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# Jump

October 1989

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Cover - Mike McCarthy in action  
off the 170' Leaning Tower of Pisa

Jump is the unofficial magazine of the  
British BASE Association (BBA). Neither  
the editor or BBA encourage or advocate  
that anyone should make a BASE jump  
regardless of the views expressed  
within this magazine. The BBA was  
founded for and dedicated to the safety,  
advancement and positive public image  
of BASE jumping in the British Isles.

Correspondence is welcomed from all  
points of view on the subject of BASE  
jumping. Articles and photographs  
can only be returned if a stamped  
addressed envelope is enclosed with  
original letter.

Editors: Nigel Slee

Jump, c/o 70 Chantry Road,  
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Tel 0279 654885

# jumping off!

## Sponsorship down under

Nick Feteris obtained sponsorship from Australian computer company Star Computers for a team of Australian BASEers to attend Bridge Day where they made a promotional film using custom canopies. The filming included some sensational head to head 'duelling canopy' face-offs.

## Who you calling crazy . . .

Norwegian John Mjoen reports that the Viking BASE Association (VBA) have been sponsored by leisure wear company Poco Loco - That's Spanish for 'a little bit crazy'. The distinctive VBA logo features a traditional Viking warrior complete with horned helmet (new style Troll Wall frap hat?).

## Doobie BASE

Journalists at a recent Bridge Day took the wrong meaning to the phrase 'to exit head high' reports BASELINE Joint Editor Andy Calistrat. Evidently some press reports told of drug crazed jumpers leaping off the bridge, surely a mistake?

## Meanwhile, getting down in L.A.

Two way bag jump - Alan Heatherington bagged partner George Rosso's canopy from his own harness after the pair made a two way water jump off a 150' L.A. bridge. George decided to call it a day after a low opening on their second jump.

## Yes, but when do they sleep?

Californian BASEer Mark Hewitt is reported to have made 309+ BASE jumps - while three other jumpers at last October's Bridge Day had around 260 - Phil Smith, Mick Payne and Rich Stein. Climber turned BASEer Rich, 23, commented he's slowing down now after making only 40 jumps in the past year. The year before he logged over 70 in four months!

## Bridge Day on BBC radio

BBC Essex aired a 10 minute feature Bridge Day combining interviews and recordings from last years event. Jumpers featured included Brit Lee Gilliland, Randy Harrison, Brad Smith, Phil Smith and Jean Boenish.

## Not tonight, I've a headache

Science News magazine reported that US scientists were investigating the sources of risk-taking behavior - such as climbing, skydiving and hang gliding, because according to the article this behavior is closely linked to risky behaviors such as unprotected sex and intravenous drug use. One scientist went so far as to claim "it is obvious that this (risk-taking) behavior transmits the virus that causes AIDS". You have been warned!

## Legal British building jump

Last October Mike McCarthy organised and made an authorised jump from the roof of the 350' Guards residential tower block, Hyde Park, London. The solo jump was featured on the local TV news. The first London BASE demo was made in circa 1916 when two Royal Marine Officers 'bagged' Guardian Angel parachutes from the 150' catwalk of London's Tower Bridge to show the RAF the potential of the parachute.

## New U.S.A. BASE newsletter

Jean Boenish has started producing a USBA newsletter entitled The BASE Monitor. The first issue was distributed at Bridge day. You can subscribe to her 3-issue per year newsletter for \$22, the money will be used to help continue her long term project of getting the U.S. park service to drop their ban on cliff jumping. In 1981 Jean helped her husband Carl produce BASE magazine (6 issues) - still a valuable reference source for anyone interested in the early days of BASE. Copies may still be available. USBA 12618 S. Manor Drive, Hawthorne, CA 90260 Tel: (213) 678 0163

## One Pizza to go

Mike McCarthy, BASE 24, had an amusing encounter with a video totting tourist when he static-lined from the 170' tall Leaning Tower of Pfs a. Explaining he was about to make the jump he reached down to unzip his parabag. "Oh my God..." exclaimed the tourist as he beat a retreat to the other side of the tower. Afterwards, seeing Mike was still alive, he tried to renew the acquaintance but Mike was already away for a celebratory breakfast.

## Cheddar fatality update

Michael Gibbard died in May 1987 while attempting to static-line from the 350' High Rock, Cheddar Gorge. It is now thought that the cause of Michael's total malfunction was the failure of the knot used to tie the end of his static-line to a tree strong point. Apparently the knot came undone on the initial static-line snatch before the bight of static-line looped into the rubber band container closing loop could be pulled free to deploy the canopy, and as there was no pilot-chute assist the container stayed shut.



# Drop test hang-ups

Last year I was shown a cliff by a friend who thought I might like to check out its jumpability. We drove to the cliff to check it out but I found estimating the height very hard. It looked jumpable but was it high enough? At the top of the cliff I got

## Dead Steve lives

'Dead' Steve Morrell, a USAF fighter pilot, broke both legs on a 500' cliff jump in a remote area of Saudi Arabia. Dead Steve, who is now nearly fully recovered and back home in the USA, had been exiled to Saudi as punishment for his BASE jumping exploits in the US by his disapproving bosses. Reports indicate that broken suspension lines might have caused the turn. Having already buried his rear risers before impact Steve was able to fly his canopy backwards off the cliff saving himself from further damage.

A popular figure on the US BASE scene, Dead Steve earned his nickname after his third BASE reserve ride (all open below 100') following a out-a-way on an 1800' cliff jump. His partner, watching from above, was sure Steve was dead so called out a rescue party to collect the body. Meanwhile Steve, with a couple of broken ribs, made his way to a local bar for some liquid medication, which is where his astonished partner greeted him with the immortal words "You're dead Steve!". His most recent adventure has a further twist. As a result of his accident Steve missed his Christmas flight home to the US on PA 103. Aaaaoooh! Hang on in there Steve.

## Static-lined Cruisair injures jumper

A hard landing under an old Cruisair resulted in a broken leg for a jumper static-lining from scaffolding on a 175' monument when the canopy cells failed to pressurize. Firing his brakes after a stable exit and on-heading opening the jumper was aware of a faster than usual descent. Anticipating a hard landing the jumper stuck out one foot breaking the lower tibia and fibula requiring fixing plate and screws. In 1984 another jumper reported a similar experience with a Cruisair after static-lining from a crane at 150', though without injury. Bearing these

jump page 4

an altimeter reading of between two and three hundred feet. I timed a stone drop (after first checking nobody was below!) at around three seconds, which put the height back around 150 feet. The next step seemed to be to try a drop test to see what sort of canopy time we could expect.

For the tests I had two square rigs both BASE packed ready to use. We had also taken along a ruck sack in which to put rocks to give a realistic suspended weight. We put eighty or ninety pounds worth of rocks into the ruck sack. I decided we would buddy the rigs off the cliff. With my rig attached to the ruck sack we were ready to do the test.

A good exit point was chosen. Two friends were to assist the rig off whilst I played the part of the buddy. My friends threw the rig off in the manner you would throw someone into a swimming pool. Nothing wrong with that I thought. My canopy went off and opened smack on heading and landed without mishap on the landing area.

## Cross-porting beats turbulence

In an incident report a little while back I read of someone having problems with canopy turbulence generated from buildings or whatever. This is a problem my CAU team encountered flying stair-step pieces one behind the other in transitions, often resulting in canopy collapse. We came up with a simple hot knife modification which greatly improved the handling of our canopies in several ways.

All we did was take a dinner plate and hot knife two large cross ports per rib and leave the third (rear) one standard (see diagram). This improved the handling of our canopies in turbulence: the openings became better, and no end cell closures -

After the ruck sack was retrieved - phew! we attached the second rig and were ready for drop test two. Although the rig was thrown the same way the second drop test ended rather differently to the first. As the rig was thrown off the edge of the cliff the whole thing turned through 180. This happened before the pin was pulled from the closing loop. Subsequently the rig was facing the cliff when the canopy deployed - on heading but now facing the cliff! After striking the cliff a couple of times the canopy hung up on a rock. The canopy was retrieved and has now been repaired.

Why did the rig turn 180? Well, the launchers swing caused the rig to go head down and twist probably because it wasn't thrown square to the cliff. From the throwing point of view I think that one should try to get the rig off as squarely as possible and not to concentrate entirely throwing for throw forward distance and momentum. We learned several things from this drop test and we won't make the same mistakes again.

