

PARACHUTIST

# STARTER MAG

VOLUME 1



YOUR INTRO  
TO THE  
SKY



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
UNITED STATES PARACHUTE ASSOCIATION



**PERFORMANCE  
DESIGNS**



A skydiver is seen from a low angle, suspended in a blue and white parachute. The skydiver is wearing a dark jumpsuit and a helmet. The parachute is fully deployed and has a small white flag attached to its top line. The sky is a vibrant blue with large, fluffy white clouds. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

**THE FUN ISN'T OVER YET...  
IN FACT IT'S JUST GETTING STARTED**

**#WHATWELOVE**

# WELCOME

**M**y first skydive was in 1999, and I still remember that day. I remember the people who introduced me to this sport and the feelings that swirled in my head the entire day. The tired arms and back from practicing on the ground once I got into the AFF program. I remember the smell of aviation, the jet fuel that used to stink but now takes my thoughts right to skydiving. I remember the feeling of freedom the first time the door opened—then finally stepping out. It was the day my life changed, and I remember it as vividly as you remember that first jump you took just a short time ago.

**“Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return.”**

—Leonardo da Vinci

There might be a million questions running through your mind. Can I jump again right away? How do I get my license? What is freeflying? Can I become an instructor and do this every day? Some of these questions will be answered in the pages that follow, and others will take some time and soul-searching to answer. But the best advice I can give you

as you ask yourself these questions is to enjoy the process. Take in every step. Enjoy every moment. Skydiving is a life-changing experience, and like many activities in life, it has no finish line. Enjoy it. Meet new people. Make new friends. Learn things about yourself. Take deep breaths. Accomplish feats you never believed possible. Be you.

On behalf of the 42,000-plus United States Parachute Association members in the U.S. and around the world, please accept a warm welcome into our community. Parachutist, skydiver, jumper or whatever term you use to describe yourself, you’re now part of our family. Enjoy your journey in skydiving, and I hope to meet you one day at a drop zone somewhere around the world.

Blue Skies,



**Albert Berchtold** D-27832  
Executive Director



## STARTER MAG | VOLUME 01

### Cover Photo & Centerspread

by **Mark Kirchenbaum/Hypoxic** D-28511

Jumpers fly in formation at Chicagoland Skydiving Center in Rochelle, Illinois, during their annual Fourth of July skydiving gathering and party, the Independence Boogie.

Instructor Chazi Rutz takes student Lindsey Goddard on a tandem skydive while nine skydivers join them during the Lost Prairie Boogie at Mountain Peak Skydiving in Marion, Montana.

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SO ...

WHAT







If you're reading this magazine, it's safe to say you're curious about becoming a licensed skydiver. When you showed up at the drop zone to complete your first jump, it's likely that there was also a licensed-jumper community there, sharing the jump plane with the tandems, packing parachutes on the ground and enjoying the day in the sky.

But how do you advance from one-time jumper to licensed skydiver? And once you're a licensed skydiver, what happens next? If you pursue your license, when will you get to strap on a camera and take videos of your jumps, or soar between clouds in a wingsuit, or jump into a music festival in front of thousands of people?

This road map should answer some of those questions. Learning to skydive is a marathon, not a sprint, but hopefully you're excited for more after touching the ground under canopy for the first time. It's only natural to wonder: *So ... what now?*



## YOUR FIRST TRAINING JUMPS

### ACCELERATED FREEFALL

**A**ccelerated Freefall, or AFF, is the most common way for new students to work toward their A licenses. It begins with a jump during which you'll be joined by (but not harnessed to) two instructors in freefall, then guided to the ground, usually via radio, after pulling your own parachute. As you progress through several jumps—typically fewer than 10, depending on your drop zone program—you'll require less and less physical assistance from your instructors.

AFF includes thorough ground-school training, as well, preparing you for everything that can happen in the sky. That includes flying both your body and parachute, hand signals for instructor communication, procedures for handling an emergency and much more.

