

# The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL

Volume Two, Number Three



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Information related to BASE jumping in any aspect, whether on the ground or in the air, is informational only and readers are cautioned to exercise due care and restraint. The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL accepts no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of information printed herein.

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# **The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL**

Volume Two, Number Three/March 1992

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# OFF

## ABOUT THE COVER

Two of the 265 jumpers who enjoyed Bridge Day 1991.

Photo by Larry Swank Photography

# THE LEDGE

"Hello Nick, I'll be in Southern California on Thursday, are there any buildings I could jump and could you put me up for a few days?"

We get quite a few calls like that around here. It's one of the great benefits of doing *The JOURNAL*. I can't speak of all the interesting people we've met, but Jay Smith and Mike Alderman are worth a mention. Jay is a traveling BASE jumper who tools around the country in his Cessna 170. He's a class act. A southern gent from Alabama you can trust with the money and the women. Jay spent twenty years helping people in trouble before retiring, cashing out and taking it on the wing. Thanks for the visit Jay, it was quite the week.

Mike Alderman is a name you'll start to hear more. A man of less talk and more action who's been clocking at least three BASE jumps a week. He's an animal and could rapidly become a contender for KING. My first outing with Mike was a jump from a local building. As we prepared to launch Mike said, "Man, if I lived here, I'd have a hundred jumps off this building." It wasn't intended to insult my leisurely pace of BASE jumping. It was a statement of fact I later learned Mike could easily back up. On a more recent trip to an Arizona bridge I was so impressed with this man's desire and ability I told him so. "I'm current," he

said, "that's all it is."

Last year around New Year's Day I crossed everything and hopefully suggested we try and make 1991 a non-fatality year. Guess what? We made it, 1991 joins '83 and '85 as zero blunder years.

Still there were incidents, episodes and events of note. This issue's *Anatomy of an Accident* concerns a jumper who somehow flew his canopy into the wires of a California antenna tower. His canopy wrapped and slid along until the lines turned molten and dropped him from 300-feet. Incredibly, he lived, and you'll see how in *On the Wire*, by Jonathan Bowlin, BASE 76. Also, from the pen of the same author, a remembrance and a tribute to his good friend, John Carta, BASE 118.

A week on a pirate houseboat with a group of first-rate shipmates plus heaps of round parachute jumps made it a week to remember on Lake Powell. Look for that in *The Boat Folks*.

If you skipped Bridge Day 1991 because of 1990's long lines you missed a honey. Yet, new problems may be on the horizon for BASE jumping's big event. Read about that in *Bridge Day 1991*.

Static line is back! Well, maybe not altogether, but Simon P. Jakeman pens *On the Ropes*, a primer on this most misunderstood aspect of our sport. Warning: don't try this yourself. You might like it! *Last Off* is a roster of tall structures in selected cities. Planning a trip? Then check out this *Hit List*.

Oh yeah, one more thing. BASE jumping is included in Dan Poynter's newest version of *The Parachute Manual*. Boys and girls, we have arrived! Ye HAA!!

C-YA  
Nick Di Giovanni  
Editor



# Air Mail...

## TARZAN BASE

I really appreciate your magazine. BASE jumping is not very organized here in South Africa for two reasons. The BASE community is small and there's a two year grounding for any skydiver caught BASE jumping. There are some great sites to jump, but to my knowledge no South African has done all four BASE categories in South Africa. To our shame a visiting Aussie did all four within a month of being here. Unfortunately, the Parachute Association of South Africa (PASA) discovered his activities and banned him from skydiving here. Well, I'm hoping to change things before the end of the year. I've made bridge and antenna jumps and I'm planning several building and cliff jumps. Believe it or not, we do have 600-foot buildings here in darkest Africa. I was particularly impressed with Nigel Slee's article and the Jean Boenish interview. Keep up the good work. Cheers from down south!

STEVE MARSHALL  
EDENVALE, SOUTH AFRICA

## TAKING IT SLOW

I'm gaining an interest in the field of BASE jumping, and would like a subscription to your publication. Such jumping is of interest because it's a very demanding application of parachute technology and techniques. I expect to continue jumping from aircraft only during the near future, based on my personal risk management evaluation, but the first step is to learn more about this evolving sport.

PETER CHAPMAN  
TORONTO, CANADA

## He's BASE #271

You are a considerate human being. I appreciate the reminder copy of what I would be missing. The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL is informative, interesting and entertaining without the back biting and done in good taste. Yes, we are a small group and everyone is important, so the impression we leave with those who do get a glimpse of our activity should be a positive one. The JOURNAL presents a braced-up insight into the sport/activity of

BASE jumping. I only hope all who enjoy BASE jumping will follow in the footsteps of The JOURNAL.

P.S. Thanks to the most thoughtful one who left the 20-feet of lead rope at Lake Powell.

MIKE PALMER  
TALLEQUAH, OK  
BASE # (I DON'T REMEMBER)

## STEALING ALTITUDE II

Here's my twenty for a subscription renewal. I went skydiving last weekend for the first time. Mark Hewitt was my AFF instructor. What a blast! Before too long I'll be seeking BASE adventures with the Florida gang. Who knows, maybe I can talk my brother John into shooting a new film. *Stealing Altitude II* starring yours truly.

DAVID STARR  
TAMPA, FL

## WINTERS HUNG

I loved the articles *Roofing* and *Security Man and the Rice Paper Shuffle* as they capture so effectively the essence of BASE jumping. The contribution by cartoonist Jeff Winters shouldn't be minimized either, it's already hanging on my bulletin board. He really cracks me up!

SCOTT LILLIE  
LOS ANGELES, CA

## BASE OUTFITTERS

Just a note to publicly acknowledge Keith Jones for setting up a trouble free building jump in Los Angeles. Keith, along with David Nunn's help was invaluable and allowed me to complete my BASE award. I would also like to thank Kiwi Steve for his assistance during my cliff, tower and bridge jumps.

RANDY PEETERS  
BASE #310  
FOLSOM, CA

I was wondering if you could mention a special thanks to Keith Jones and David Nunn? They both went out of their way to help me finish BASE this past summer. Keith and David worked

hard to get my cliff and building jumps. Thanks also to you and The JOURNAL for putting me in touch with those guys.

JOHN CRUCHELOW  
BASE #308  
COLUMBIA, IL

## BASE GOES GOLD

I took the summer off from BASE jumping to fly 100 miles on a hang glider and win the GOLD in 10 Man Speed Star. The 100 practice jumps in subterminal air with 9 other skydivers was worth it! After six years of domination by "The TEAM" from Florida we brought the gold home to California. Send me another set of your fine JOURNALS and let me get caught up.

BOB "RIPCORN" MCCORD  
COSTA MESA, CA

## TOUCHED 'EM

I find your magazine informative, and for me, it doesn't only serve as a source of information but also a source of inspiration. Every time your magazine drops in with the mail I get that very special feeling of wanting to throw myself off everything high around the neighborhood. So, please give me more of that feeling. Send me four more issues.

MIKAEL NORDQUIST  
BASE 268  
UPPSALA, SWEDEN

I'm sure you heard about the accident at Walnut Grove. I witnessed the incident and put a great deal of thought into just what went wrong. I've written it up for the JOURNAL hoping someone out there can benefit from Lee Brown's experience. If you're ever in Northern California give me a call. I'm always happy to crew or help out if you need it. Your JOURNAL continues to be an inspiration and motivating force in my life. Thanks for doing a great job.

JONATHAN BOWLIN  
BASE 76  
SACRAMENTO, CA

# Around The BASEs

"It would be splendid to throw a bloke."

## MIKE ALLEN

Mike Allen, BASE 163, died in an automobile accident in Florida on March 4, 1992. Although circumstances of the accident are not fully known at press time, reliable reports described the incident as a head-on collision. News of the accident spread quickly throughout the jumping community. Mike was well known, respected, and as personable as they come. He would never dine on anything that had eyes or made noises, his photographic and video artistry showed traces of genius, his air-skills were smooth and dependable. Mike had many friends who have expressed sorrow for losing a friend, a man who coined the phrase, "I hope their not concerned for our safety." Mike Allen was thirty nine.

## THE SHAFT

In addition to a wind tunnel, the best equipped drop zones of the next century might include a Drop Shaft Facility. The apparatus is marketed as an inexpensive way to conduct microgravity experiments. The device is a shaft sunk into the ground with a capsule inside that freefalls the length of the tube before gradually being slowed to a stop at the bottom. The test model is approximately 2,250-feet long. Scaled up these drop shafts could be as deep as the DZ could afford to go and have capsules large enough for

yourself and a few friends.

## FLING ME

Hew Kennedy is a wealthy landowner in Acton Round, England. What separates Mr. Kennedy from his equally wealthy landowner neighbors is his Trebuchet. A Trebuchet is a giant medieval war machine also called a siege engine. This 4 story, 30 ton behemoth can heave a dead 500 pound hog over 500 feet. Dead horses, small cars and grand pianos are also crowd favorites. In ancient times such war machines were dreaded instruments of destruction. Early biological warfare was accomplished by flinging plague ridden horses over castle walls. They were also used to fling ambassadors and prisoners of war back were they came from, a great way to demoralize the enemy. It wasn't long before a few local jumpers showed up at Mr. Kennedy's estate with their rigs. Two dead man-sized hogs were launched wearing parachutes. One came down under canopy and the other frapped. The problem is the machine generates as much as 20 Gs during launch, (acceleration is zero to 90 miles per hour in 1.5 seconds.) Mr. Kennedy, who is still studying the problem says, "It would be splendid to throw a bloke."

## LOW PRO

Mitch Miller, a California jumper, may have scored a breakthrough in demo jumping. Mitch, along with some

of the area's most experienced BASE jumpers are currently talking with FAA officials regarding low altitude demo jumps. Low altitude means exits from as low as 500-feet. The idea isn't all that far-fetched when you consider pilots who can demonstrate proficiency, are allowed waivers to perform aerobatics down to ground level. BASE jumpers proficient in low altitude jumping should be afforded the same waiver. The FAA, at least initially, appears receptive to the idea. In time, just as in conventional BASE jumping, new gear and techniques will be developed that will make low altitude demo jumping safer. Can't you just see the Twin Otter screaming through show center at 500-feet with five floaters out.