BASE 134

when dynamically stalled from canopy collapse. Then, the toggles released (full drive), the canopies reinflate completely without using brake. Most importantly they all all safer near the ground. This is probably common information to all, but it is amazing the number of older canopies around with little or no cross porting (Ed: Cruisair?).

Also in training we had toggles fly off on opening, tying up through either slider or cross connector - usually combining with a 180 opening! This occurrence is very rare but in competition we 'masking tape' the toggles down or hand tack with cotton. Our toggles are the velcro attached, hard end of toggle through riser loop type. I have incorporated this into every BASE jump as well. I've just read all your back issues and think what you're doing is a great service to the sport.

Andrei Percio BASE 164, Australian 12

Ed: Thanks for your letter. You've probably read in BASELINE that many BASErs are changing to Zoo toggles, which can't come free on opening in the manner you describe. It's especially important to change to Zoo toggles if routing brake lines outside of keeper rings as the hard end type toggles can jam on in the event of a line over.

# jumping off!

## 245' Two Way

This sequence captures two jumpers making the first linked two way off a 245' suspension bridge (Sept 86). It also tells an interesting story. The jumper closest to the camera is being buddied. Note the buddy uses both hands, one to hold the folded pilot-chute while the other keeps the surplus bridle clear of the jumper on exit. His companion free falls 'towing' his BASE pilot--chute for a faster deployment.

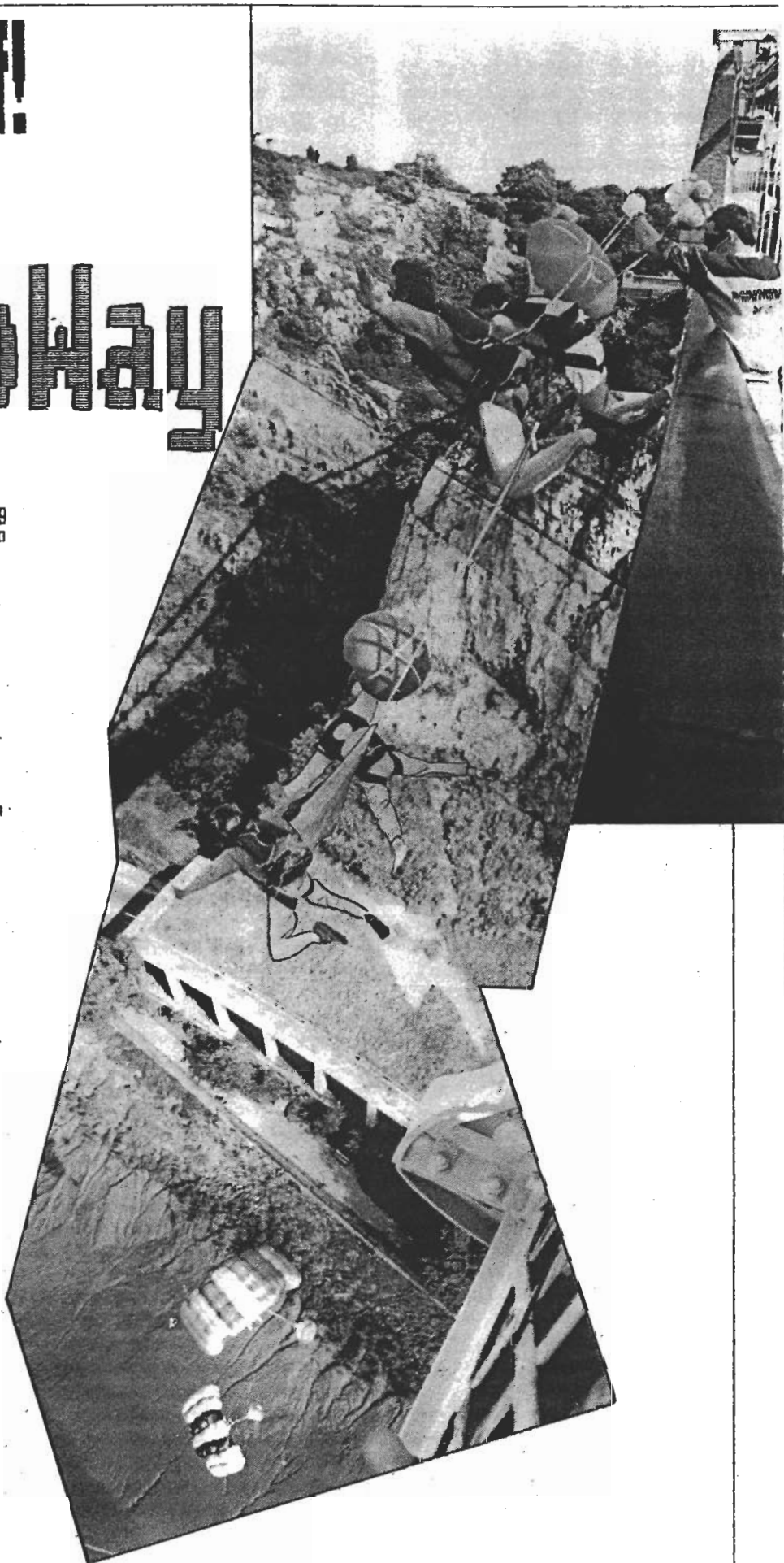
Starting from a sitting exit they had planned for the free faller to delay until his companion reached line stretch. But notice how a gentle head wind has already fully inflated the completely exposed pilot-chute on exit.

By the second frame (1 second approx) you can see the inflated pilot-chute is starting to pull back the jumpers arm and effect his body position. Looking at his partner we see the canopy wad has only just lifted off and the free stowed lines are still in the container. It will be another 15 feet or so until he reaches line stretch!

The final part of the sequence shows that the free faller managed to grit his teeth and hold on for another second before releasing the tugging pilot-chute. And we can see his canopy turned slightly on opening as a result of his uneven body position, low left shoulder = left turn (looking back over your shoulder after pitching might have a similar effect). The free fallers shadow on the exposed mud gives you an idea of his opening height. The chosen landing area is the narrow strip of grass running alongside the flood wall.

### Towing Tips

For this length delay the jumper would have found it easier towing the pilot-chute with atleast half of the mesh folded in his hand. That way he would have had the reassuring benefit of a fast pilot-chute deployment but without upsetting his body position. This is the site where an earlier jumper had a static-line total and lived (see Early Days).



# beating the base blues

It was almost 10 weeks since I did my first BASE jump and I had been restless ever since waiting to do more. I had been to several sites with friends, discretely checking out the suitability for a BASE jump. However each time there had been a reason why we couldn't go further. There were problems of access, landing areas or unsuitable conditions. We spent several sleepless nights travelling to North Wales to climb a 700' mast, only to find the winds strong and down the wire on reaching the top. A loud humming noise from the top did nothing for our peace of mind either!

It was getting me down. I had a bad case of the BASE blues - all the travelling and sleepless nights. Surely, I thought, there must be some BASE sites in the North West of England just waiting to be found.

Then, one of my mates mentioned a 100' railway bridge over water not 10 miles from my house. This sounded to good to be true. After work the following day we both went to have a look. I had packed my kit just incase it seemed possible. We parked in a pub car park, climbed down onto the railway track and walked the 500yds to the bridge. It looked perfect. It was a single track bridge with plenty of room either side. There were four stone arches and between two of them was water. We decided it was

## "All the travelling and sleepless nights were getting me down... by W. Viaduct 1

too risky to jump into unknown water that night, so we decided to wait until we'd had time to test for underwater obstacles - and warmer weather. We did however test drop my rig from an end arch over land and saw a perfect deployment.

Two weeks later during Wimbledon week it was hot enough to have another go. We arranged to meet at the house of a friend who was to be our cameraman for the evening. I had packed my kit the night before and took the precaution to remove the reserve to save drying it. We had taken the precaution of taking another scuba-diving friend along to stand by as safety cover in the water and to check out the depth. It certainly made me feel better when he disappeared for a while under water and then came up to tell us there were no old cars or bikes down there and that the water was over 15' deep. As it was a warm evening we decided to jump wearing shorts and tee-shirt.