### INSTRUCTOR-ASSISTED DEPLOYMENT/STATIC LINE

**Y**our other options, depending on what's available at your drop zone, may be instructor-assisted deployment (IAD) and static-line (SL) progressions. Both of these paths are less freefall-oriented than AFF, but require roughly the same number of jumps, and will get you to the point of being cleared to jump solo or with a coach or instructor.

Both of these methods are designed to build you up slowly to a full freefall, beginning with jumps that include almost no freefall at all. At the beginning, your parachute will open almost immediately upon exiting the plane, with the delay before opening increasing gradually over five or more jumps. In the IAD program, an instructor in the jump plane will handle your pilot chute, releasing it for you as you exit the plane. In the SL program, your deployment system will be attached directly to the jump plane. Your body exiting the door will begin the process!

### TANDEM

**I**f your first jump was a tandem skydive, you're in good company. Tandems are the most common way that skydivers enter the sport. And they aren't just joy rides—they are a terrific way to begin the student program and learn some of the basics of skydiving. In fact, you can check off the first two categories of AFF or IAD/SL jumps on tandem skydives. Ask your instructor how you can cross them off the list!

## YOUR PATH TO GREATNESS

### INTEGRATED STUDENT PROGRAM

**O**nce you've completed one, or a combination of, the training programs, you'll be cleared to jump solo with a coach or instructor—but you won't be licensed yet! You still need to reach 25 jumps and complete a written test before you're eligible for an A license, and during the remaining jumps, you'll complete each goal listed on your A-License Proficiency Card. Those tasks range from standing up landings to packing a main parachute to predicting turbulence in the landing area!

## COMPETITION

As you gain confidence in your flying skills, seek out opportunities to explore the competitive side of skydiving. There are local competitions for jumpers of all experience levels, but once you've earned your B license, you qualify to compete in certain disciplines at the USPA National Skydiving Championships. If you're curious about how skydivers compete, check out "Ways to Fly" on page 32!

IOANNIS VUACHOTIS

MORE →

## A LICENSE

Min  
25 Jumps

Once you've completed your AFF or IAD/SL program, reached 25 jumps and passed your test, you're licensed! With an A license, you'll be able to skydive with no supervision, pack your own main parachute and get together with other licensed jumpers for group skydives. But the A license is just the first step in your skydiving journey ...

## B LICENSE

Min  
50 Jumps

### Requirements:

- Cumulative 30 minutes of freefall time
- Ten accurate landings (within 33 feet of a target) and 10 formation skydives
- One canopy course
- Training for water landings

Your B license is the next level of license, and it comes with extra privileges. Many drop zones, especially those close to water, have landing areas that are only for B (and higher) license holders. You'll also be able to jump at night and out of certain specialty aircraft, such as helicopters and hot-air balloons!

HENNY WIGGERS



## FLYING A CAMERA

USPA recommends jumpers have a minimum of 200 jumps before they begin flying with a camera. Once you've reached that threshold, ask experienced camera flyers around your drop zone for advice on getting started with developing a new skill!

## COACH RATING

After reaching 100 jumps, you'll be eligible to obtain your first rating—the Coach rating. To do this, you'll need to audit a first-jump course as well as complete a USPA Coach Rating Course. Once you've achieved this rating, you can start assisting instructors at the drop zone by conducting certain parts of ground school and freefall training with students who have been cleared to jump solo but have not yet achieved their A license. A coach can also supervise a currency jump with a skydiver who has been out of the sky for too long!

## C LICENSE

Min  
200 Jumps

### Requirements:

- Cumulative 60 minutes of freefall time
- 25 accurate landings (within seven feet of a target) and 50 formation skydives

Have you ever wished you could skydive into an event in front of a roaring crowd of people? With your C license, you are qualified for certain kinds of demonstration jumps into large landing areas! You'll also be able to pursue certain instructional ratings as well as ride as student during tandem training and currency jumps.