## OH OH OHIO!

A 970-foot TV antenna tower is under construction in College Hill, Ohio. What makes this one different is it's free standing (without guy wires) and stands on three huge legs. The tower will be the 3rd tallest free standing structure in the world.

## FLITE-PAC

T&T Rigging has introduced a new backpack called the *Flite-Pac*. While meant to appear similar to other wilderness packs it's specifically designed as a backpack/gear bag for the wilderness trekking BASE jumper. It folds neatly into it's own pouch becoming the *Freefall-*

*Pac* that straps to the waist while jumping. Once on the ground your gear can be quickly concealed back into the *Flite-Pac* allowing you to blend in with other hikers. For more information or a copy of their catalog contact: T&T Rigging, 27475 Ynez Rd. #200, Temecula, CA 92591 Phone: (714) 699-5206

## EL CAP RECORD

Last summer, two Yosemite residents Peter Croft and Dave Schultz set a new record for speed ascents by climbing the nose route up the face of El Capitan. The two crested the top in four hours, 48 minutes and ten seconds.

## BUNGEE RULES

Florida and Georgia have begun to license operators of bungee jumping operations and a dozen or so other states are considering similar steps. "It would go haywire if we didn't control it," says Florida inspector Ronnie Greenman. Bungee operators are pushing for self regulation, "It's infinitely safer than it appears," says Thomas J. Woodard, head of Air Boingo, in Park City, Utah. Insurance is another problem for bungee operators. "It's difficult to get insurance based on actual risk, rather than perceived risk," says Martin Tilley of California's Altered States Bungee Company, a state that's also regulating bungee jumping. In October the first bungee fatality in North America took place not far from the Perris Valley drop zone. Hal Irish, 29, an instructor for the Ultimate Jump Company was killed after he became separated from the bungee during a jump from a tethered hot air balloon.

## JUST ANOTHER T-SHIRT

T&T Rigging's Troy Fink

recently picked up the phone to take an order for shirts the firm sells. The call was from Fresno, CA, and the girl on the phone wanted to order a "Go Jump a Rock" t-shirt for her boyfriend. The ensuing friendly conversation revealed the caller was the step daughter of Magistrate Donald Pitts of Yosemite Valley. Pitts is currently pondering the disposition of the case involving the Yosemite Skydivers Association. "We talk about BASE jumping once in a while," said the girl of her step dad, "and he does understand what it's about."

#### BOOK PUBLISHED

*Groundrush* by Simon P. Jakeman, which we mentioned in the last issue, has been selected for publication in book form by a London

publishing house. Details on getting a copy of the book weren't set at press time and copies of the manuscript are no longer available through The JOURNAL

#### THIS IS ONLY A TEST

Recently a group of paragliding pilots got together in California to learn more about the round reserve parachutes they carry. Besides a seminar and packing class, all pilots made jumps from a one hundred foot crane. It wasn't as exciting as it sounds as the pilots had bungee cords attached to their ankles.

#### THE LOGO

The round patch depicting a jumper in freefall surrounded by all four object categories is a familiar icon to anyone involved in BASE jumping.

The patch was designed by Max Deretta of Holland who says, "As an artist, I'm proud and happy that people like the logo, and that it became a trademark for the BASE community. I'd be even more happy if the world knew I'm the author and designer because Carl Boenish, the father of BASE organization, asked me to create it."

#### TFS ANNOUNCES BASE PIGGYBACK

Tailored For Survival has indicated they have begun research and development on a new piggyback rig for BASE jumping. The non-TSO'ed harness and container system will feature a square reserve parachute with an externally mounted large spring loaded pilot chute. There will be three methods of reserve deploy-

ment. Tailpocket, free bag and attached bag. Testing is currently underway using both the "Single Operation System" (SOS) and "Reserve Static Line" (RSL). The main canopy can be deployed either by tailpocket or attached bag. The rig will come with a choice of pilot chute mounting locations. The reserve can be packed in all modes - sail slider, mesh slider or no slider at all and the line over modification. Tailored For Survival is using 40 to 100 feet as its reserve opening design parameters. The piggyback BASE rig, that so far hasn't been named, will join a popular family of Tailored For Survival BASE rigs that includes The Edge, The Blade and the Para-Pak. A recent survey published in SKYDIVING showed Tailored For



Gary Oster makes a night jump in Los Angeles with a buddy assist from Rich Stein, BASE 74.

Photo by friend

Survival made the list when folks were asked what rig did they use on their most recent jump.

### PARAGLIDING

The magazine *Paragliding USA* mentions two incidents of note. A paragliding pilot fell over one thousand feet and was killed when all the suspension lines of his Will's Wing (a respected manufacturer of hang gliders) paraglider failed in flight. Para-Flites' president, Elek Puskas, wrote in to express his shock and dismay that the manufacturer in this case didn't seem to understand the finer points of ram air line attachment. In another incident a paragliding pilot was badly burned by his BRS rocket deployed reserve when the rocket motor failed to clear his gear. The pilot however, managed a survivable landing. The save record for BRS rocket deployed reserves now stands at 53.

### RIGGER GOES IN

*The Rigger*, a publication that tried to make it in the rigging community ceased publication recently. "We didn't get enough input," said editor and publisher George Galloway of Precision Aerodynamics. The magazine endeavored to offer parachute technicians a place to communicate.

### PARACHUTES: YESTERDAY/TODAY /TOMORROW

Is the name of a new magazine edited and published by Jim Bates of Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Jim is an accomplished parachutist and a BASE-friendly author who has attended Bridge Day and written fairly about BASE jumping in his books. The first issue had enough interesting technological

parachute information to satisfy the most die-hard paraff. Jim describes his new effort as a publication for the benefit of those who want to know about parachutes. *P:Y/T/T* will include all aspects of parachute usage including skydiving, paragliding, military applications and BASE jumping. In short a potpourri of information about the wondrous device, the parachute. *P:Y/T/T* is published six times per year and costs \$12.00. Contact: Jim Bates, 25 Whiton Street/P.O. Box 283, Windsor Locks, CT 06096. Phone (203) 623-5480

### PARA PUBLISHING

Para Publishing of Santa Barbara, CA has two new products on the market. The most important being the completely revised fourth edition of *The Parachute Manual Vol. II*. This edition is a companion to Vol. I which was last revised in 1984. Vol. II can safely be called the "Square Edition." It also contains a section on special use parachutes that includes paragliding canopies, hang gliding & para recovery systems and BASE jumping. The BASE jumping section explains a bit of history on the sport, how BASE gear manufacturers are learning a great deal about vertical, sub-terminal deployments and where to write for more information on The United States BASE Association. It also shows were interested persons can get BASE gear catalogs and how to obtain BASE related magazines such as *The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL*. The price for Vol. II of *The Parachute Manual* is \$49.95. The second product is called *The Canopy Color Program* a computerized color selection pattern by Gary Peek for choosing just the right colors for your next

BASE or skydiving canopy. The program runs on any PC with a color monitor and is simple and easy to use. \$14.95 Contact: Para Publishing, P.O. Box 4232- P, Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4232.

### IN THE BUCKET

Eric Jones, British adventurer and the first man to BASE jump the Eiger mountain, recently passed over the summit of Mount Everest in an open basket balloon. Jones filmed the crossing and rode most of the way in a bucket attached to the side of the gondola. "We flamed out, burned up and melted down," Jones said of the trip, "we rigged, fiddled and patched our way across."

### LEGAL ANTENNA JUMPS

Recently four BASE jumpers had the opportunity for some legal antenna jumping in Raymond, Maine. The 1600-foot WGAN-TV tower was rented by the ABC network for a segment of a new show called *The Extreme Edge*. The project included a full production crew of 14, a helicopter and BASE jumpers Moe Viletto, Mike Allen, Tom Sanders and Jan Davis who each made five jumps. Moe Viletto said most of the jumps were ten second delays. Cameras recorded from the top of the tower, at the 1000-foot level and from the ground. Additional cameras were carried in freefall with a live signal being sent to the ground. The segment aired in early January and was a positive look at the sport of BASE jumping.

### CANYON DE CHELLEY

This accident report reached *The JOURNAL* at press time and is not very detailed. An unidentified jumper was reported injured after a night jump from

Arizona's 600-foot Canyon De Chelly (pronounced De Shay) cliff. It was described as a landing accident caused by flaring too high. The jumper severely injured his back and a helicopter was used to transport him to an area hospital. Canyon De Chelly had hosted many BASE jumps under an agreement made long ago between BASE jumpers, the Park Service and local Indians. The agreement, called for no publicity and banned the landing of any powered aircraft. Both tenants of that agreement have been broken by various individuals over the years. The status of jumping in Canyon De Chelly now is unknown.

### I'M MOVING THERE

Although Everest is the highest mountain, the most difficult climb may be the south face of Lhotse I. Famed world class climber Reinhold Messner calls it, "The last great Himalayan problem." Lhotse is a set of three Himalayan summits on the Nepal-Tibetan border. It is the fourth highest peak in the world and was first climbed by a Swiss Team in 1956. It is known for the unique challenges of its south face. Among them is a reported incredible 10,000-foot vertical drop, of which 1,000- feet is overhanging.

### READER'S CHOICE AWARDS

The readers of *SKYDIVING* voted the photograph of Moe Viletto BASE jumping from Bungee Adventures' 240-foot crane as their favorite photograph of 1991. Also included in the December issue of *SKYDIVING* were two other BASE photographs, one of Bridge Day 1991 and another showing an antenna jump.





# The Boat Folks

BY • NICK DIGIOVANNI

Millions of years ago a flat desert in what is now southern Utah was transmuted by the retreat of a great sea. The draining water left behind towering sheer sandstone canyons. In 1869, John Wesley Powell, a retired Union Army Major who left his right arm at the civil war battle of Bloody Shiloh, came down the

Colorado River by rowboat and found a splendid vertical desert.