My buddy was going to hold my 52" pilot-chute. At the time I thought I didn't really need a large pilot-chute for the

jump, thinking it was too low for free fall. However, I thought the drag from the pilot-chute and my deploying canopy would keep me upright if I entered the water before my Cruiselite did its job.

We checked the kit and then made sure there were no trains coming. I climbed over the side and gave my buddy the pilot-chute. I looked down at my diving friend, lying on his back in the water 100' way and thought how different this was to the last BASE jump off a 1000' mast. This time I didn't have the company of experienced BASErs to dispatch me.

I looked down and saw the cameraman was ready. My buddy was ready. I took a deep breath, let go of the rail and LAUNCHED! Head high, my previous mast jump flashed through my mind. Here I am again! Only now I know why I am doing this. A few seconds before I wasn't so sure. I heard the pin pop out, the ruffle of the unfurling canopy and then I felt the deceleration. A full canopy, bang on heading after 70' or so. Just enough time to grab the back risers and stall into the water. I looked back up to the exit point and felt great.

My buddy who hadn't been so sure about the idea now wanted to go for it having just watched my successful jump. We packed his Pegasus into my wet container and I held his pilot-chute. A slow, long count down and off he went. The same result, a quick opening, 10 off-heading and into the water.

It was so quiet. There were only two couples wandering by in the two hours we were there. Instead of the usual apres jump breakfast - after an early morning BASE jump, we all went for a few pints to celebrate.

I know this isn't exactly a hard core BASE jump - 100' over water, but it does have several advantages.

- \* It's quiet and low key.
- \* It can be done early in the evening.
- \* It's a good safe introduction site for first time BASE jumpers and ideal for test dropping BASE packed equipment.
- \* It will count as an 'S' for my BASE award.
- \* And it's close to my home!

Since this first jump, a total of eight BASE jumps have been made from this site. Five of these have been by first-time BASE students.

*WV #1*

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

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I had booked a flight to go to Japan with a friend who was a very experienced BASEr. We hoped to be able to do some BASE while we were there. As I still had to make my first jump my friend and I agreed that it would be nice if I could have a BASE jump under my belt prior to our trip. A 245' bridge jump was proposed and two of my friends decided that they too would like to be involved.

Unfortunately we had nobody at hand to get help from and so ended up getting our packing instructions over the phone. My rig was packed and unpacked several times until we were all happy that the instructions we had been given were okay. My rig was packed, using break tie to secure the rig closure and to attach the static-line directly to the top of the canopy - pilot-chute and bridle removed. I was ready to go. One of the other rigs was packed but not in my presence.

Jump night arrived and once we had assembled we left for the bridge. By now we were all really buzzing at the thought of our first BASE jump. We had total confidence that the two rigs which were already packed were going to open fine. On the way to the bridge we stopped at a friend's house to get our third rig. Soon the rig was packed and we all decided that the packing method we were using was a good one. Albeit we were ready to explore a brand new experience. correction to reach the riverside footpath, our chosen landing area. We had decided that jumping over water was an extra safety margin. We peered down into the dark trying to see what we had for a landing area.

At the bridge we went for a casual walk across the footpath to work out where to make our exit point. We chose an exit point over water but close enough to the river bank to require only a gentle canopy

Jump time was still some time off. The waiting was terrible, nervous pees were contagious. We had agreed to drive onto the bridge at 11.30. As the big hand crawled its way around towards half past I kitted up. I felt one hundred percent sure I would survive this jump. My friends had decided to wait and gear up on the bridge. Half way across the bridge our driver stopped to drop us off, we were out in a matter of seconds. In my mind there was only one way for me to get off the bridge, that was down under my canopy. Now my heart was racing, there was to be no turning back. Three late night strollers walked past enjoying the panoramic night time view. The clang of our static-line attached oorebene's rung out as they hit the bridge metal work.

Then we were all kitted up. We checked each other out, all our static-lines were attached to the bridge. And then there were three ready to leap. One leapt, disappearing into the blackness. His canopy opened, stalled and flew him into the steep slope directly under the bridge. I pushed off keeping my eyes fixed on street lights ahead of me. I felt the first break-tie snap, then the second as I was pulled upright with a perfect opening. Now approaching the dark footpath I realised I couldn't see the ground in enough detail. I piled in and broke my foot. Number three leapt. Silence, he just kept on going... all the way to impact in the cold water beneath him. Two and a half hours later he was taken to hospital. One walked away, one hobbled and the other frapped but lived to tell the tale.

I knew in my own mind there must be more to BASE. Having watched a friend go in isn't much fun. We knew what the cause of the accident was, our friend had had a 'total'. The 100lb break tie attaching the end of the 9 foot static-line directly to the canopy attachment point broke at the same time as the 50lb break-tie used to close the container leaving the canopy in the now open container. Ironically the canopy floated to the surface and spread out on heading. Our friend remembers floating back to the surface and seeing the canopy he thought 'that was a hard landing...'

We were a group of three friends who wanted to do a BASE jump but had nobody to ask for help. We all suffered in our own little way for our eagerness to do a BASE jump. We felt we needed to tell someone who had a way of contacting other BASE jumpers to tell them about our nightmare. 'Jump' seemed an ideal way. Hopefully no one will have to go through what we went through again. In my mind Direct static-lining without a pilot-chute is not a healthy way to do a BASE jump.

In hindsight we should have sought better advice. If you seriously want to make a BASE jump for Gods sake get help before you start. There are people out there who will help you. They may be hard to find but that is the BPA's fault for trying to drive BASE underground. It may not be easy to find someone but get help. It is essential. We were lucky. How lucky are you feeling?

Ed: If you need to static-line consider either Direct Bagging, Buddying.

# Early Days

**On September 24 1986 I made my first ever BASE jump.**

**This is a story of how a sport which can be so much fun**

**can so easily turn into a nightmare...**



Andy Calistrat, BASELINE editor exhibits classic form off a 1900' Oklahoma mast.



# BASE Beach Party

"Finally, after years of consideration it's happening!" announced the classy postal invitation. BASE 60 was organising our first BASE accuracy meet complete with beach party, barbeque, swimming (brr!), a BBA judge, medals, trophies and certificates for everyone and unbeatable jump prices - free! Reading on I learnt that any 'low pulls' would earn a bust with disqualification for a mal. "Leave your politics and inhibitions at home" read the invite.

"There's gonna be a party and we want to party with you!"

Come the day and we all eventually met in a sheltered corner of a wind swept field above the jump site. Eight competitors had been invited with experience ranging from 2 - 85 BASE jumps, 77 - 3,000 skydives, an average of 33 BASE jumps/8-55 skydives each. It also turned out to be a celebration for the organisers 29th birthday. Apart from the niggling headwind the conditions seemed perfect.

An hour before the meet the Chief Judge and Meet Director stood on the shoreline, next to an impromptu driftwood wind sock facing out into the steady 10-15 knot onshore breeze. Above the competitors waited anxiously for the verdict. The top-to-bottom radio crackled into life - Yes, the meet was on!

Deciding where to 'spot' the accuracy target provided it's own unique problem as the meet included both freefallers and static-liners (all using squares). The awkward wind-conditions, blowing at a 45 angle onto the beach, meant that the usual landing area - a long strip of shingle beach, had to be abandoned in favour of the far shorter left section.

There quickly emerged two distinct schools of thought over the spotting - land down wind and be damned, or, softly upwind. The upwind option would be fine for the freefallers with their 5 - 8 second canopy rides but awkward for the static-liners with their longer rides - with water/rock overshoot. A compromise was reached - which didn't really suit anyone! The large paper accuracy cross was unfurled and weighed down with pebbles slightly upwind of the exit point.

Back on top as we prepared our gear the local Coast Guard Land Rover patrol appeared in view. We quickly elected one of our party to handle the PR. The Coast Guard admitted it wasn't the sport for him but wished us luck and left us his phone number to call when the meet was over and for future visits to the site \*. He also



**Base 106 holding pilot-chute in the conventional 's' folded style as he starts his delay.**

gave us directions to the nearest working phone in case we needed to call for any rescue help. We were ready for round one.

The three static-liners went first using a variety of methods. The free fallers looked on with 'interest'. Static-line square malfunctions (using break-tie) have already killed two and badly injured a third British BASE jumper.