## WINGSUITING

According to USPA's Basic Safety Requirements, a skydiver must log 200 jumps before they're able to fly a wingsuit, though a C license is not required. Many drop zones offer first-flight courses for those wanting to try it out, so once you hit jump number 200, ask around and see what all the hype is about!

## INSTRUCTIONAL RATINGS

After your C and D licenses, depending on the rating, you are able to take courses to earn different instructional ratings. They require different skills, so ask those who've already achieved that rating what you should work on during your skydives to be the best instructor you can be. Once you've earned your AFF Instructor, Tandem Instructor or IAD/SL Instructor rating, start sharing all you've learned with another generation of skydivers.

## D LICENSE

Min  
500 Jumps

### Requirements:

- Cumulative three hours of freefall time
- Completed two of the following:
  - A night jump
  - 100 accurate landings (within seven feet of a target)
  - A canopy formation of three or more
  - An intentional water jump
  - 100 formation skydives

You've made it! The D license is the highest level of license in the United States, and historically speaking, only 11% of USPA members have gotten this far. But this isn't the end! You are now eligible for all instructional ratings, including Tandem Instructor and AFF Instructor. It's on you, now, to not only keep learning but to pass on all you've learned so far to a new generation of skydivers!

JOE LOHMULLER

## PRO RATING

While D is the highest level of license, reaching that point means you can go for your PRO rating! The C license qualifies you to jump into certain events with large landing areas, but why stop there? A PRO rating means you can jump into events in smaller areas, as well as stadiums. To obtain this rating, you must:

- Possess a D license.
- Make two night jumps.
- Make a series of jumps demonstrating consistent accuracy within a small landing area.

Show that your canopy skills are second to none, and go for the PRO rating. Maybe one day you'll be jumping into the Super Bowl!





Once you have your license, you can travel the world to skydive at International Affiliate drop zones and special events. Here, Greg Crozier admires the sunset over Bali from the best seat in the house while Herman Landsmann looks down to “spot” their landing area.

**Photo by Ioannis Vlachiotis**



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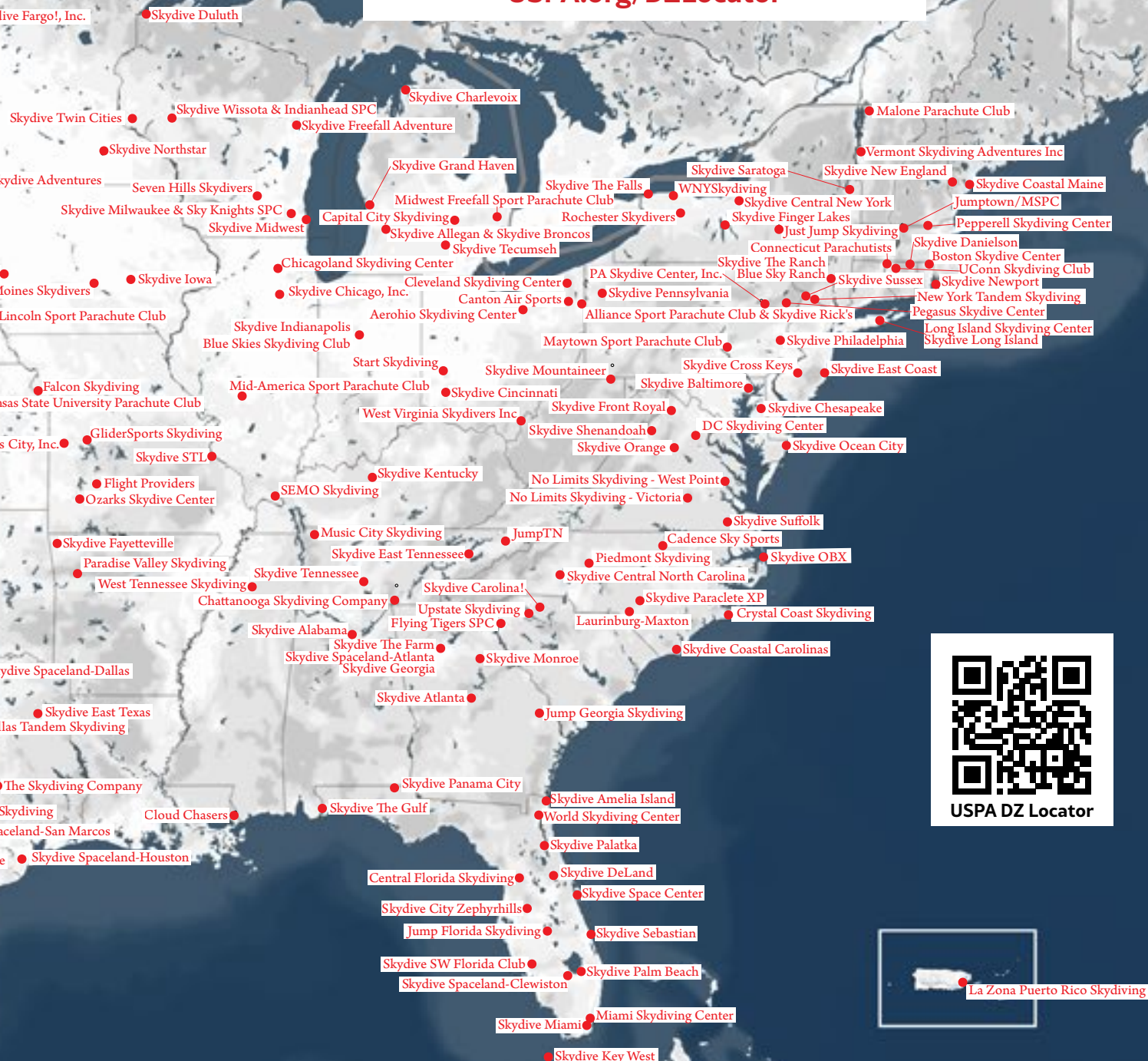
Big Island Gravity