Ninety four years later in one of the last great feats of civil engineering workmen backed up the river with the Glen Canyon Dam. It was something Earth First! would never sit still for today and the result was Lake Powell. The good Major wouldn't recognize it,

but with a coastline longer than California, it's a breathtaking waterworld in a desert, a place of wonder and sanctuary.

We stood in the wheel house of our rented floating home. It was a 50-foot houseboat. A Winnebago on floats. We were being briefed by our houseboat

instructor. We knew that because it said "Houseboat Instructor" on his shirt.

"Okay," he asked, "who's to be the captain?" The entire group took a step backward. Don "Jake" Jacobson, BASE 305, was thrust forward. After all, he was a heavy equipment operator in real life.

I was half listening as our instructor covered how to keep from getting lost, going up in a big ball of propane flames, poisoning ourselves by drinking out of the wrong tap, shearing the props off the motors or just plain going to the bottom with all hands. One thing was apparent, this big underpowered box would be a handful in any kind of wind.

I studied my shipmates.

Besides Jake and myself there was Todd Shoebottom BASE 169, and Troy Fink BASE 168, both of T&T Rigging. Anne Helliwell BASE 222, Brett Breon BASE 210 and Adele Wheeler all from Square One Parachutes. Cris Szabo, who ground crewed numerous BASE adventures, was there looking for his first BASE jump along with John Martin who brought his speed boat and rounded out the crew.

Since a hundred or so round jumps a long time ago and the occasional gut-gear for fun jump, I was looking forward to playing with rounds again. I also thought about BASE jumpers more competent than I who have hit the walls here.

Phil Smith, BASE number 1 spanked. Rich Stein BASE number 74 spanked. Manny Gonzales BASE number 203 spanked and actually died before Rich Stein pulled him from the water and blew him the kiss of life. I won-



Old #158 the "Pirate Boat."

Photo by Nick Di Giovanni

dered, would it be smack, smack, smack all week long? Was this a ship of fools?

"These houseboats are pretty sturdy," our instructor continued, "you can ram the cliffs, you can hit the other houseboats, you can hit anything that floats that's smaller than you are, just don't hit anything expensive." With that he waved us off and I'm sure got a good chuckle as nine good people serpentine their way out of the Wahweap Marina. Someone was singing the theme from Giligan's Island.

In organizing this trip, Todd went after more than just folks who could afford it. He went out of his way to get people he knew would get along for a week in close quarters. He did his job well, there was no mutiny or discord and all agreed it was one of the best BASE adventures ever.

The beauty of this place is hard to describe. Our excitement however, is easy to understand as we ventured deeper into Lake Powell. As the cliffs grew higher and sheerer I realized one could spend a year here, probably longer, and never jump the same place twice. The main channel took us past deep water canyons named Dungeon, Grotto and Labyrinth, all just begging for exploration. They would have to wait as Navajo Canyon was our destination and we'd just get there in time for one jump before darkfall.

With proper ceremony we hoisted the Jolly Roger, opened the beer and settled in for the ride. Going aft to stow my gear I noticed there were seven boys, two girls and eight bunks. Somebody was going to get lucky.

While Jake had his hands full of awkward houseboat, he also had to deal with dangerous turbowaves. It's a local phenomenon that can put you pontoons up if you're asleep at the wheel. We also

quickly learned to take cover when encountering other houseboats in the main channel. You could expect a full broadside of water balloons launched from surgical tubing. Maybe it was our flag.

Two hours later we sighted the entrance to Navajo Canyon. A white section of sandstone ringed the surface of the water and rose 75-feet above the water line, a visible sign of the West's enduring drought. Bonus altitude which made everyone happy until I heard Jake say to know one in particular, "It's just The crew. more wall to smack."

We penetrated deeper into the canyon looking for the spot called Big Cliff/Little Cliff. We passed some sweet looking sites in this fixed object candy store. As I gazed at the sheer walls I wondered, could there be several hundred feet of altitude below the water. Could there be thousands. Could there be a hundred Yosemitees buried here? If Glen Canyon Dam ever lets go, we'd all have to move here.

My wishful thinking was interrupted by the sighting of our destination. Little Cliff was sheer except for a slight bulge two thirds of the way down. It appeared at least 400-feet above the water. Big Cliff looked about 150-foot higher. We wasted no time in tying up the houseboat which was a nautical



The crew.

*Photo by Auto Timer*

comedy of errors itself as we had too many landlocked riggers aboard. Cris volunteered for first watch and the rest of us piled into John's speedboat.

Access to the route up the backside was a good mile away. "It's just a steep hike for the most part," Todd assured us, "but with the water level down, we'll probably need some rope action in the beginning."

Assemble any group of 5 or more BASE jumpers together and it's a cinch at least one of them will be limping. Our group of nine had two. Troy still wears a brace on his lower leg, a trophy he picked up at Burro Creek. I was nursing a fractured heel. My goal for the week was to make at least one jump on any day that anybody else jumped.

At the trail head John maneuvered us into position and we quitted down on first glance at the pitch. Todd had our rope across his back ready to scale up and tie off. The sandstone was loose and the footing treacherous. What could have been a tricky climb became cake after Todd found a rope already tied off and hidden behind some rocks.

Thirty five minutes later we were there. The view from the top was glorious. Glassy water and lots of altitude wrapped in big white walls. Our on the belly gander over the edge of Little Cliff revealed 400-foot sheer into the water where John's speedboat bobbed giving us perspective. I looked over my BASE rig wondering what my first round BASE jump had in store for me.

Todd launched first and had everybody hooting with a deep 3 followed by a perfect round opening and big splash into the water. Wow! How some don't see the joy in this BASE jumping stuff simply amazes me.

It was my turn. A running limping launch is not practical so I inched up as close to the edge as possible. In looking around at everybody it was neat to see the glow of impending BASE jump in their eyes. It's a look people don't give you anywhere else and you don't usually get it in this big a dose.

I got off a little head high, not a lot, but enough so I knew the video replay would trigger a big chorus of "Frankie!" I pitched and waited. Everyone said, even if you've seen round BASE jumps before, you're gonna think you're going in. When you pass the point where your square would have slammed open it's a bit scary but feels great . . . wait a sec . . . did I forget to choke off my apex with a rubber . . . thaaaWaaap! Yeah!!

The Pioneer Tri-Con I found in

the bottom of my closet flew quite nicely. It didn't have the circumference bands needed to keep it together at terminal but I wasn't going there anyway.

I was smiling as the water rushed up to meet me. I was smiling because it wasn't asphalt and I wasn't about to bust my butt.

The water was cool enough for wetsuits, but not cold enough to sting. Adrenalin keeps you warm. The sun faded in a splash of water. It turned the cliffs, filled with ferris metals, a flaming shade of red. Anne jumped with the grace of the dancer she could have been and oscillated herself into the water.

We all stopped what we were doing to watch Brett. His round canopy wasn't modified for steerability until just hours before the trip when he took a hot knife to it. Make sure the video is rolling.

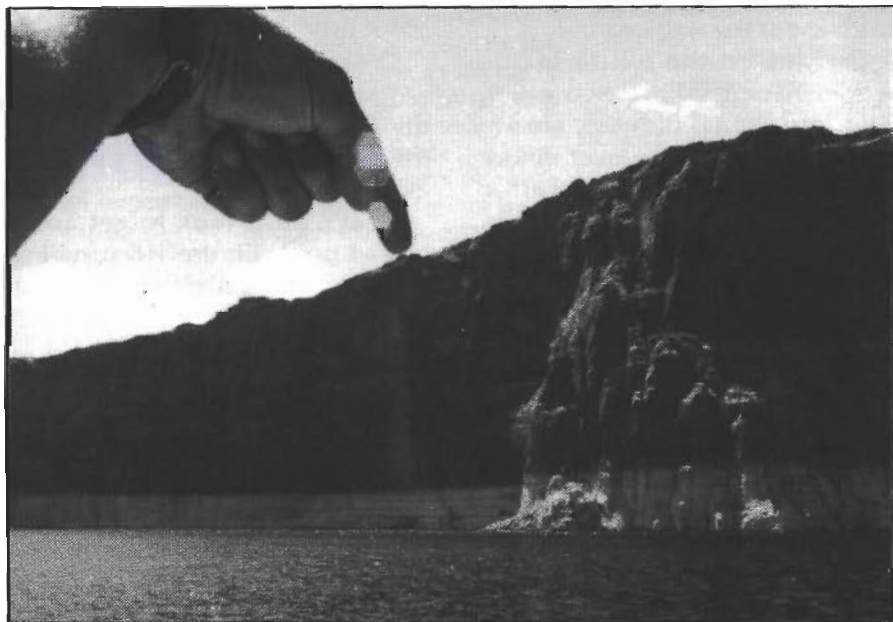
It worked and Brett reported good response despite having a pattern cut into it Dan Poynter wouldn't recognize. It looked checkerboard with all the black squares missing.

Troy followed and also had an

excellent jump. His previous injuries make no-wind street landings something he avoids, so he took advantage of the water and made every load that week. Despite what must have been some painful climbing it was obvious he came to jump. He never complained about it either. I on the other hand would cry to anybody who'd listen.

Jake was last off jumping his Cruislite. He'd climbed to the top of Big Cliff and jumped setting a pattern for the rest of the week. Jake isn't a follower. Besides the fact he was the only person jumping a square, he never jumped the cliff in the same place twice. Jake's tough as nails, but he carries it off in a very disarming way that makes it a pleasure to have him around.

Dripping and happy we made our way back to the houseboat already toasting our first day in this exquisite place. With clean air and no light pollution the stars here make you gasp. Troy amazed everybody with his knowledge of the heavens, a skill which he later



The spot called "Big Cliff/Little Cliff," with evidence of Lake Powell's low water level.

Photo by Nick Di Giovanni



confessed came from watching hours of Public Television while wrapped in plaster.

A ladder on the afterdeck led to an open overhead that was flat and made a great place to pack. We found accommodating three canopies at one time was no problem. We also thought it a good practice launch point for Cris until Cris mentioned it looked scarier than the real thing.