The first to go was a young lady making her second BASE jump. She composed herself at the start of the narrow exit runway and before long took several determined steps and was over the edge. The effect of the head wind became obvious on inflation. For a second the canopy hovered feet from the cliff fully pressurised with little height loss. Brakes off and she headed out on her pre-arranged flight plan, slightly bobbing in the headwind lift,

to 'S' off some height before turning back for the target.

Below the Accuracy Judge watched her progress ready to cover the distance to the point of touch down (measured in judge-sized paces). After a long canopy ride she disappeared from our view flying back towards the cliff. We waited with trepidation to hear if she'd landed OK. A few seconds later the Judge radioed up to give the score of our first BASE accuracy competition - 40 paces!

Next came a young man making his second BASE jump - now BASE 228. After a good strong exit he went a little head down but was soon pulled up by a good on-heading opening. Third to go was an accomplished international BASEr. Not quite ready for 300' free falls he also chose to use a static-line. Off he leapt with his distinctive banana arch for yet another fast on-heading but curious opening. Tail high, the leading edge of his Maverick canopy dived down lunging for air to pressurize the cells.

The Maverick settled down as soon as he pumped the brakes and corrected a slight turn.

With some relief, the static-line strong point rope was pulled-back out of the way and the first of our five free fallers, BASE 107, stepped down onto the exit runway. Standing there head down arms by his side he resembled an Olympic high diver preparing for his dive. I'm sure he was also re-living a pilot-chute snivel (caused by a tight container loop and too short a delay) on his last visit to the site! After 30 seconds, his fore arms now raised he confidently started his 6' run to the rounded drop off point. He dropped silently from view in his characteristic standing up, legs straight, free fall position, pilot-chute in hand. A few seconds later we heard a muffled "tierrack!" and faint, but distinct wind blown cheers from the growing party on the beach.

The next competitor, BASE 190, exhibited a totally different school of free fall style, head high, arms low, feet up. He pitched his pilot-chute with an easy under-arm flick - to good effect, another fast onheading opening. It's interesting to see how BASE students take the style of their teacher, in this case obviously BASE 60.

Those of us left at the top waited to hear his score. "Three paces" crackled the radio. The competition was heating up. Then there were three, BASE 60 - the psychedelic warrior resplendent in day-glo face paint and headband, myself and BASE

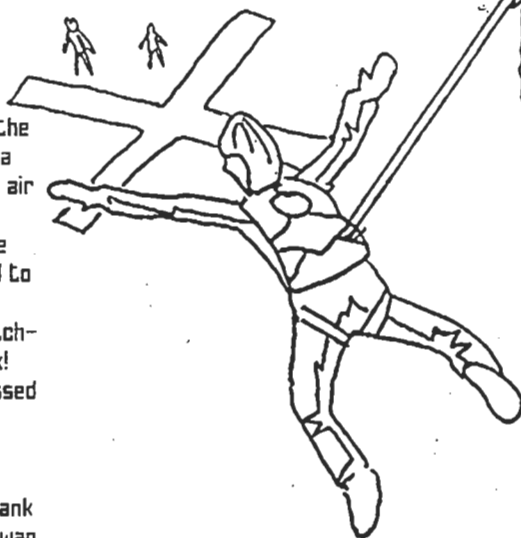


106 who was the next to go. Little did the beach party know but they were in for a thrill, BASE 106 likes to build up a little air speed before making his throw. A few unhurried but purposeful strides and he placed himself knees down into the void to start his delay! On the beach, directly over the spectators, his lanky outstretched frame darkened the sky... Kerrwack! The static-liners were becoming impressed with these clean on-heading free fall openings.

Now it was getting cold. The pale October sun had disappeared behind a bank of clouds. BASE 60, clad in his lurid Hawaiian shirt was starting to shiver so claimed the last but one slot. After checking each other out I radioed down a two minute warning. Soon he was off, slightly twisted at the waist to compensate for his hearty last push off the cliff. His slightly twisted position emphasised his distinctive head high, arms down exit. As he dropped from my view I was reminded it had been three years since I had last watched him go, that time he disappeared into cloud on an early



**Towing a partially inflated pilot' to squeeze an extra 1/2 second of free fall time. All but 3 to 4 inches of netting stowed with surplus bridle in hand - routed out between thumb/1st finger.**



morning mast jump. BASE 60 was the first to free fall this site back in 1984 (cover Jump 1985). On that occasion none of his skydiving friends wanted to come and watch!

'Hurrrumph!' The shouts of approval drifted away and I stood alone folding my own pilot-chute. Everyone else was down and safe - now it was my turn to face the fear. Standing at the start of the runway, eyes fixed on my final stepping point I couldn't help wonder what waited for me three seconds down over the edge...

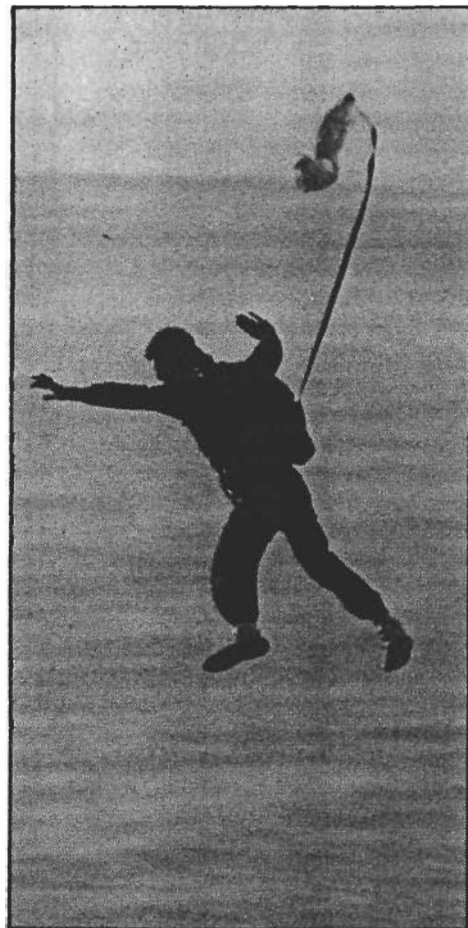
Then I was in free fall watching the undulating cliff face unfold in front of me and there below me was a strange new sight - ten heads staring back up at me. Wow! So I waved back with my free hand and released my gently tugging pilot-chute.

Overshooting the target and was immediately surrounded by my fellow competitors. A welcome beer was thrust into my hands.

'Aaooooh!' Hugs and hand shakes and the party began. His light felt we hastily gathered firewood and built a fire in a shallow 'cave' at the top of the beach directly beneath the exit! A few hours later after our beach fire died down (still only 6.30pm!) and it was off to a pub where BASE 60 announced the scores, handed out the medals and a certificate for every one present, and the party continued.

#### Post Script

Large BASE loads are not usually a good idea. Most BASEers prefer to jump in small groups of just two or three, and then



**Throwing your pilot' on exit can leave you with an uncomfortable wait as the pilot' slowly snakes up to the end of the bridle!**

people they know well. It's safer on all counts; you can keep a check on your 'attitude' and know, through past experience where to draw the line. Larger loads have an unhealthy habit of making decisions that a smaller group wouldn't. This meet was a special occasion, we were aware of the multiplied 'risk' factor and the organiser and jumpers took extra special care and things went smoothly. Everyone had a good opening and a safe landing. As the invite requested, politics and inhibitions (?) stayed at home and we had a great party!

#### Accuracy results:

1st ..... BASE 190  
2nd ..... BASE 106  
3rd ..... BASE 60

**BASE 28**

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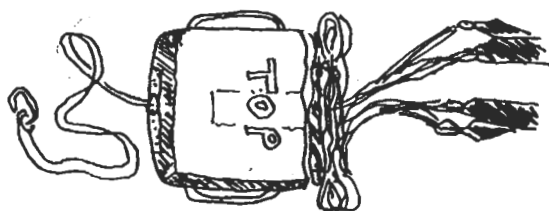
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# Direct Bagging



Direct bagging is a popular Californian  
technique for static-lining square canopies  
from short objects. Unlike other  
static-line methods the canopy is deployed  
from a bag held by an assistant.