Once you earn your USPA A License, your credentials will be recognized at each USPA Group Member drop zone—more than 200 across the country. Look at the drop zones close to—or far from—you, and start planning that skydiving road trip!

Find out more about USPA Group Member DZs in the U.S. and about USPA International Affiliates around the globe at:

**USPA.org/DZLocator**



USPA DZ Locator

# HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

I have always been shy and introverted. I was a quiet kid, and I grew into an even quieter adult. In college, my introversion escalated into social anxiety. I started to avoid social situations because interacting with people made me so anxious. Speaking in class, making phone calls or even just casually talking to people was terrifying. There were so many mundane things I wanted to do, but I was paralyzed by irrational fear. I missed classes and events, and I didn't make many friends, but I somehow survived college.

After graduating and going through a few horrible situations caused by my crippling social fears, I started making strides to step outside of my heavily restricted comfort zone. I told myself that if I didn't work to face my fears, they would only get worse. I made a list of things that I dreamed of doing but had been too afraid to try. Skydiving was one of the challenges on that list.

I made my first tandem in June of 2015. I was honestly more nervous about talking to my instructor than jumping out of the plane, which felt bizarre and stupid. But as soon as I met my TI and he harnessed me up, my anxiety melted away. I got this weird feeling of belonging in that Cessna 182, because I felt more comfortable crammed in that tiny plane with my instructor and two other skydivers than I'd felt around people in a long time. On the ground, the adrenaline overpowered my social anxiety, and everyone was extremely kind and answered all of my excited questions. They sincerely said, "You should come back," and that stuck with me.

In the following weeks, I couldn't stop thinking about skydiving and that feeling I had in the plane. I researched the AFF program and kept thinking, "This is ridiculous; I can't be a skydiver." Even if I could physically and mentally do it, I was worried that I wouldn't fit in. But there was a little voice in the back of my head that said, "Why not?" So, I decided it was worth a try.