We awoke the next morning at first light and the routine of packing, climbing, jumping, splashing, drinking began. The closest anyone came to hitting the wall was me. Being too casual I blew a launch going head down and over on my back. This was it I thought, I was about to find out something real important about BASE jumping. Here comes the big spank.

Choosing the less severe pitching on my back to going in on my back I was rudely pulled upright and spun around. There now, vertical ground rush, that's something you don't see everyday. I hauled in a riser and would've had a hard time spitting on the wall. After I missed by a mile nobody worried much about the wall anymore.

Owning to the white man's propensity of taking too much food into the wilderness, we ate pretty good. The topic over dinner that evening centered on whether to stay put or go exploring. It was a tough choice as this was already pretty idyllic.

Exploring won out and the next morning we got underway. In looking for BASE jumps we followed canyons that narrowed and twisted until only the speedboat could get further. The maze proved an irresistible challenge to Cris. With horn blaring the speedboat cut through the narrow sandstone walls at the edge of control. I'm still not sure who was more scared, us in the boat or Chris on the skis.

On the map it was called Cathedral Rock. It wasn't all that high, maybe 220-feet, but it had more than just height. It was an overhung dished out shell we couldn't pass up. We climbed the backside and found the launch point of launch points. It was a sandstone stage. You could do Rocky Horror up there.

Everyone did at least two jumps with Troy making the jump of the day. While we opted for buddy assist sled rides into the water with squares Troy did a freefall with his round. It netted him a one second canopy ride. It left us wide eyed and his swim for the boat was accompanied by shouts of, "You win, dude, you win!"

The next day, our third on the lake, the winds came blowing across the top of the canyons. The turbulence it created was better left unchallenged. We were winded. Ingenuity overcame boredom as we found ways to amuse ourselves. Water skiing behind an inflated round parachute didn't work, but yielded some hysterical video.

"Hey, John's speedboat does about fifty, right?"

"Yeah so."

"Suppose someone stands up in the back of the boat with their BASE rig on and tosses out a 52-inch pilot chute?"

That's all it took to get Todd geared up. With the video rolling and the boat cranked up as fast as it could go Todd passed the houseboat and pitched for all he was worth. It was a suspenseful moment because we really didn't know what to expect.

The pilot chute inflated, the bridle extended and the moment ended as the pilot chute fell grandly into the water. It left a braced and ready to fly Todd Shoebottom nowhere to go. The laughter became tears as we rolled on the deck. It was classic.

The next day the winds were down and the jumping resumed back at Little Cliff. It wasn't long before multiple launches were being flown from the wall. Chris made his first BASE jump after we ganged three bridles together and buddy assisted him off Little Cliff. As it was his birthday he was also presented with the obligatory Blue Skies/Black Death t-shirt. John also succumbed to the fun and asked to fly. We direct bagged him into the water with instructions to, "Don't do nothing."

The next couple days blurred into jumps and laughter leaving a satisfied crew of water-logged BASE jumpers on their way back to Wahweap Marina. The trip has become an annual event with both experienced and novice BASE jumpers welcome. Contact Todd Shoebottom at T&T Rigging for more information.



Don "Jake" Jacobson splashes down.

Photo by Nick Di Giovanni



# On The Ropes

BY • SIMON P. JAKEMAN

*Static line BASE jumping fell from grace in this country with the advent of the direct bag system. The thinking became static line is too complicated, too prone to mis-rigging and it's killed too many already. British BASE jumpers suffered through a rash of static line failures. Being a Brit on a static line seemed a great way to wind up a paragraph in the morning papers. However, in typical British fashion, they stuck with it until they got it right. In terms of BASE jumping it may have been their finest hour. Recently, I watched Simon P. Jakeman, BASE 60, static line himself from a twenty two story San Diego building. I didn't pay much attention as he explained how it all worked, but I held my breath as he pushed off. Christ, didn't he remember he was a Brit. The following came in the form of a letter a few weeks after "Jake" and I visited that building.*

I'm sitting here in the shadow of some new steel-work in San Diego. It's mid-day and I'm just hanging out picking up a buzz off the building. I had a great time here the other night. It's kinda funny because when I came and did the recon I says to myself, "Well, you know it is a perfect 200-feet. It has a corner exit with 270 degrees of clean air. Parking lot with no obstructions right up against it. But, it does look a little like a trap."

Sure enough there were a few days later surrounded by the security guys, .357's and all. It was kind of an exciting morning, didn't you think Nick? Didn't the guy with the gun look scared?

"Stand still or I'll cuff you!"

"So cuff me!" Great stuff.

Anyway, while sitting here in that same spot I can see my static line still hanging off the twenty second floor. This is a week later to the day. There is a guy welding right next to it. He doesn't know me or my connection to that piece of rope. Aha!

The connection, it occurs to me, is that most American low BASE jumps are done either buddy assist or direct bag. So I thought I'd drop you a line about static lining.

Sometimes it's not practical to leave anyone at the top and static lining is safe if done correctly. There are however, a few things to know. We don't have much high stuff in England so probably half my BASE jumps have been static line. It's never been a problem for me and I've packed for more people than I can remember and their openings have been consistently good. Here is how it goes for those who may be wondering.

First, your pack job has to be on heading in the first place. And your body position is just as important, tho I've seen a few saved from going over the top on head down exits by the deploying canopy!

In England we are still rather primitive as far as our skydiving students are concerned. We mostly throw 'em out of airplanes with static lines on round canopies. We do have a very

good safety record according to the national safety dudes. Round is sound right? Yeah well, you don't go through many weekend courses without the token broken leg. But they live dammit! They live! They don't even sign waivers and still they don't sue. Wild huh? "Ah gee, I guess it was my own fault." Some call it gentlemanly, others call it stupid, I think a free health service has a lot to do with it. I digress.

The point is break cord. One hundred pound break cord to be precise. You can get this on any U.K. drop zone. It seems a little harder to find here. Ask your rigger. What we do is take off the pilot and bridle and then take a piece of rope. It doesn't have to be a thick rope just as long as it's stronger than 100lb. breaking strain, geddit!?

Tie a loop in one end and then tie this loop to the attachment ring on the top of the canopy with "ONE" turn of the 100lb. break cord. Then take a rubber band and attach it to your packing loop. Pull the rubber band through the grommets of the flaps and secure it with a bite of the static line.

"IMPORTANT" When you tie the static line to the top of the canopy use only "ONE" turn of break cord. It can quickly add up and just a couple of turns can rip the top surface off your canopy or even give you a hang up. I have never had damage occur to my canopy through static lining.

Also make sure the rubber band is thin enough to easily pass through the last grommet. You can cut it down with a pair of scissors

if you need to. I once put a friend off using this system, when the rubber band cleared the static line it immediately resumed its normal thickness as it shot back through the grommets. By the time it reached the last

grommet it was too thick to fit through. The last two flaps locked up and the canopy came out 45 left. It is impossible to completely "lock up" on this system because the rubber band will just break before the break cord even gets a loading.

When you exit, go off directly over or in front of where you have attached the static line to the object. I once exited about 4-feet to the right of my static line and got a 90 right opening.

Make sure the static line is securely tied to you chosen strong point on the object. Sounds stupid? Believe me, it's been known for a static line to follow someone over the edge. The second U.K. BASE fatality was caused by this. As with all BASE jumps, check yourself out and check out your friends and have them check you. It costs nothing.

To summarize, there is really nothing wrong with static line if done correctly. That's what we say about everything in general. The technique I've talked about is really most useful with a conventional skydiving rig. If using a Velcro closed BASE rig you need to make the break cord connection to the Velcro flap instead of the top of the canopy.

I think that's about it, thanks for the fun the other night. I guess it was revenge of Mr. Security Man. Aargh! Static line? We don't need no stinking static line, this baby is going to 40 stories. YAHOO! I'm off to the Pine Valley Bridge to wait it out.



# Bridge Day

## 1991

BY • NICK DiGIOVANNI

**O**n the day before Bridge Day the sun beamed down on the New River Gorge in Fayetteville, West Virginia. With temperatures in the seventies it was evident to the Bridge Day staff - the jumpers themselves - and most whuffs that tomorrow would be the day. Following three years of so-so conditions, Bridge Day 1991 would be a peach.

When it was over an October chill was in the air and a misty eyed Jean Boenish raised her head and quietly announced, "This is the last year I'll be involved in the organization of Bridge Day."

Jumpers, friend and foe, who gathered at the post jump meeting expected it, but they got more. They were treated to a visibly moved Jean Boenish. The years of dealing with hard to please jumpers and what she calls inept local officials plus the logistics of running BASE jumping's premier event had taken their toll. This after 265 registered jumpers made 550 BASE jumps during a very successful Bridge Day.

Picking up the local papers on the way into town I was dismayed to see our dirty laundry right there on the front page. "Squabble Between BASE Factions Heads for 1991 Showdown as Boenish Hits Calistrat with Sanctions." This referred to Texas jumper Andy Calistrat's attempt to wrestle control of Bridge Day away from Jean Boenish. It also showed our inability to keep our squabbles in the

family. When the coup d'état failed things settled down and the media, as usual, focused on the injuries and tree landings.

There was also a sidebar story in the paper concerning a demand from Park Service officials that they be provided with a list of all registered jumpers. Jean Boenish steadfastly resisted and the day before Bridge Day the request was dropped.

The 1991 Bridge Day celebration began as jumpers found light to moderate winds and large landing areas. A looksee over the rail revealed two things. Autumn's color as radiant as anyone remembered it and the sand bar landing area, something that's been missing for a while. Although big enough to land on it was still small enough to drop your canopy into the New River.

A rock-strewn shoreline provided an easy place to get into but also accounted for most of the injuries. Last year's landing area in the middle of the trees was there as well. A plethora of LZs.

Bridge Day is different things to different people. To hard-core BASE jumpers it's their Nationals, a time to catch up with old friends and compare notes. To see who survived another year. I heard you were dead, is a common refrain at Bridge Day.