Bagging has a lot going for it's favour,  
especially safety. In his article 'Romancing  
the Rope' (BASELINE Vol 2, Issue 1) DB  
pioneer Mark Hewitt, reckons the only  
malfunction possible with a correctly pack-  
ed DB is a line over (this mal can be fixed  
using Hewitt's free brake line mod).  
Bagging eliminates the risk of premature  
break-tie failure (1 incident 1982, 1  
accident 1986) and canopy damage - an  
undue stress on the central attachment  
point. The use of a back up static-line and  
re-inforced bag eliminates the risk of a  
total (1 British fatality 1982). The  
static-line back up is there in case the bag  
gets dropped or pulled from the assistant's  
hands, and, can hold the jumper in the  
event of bag lock.

Curious to see how D-Bagging compared  
to Buddying (packing for free fall and  
getting pilot-chute assist), we gave it a  
try using a 175' 7 cell reserve packed nose  
down into a modified square free bag (We  
used a reserve simply because the main was  
already packed for free fall in a velcro  
rig). It took a little thinking to work out  
which way up to place the stacked canopy in  
the bag - the wrong way up would mean  
instant 180 off opening. The lines were  
then stowed on the outside of the bag.

Following Hewitt's advice we took the  
precaution to mark TOP on the top side of  
the bag. To get the rig to the exit point  
we 'field packed' the bag into the container  
and tied it shut with a pull-up cord - having  
taken care not to twist the bag! A 375'  
platform site with clear landing area was  
chosen for the test jump.

At the exit point we laid the rig down and  
carefully opened the container. Then with  
the assistant holding the bag, the jumper  
put on the now empty rig. The short  
static-line back up was attached to a  
strong point. After checking we hadn't put  
a twist in the lines the jumper climbed the  
safety rail commenting how strange it felt  
to be wearing an empty rig! The assistant  
now controls the canopy heading - experie-  
nced baggers tell of angling the bag to  
determine the canopy heading! For this  
jump we figured straight ahead would be  
just fine so the bag was held up behind the  
jumper.

After a final check (by the bag holder)  
the jumper stood up from the lower rail  
the jumper sprang off head high - to keep  
feet clear from the suspension lines. As he  
dropped away the lines unstowed and out  
slid the canopy for a fast on-heading  
opening. The opening didn't seem quite as  
crisp as a conventional buddy/static-line  
deployment but that might well have been  
because of the small size of the canopy,  
but it's fast. In US jumps have been made  
from as low as 9 floors over water bagging  
(Jump Oct 87). Afterwards we wondered  
whether a light 20lb break tie might help to  
hold back and help unfold the canopy before  
it is snatched from the bag?

### Bagging v Buddying?

From both the jumpers and the bag  
holders point of view bagging seems more  
'fun'. On one hand there's less for the  
jumper to worry about. The canopy is  
already out of the container, you just  
have to fall away to stretch it out. It's  
less stressful for the bag holder too. You  
don't have to worry about anticipating the  
line stretch snatch as you do buddying.  
For the assistant it's a whole bunch of new  
sensations the rapid fire whirr as the line  
groups pull free from the rubber bands  
inches from your face, and then the  
strange feeling of being left holding a  
suddenly empty bag. Mind you there are  
some sites where you may not have room or  
time to use a DB i.e. Clifton with the spiked  
exit rail. Buddying is 'cleaner' - easier for  
no fuss exits, just hand over your  
pilot-chute and you're in business. Also  
there's nothing quite like the satisfaction  
(or is it relief?) of giving a friend a good  
clean buddy deployment.

Bagging is now firmly established in the  
USA. It will just be a matter of time  
before Brits visiting the States 'learn it'  
and bring it back to the UK. Of course not  
everyone likes doing low stuff or static-li-  
ning. BASE addict Rick Payne comments 'I'd  
rather watch TV than DB!'. Still, what  
ever turns you on and you might be trying  
to complete the BASE circuit. More impor-  
tantly it's a safe proven technique that  
beats the hell out of our original break-tie  
system. The technique is there if you  
need to use it.

### Further information:

'Romancing the Rope' by Mark Hewitt,  
BASELINE Vol 2 No. 1.

# Beyond the Truth Barrier

by BASE 60

Last weekend I went back to North London and jumped a building again. My third off it. I have a Fury and with its exceptional lift I had no problem reaching the landing site, a building plot which is becoming smaller as the construction continues. The jump involves flying over a road and a lot of hostile looking steelwork in the dark. From 250' safety looks a long way off!

The manner of the dive prompted me to ask myself a few questions not least of which was the classic "What in Gods name am I doing here?". You see I went alone. I went there on the tube train, landed, then walked off to a bar for a cold beer with a kit bag full of unpacked Fury and a chest full of pounding adrenalin.

It struck me in this crowded bar and then in the even more crowded tube that nobody would dream of what I had just done. So then, here's my version why.

Justifying the risk is difficult until you examine the motive. Some people like to be scared. Personally I'm a coward, fear doesn't turn me on at all. But what really makes me buzz is knowing that I have the ability to control my fear! It's also a great way of stating your existence if you like. To go through the fear barrier is like shouting "I AM". It's what has also been termed 'the moment'.

Quite simply it's spiritual evolution. Some say BASE jumpers have a death wish but we know it's the opposite - it's a passion to live. We become more because of it. Sometimes someone has an accident and they stop jumping. Now to me that is strange. It's like you know the risk but kid yourself that it won't happen to you. That's a new and far more real obstacle than just fear alone, that's the truth barrier.

We are all fallible and sometime we will all die. That is not up to us, it's the manner of life which is our choice. When I was bouncing down the side of the Barbican I remember saying over and over, "...that's it, I'm going in". But I didn't so a few days later I made another BASE dive. Like I said it's a statement of your existence, you know like "I'm still here!".

During 1987 there were a few fatalities in regular skydiving in Britain and one in BASE. Whilst on one hand defending itself to the media the BPA has reinstated its life ban on proven BASEr's. As we all know this is a desperately counter-productive move directly attributable to ignorance.

I went there on a tube train.

landed, then walked off to a bar with

with a kit bag full of unpacked Fury and

and a chest full of pounding adrenalin



A skydiver might say to a climber "Wow! I could never do that, what if you fall?". So the climber replies that he's tied off to a belay point below and he puts them every six feet. But man, he would never want to jump 10,000' from an aeroplane. Of course to a jumper that doesn't compute, he's got a parachute. It's like, what if the climbers belay point works loose and falls out? Or what if the jumpers 'chute doesn't open? Well, they each know that's not going to happen and even if it does then they each have another don't they? But now and then a climber falls and dies and sometimes it's a parachutist. It's a fact that in adventure sport it's always everyone else who is crazy.

We all know the fear barrier but hopefully as long as the word is spread, those who face the truth barrier and survive (or otherwise) will be the minority.

To all you would be BASErs out there, don't let stances like that of the BPA be the death of you! Look before you leap. Seek out answers, be ready to learn and you will find someone to teach you. Know fear, know pain - no fear, no pain. BASE 60

BASE 60



An unidentified person makes the first jump from the 516' Blackpool Tower.



Take it from me you don't want to have a cliff strike. Before my 'education' I'd wondered why earlier victims hadn't been able to either pack better, or turn the canopy away before impact. Now I have some hard earned answers. It's disturbing to note that cliff strike injuries and fatalities have claimed jumpers of all experience levels. Having survived a cliff strike I can understand why. Off-heading openings, especially the really nasty ones, happen when you least expect it or need it. Jumping slider down you'll be opening close to the wall with potential impact only a couple of seconds away.

## Off-heading openings.

The common factor of all cliff strikes is an off-heading opening. Off-heading openings occur for a variety of reasons but they can generally be divided into two types:

- 1> canopy opens facing off-heading
- 2> canopy turns quickly off-heading

The first is often a sign of the canopy wad turning on deployment, the other could be any number of things: slack packing, body position - dipped shoulder > head down > unstable, and uneven canopy inflation. It might just be the symptom of another problem - a snapped brake line or soft toggle that's come free.

Line-overs - the unseen culprit?

I now think that line-overs might also be the cause of some unexplained off-heading openings. Last year at Bridge day we saw at least one canopy turn off-heading because of a brake line over the back corner which cleared by the time the canopy had turned a sharp 90. Speaking later to the 250+ jump BASEr, he knew his canopy had turned off but from below he hadn't seen the brake line. Food for thought.