I started AFF that July. The first day, my instructor said with no hesitation, "Yep, you're a skydiver; you're one of us." I didn't believe him then, but he was right. A month later, I was



carried to a dunk tank to "celebrate" my A license. That night, I slept on a couch in the hangar because I wanted to make the first load in the morning. At that moment, I knew I found a home. I took \$10,000 I had saved—intended as a down payment for a house—and instead spent it all on training, gear and jumps, and I moved into a friend's basement.

Taking that leap changed my life. I didn't realize it then, but learning how to skydive taught me methods to manage my anxiety. You learn and plan for the jump on the ground. Whatever fear and doubts build on the climb to altitude go out to the sky when the door opens, and you have to just go for it. At the end of the day, even if everything didn't go as planned, you are happy that you did it instead of succumbing to the fear.

Going through this over and over taught me that the feeling of fear doesn't mean I should stop, it means proceed with caution. The best feelings in life are past that barrier of fear, on the other side of that door. Through learning to skydive, I gained the confidence to repeatedly throw myself out that door and many others.

I have now done countless things that would've been unfathomable for me five years ago by applying the mindset that I learned through skydiving. I got my motorcycle license; I traveled with friends and alone; I tried many things on that original "scary things I want to do" list; and I even performed aerial arts in front of crowds of people. I went from being too anxious to talk to a cashier at a grocery store to literally performing in front of a room packed with people. It still blows my mind. I never would've been able to do any of this without my amazing family at WNY Skydiving in Albion, New York, who welcomed me in with no hesitation and supported me along the way, from my first solo skydive to my first aerial arts show.

It's weird to me now that people call me "fearless." I am absolutely not fearless; I still get anxious all the time. I'm just better at being afraid, and I often chase that feeling instead of hiding from it. I'll admit it's super cheesy, but I live by it now: If your dreams don't scare you, they aren't big enough.

**Robin Basalla** [D-39612](#)  
Rochester, New York





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# WHO ARE SKYDIVERS?

JEFFRY JOHNSON

“Many of us—I’d say even most—dreamt of flying as kids. With imaginations peaking, we watched birds soaring overhead and movies with superheroes, dreaming about how fabulous it would be to fly like they do, past the clouds, using our arms and legs as wings, unattached to any man-made flying machine. But even at a young age, we realized that our dream would never be more than a fantasy. Human beings can’t fly.

Then one day we saw pictures, videos or social media posts about skydiving and realized it was the closest we could come to true human flight. Maybe one percent of the kids who saw those actually wanted to skydive, and maybe one percent of those that wanted to skydive actually made it to a drop zone. One percent of those became skydivers.

Who are skydivers? We are the one percent of the one percent of the one percent. We are dreamers who aren’t just dreamers. We’re dreamers who backed it up with action and made that dream come true—action that was hard for us to take.

There is every reason not to skydive. It’s expensive, terribly inconvenient, scary as hell, dangerous and usually something few, if any, of our friends want to do with us. But despite all of that, our dream of flight was so strong that we made it happen. In the process, we discovered the most amazing sport in the world, and met friends from every walk of life.

Welcome to the family. It’s only just begun for you.”

—Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld

*Drop Zone Manager at Skydive Perris and author of “Above All Else”*



When it comes to skydiving, it truly takes all kinds. Walk into the hangar of your local drop zone, and you'll see people of every occupation, gender, ethnicity, political ideology and personality, all there to share their love of the sky. While your drop zone community—from the instructors to

the other new jumpers—will be supportive of you on your path to becoming a licensed skydiver, there are other groups that span the globe, offering resources for new and experienced jumpers alike. Here are just a few of them!