For skydivers like Diane Bourne, of Orlando, Florida, it's a

chance to pit themselves against their fear. Diane had twice traveled to Bridge Day without making the jump. Resolved that this was the year, and with plenty of support from staff members, Diane made her first BASE jump a study in determination and guts.

The Battleship Wisconsin steamed home from the Persian Gulf with a young Naval officer aboard named Chuck Ramsay. After months at sea Chuck had just two things on his mind. The second thing was Bridge Day. He made his first two BASE jumps at Bridge Day and the glow lasted until the last time I saw him still on his feet at four in the morning in the lobby of the Holiday Inn. Way to be, Navy.

Small crowds seen gathered frequently weren't jumpers beating on Andy Calistrat, it was actor Don Swayze who was there under the tutelage of Tailored For Survival's Moe Viletto. Don attracts girls like BASE jumpers draw security guards and he made two smooth BASE jumps to the delight of onlookers. Jean Boenish estimates that approximately 100 participants at Bridge Day are making first BASE jumps.

A special thanks to master rigger Larry Riddle who again checked everyone's gear and Joy Harrison who tirelessly answered questions and registered late arriving jumpers. To avoid problems encountered last year, when large numbers of jumpers mixed with conditions that were marginal, Jean Boenish announced only 300 registration forms would be accepted for this year's event.

"There's a definite limit," she says, "on the number of jumpers and spectators this event can support." Some estimates of past

crowd attendance reached as high as a quarter million. This year's smooth event was due in part to a smaller number of both jumpers and spectators. The number of spectators was estimated at 150,000 and that's still a lot of whuffos in one place.

After years of organizing Bridge Day, Jean cites the local Bridge Day Commission as one reason for her departure.

"I've received absolutely zero cooperation from them this year. They are way over their heads without the resources or management skills required for an event this size."

There were almost no lines at the two launch points as jumpers made as many jumps as they wanted. The staff even had time to pull whuffos out of the crowd so they could lean over the rail and snap photos as the bridge rained BASE jumpers.

Injuries were up this year with at least ten jumpers admitted to area hospitals. Three required major surgery to repair broken bones. More jumpers than ever were using large BASE pilot chutes and other BASE equipment, but the staff was confronted with a new problem. Many jumpers are coming to Bridge Day with their new nine cell screamers. These high aspect ratio canopies are great for gee-whizzing around the drop zone, but they make steep accuracy approaches tough for inexperienced jumpers and landing on obstacles even tougher. Jumpers were advised to ditch in the water if their accuracy skills were low, but it was apparent some hadn't heard you dry

faster than you heal.

Another factor is surfacing at Bridge Day as the Park Service is now more involved. Since becoming owners of the property beneath the bridge, parachute landings in what's now a National Park have been only allowed by special permit. Every year since, the Park Service seems to be exercising more control. When a ranger stood to give a briefing on water landing procedures, the more astute in the crowd couldn't help but ask, how many water jumps does he have anyway?

One ranger was posted at the launch point all day and his interest became apparent as jumpers returned to the bridge reporting they were being subjected to field sobriety tests in the landing area. It was hard to talk to any of the rangers without feeling they were staring at your pupils or trying to sniff your breath. Some jumpers went to great lengths to make inroads with the rangers but it was obvious they are biased and con-

sider our presence there an act of aggression.

Some attribute the ranger's behavior to a jumper last year who was seen jumping while flagrantly intoxicated, but others say it's because while the rangers in Yosemite Valley play cat and mouse with BASE jumpers, these rangers have to take it, and it's evident they don't like it. Rangers and BASE jumpers are such a volatile mix it even caused the usually conservative Jean Boenish to condemn the ranger's actions as meddling. If you want a good video of Bridge Day 1991, ask the rangers, they taped almost everyone in the landing area.

The Fayetteville Memorial Building was again available for pre-jump briefings. It was also the place to get help and advise on packing from the Bridge Day Staff. For a second year a small BASE trade show was held with manufactures exhibiting their latest efforts. Todd Shoebottom of T&T Riggings reports selling the rig off



Jean Boenish manages a smile during the post-jump meeting as jumpers and rangers look on.

*Photo by Nick Di Giovanni*



his back as more Velcro closed BASE rigs were in evidence on the bridge than any year prior. Of

those jumping BASE rigs, only a few opted for a tersh reserve as most seemed to embrace the one

man, one paraphrase theory.

Choice Rigging, (Experience the Vision) was there with their Vision

BASE rigs. Vision BASE rigs are distinguished by their great flap art. They also have a most innovative toggle system called the "One Step." It has all of the advantages of the Zoo toggle system without the bulk or awkward release system. The brake line fingertrap is secured with a long stainless steel pin and the pin is protected by a tight fitting channel sewn to the riser. The brakes can be released simply by pulling down straight even when the steering line is highly loaded in a line-over situation. Other BASE equipment manufactures included Tailored For Survival as well as California Connections. T-shirts and magazines were available as well.

Bridge Day also included a planned flag jump. Jumps that sport the American Flag are quite popular with the patriotic West Virginia crowd. The jumper opened with line twists and failed to get the flag flying before crashing into the landing area. His second jump later in the morning didn't work out either. By his third attempt the media was on it and the jumper was heard to say, "Yes, I'm having a



Bridge Day 1991 was a success despite afternoon cold winds and threatening skies.



bit of difficulty with the equipment," as reporters soaked up every word, "but," he continued, "I'll get that flag out next time." The next time netted him more line twists and another crash landing.

To avoid near wraps produced by poorly planned multiple launches, such jumps this year had to be cleared through a staff member. The conversation as two or more jumpers approached the launch point usually went something like this, "Have you guys cleared this with a staff member?"

"No man, we didn't know ya hada."

"Well, what are you planning?"

"A two way."

"I know that, but do you have your timing down?"

"Yeah sure, he's gonna dump first."

"Step over here for a minute fellas."

The largest jump of the day was a four way that featured a direct bag deployment on one end and Rich Stein, BASE 74, doing a deep five on the other. The jump was originally planned as a six-way, but getting all six jumpers to the launch point at the same time proved too difficult a task. It wasn't anyone's fault, it's just hard to budget your time at Bridge Day. There's so much going on, one gets swept up and carried along by it all.

One jumper thrilled the whuffos in the landing area by chopping his main approximately 400-feet above the middle of the river. The intentional cutaway to a square reserve packed slider down was picture perfect.

A large contingent of Canadian BASE jumpers came to Bridge Day including one who put his BASE rig on his chest and hooked his canopy up backward. He went face to earth on the jump and wound up in a tree out of reach of would-be rescuers. First, several

inflatable rafts were stacked high to cushion his fall after a cutaway. When final instructions included the phrase, grab rubber, the plan was abandoned and climbers using ropes finally lowered him to the ground.

At least three line-over malfunctions occurred during slider down jumps, two of which were cleared using the line-over modification. The third jumper managed to gain some control over his canopy in the last few seconds, but landed in a tree anyway.

There are still skydiving pilot chutes in use at Bridge Day. So many new people come to Bridge Day every year, it's inevitable some just don't get the word. Skydiving pilot chutes are too small, have bridles that are too short and have handles that may cause the pilot chute to malfunction. Remember, problems that lead to a reserve ride during a skydive can lead to death during a BASE jump.

The annual BASE fellowship award was presented again this year by Don "Jake" Jacobson to a deserving Phil Smith, BASE number one. The actual ceremony had to wait as the baggage smashers on Jake's airline managed to destroy the award.

As Bridge Day moves into the nineties there are certain challenges that must be overcome to ensure that Bridge Day will survive the changes that are coming. It's already withstood a

jumping fatality, bad weather, local mismanagement, and BASE community infighting. This past March, Jean Boenish removed the USBA completely from all Bridge Day management duties. The Charleston Grotto, which manages the rappelling portion of Bridge Day has also pulled out. According to Jean Boenish the Bridge Day Commission has instituted a new fee structure along with other changes all without consulting either the rappellers or the BASE jumpers.

As the dust settles it is apparent that Bridge Day is a valuable asset, and it's worth doing whatever it takes to save it. It's all up to us.

*The photo for the "Tailored For Survival" ad was taken By Tom Sanders*

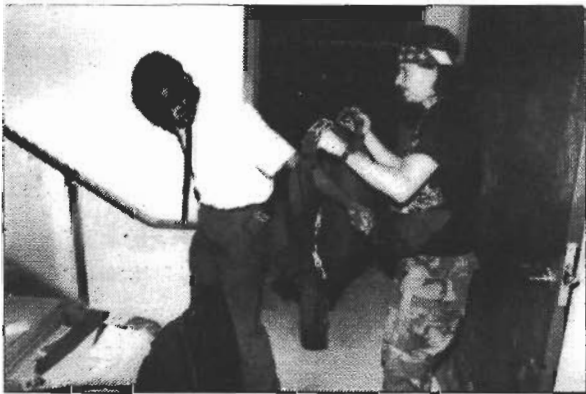


The landing area, though large, sent more than the usual number of jumpers to the hospital.

# Guards Gone Fishing



"I can't let you guys go up there."



"So how's this thing work anyway?"



"Okay, but I don't wanna know nothing."

After many jumps in San Diego without any real guard problems I invited Rich Stein, BASE 74, down for a building jump. You guessed it. It was guard city. In retaliation we received these photos from Rich showing how laid back jumping is in his neck of the woods. According to Rich, "In L.A. all the guards ever do is catch 'em and throw 'em back. In San Diego they want to stuff 'em and mount 'em on the wall."



Home free!