## line/riser twists

Another cause is the unstable opening i.e. radically head down (first-timer?) or maybe even inverted (slipping on the edge?). In these situations there may be line or riser twists. If you're lucky your canopy may be facing forwards. I once had riser twists after going radically head down on a short delay camera jump and found I could correct the canopy heading by reaching above the twist and grabbing a rear line group, untwisting (easy with riser twist) once flying away on heading. With line twists (uggh!) you'll have to do the best you can. It's a grey area. Discuss it with your friends.

# Cliff Strikes

How to avoid having one - and a few things to try if all else fails

Whatever the reason for your off-heading opening you've got to learn accept two things:

- \* No one is immune from an off-heading opening - sooner or later.
- \* Off-heading openings aren't something to be frightened of.

If you're a careful packer you probably haven't had one for a while. You might have already been lulled into the false sense of security of a good pack job and long run of on-heading openings. If you haven't made many BASE jumps your fear factor and conscientious packing should keep you opening on-heading, for a while.

## taking evasive action with rear risers

How can you save your self? Firstly, let's hope you've already put some distance between your self and the cliff with a good launch. Secondly, you need well drilled reflexes. You've got to be able to act without thinking! And your FIRST reaction must be the RIGHT reaction if you're to save yourself. Going straight for rear risers should be your automatic reaction for any off-heading opening for two main reasons: it's faster and more reliable than grabbing for toggles, and rear riser turns rock the canopy back away from the object. Why not toggles? You will be wasting valuable time and there's a greater margin for error i.e. fumbling, missing one when faced with rock rush (yeah, just like ground rush). Plus, faced with a fast approaching rock wall you may only go for one brake leaving the other stowed, uh uh, prepare for impact (that's one of the mistakes I made). With rear risers you have three options. You can HAUL the canopy back onto heading with one riser, (complete the turn if the canopy already has momentum?), or, if heading directly towards the wall you can BURY both risers to stall back away before letting go of one riser to turn back onto heading. Be physical. Be flexible. Be confident. OK, now the bad news, you might still hit the cliff, perhaps as you swing forward as the canopy drops back but at least this impact should be less violent than full surge.

## The 'what next' attitude

In some situations you might find that the rear riser can't solve the problem. Finding your canopy in a turn on opening may be a just the symptom of another problem i.e. line-over, broken brake line, brake line/stabiliser entanglement for example. Time to start thinking. "This isn't working, what do I do next?" Now, you might need to fire one or both brakes to get back some directional control. Your action obviously depends on the situation. Think your options through before you make your next jump. Develop a 'what next' attitude, not just for cliff strikes but for all aspects of a BASE jump: pilot-chute hesitation, slider snivel, total malfunction etc...

## Practise makes perfect

The only sure way to learn how to use rear risers is to start doing it - leave those toggles alone. On your next few skydives try leaving the brakes on for a little while after opening and see how your canopy reacts to rear riser turns. The best practise is actually doing it for real. Yes, correcting off-heading openings. Count yourself lucky if you suffer the occasional 90 off-heading opening - it's a chance to stay sharp. Like any mal, you don't know how you going to handle it until it happens. After a few times hauling down the opposite riser you'll have it down pat and the thought of an off-heading opening becomes less scary - it's something you know you can deal with.

## Tunnel vision & brain lock

When you find your self swinging forwards under a surging canopy towards a solid wall you'll know just what it feels like to be that rabbit caught in your car headlights. 'Sensory overload to the max' as our American friends might say. The poor old brain (your thought processing area) just jams up. And it happens so fast. One second you're having a hoot in freefall, the next you're faced with a fast approaching rock wall. It's a feeling beyond fear, just an awful feeling of inevitability.

"This is it, I'm going in...". Of course if you've already hauled down a rear riser you've done everything you can, and if you've got enough room you should find your self rocking back away before impact. Of course you might not have enough time/distance to prevent the strike but we'll discuss that a bit further on. Start practising those riser turns with brakes on after a skydive. Get to know how your canopy reacts with the brakes still set.

## Reducing canopy surge with deeper brake settings

Yet another smart idea from California that's now been adopted by most seasoned BASErs. By setting your brakes closer to the stall point can reduce the opening surge. This will give you more time to react and slower forward speed should you hit. Go too deep and you'll find yourself stalling backwards towards the object. Yes, it's been done. One poor bloke bounced down a cliff under a stalled heavy Strato Cloud until he got the brakes off. How much deeper you go depends on several factors: your existing brake setting, how your canopy reacts in deep brakes, your weight, and so on. You might need anything from 3" - 6". Once you've found your mark get an extra finger strap setting put on the brake line. Make a skydive and see where your fingertrap points are in relation to the stall point. Then back off a few inches. If you can daisy chain your brake lines experiment with a few settings. Be cautious about trying deep settings for static-line jumps and be wary with unfamiliar gear and someone else's deep settings... Also, if you go deeper be aware that riser turns won't pull you back if a brake line snaps or fires on opening. You'll simply stall the canopy.

## Preparing for the worst

OK, here's the scenario: you haven't practised your emergency riser turns for a while, you were up all last night, you've just hastily packed for your third jump of the day, your canopy is still set on factory mega surge and in your mellow mood you just rolled off the cliff with minimal throw forward and... 'Whaccccc!' Your canopy's opened 120 off and you're two seconds from being knocked senseless on a rock wall. Well, let me speak from experience, here's what not to do.

Don't try to fend yourself off with an outstretched leg or arm - you'll find it's an instinctive survival instinct (just like those first jump students). It's a sure recipe for broken bones. Remember your

first parachute course and the magic PLF (parachute landing fall) position, feet and knees together, head tucked down and protected by your arms, rolling with the fall. Well, as you're impacting horizontally you can't do a roll but you can twist to one side to take the impact sideways on rather than head on and the other stuff should help too. Smitty, a survivor of both square and round canopy cliff strikes recommends tucking up into a ball. Get the idea? I twisted sideways but stuck out a leg at the last moment - it was an involuntary action, a spark lept across some points somewhere in the circuits of the brain. Fortunately I managed to protect my head with my arms - in first jump student fashion. Later I appreciated the damage to my sore elbow wasn't on my head.

Of course you might be unlucky and take the right action and still hit - as Dead Steve recently discovered. You might just not have the time/space to turn/fly backwards. Steve reports burying both risers and thinking "I mustn't stick my feet out" only to find his feet swinging up to strike the cliff as his canopy started to drop back. He broke bones but he managed to fly away from the wall, saving the risk of more body damage.

Some people have got away with putting legs out in PLF position (feet and knees together). Randy Harrison tells of doing just that on an 1800 foot cliff when he opened close to the cliff with a spinning canopy. Knowing his only chance of making a survivable landing below was by protecting his head and keeping conscious, he put his feet and knees together lifting them up as high as he could to take the impact feet first. That worked for him, he didn't actually break anything and he managed to turn his canopy away from the cliff. Then again six or seven other cliff jumpers didn't survive and several of them may have tried something similar. Prevention is your best option.

## That first IMPACT

What an impact, a sickening body blow that left me hanging senseless in the harness. Black and white slo-mo time, my hat spinning slowly above me as my canopy, now on auto-pilot, dropped back off the wall (now with line twists) to take another run at the cliff. Luckily for me I was now less than 150 feet off the ground and only struck two more glancing blows before 'landing' - ughhh. The canopy, luckily didn't hang up on the wall and stayed inflated. You might not be so lucky if your canopy snags up, deflates and then tears free (common canopy damage is lots of small rips

across the nose where it's been nibbling the cliff). Had the cliff in question been 1,000 feet, or 2,000 feet and not 300' I wouldn't have fancied the odds for my survival.

## Self Help

A final point to consider is what happens after your landing (that is if you don't end up hung up on the wall). Your problems might just be starting, especially if you're in a remote area. You might need to alert your ground crew or fellow jumpers to let them know you need help - if you're a self supported load your friends might not be able to see you. A small plastic hikers whistle attached to your harness could be invaluable here (Six long blasts is widely recognised as an emergency call). While you're waiting you should keep yourself warm - use your canopy, that will help delay onset of shock. If you've bust something you'll need to get it splinted. Improvise, I managed to use a piece of drift wood fixed with a camera belt. If something bleeds try to keep it elevated. Try to keep positive, it will help your friends who've got to work out a way to get you out of the area.

