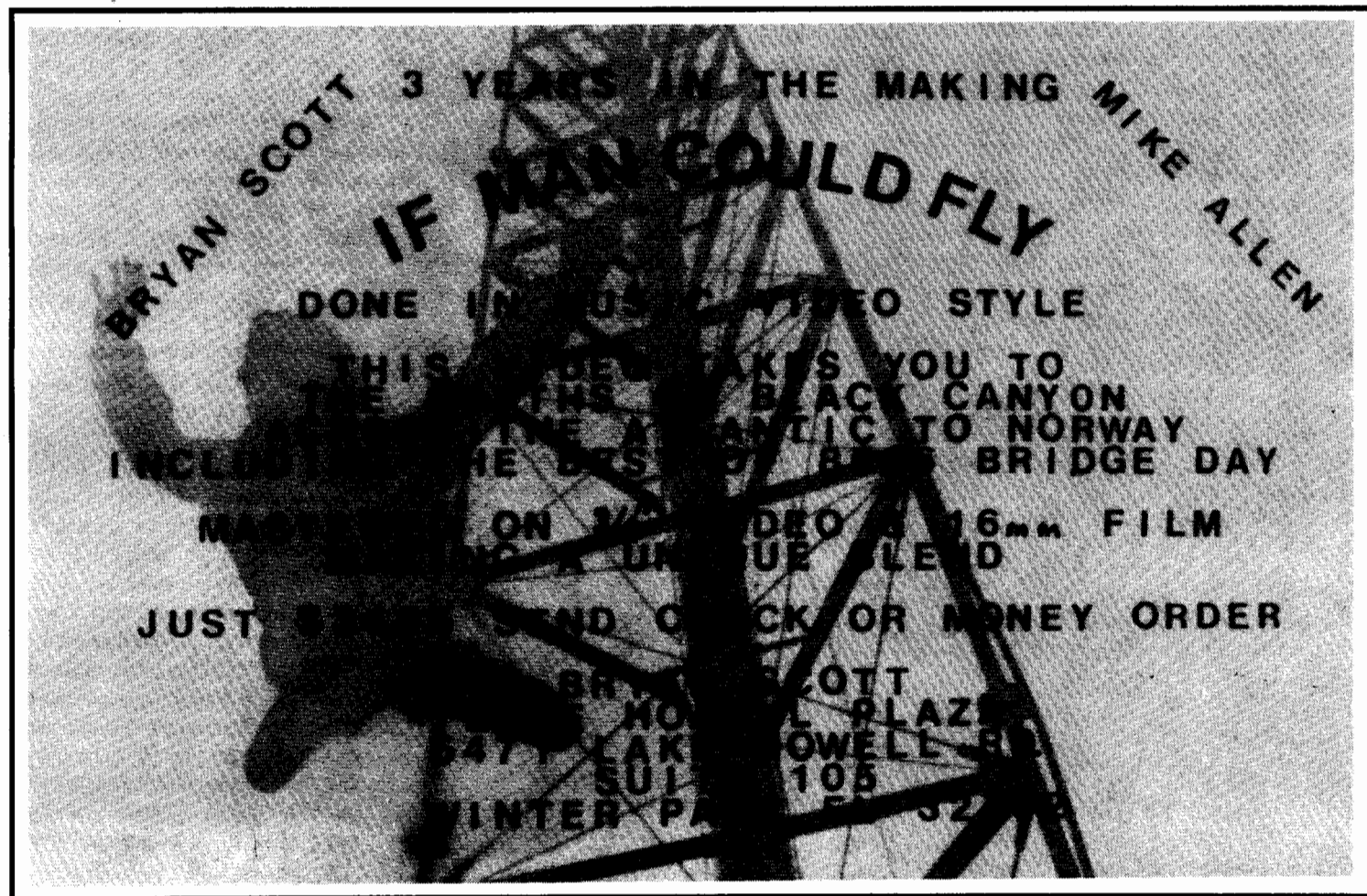
make a million jumps at Bridge Day!