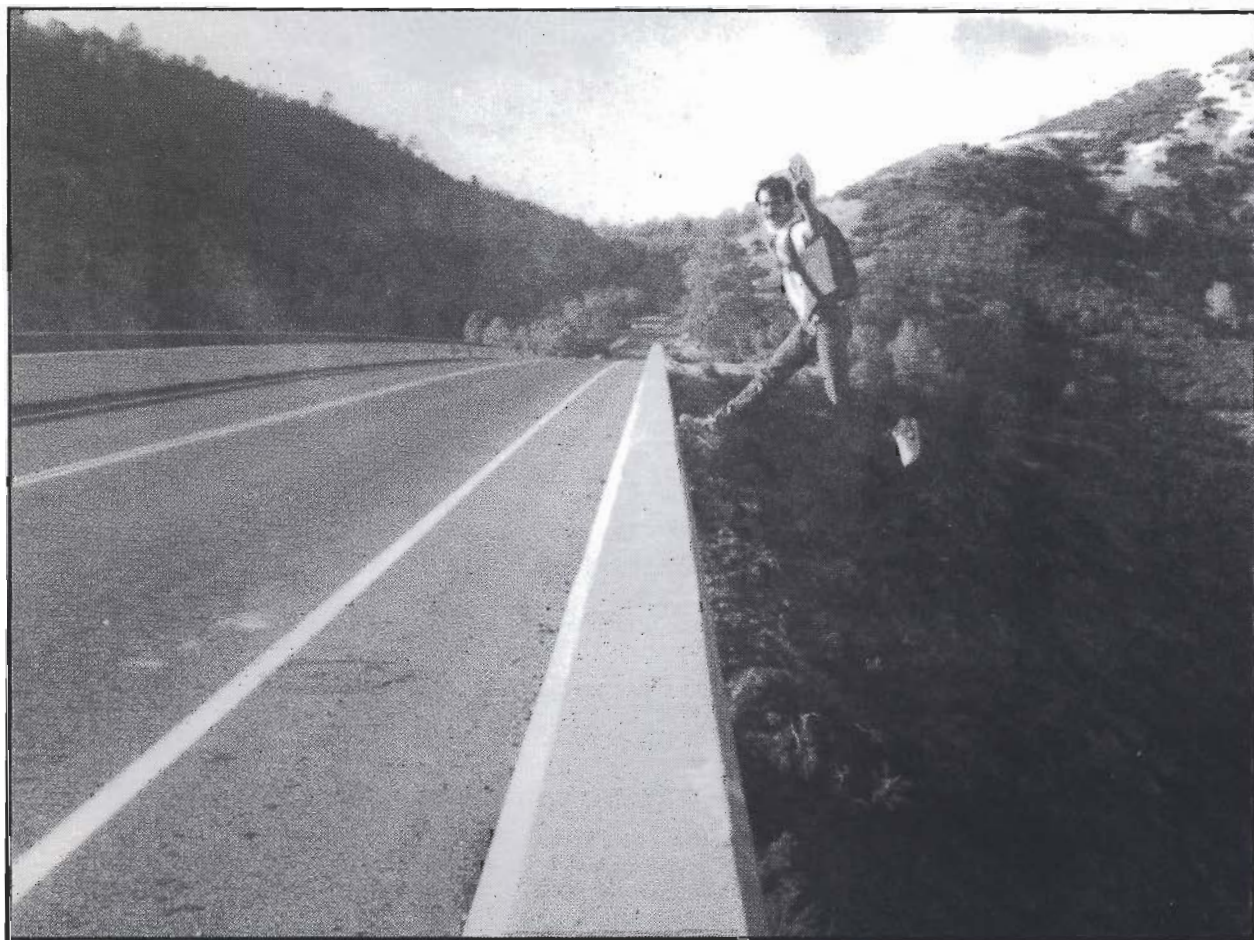


On top and the BASE jumping's easy.



# Subterminal...

*Photos from the field*



Lee Sarouhan, BASE 274, celebrates his  
29th birthday with a jump from a 400' N.  
California bridge.

*Photo by Barbra Baptista*

# Subterminal...

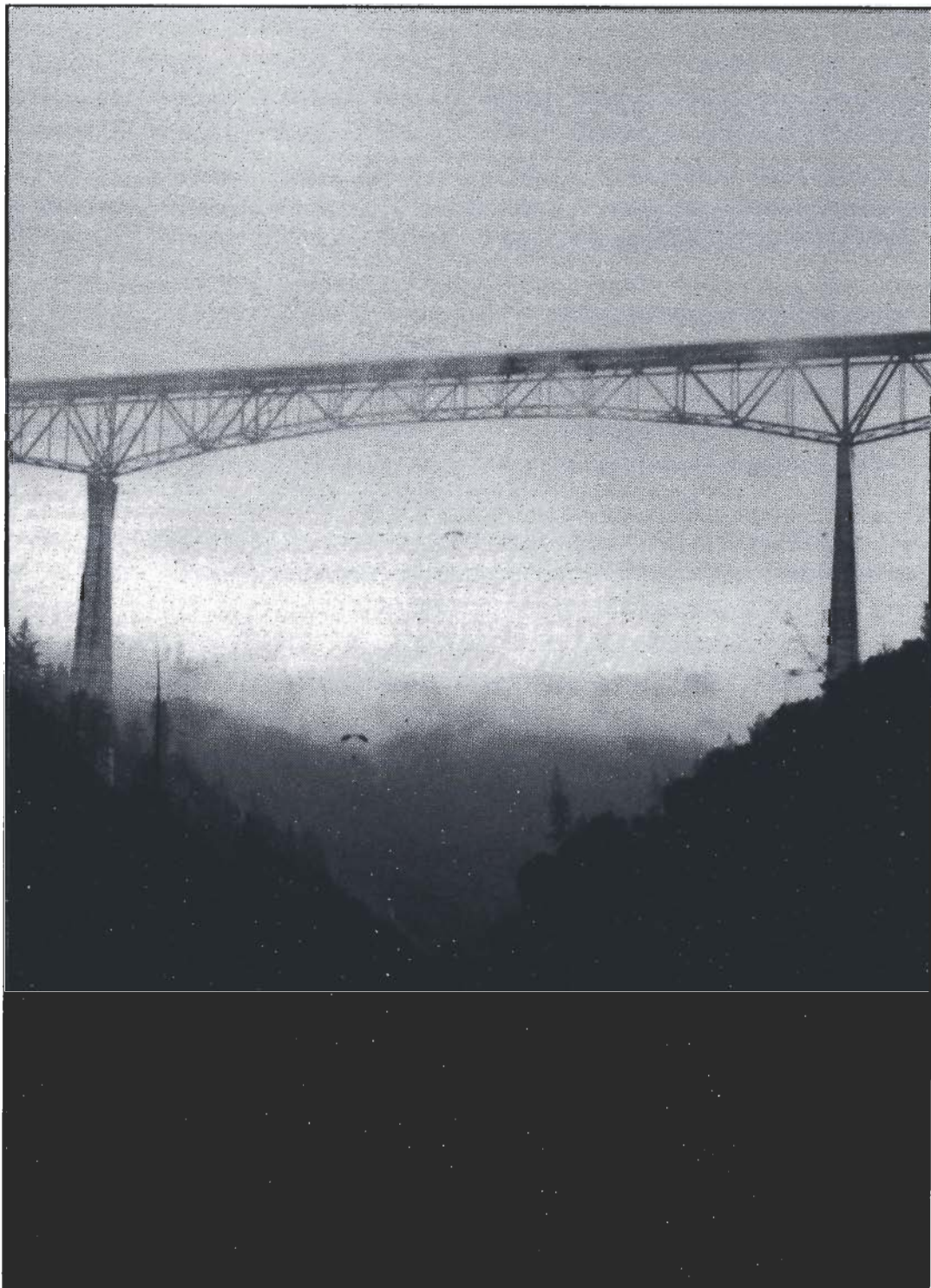


Mike Allen and Moe Viletto prepare to launch from a 1600' antenna during the filming of ABC's *Extreme Edge*.

*Photo by Tom Sanders*



# Subterminal...



Jumpers descending from a California bridge.  
*Photo by Ground Crew*

# The Black Box... Anatomy of an Accident

*The lessons learned and incidents prevented by the investigation of accidents is an important responsibility all BASE jumpers must share. Conclusions are often hard to come by due to the nature of the activity and the natural fact that two people can see the same thing, yet disagree on what they saw. The FIXED OBJECT JOURNAL will print reports of accidents written by jumpers who have first hand information. Although this doesn't guarantee the facts and conclusions to be one hundred percent accurate, it's a logical way to go about it at this time. If you're involved in an incident or an accident or if the worst happens to a jumper in your area, it's up to you and your associates to huddle up, figure out what went wrong, and let the rest of us know.*

## On the Wire

By JONATHAN BOWLIN, BASE 76

**I**t started out routinely enough. Bryant Austin, a friend and novice BASE jumper out to do his first tower jump, and I were climbing the KORV Channel 10 broadcast antenna near Sacramento at four in the morning. We expected to enjoy a low-key jump from the top at the first break of dawn. What should have been an easy BASE jump from the 2,000 foot structure unexpectedly turned into a chilling nightmare of nasty weather, bad luck and questionable judgment. An experienced BASE jumper we were to accidentally meet on the climb up the structure very nearly lost his life on this day, and only the most incredible good fortune saved him.

What follows is a lesson for each of us to observe. As an experi-

enced tower jumper, I was unprepared to witness the "impossible," a wire strike under a perfect canopy in what I believed were fairly manageable winds.

Thanksgiving Day the plans were laid. Bryant and I packed in my warehouse after dinner and discussed the various things that could possibility go wrong with the jump. Considerable ground instruction had preceded the decision to have him go up with me, and I felt he was prepared. While he had only 60 skydives and a bridge jump under his belt, he had constantly demonstrated a "heads up" attitude and an unquenchable thirst for detailed BASE information. I made it clear from the start that if he couldn't keep up with me I would go on alone and he would jump off the 1000-foot level.

On the climb to the top, the winds gradually increased to 20 knots and were steadily blowing down the wires. I had jumped many times in worse winds than this and felt fairly comfortable. Before we reached 500-feet, Bryant advised me that he couldn't go on much farther. I had forgotten, with the bitterly cold wind, the darkness and the great physical effort how intimidating a first antenna jump can be. After a short discussion, I continued on. Nearing the 1,500-foot level, I peered into the dark towering structure above and noticed what seemed a pair of legs hanging down. Startled, I instantly recalled the story of Jim Bridwell (a notorious and much-loved Yosemite climber) coming upon a body, sitting upright, decomposing on a ledge high up on a cliff. Looking again, I saw the appendages swinging in the wind.