OK, so it's a grim subject, but if you're going cliff jumping you've got to face up to the risk. Get serious about it, check out your brake settings and practise your riser turns, because take it from those of us who've been there - hitting a rock wall is even worse than you could ever imagine.



# BASE Belgique

Having intended to hitch across Europe to Stuttgart for some bridge jumping, we found that two of us hitching, with packs was not only impractical, but bloody impossible. Finally, my cousin and good friend Paul settled for train-ing it, taking in a little of Belgium, France and Germany. With the exception of a few interesting buildings in Brussels that even the intrepid 007 couldn't penetrate, we found nothing suitable.

Five days of travelling and a couple of beers saw the money running low, so we decided to head back to Belgium's best known port. Checking into the Youth (being the operative word in my case) Hostel, we showered and decided to find something to eat. Walking into the stark sunlight we casually surveyed the prospective cafe's. It was then my jaw dropped at least 25,000 feet. To my right was a towering block just 400yds away. We made our way to the base to read the advertisement on the entrance doors:

## ROOFTOP RESTAURANT

100M HIGH

ADMISSION 300F

(not a bad price by Clifton Toll standards!). The only thing lacking seemed to be 'BASE Jumpers welcome'.

The recce proved to be unbelievable, a lift to the top floor allowed access through the restaurant to the roof. The BASEers dream, a 2'6" wall surmounted by a 1' grab rail. Part of the roof had another level accessible via a 9' steel ladder. This higher level allowed unviewed exits from the North and West facing walls. A kitchen window overlooked part of the steel ladder. With a little care this would not be a problem. Opening hours were between 11:00 and 13:00. This presented

two choices, either to risk being discovered upon a pre-closure security check or jump during opening hours. The latter seemed the only option. Having briefed Paul on the procedure for the OZ I decided that asking him to take pictures would not only psych him out but probably reduce his own buzz.

We returned to the building at 17:30, this I was felt sure was perfect. From past jumps I knew that there is sometimes a nagging doubt, "Go or No Go". I once came down from a building in Berlin because it didn't feel right. (I digress). The reception presented us with a potentially

disasterous problem. Pack on back I walked forwards to pay our 300F. A rather charming specimen of the Belgian female fraternity confronted us inquisitively. "Were you not up earlier?" she asked.

"Er, yes" I replied, avoiding the obvious double entendre.

"Then you do not have to pay again".

"Oh! Cheers..." (PHEW)

Onto the roof and only a couple of men to be seen, they soon departed - hand in hand I might add! I climbed the ladder undeterred. Paul passed the pack and I emptied the contents. Throwing the empty pack to Paul I realised that there was now no going back.

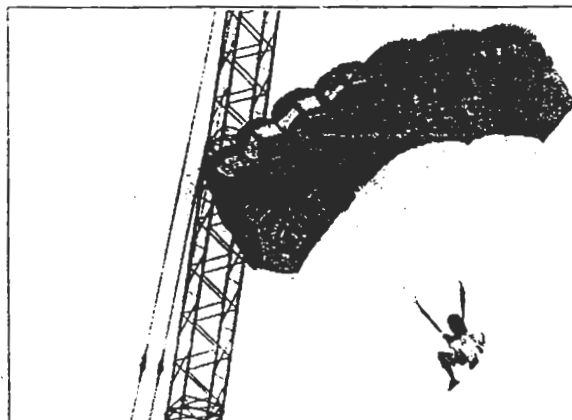
Paul made his way down the stairs while I made my final preparations and gear checks. When he was down on the OZ and signalling that all was clear I tied the 12' static line to a strong point, checked it and stepped over the wall onto the parapet. It was at this stage I felt the gut fear reach its crescendo. Two deep breaths and everything was cool. A few more and all fear seeped out leaving only a

warm anticipatory glow. It sounds corny but I guess that was 'the moment'.

A good launch and relaxed position allowed excellent vibes as my peripheral vision seemed to expand to host the panorama. Buildings, beach, sea and the facade of the northern wall streaking by. Another bang on heading opening from my old Cruise-air, back riser onto the line of the OZ. With plenty of time, brakes off and promenade ahead, the vibes were fantastic as I set up for landing on the small road (Vlaanderen Straat). A great landing - passing pedestrians agape as Paul and I simply stashed my canopy into the bag and strolled away from the scene. The owner of a nearby cafe ran into the street and shouted enthusiastically in Flemish, he appeared to have enjoyed the show! A wave goodbye and we were off - what a buzz!

The next morning we headed for Dover on the Jetfoil. Surveying the port from the sea offered a pleasant surprise. A full frontal of the 34 storey building heralded farewell. 'Tis only 'Au revoir - cheers Belgium'.

BASE 119



Feteris in full flight: Finally on side with the boys in blue

## Nick loves a jump

After years of doing it in places nobody wanted him to, including the police, Nick Feteris has gone legit.

That's right, the lad internationally known for performing his favourite pastime in public places illegally, dumped his bad boy image over the weekend and hurled himself from a 90-metre crane with blessings from the boys in blue.

Feteris is one of those slightly mad individuals who enjoy what's known as base jumping or parachuting from very low heights.

His list of achievements include tossing himself from the Statue of Liberty and World Trade Centre in New York, Wells Fargo Bank building in Los Angeles and into Melbourne's Yarra from a 80-metre crane.

On most occasions Feteris ended up being a touch less adventurous in a police cell.

Why? Well, as he tells it "for the compelling sense of adventure".

His and fellow daredevil Theo Thomas's 90-metre plummet at the weekend was the first legally sanctioned base jump in Australia which Feteris did to help his friends at printer/distributor Star Micronics open their new Sydney headquarters.

Being an advertising manager for a rival computer newspaper, we sincerely hope Star booked an ad through Feteris for his troubles.

By the way, to confirm the boy is a few chocolates short of a box he not only jumped once but four times.



# We learnt from this

One fine Sunday afternoon five of us set out for a nearby 150' bridge where two of our party planned to make a water jump. One was to test jump a small experimental single surface canopy, the other to make a Direct Bag (DB). For a fairly impromptu load organised that morning we felt we were adequately prepared. Before the day was through one of our party nearly drowned. This is our story.

We didn't have a boat so the jumpers were to wear a life jacket. We'd also have a shore crew ready with a life jacket who could swim out to help in case of any problems. Because we only had two life jackets we decided that the second jumper would wait for the first to return to the top to hand over the life jacket. Both jumpers did dive inflating the life jacket which had an air tube and CO2 cartridge release.

The first jumper test-jumping the static-lined 11' x 11' experimental canopy had a snivel and line twists that made the canopy even smaller! He was sore for the rest of the day from the landing - big splash! He slowly swam to shore without needing the help of our ground crew. While he dried off and changed our top crew, now off the bridge, reported a visit from the police - a passing motorist had reported seeing a jumper. The police left but we felt it wise to forget the other bridge jump.

Directly under the bridge was a sheer cliff wall maybe 80, 90 feet high. It looked jumpable and the other jumper who only needed an 'E' for BASE decided to DB off it. By now we had met two more jumpers who had also arrived to look at the bridge. The new exit point was a 150' swim away from the nearest shore and our ground crew. The jump went well but the jumper needed help from the shore crew to swim the last 75'.

On reaching the shore some of the canopy lines caught on the branches and roots of a submerged tree trunk. It took another 15 minutes in the cold water to free all the lines - if they hadn't been at the shore this could have meant serious problems. The ground crew takes up the story: We were drying off, congratulating ourselves about the success of our jumps when a call came down to say that another of our friends was now packing to make the jump. He hadn't planned to jump but was impressed by the DB and also needing an 'E' for BASE it was an opportunity he didn't want to miss. He didn't have his rig so



borrowed an unpacked canopy and DB from one of the other visiting jumpers. Not being familiar with the technique or the size and characteristics of the borrowed canopy he set the brakes on the deeper anti-surge setting thinking this would give a faster opening.