Speaking of Bridge Day, I regret that I was not able to make it over to the U.S. last October. But I do hope to spend several weeks there next year, with my surf and fun board, and of course not forgetting my canopy. And if any Americans make it over to France in the meantime, they are welcome to stay at my home if they warn me early enough that they are coming.

As for the future, I intend to finish the BASE circuit, make a few intentional tertiary reserve jumps from an ultralight, and to build an electronic device to warn you when to pull the reserve on a BASE jump. It will not be based on barometric pressure, but on a digital clock, and can be adjusted to the height of each jump.

I also hope to make a BASE jump the same day as an authorized rubber link leap takes place, to explain what it is and why not to send you much more "frog-face" for the Bridge Day in your country.

Please excuse the poor quality of the pictures I have sent, but don't worry: more and better are to come. Blue skies, and long life to BASELINE!



Reports in this section are compiled from information received 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 wherever requested.

Please help us ensure that the reports in this section are as accurate as possible: if you are involved in, or are witness to, any type of a BASE jumping mishap, contact us with the pertinent details. All it takes is a phone call to (713) 437-0323 or 931-7709, or simply jot down the essential information on a post card and mail it to us.

## Incident Reports

**Name:** John Winkler      **Age:** 43  
**BASE Jumps:** 7      **Skydives:** 2,000+  
**Main:** Cruislite      **Reserve:** Super-22  
**Tersh:** 20-foot hang-glider recovery system  
**Container:** Racer      **Pilot Chute:** 42"  
**Packing:** Slider up, mesh slider, deployment strap, remaining lines S-folded in pack tray.  
**Object:** Bridge      **Altitude:** 876'  
**Delay:** 3 seconds  
**Type of Jump:** Daytime, solo exit  
**Nature of Incident:** Uninflated canopy at impact, water landing.  
**Extent of Injuries:** Bruises

### Description

The jumper performed a stable exit and three-second free fall, then threw his 42-inch BASE pilot chute. The container was promptly opened and the main extracted to line stretch, at which point the Cruislite began a horrendous snivel.

Winkler spent three seconds attempting to inflate his main, without success, and then decided it was time for a reserve. Despite the fact that he was wearing a chest-mounted, hang-glider-type tertiary reserve, the jumper instead deployed his conventional round skydiving reserve.

The Super-22 canopy either partially entangled with the sniveling main, or did not have sufficient time to inflate, as the jumper impacted the New River approximately three seconds later under partially-inflated main and reserve canopies. Moving in excess of 60 mph, but entering the water cleanly feet-first, Winkler received only bruises from the impact.

### Conclusions

This incident is especially perplexing because, just prior to the jump, Winkler had installed a mesh slider on his Cruislite. Mesh

sliders are commonly known for giving very rapid deployments (see Nigel Slee's article "Zero-Drag BASE Sliders for Short Free Falls," Vol. 3, Issue 2, No. 10).

Some people initially suspected that an entanglement between the slider and some part of the parachute (for instance the stabilizers) may have kept the slider from coming down. However, a subsequent inspection of the canopy showed no evidence of tears or burns which would support that theory, Winkler said. He also stated that while looking up at the parachute during the jump, all four line groups appeared to run clear and there were no apparent entanglements.

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*"Despite the fact that he was wearing a chest-mounted, hang-glider-type tertiary reserve, the jumper instead deployed his conventional round skydiving reserve."*

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Others have pointed out that the very large mesh used in mesh sliders might be prone to catching lines, slider-stop bumpers or other portions of the canopy, thereby trapping the slider up. Again, there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that this is what happened in the case of Winkler's incident.

Winkler did report that, upon measuring the mesh slider, he found it to be several inches shorter on each side than the stock slider supplied with his Cruislite. This tends to keep the line groups closer together than normal during deployment, and may very well have caused the slow deployment. A test jump on a friend's parachute, from a slow-flying Cessna, resulted in a very snivelly deployment with the smaller-sized mesh slider.

Although the exact cause of the slow deployment in this incident remains inconclusive, it is nonetheless a good idea to make sure that, when ordering a mesh slider, it is of identical dimensions to the stock slider supplied with the canopy on which it is to be installed! (T&T Rigging, a leading supplier of mesh sliders, reports that they can custom-build mesh sliders to any specified size.)