No rigor mortis here. I sped up and soon came upon the mystery climber. We quickly exchanged greetings in the cold wind.

I had met Leigh Brown years before on a jump in Yosemite. An experienced BASE jumper, Leigh seemed as excited as I about approaching the top. With him were three other friends. It was decided to launch from the maintenance platform several hundred feet below the top rather than expose ourselves to radiation from the transmitting masts on top.

The winds at this point were increasingly strong and cold and still blowing down the wire. Although the option of climbing back down the ladder was not discussed, the stress of the wind conditions weighed on everyone's mind. After some discussion we decided that the winds were slightly more favorable on the southwest side. From this corner of the tower the winds were blowing from right to left.

One at a time the first two jumpers in Leigh's group exited the structure, tracked hard and opened safely. They each steered their canopies into the wind and landed in the middle of the field.

Leigh and another jumper Mike who was wearing a helmet mounted video gave high fives and yelled above the wind, a traditional BASE cheer. The air was tense with anticipation. Backing up from the edge, they nodded to each other and ran off, Leigh slightly ahead of the cameraman. Crawling out to the edge I watched their freefall with fascination. Leigh's track out from the structure was not as far as his partner's (by approximately 75-feet) probably

because of a head high exit. Their canopy openings were staggered by a full second. Leigh Brown's parachute opened 45-degrees to the left, but was still heading away from the wires. His partners canopy opened straight ahead and quickly turned into the wind. Leigh did not appear to be controlling his canopy. Although still pointed away from the wires, his canopy was crabbing sideways closer and closer to danger.

Within six seconds of canopy deployment his chest struck one of the antenna's cables with violent force, crushing five ribs on his left side and puncturing several vital organs. From my point of view at the top, it appeared as though his canopy merely struck the wire and glanced off. After quickly reinflat-

ing, the parachute was still heading away from the cables by 20-degrees. I was astonished to see that Leigh was still not steering the canopy into the wind in spite of his close call. What I didn't know at this point was Leigh was seriously injured and barely conscious.

Seconds after glancing off, the canopy crabbed back toward the wires and struck the cable again, this time wrapping. In an agonizing few moments that are indelibly etched in my brain, Leigh's body swung from side to side as his now totally malfunctioned parachute slid down the cable. For 500-feet the antenna's support cable burned through his suspension lines. Finally he broke free and streamered 300-feet to the ground. In a miracle that was almost impos-

sible to comprehend, Leigh landed in a four foot wide irrigation ditch filled with a couple of feet of water. As fate would have it, it was not his day to die. From my position 1,700 above him, his unlikely splash into the water seemed comparable to making a moon shot with a Frisbee.

His partners on the ground ran toward him across the field. Not fully comprehending what I had seen, I focused on my own immediate situation. Checking my pilot chute handle, I looked at the horizon and ran off the edge, arching hard. After a poor track, I also opened 45 degrees to the left and (as I recalled later with the wisdom of much arm-chair analysis) turned the canopy far too slowly under the circumstances to the

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right and into the wind. As soon as I felt comfortable with my canopy direction I searched the field for Leigh. Thirty seconds later I landed, concealed my gear and ran toward the point of impact.

Leigh is submerged in freezing cold water, drowning. Mike pulls him out, onto the bank's edge. He is face down in the muddy grass, semi-conscious, nothing obviously broken. Weakly, he speaks, begging us not to move him. His back looks raised and uneven. His breathing is labored. Mike pats him gently on the back and he screams. Gurgling noises from his chest grow louder. I check his pulse and cover him with my jacket. Trying to comfort him, I promise paramedics soon (his

partners have gone for help). I search my brain for some explanation, something that will tell me what went wrong, an answer that will reassure me that it can't ever happen to anybody else. Leigh's breathing grows weaker, his pulse slow and faint. I have to ask. "Leigh, tell me man, what happened?"

"I . . . thought I had it." The effort to reply is more than I have the right to ask. No more questions. But that's it, the answer I need.

Paramedics arrived 30 minutes later. They gestured hopelessly when I described Leigh's signs. He was air-lifted by Life Flight to St. Joseph's hospital in nearby Stockton. Later that day I spoke to Mike. Leigh was going to live.

The Sheriff's department reported to the press that Leigh's fellow jumpers abandoned him immediately after the jump. Apparently miffed that they couldn't file

charges right away, they were out to even the score.

It is easy to say, as many did, that we shouldn't have jumped in those winds. The fact is that tower jumps are routinely made year-round by experienced jumpers in winds that blow directly down the wires. The risks are obviously greater, but an acute awareness of the particular conditions on a tower, along with fast reaction times reduce the hazard.

**"I... thought  
I had it."**

So what happened to Leigh? The answer was provided alongside that muddy ditch by a dying man. Leigh thought he had it. When his canopy opened he knew two things: he was headed away from the cables and the wind was, at worst, going to push him parallel to them. The deadly error came from a subtle wind shift that none of us were aware of on top. Although winds were going down the wires on top, at opening altitude they were not. There was a wind shift at around 1,000-feet, blowing under them. Leigh's canopy heading of 20 degrees off the wires was inadequate to compensate, explaining why he crabbed sideways.

Bryant, poised to jump at 1,000-feet, knew what I only deduced later. His wind drifts tests confirmed the dangerous winds but his low experience level prevented him from making a wiser decision to jump from the opposite side of

the tower. My failure to stay with him for his first tower jump was a serious error of judgment, a mistake that could have cost him his life. As it was he jumped facing into the wind, sideways to the structure. His push off was weak and his delay only three seconds. A canopy opening to the right would have driven him straight into the antenna. Although he landed blissfully, having missed seeing Leigh's cable strike, the ending could have gone very differently.

The lesson we have to accept from Leigh's accident is not to assume that winds which blow in a certain direction at exit altitude are the same at opening point. A careful wind check with a weighted indicator might have helped. Above all, instantaneous steering with rear risers, even though danger was not perceived, would have reduced the odds of being carried into the wires. Certainly, a long and difficult climb down when the winds are going along the wires, is preferable to the possibility of striking a cable.

In the same vein, I have seen jumpers defy death intentionally flying their canopies between wires to land on the other side of the antenna, thinking the risk is minimal. I watched one extremely experienced friend of mine fly between the wires recently and narrowly missed one he didn't see until too late. A cable strike should always be considered certain death. That Leigh Brown lived that day is due to a miracle of luck and the decisive action of his friends.





# John Carta, BASE 118 1946 - 1990

By JONATHAN BOWLIN

A Vietnam veteran, Green Beret and helicopter door gunner, John Carta was truly an adventurous Renaissance Man. Licensed to fly helicopters, hot air balloons and fixed wing aircraft, he was a rigger, master parachutist and BASE bat wing jumper besides being a professional stuntman and a gourmet Italian chef. A native of Sardinia, Italy, John spoke and wrote fluent Italian. Of all his talents the one that endeared him most to those who crossed his path was a rare and irreverent sense of humor. It was a humor whose deadly aim struck, most often, bureaucrats and law enforcement officials alike.

One of his most unusual and whimsical BASE jumps was from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Recorded on video, John gains entrance to the historic structure disguised as a hunchback pauper. Once on top, having convinced the officials of his innocent intentions, he realizes he is going to have to jump from the wrong, or uphill side. The other side, which safely overhangs, has numerous landing hazards.

Going for it Italian style, he casts off his tattered, over-size coat and with a flourish hands the alarmed guard his direct deployment bag. Ignoring the protests, he donates a large wad of cash and a knowing wink to the cause while commanding the Poliziotto to hang on tight to the handles. With a mighty leap from the balcony, he barley clears the structure.

An instant later the parachute opens and he turns to miss an obstacle. Within seconds of landing he is quickly set upon by a vocal old Italian woman obviously angered by his lack of reverence. Gathering his parachute at a full run, bawling shrew in tow, the entertaining video follows him down a cobbled street as he looks over his shoulder, his broad smile and white teeth revealing amusement.

Only one week before his death in a plane crash, John was gravely injured during a BASE jump from an unfinished building when his parachute malfunctioned. One toggle (non-Zoo type) prematurely released, causing a suspension line entanglement. He underwent seven hours of surgery for a broken back and other fractures. Ever unable to resist adventures, he wriggled his way, still in a body cast and out of luck, onto a doomed PV-1 amphibian. The WWII seaplane crashed into a lake in northern California after a low altitude stall, killing all 8 passengers and the pilot.

Shortly after John's memorial service his ashes were scattered in freefall from the northwest face of Half Dome by myself and Tim Sell.

As much as I felt cheated by John's death - he was, as for so many a best friend - I have to admit that I gained a whole lot more over the years I knew him than I lost in that plane crash into Clear Lake. While we feel shattered and gaunt by his pass-

ing, I think we have to agree, in terms of gain and loss we're still in the black. The debt we own John we can't ever repay.

He left me richer in ways that are difficult to put into words. I owe him for the most incomparable adventures together, for his inspiring deeds of courage and for an imagination that never failed to spark mine. If his derring-do served as an example to me, so did his unfailing generosity. Whatever it was that John had, he was always ready to give it away. And it wasn't as though you had to ask if he suspected you needed it.

Even his adversaries had great respect for him. I'm reminded of the Placer County Sheriff's Department. They would have given anything for a piece of his hide when he parachuted off the Foresthill Bridge on his motorcycle. There were pretty strong feelings among the deputies over John. He was hot property in Auburn. The entire force was embarrassed by this outlandish, illegal media stunt right under their noses.

They were tipped off in advance that he had something planned for that morning. They put double patrols

but they were determined not to be caught once again with their pants down.

In between Sheriff's patrol passes, John roars up on his motorcycle, a Toscanelli cigar squirting out from between his teeth. Around his head a red bandanna ties back his thick black hair. The loud exhaust adds tension to the air as he guns the motor. Conspicuous with his parachute rig and white jumpsuit, he seems doomed to arrest.