[USPA.ORG/SIS](https://uspa.org/sis)

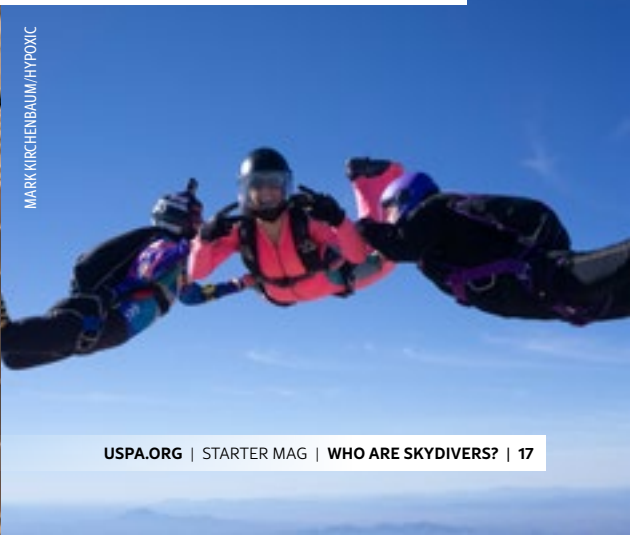
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**SIS**  
**SISTERS IN SKYDIVING**

## SISTERS IN SKYDIVING

The core idea behind Sisters in Skydiving, or SIS, is to create one-on-one mentor relationships between experienced female skydivers and those women who've just started in the sport, with the goal of getting more women to stick to the sport and continue to progress. It provides a strong support network. A Big Sister can be a friend, role model and mentor, giving her Little Sister someone to talk to about issues she may have as she learns the ropes.

With everything from weekend-long SIS events to simply meeting together at the drop zone to jump, Sisters in Skydiving has created lasting bonds between female skydivers, often those spread out across the country and world who would never otherwise have met. And you don't even need to have made a jump to reach out to SIS! It's common for women interested in pursuing the sport to reach out to USPA to connect with a Big Sister before their first trip to the drop zone. The community is there to support female skydivers with any level of experience.