Also of question in this incident was Winkler's decision to deploy his round skydiving reserve, even though he was wearing a chest-mounted "tersh." Skydiving reserves typically open slowly in low-air-speed situations, with the diaper and stabilizer panels further increasing the inflation time. Furthermore, skydiving reserves will seldom successfully deploy past a trashed-out main, especially if the main is sniveling or spinning.

Tertiary reserves, on the other hand, which are specifically designed for emergency situations on BASE jumps, provide extremely rapid deployments and will successfully deploy past a trashed-out main canopy. (They are also safe to use at terminal velocity.) Had Winkler thrown his tersh after six seconds, instead of deploying his skydiving reserve, he may well have had a gentle landing in the river under a fully-inflated canopy.

Winkler later stated that his decision to deploy the skydiving reserve was part of his "preplanned emergency procedures. If I looked up and saw trash, I intended to dump more into it, working on the 'big mess' theory. Then, once I had enough drag to slow me down somewhat, I would dump the tersh. It just so happened that in this one case, I was faced with the most unlikely of situations: a high-speed partial malfunction."

Finally, to Winkler's credit, he prepared for the impact by putting his feet together and entering the water cleanly. There has been much comparison between Winkler's splashdown and Steve Gyrsting's fatal impact last year. Although Winkler was undoubtedly moving much slower than Gyrsting, body position was also a big factor: Gyrsting died from massive injuries received

when he hit in a sitting down/back-to-earth position.

And while Gyrsting may still not have survived if he had entered feet-first, Winkler would have almost certainly received far more serious injuries had he hit in any other body position.

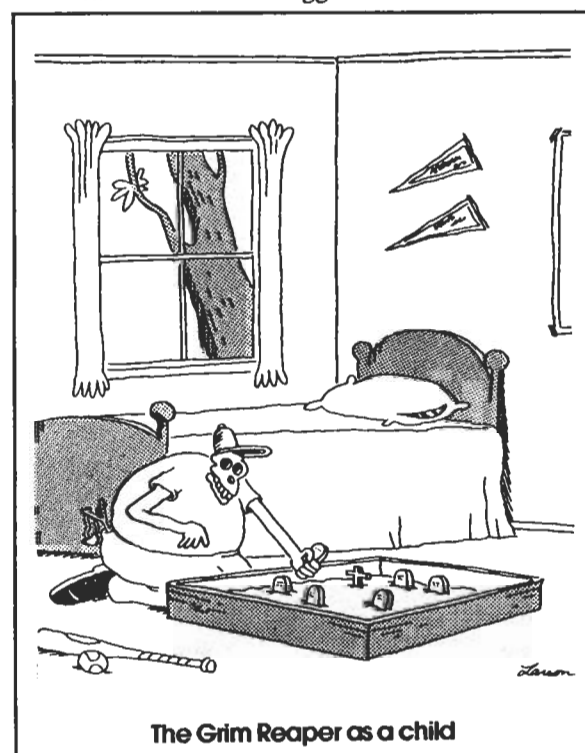
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***"Attempting to judge the direction a parachute is facing, through line twists, is admittedly a difficult task. However, it is also paramount to do so in order to avoid complicating an already-bad situation."***

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Part of having adequate emergency procedures includes knowing proper body position for a "worst-case" scenario: for an eminent object strike, it is to ball up and relax as much as possible. For a high-speed impact into water, it is to streamline your body, trying to enter cleanly and feet-first.

**Name:** Tim Sell      **Age:** 22  
**BASE Jumps:** 13      **Skydives:** 900  
**Main:** Glide Path Sharpshooter (240 ft<sup>2</sup>)  
**Reserve:** Raven III  
**Container:** Vector      **Pilot Chute:** 55"  
**Packing:** Slider down, tail pocket, line-release mod with zoo toggles.



**Object:** Cliff      **Altitude:** 1200'  
**Delay:** 1.5 seconds  
**Type of Jump:** Daytime, solo exit.  
**Nature of Incident:** Wall strike  
**Extent of Injuries:** Scrapes and bruises.