Driving the other way on the bridge is a Sheriff's deputy. They make instant eye contact. John looks ridiculously piratical, a swarthy gypsy dressed, possibly, for a rogue motorcycle wedding. Their heads turn, following each other carefully. A huge smile parts John's lips, his teeth crushing the cigar. He throttles the motorcycle. Unbelievably, the deputy keeps going and disappears around a bend. We wonder what's going on in the cops mind. Does he know, but chooses to let this preposterous stunt run its course? Perhaps he just doesn't get the clue. I can imagine the departments letter of reprimand now. Desk duty for this guy. He was wearing a parachute.

Meanwhile John's cohorts threw flares out along the roadway. Traffic is quickly

**"He left me richer in ways that are difficult to put into words"**

out on the bridge while a CHP airplane circled overhead. Meanwhile John's cameramen strolled around in the middle of the span like they were sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Placer County law enforcement had no idea what John was going to pull this time,

blocked by a pre-planned, staged, multiple car accident. People get out of their cars to investigate. Something very strange is about to happen in the middle of the bridge. A crowd gathers. Shouts and whistles show their approval. The CHP plane circles in for a closer look as

sirens scream in the distance. A custom motorcycle ramp is unfolded into position. John approaches the outlandish structure, focuses on the job, and without further ado accelerates up and over the bridge rails, launching far into space. Like a cowboy on a rodeo bronco, he sits tall in the saddle, his right arm waving the air, pilot chute in hand. Seconds later he releases it, pulls the lanyard for the bike's parachute and kicks away from the footpegs.

As the Raven IV canopy violently inflates to life, the motorcycle falls away, condemned to the river five hundred feet below by a total malfunction. An explosion echoes across the canyon as John sets up on final approach.

Back on the bridge the ramp is quickly folded up and towed away. Patrol cars arrive at maximum speed, lights and sirens going. As they stop their cars, surveying the scene, traffic begins to move. The cameras are gone and only tourists remain on the bridge, bemused looks on their faces. The bridge is now

swarming with deputies looking for suspects, eyeing the smoldering flares. Bystanders are harassed, photos taken of everyone in view. For an hour Placer county officials carefully investigate the crime scene trying to reconstruct the event. Like compulsive criminals after a robbery we are compelled to drive by again and again, fascinated by our extraordinary luck in the midst of a the law enforcement.

The papers and evening news are abuzz with details of the jump. Sheriff Nunes, interviewed by the press, vows to arrest John Carta. Citing the remote and precipitous nature of the terrain, he revels a plan to recover the evidence the next day using a winch equipped helicopter and Mountain Rescue personal.

That night we hike upriver to the smashed motorcycle and carry it out. After much debate it is decided a proper resting place for the coveted trophy is under glass; a more glorious coffee table Sheriff Nunes has never laid eyes on.

I think that, not so deep

down, the Placer County Sheriffs had a wry sense of humor about John. Recently, a friend informed the D.A. of his death. Visibly saddened, he remarked that every time John pulled off a new stunt on the Foresthill Bridge, the Deputies would shake their heads and grin, "Whew! That Carta, we'll catch him yet!" Of course, they never did, although the chase had long ago become sport for both them and John.

While individuals in the BASE community criticized John for what they called "publicity seeking," for others he lit the fires of inspiration and imagination. As for the motorcycle jump, we can all probably agree it was stupid, it was crazy and it was dangerous. But most of all, by his own words, it was entertainment, and that was John's gift to us. Beyond that, his retiring modesty prevented him from claiming much more.

For me, it's going to be a tough year, and from now on I'm going to have to entertain myself, but I hear talk among John's friends of an annual outrageous stunt on the anniversary of his death,

his name attached to the ill deed. I can see them now, up in Placer County, shaking their heads, and maybe, just maybe, so can John.

### **Bungee - BASE . By Bryant Austin**

On September 29, Jonathan Bowlin, BASE 76, of Sacramento California, commemorated the first anniversary of the death of John Carta, BASE 118 with a 500-foot bungee jump from the Foresthill Bridge in Auburn, California. After the bungee came to rest, Bowlin added a unique twist which John Carta would have certainly approved. Using a single point cutaway attached to his ankle harness, he released himself from the cords, delayed for two seconds and deployed his slider-down Raven III canopy. Jonathan was under canopy at two-hundred feet above the riverbed. Although both bungee and BASE jumping specifically are prohibited by an enthusiastically enforced ordinance. Bowlin avoided arrest by the use of radios, binoculars and ground crew.



## **1991 Bridge Day Video**

**& Building Jump  
by BASE #262**

# **\$20**

3081 McCrae Street  
Abbotsford, BC  
Canada V2S-5T1

*Some glitches*

## **BASE Day-Pacs**

**Built by: Cloud 9**

(looks like a Velcro closed BASE rig)

**Makers of the popular  
Vector™ & Racer™ Day-Pacs**

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## Last Off...

# Hit List

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Significant structures in selected cities. Height is from sidewalk to roof. Actual number of stories begin at street level. Not all structures are shear from the height given. Source: The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1992.

PLACE	NAME (Yr. Cmp.)	HT	FL
Akron, OH	First National Tower	330	28
Albany, NY	Erastus Corning II Tower	589	44
Alanta, GA	C&S Plaza, 600 Peachtree	1,063	57
Austin, TX	One American Center	395	32
Baltimore, MD	U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co	529	40
Baton Rouge, LA	State Capital (1932)	460	34
Birmingham, AL	SouthTrust Tower	454	34
Boston, MA	John Hancock Tower	790	60
Buffalo, NY	Marine Midland Center (1971)	529	40
Calgary, ALTA	Petro-Canada Tower #2	689	52
Charlotte, N.C	One First Union Center	580	42
Chicago, IL	Sears Tower	1,454	110
Cincinnati, OH	Carew Tower (1931)	568	49
Cleveland, OH	Society Center	948	57
Columbus, OH	State Office Tower	629	41
Dallas, TX	First Republic Bank Plaza	939	73
Dayton, OH	Kettering Tower	405	30
Denver, CO	Republic Plaza	714	56
Des Moines, IN	Principal Financial Group Bldg	630	44
Detroit, MI	Westin Hotel	720	71
Edmonton, ALTA	Manulife Place	479	39
Fort Wayne, IN	One Summit Square	442	26
Fort Worth, TX	City Center Tower II (1984)	546	38
Harrisburg, PA	State Office Tower #2	334	21
Hartford, CT	City Place	532	38
Honolulu, HI	Waterfront Towers (1990)	400	46
Houston, TX	Texas Commerce Tower	1,002	75
Indianapolis, IN	Bank One Tower (1989)	728	51
Jacksonville, FL	Barnett Tower	631	43
Kansas City, MO	One Kansas City Place	626	42
Las Vegas, NV	Fitzgerald Casino-Hotel	400	34
Lexington, KY	Lexington Financial Center	410	30
Little Rock, AK	TCBY Towers (1986)	546	40
Los Angeles, CA	First Interstate World Center	1,017	73
"	First Interstate Bank	858	62
"	Cal Plaza	750	57
"	Wells Fargo Tower	750	54
"	Security Pacific Plaza	735	55
"	So. Cal. Gas Center	733	55
"	777 Tower	725	52
Louisville, KY	First National Bank	512	40
Memphis, TN	100 N. Main Building	430	37
Miami, FL			
"			
Milwaukee, WI			
Minneapolis, MI			
Mobile, AL			
Montreal, QUE			
Newark, NJ			
New Orleans, LA			
New York, NY			
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Oakland, CA			
Omaha, NE			
Orlando, FL			
Ottawa, ONT			
Philadelphia, PA			
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Phoenix, AZ			
Pittsburgh, PA			
Providence, RI			
Raleigh, NC			
Richmond, VA			
Rochester, NY			
Sacramento, CA			
St. Louis, MO			
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Salt Lake City, UT			
San Antonio, TX			
San Diego, CA			
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San Francisco, CA			
Seattle, WS			
Tampa, FL			
Toledo, OH			
Toronto, ONT			
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"			
Tulsa, OK			
Vancouver, BC			
Winston-Salem, NC			
Southwest Financial Center		764	55
Centrust Tower		562	35
Center & Office Tower		625	42
IDS Center		787	51
AmSouth Bank			34
Place Victoria		624	47
Natl. Newark & Essex Building		465	36
One Shell Square		697	51
World Trade Center		1,368	110
Empire State Building		1,250	102
Chrysler Building		1,046	77
Ordway Building		404	28
Woodmen Tower		469	30
Sun Bank Center Tower		441	31
Place De Ville Tower C		368	29
One Liberty Place		960	61
Two Liberty Place		845	52
Mellon Bank Center		795	54
Bell Atlantic Tower		739	53
Valley Natl. Bank		483	40
USX Tower		841	64
Fleet National Bank		420	26
2 Hanover Square		431	29
James Monroe Building		450	29
Xerox Tower		443	30
Wells Fargo Center		405	30
Gateway Arch		630	
Metropolitan Square Tower		591	42
LDS Church Building		420	30
Tower of the Americas		622	
Symphony Towers		429	34
Great American Plaza		429	34
Harbor One		460	40
Hyatt Hotel		475	39
Transamerica Pyramid		853	48
Columbia Seafirst Center		954	76
Barnett Plaza		577	42
Owens-Illinois Corp		411	32
CN Tower		1,821	
First Canadian Place		970	72
Bay / Adelaide Project		951	57
Scotia Plaza		902	68
Bank of Oklahoma		667	52
Royal Centre Tower		460	36
Wachovia Building		410	30
OFFSHORE STRUCTURES			
Hong Kong	Bank of China	1,209	72
Russia	Moscow State University	994	32
Paris	Effiel Tower	984	
Germany	MesseTurm Building	832	70
England	One Canada Square	800	56
Poland	Palace of Science & Culture	790	42
Australia	M.L.C. Centre	786	70
Tokyo	Ikebukuro Office Tower	742	60
South Africa	Carlton Centre	722	50





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