MARK KIRCHENBAUM/HYPONIC

MARK KIRCHENBAUM/HYPONIC

DAVID CHERRY





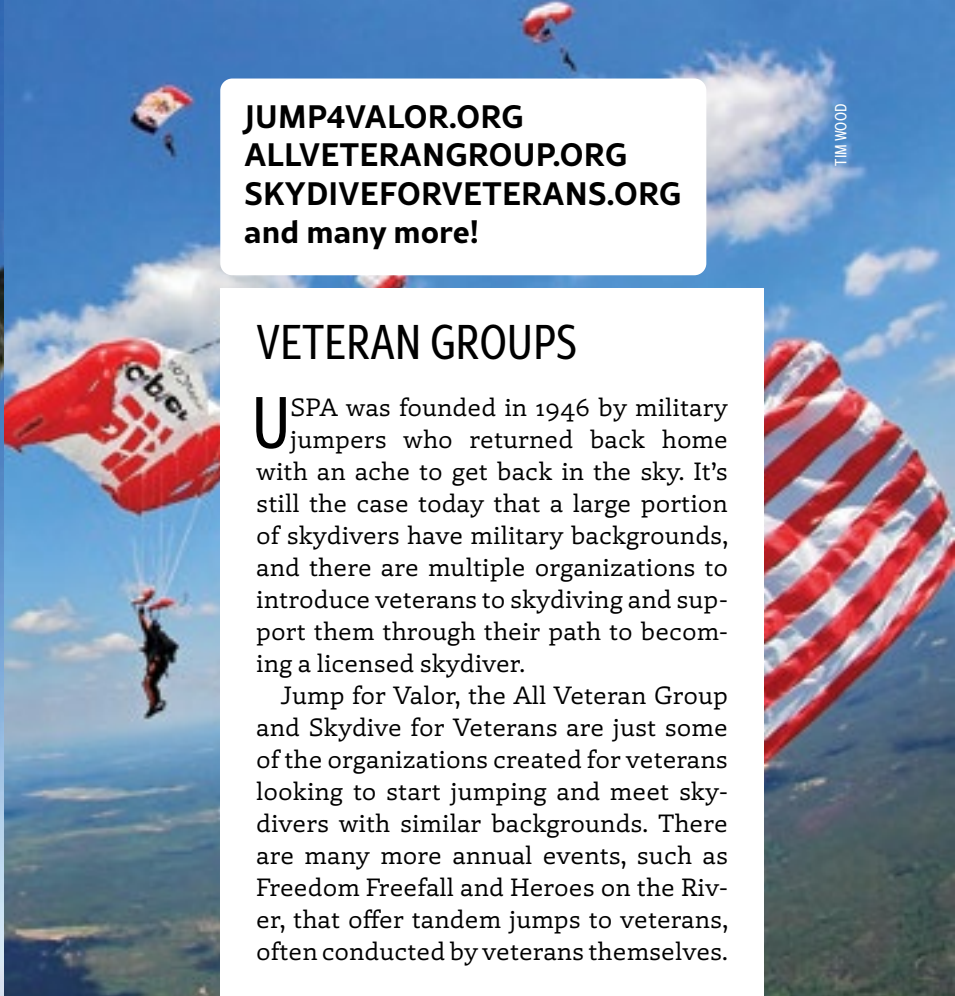
TIM WOOD

**JUMP4VALOR.ORG**  
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**SKYDIVEFORVETERANS.ORG**  
 and many more!

## VETERAN GROUPS

USPA was founded in 1946 by military jumpers who returned back home with an ache to get back in the sky. It's still the case today that a large portion of skydivers have military backgrounds, and there are multiple organizations to introduce veterans to skydiving and support them through their path to becoming a licensed skydiver.

Jump for Valor, the All Veteran Group and Skydive for Veterans are just some of the organizations created for veterans looking to start jumping and meet skydivers with similar backgrounds. There are many more annual events, such as Freedom Freefall and Heroes on the River, that offer tandem jumps to veterans, often conducted by veterans themselves.



TIM WOOD



**POPS-USA.COM**

## PARACHUTISTS OVER PHORTY

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now. Since 1966, Parachutists Over Phorty, or POPS, has been a community for older jumpers, and its membership is now in the thousands. Many POPS members have hundreds or even thousands of jumps, but the community is supportive of skydivers with all levels of experience.

POPS is one of the largest subgroups of skydivers, and holds events and world-record attempts multiple times a year, all over the world. There are even subgroups of POPS—including Skydivers Over Sixty (SOS), Jumpers Over Seventy (JOS), Jumpers Over Eighty (JOEs) and even Jumpers Over Ninety (JONs).



ANTJE GRUBE





TEAMBLACKSTAR.COM

## TEAM BLACKSTAR


Team Blackstar formed in 2014 as an organization devoted to supporting and encouraging skydivers of color, regardless of experience level. Beginning as a very small group of six, the Team Blackstar community has grown to drop zones across the United States and in six countries. “We act as a support group,” says founding member Harrison Wallace. “Because a lot of the skydiving community doesn’t realize that there are a lot of experienced skydivers of color.”



DON CARRINGTON







While at the drop zone, you might see “swoopers” coming in for fast landings. These skydivers have hundreds or even thousands of jumps and take special canopy courses to help them learn to execute these maneuvers close to the ground. They’re also pretty good at smiling for the camera, as shown by James Heck here at Skydive Tennessee in Tullahoma.

**Photo by Eddie Phillips**





# SPYN PAD SYSTEM



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Skydivers travel from near and far to “boogies,” which are multi-day events with lots of skydiving during the day and music, food, parties and prizes at night. They may coincide with a holiday—as you can see here with Cienna Stover and Michelle Daimion feeling patriotic at the 4th of July Boogie at Skydive Cross Keys in New Jersey—or might be a local tradition. They’re always a great opportunity to meet other skydivers, especially at boogies specifically for newly licensed jumpers!

**Photo by Bert Navarette**



# HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

Ever since I was a little kid, doctors told me that I would be limited to certain activities because I was born with spina bifida. I never even entertained the idea of jumping out of a perfectly good airplane, and anyway, skydiving was something that terrified me. That all would change after going to Skydive Perris in California.