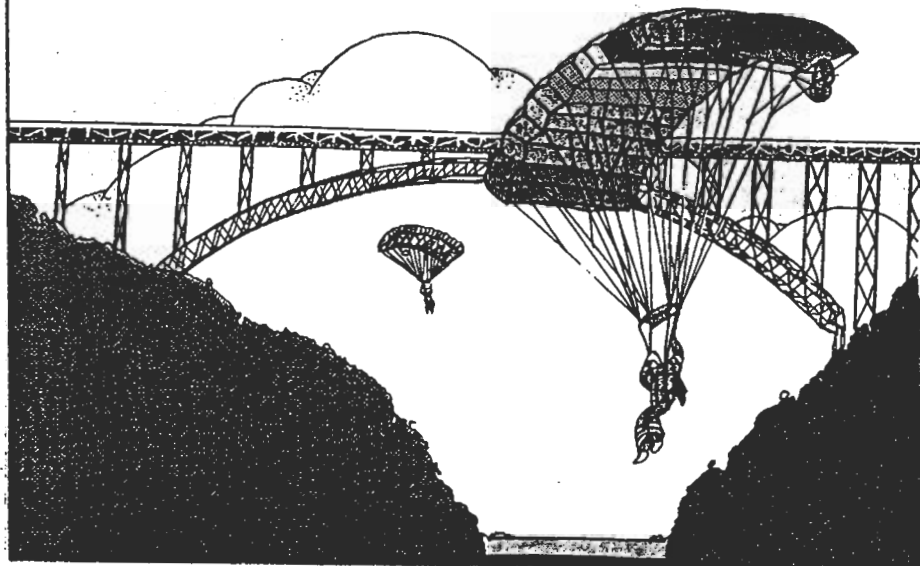
Incidents are usually a combination of several minor mistakes. The next mistake was to nearly tip the balance from incident to fatality. Our friend wanted to use his own life jacket - a foam cell buoyancy life jacket, which the ground crew had been using. Unlike the CO2 jacket the wearer has buoyancy the moment he puts it on. Our other two jumpers chose the CO2 jacket due to its minimal bulk. A radio call came down for the foam cell jacket but there was a mix up over colours (red v orange) and up went the wrong one. It was nearly dark and getting cold. From the bottom the preparations on top seemed to be taking ages. The shore swimmer was reluctant to get back into the water until he was needed. Exit: the jumper fell past the wall pulling out the large canopy which opened and stalled back towards the cliff. The canopy finally hit just before dropping the jumper an arms length from the wall.

What we didn't realise from below was that the sinking canopy lines had tangled and tied up his legs and to a lesser extent his arms preventing him from treading water. In this situation he couldn't inflate the unfamiliar life jacket and he started to flounder.

Eighty feet above, the radio man realised what was happening and called down to the shore crew to get in the water to help. As the shore swimmer pulled off his shoes and prepared to dive back into the water a sport fishing boat was approaching and the ground crew called for help.

The two fishermen were confused by the shouts from the ground crew for help but followed the swimmer starting the 150' swim out to the jumper. The swimmer took a while to cover the distance to the floating canopy. "30 feet away and I was exhausted, I looked and couldn't see our friend or any movement. It was a grim moment, I thought he'd already drowned." Luckily he hadn't, he was just managing to keep his upturned face bobbing on the surface. The swimmer blew a couple of lungfuls of air into the jumper's life jacket air tube and then found and fired the CO2 release cord. Our friend was safe and with the aid of the fishing boat we towed him back to the shore - still tangled with the lines. But there was still one more obstacle - the submerged tree stumps. Fortunately the jumper made it to the muddy shore line just before the canopy snagged. We were lucky, our friend could have so easily drowned if he hadn't had the foresight not to struggle with the lines and tie himself up even more. Talking later that evening about how, what and why things had gone wrong we came up with the following points. We all thought putting the episode on paper might help others from repeating our mistakes.

- 1 Not sticking to our prepared plan.
- 2 Being unfamiliar with DB packing, the borrowed canopy, and setting too much brake.
- 3 Using an unfamiliar life jacket.
- 4 No waiting water rescue. Our original rescue plans were for the bridge exit, not for the cliff. We should have thought "What if he hits the cliff and he gets knocked out?" Well we all now knew the answer to that - our friend would have drowned.
- 5 The rescue swimmer could have carried a hook knife to free any caught lines - if the jumper was at risk.



# Jump a bridge legally!

Bridge Day is the ultimate BASE boogie - if only a weekend. The attraction? Six hours of day light jumping off the best bridge in the world (876' high) plus a chance to meet and swap stories with 350 like-minded souls. It's a friendly atmosphere among both jumpers and local people, with suprisingly little 'Sky God' elitism, and the experience of walking out across the bridge geared up past the 1,000's of curious spectators is something else altogether. Roughly 50% of the jumpers are making their first BASE jump. At the other end of the spectrum you'll meet a few jumpers dashing past trying to make as many jumps as they can, eight seems to be the current record. And then there are the numerous novelty jumps with jumpers wearing fancy dress, doing gymnastics - gainers, front loops, backwards and group exits - (not all on the same jump...). Largest successful linked launch was five-way exit a few years back.

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October 21 is the date of this years Bridge Day. Contact organiser Jean Boenish and she'll be able to give you comprehensive information on everything you'll need to know: travel, accomadation - including staying free with local people, BASE equipment suppliers, white water rafting trips (on the Sunday) and the requirements of the site. Jean, who has been involved with the event since 1980, coordinates the jumping activities and produces practical jumper guides covering all aspects of the event. Every jumper is asked to make a \$15 - \$20 donation to cover the organisational

expenses. You'll be relieved to discover these include hiring the powerful white water raft rescue boats and a shuttle service back to the top.

## Getting there

Nearest entry point is Washington D.C. (6-8 hour drive) or New York (12 hour drive). Another option is to tag it onto a Florida trip and travel from/to there. If you're just going for the weekend flying on the Thursday to arrive at the bridge park Friday morning works well. Friday, the seminar day, is a chance to meet people, check out the landing area, get help with your gear and packing (plus a rig check), in contrast to the chaos of Saturday morning when most of the US jumpers appear. Hiring a car can be quite expensive on your own but becomes quite reasonable split between a few friends. This can be arranged at the airport. If you're on your own it might be worth considering taking a Bus (10 - 12 hours \$75 approx each way) to the nearest large town, Beckly. I did that last year and had no problems hitching the last 15 miles, or for about the same price you can take a train which should offer spectacular views of the gorge.

## Accommodation

Although this part of West Virginia is quite sparsely populated there are a numerous of motels and hotels in a 20 mile radius of the bridge. There are also several campsites close to the bridge which are popular with many of the US jumpers.

## Gear

You will be able to use your skydiving rig with a few modifications such as a larger BASE pilot-chute and an 8'4" bridle. You can order a BASE pilot-chute from several of the BASE riggers and arrange to collect it there. A long bridle is essential, especially if you can't get a large pilot-chute. If you have a tight container you will need to make a longer closing loop to reduce pin friction. Some sort of floatation gear is also a good idea - especially if you're a weak swimmer, but not compulsory.

## Packing

If you're unsure how to pack and need some help you'll be able to get the help and advice from one of the yellow shirt staff (easy to spot) on the Friday. To avoid line-over malfunctions first timers are advised to pack slider-up and mesh sliders are becoming increasingly popular - a must if your canopy snivels at slow air speeds.

## Site Requirements

New River bridge is one of the easiest BASE sites in the world. It's the ideal place to make your first BASE jump. Being a bridge off-heading openings aren't a serious problem, you're opening in clean air. By our standards it's high - 8 seconds high in fact. On the bridge there is a cordoned off exit area - to keep back the 1,000's of whiffos pressing for a close look, with two exit points with easy to climb wooden steps. At each exit point are two jumpmasters, one doing gear checks and the other to help you exit - there's no hassle, you leave when you're ready. A fifth jumpmaster has a radio link to the landing area controller and co-ordinates the flow from the two exit points to avoid canopy congestion (average of one jump every 35 seconds for six hours). The main landing area is a soft pit size sand bar at the edge of the river. Unless there's a strong headwind it's usually no problem to reach after a good slider down delay. Secondary landing sites are alongside the river with varying degrees of rockiness backed up by trees. If your accuracy isn't too hot you can always land at the edge of the river or make an intentional water jump, yahoo! See you there!

## Contact address for information:

U.S. BASE Association  
12619 So. Manor Drive,  
Hawthorne, Ca 90250 USA  
0101213 678-0183