#### **Description**

The jumper, after making a running exit from a down-sloping cliff edge, went radically head low, almost on his back. At this point the jumper threw his pilot chute, and his canopy deployed through his legs and opened with a 60-degree right turn.

Disoriented, and possibly further confused by line twists, Sell mistakenly pulled his right rear riser. This immediately spun him into the wall, which he struck with his legs, back and buttocks. His canopy, which also hit the rock, never deflated.

Sell managed to turn around his parachute and fly away from the cliff. He landed relatively uneventfully, receiving only a few scrapes and bruises from the incident.

#### **Conclusions**

On any BASE exit, it is paramount to leave in a head-high body position. This is especially true, but harder to achieve, on a down-sloping edge. Whenever the launch platform is tricky to negotiate, or not long enough for anything but a few steps before leaping, many BASE jumpers prefer to walk carefully to the edge, then perform a standing, two-foot exit.

Many jumpers are understandably leary of walking to the very edge of a cliff if the angle of the launch platform is exceedingly steep, covered with loose shale or rock, or especially if it is unstable at the very tip. However, launch points should not be selected at areas that are unstable and may break or fall away, and any loose rocks or debris should be cleared prior to the jump.

The jumper in this incident reacted to going over onto his back by immediately throwing his pilot chute. It is true that the first priority of any jumper in free fall should be to attempt to get an open canopy before he runs out of altitude. However, having jumped a cliff over 1,000 feet high, the jumper could have safely waited an additional two or even three seconds (even with his slider packed down) before deploying, in hopes of improving his body posi-

tion. (There is seldom enough airspeed after three or four seconds of free fall on a BASE jump to make aerodynamic corrections to body position; however, twisting and kicking are often effective in "zero-speed" air.)

It is also worthy of mention that the jumper may well have prevented entangling his suspension lines around his feet (his canopy deployed between his legs) because he used a tail pocket. In this method of free packing, all the lines are lifted from the container simultaneously as the last fold of the parachute is extracted, thus decreasing the chances of an entanglement.

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***"Many jumpers are understandably leary of walking to the very edge of a cliff if the angle of the launch platform is exceedingly steep, covered with loose shale or rock, or especially if it is unstable at the very tip."***

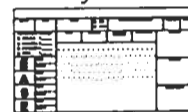
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On the other hand, the jumper's failure to recognize which direction his canopy was facing resulted in a cliff-strike. Attempting to judge the direction a parachute is facing, through line twists, is admittedly a difficult task. However, it is also paramount, to avoid complicating an already-bad situation.

Finally, the jumper mentioned that the extra-large cross ports on his canopy may well have kept it from deflating after the wall strike. This enabled the jumper to successfully turn around the parachute, fly clear of the wall, and make a safe landing.

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# Accident Reports

**Name:** Dave Kotowski      **Age:** 27  
**BASE Jumps:** 12      **Skydives:** 514  
**Main:** Avenger, 220 ft<sup>2</sup>  
**Reserve:** Phantom 220  
**Container:** Warp III      **Pilot Chute:** 36"  
**Packing:** Bag-deployed, slider up.  
**Object:** Bridge      **Altitude:** 876'  
**Delay:** 3 seconds  
**Type of Jump:** Daytime, backward solo exit.  
**Extent of Injuries:** Crushed left calcaneus, fractured right heel.

## Description

The jumper performed a clean backward-facing exit and stable three-second delay, and experienced a normal canopy deployment. On final approach, the jumper set up to land on a rocky beach shoreline crowded with spectators. Just before Kotowski touched down, one of the spectators walked directly into his path, forcing him to make a sharp hook turn to avoid hitting her. Kotowski subsequently hook-turned into a large boulder, receiving serious injuries to both his feet.

## Conclusions

The jumper was participating in an organized festival with 300 other jumpers and almost a quarter-million spectators. During any such organized event, whether skydiving or BASE jumping, crowd control can get out of hand. Jumpers must then be extra-aware of the spectators, and the possibility that some of them (especially little children) will run into the path of approaching canopies. (Organized festivals are not the only times that BASE jumpers must be cautious of crowds; other situations, such as a jump from a tall building onto a crowded city street, require extra consideration for whuffos.)

If a collision with a ground observer is imminent, it is important to weigh the consequences of striking the whuffo with the possibilities for (and consequences of) performing a low turn to avoid the observer. Granted, such decisions (as in Kotowski's case) are made on the spur-of-the-moment, and there is hardly enough time to analyze the situation and decide on a logical course of action. Still, if spectators are a factor in a jump, then such options should be figured out *beforehand*,

just like emergency procedures and other contingencies which require an "act-now" response.

Furthermore, in the case of this accident, a sandbar landing area was available as an alternative to the rocky, crowded beach.

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*"If a collision with a ground observer is imminent, it is important to weigh the consequences of striking the whuffo with the possibilities for (and consequences of) performing a low turn to avoid the observer."*

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Finally, because a collision with a ground spectator occurs at the moment of landing, it is probably the case that the jumper has just flared and is at his slowest rate of descent and forward speed. In this situation a collision might well be no more violent than two people bumping into each other on a crowded street, and chances are that it may not result in injury to either party. ■

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# At Presstime

## A Step Away from the Edge of a Fall ...

**BASELINE** correspondent Steve Morrell, who recently completed an 18-month Air Force assignment in Dharaan, Saudi Arabia, celebrated leaving that country by making a second jump from a 600-foot sheer cliff in the Rub Al Khali desert. (See **BASE Bits** section, this issue.)

Not all went as well the second time: **Morrell** experienced a 180-degree opening, impacted the cliff face, and broke both his legs. Morrell

was airlifted to a West German hospital for emergency surgery, and is currently recuperating at his parents' house in North Carolina, where he is expected to make a full recovery.

Morrell did report that his accident had an apparent reason: had he not experienced the cliff strike, he would have returned home on Pan Am's Flight 103 — the one which exploded over Scotland, leaving no survivors.

## "Empirical" BASE

An East Coast jumper successfully parachuted from New York's world-famous Empire State Building last January, escaping before arousing the suspicion of security or the police. The jumper, who requested anonymity, made the first-ever free fall from that building, taking a five-second delay before deploying his slider-up ram-air main. (Michael McCarthy and Alasdair Boyd static-lined off the Empire State Building in 1986.)

Said the jumper: "It seems like the building is still open. I'd like to keep doing it as long as I can."

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Andy Smith, BASE 9, performs acrobatics on a static-line jump from a 190-foot bridge.

# ***Photo-Finish***



# BASELINES

*"We have nothing to fear but fear itself."*

Franklin D. Roosevelt

*"Don't fear the reaper."*

Bluc Oyster Cult

*"Be not afraid of sudden fear."*

Proverbs 3:25

*"Of all base passions, fear is most accursed."*

William Shakespeare

*"I'm only here for the fear!"*

John Owens

*"I have seen the future of skydiving. It's called BASE jumping."*

Walt Appel

*"Actus non facit reum, nisi mens sit rea."*

Legal maxim, translated from Latin: *"The act is not criminal unless the intent is criminal."*

*"Just a step away from the edge of a fall."*

Poison

*"All we are is dust in the wind."*

Kansas

*"Look at the way we gotta hide what we're doing. Cause what would they say, if they ever knew? So we're running just as fast as we can, trying to get away into the night, we tumble to the ground and then you say: 'I think we're alone now; doesn't seem to be anyone around!'"*

Tiffany

*"Would that I were under the cliffs, in the secret hiding places of the rocks, that Zeus might change me to a winged bird."*

Euripides

*"And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats, none knew so well as I For he who lives more lives than one, more deaths than one must die."*

Oscar Wilde

*"Common sense is very uncommon."*

H.A. Franz Music Co.

Houston, Texas

*"The more one knows, the less one believes."*

Anonymous



Bryan Scott's rear-facing camera catches Randy Harrison moments after the pair exited a south Florida antenna tower