I moved near Perris in 2015, and for years I saw and heard planes flying overhead all day long. One day at the beginning of 2019, I thought I'd go check it out and see what it was all about. As soon as I arrived, I felt a warm, welcoming feeling from people. It was a busy day, but everyone was nice and approachable and made me feel at home. It was a place I loved to be and didn't ever want to leave.

In the coming weeks, I would go back multiple times and watch large events, including big-way formations, P3 camps and Skydivers Over Sixty gatherings. I also saw the Canadian Army demo team, the Skyhawks, in training. They made the hardest tricks under canopy look effortless. I met J.P., the man behind the Skyhawks program, and Craig O'Brien, who was filming the Skyhawks doing their aerobatics under canopy. Each event was like nothing I had ever experienced before. It was incredible to watch all the ground operations leading up to formations in the sky. I just couldn't get enough of it.

I constantly talked with anyone and everyone at Perris about the sport and learned all I could about what I was watching, I must have talked to hundreds of people—new jumpers,



as well as world champion skydivers. Over time, it changed my whole view on the sport, and I started thinking that I should get in the sky and do what all these other crazy people were doing! If they could do it, then I could, too. I just had to get past the mental block. Each person I came into contact with helped crack that barrier a little bit at a time. But one person I came into contact changed a lot of things for me.

One morning, I introduced myself to a guy I saw riding around on a bike a day earlier. Someone had told me that he was Dan B.C. (Dan Brodsky-Chenfeld), the DZ manager. I approached him, introduced myself and told him how much I enjoyed the place. He told

me that the drop zone was one of the busiest in the nation and to stick around watch some events they would be hosting later that month. The next couple weeks I attended the Aussie Big-Way Camp and met even more accomplished skydivers. That pretty much did it for me ... I was sucked in and ready to make my own skydive a reality.

On a quiet afternoon a few days later, I asked Dan if it would be possible to make a jump, even though I was in a wheelchair, and also if he'd go with me. He said, "Yes, it's 100-percent possible! They have straps they can use to help with landing, and we have the best instructors, so let's do it!" I asked Craig O'Brien if he could join, and he said "Absolutely!" So, we made a date for the jump and it was a go.

On June 5, 2019, I experienced the closest thing to human flight possible. It was one of the highlights of my life. I did lose both of my shoes when I pulled the parachute, but it was all worth it. It may have taken six months to build up the courage needed, but with the help of Dan, Craig and my instructor James Perez, it became a reality.

Skydiving changed my whole view of life. It taught me that we need to chase our fears, because on the other side of fear is greatness and growth. We should do what we fear because life is short, and we should look to grow daily. We shouldn't let anything limit us from achieving what we set out to do in life. Just because doctors told me that the things I could do were limited, it didn't mean I had to listen. I wanted to skydive, so I did.

**Spencer Hopp**  
Perris, California

TURN THE  
PAGE FOR  
A PULL-OUT  
POSTER!











MARK KIRCHENBAUM/HYPÖXIC



# HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

**N**ovember 2, 1968, was a beautiful clear Saturday. I had just turned 19 and was a 145-pound freshman at the University of Houston when I went to the Galveston Skydivers in Dickinson, 30 miles away. That day I did about a two-hour ground school that primarily involved jumping off a 4-foot-high platform, crudely perfecting my parachute landing fall. I soon found myself in an old Cessna 195 climbing to 2,800 feet for my first jump, a static-line jump using a modified 30-foot round military parachute, commonly referred to as a cheap-o. I hit the ground fairly hard but did an OK PLF. It was so amazing!

In the next few weeks, I finished the required five static-line jumps followed by one jump-and-pull and two five-second delays. I was able to buy and begin packing my own cheap-o rig (\$35) after my third jump. I was beginning to feel like a real skydiver.

It was around this time that I met Deborah, a beautiful girl from a small town in Tennessee. She was visiting her relatives in Houston. I invited her to the drop zone for our first date. When we got there, it was too windy to jump, so we continued on from Dickinson to Galveston, where we took a romantic ride across the bay on the Bolivar Ferry.

Deborah returned home to Tennessee, and I finished the semester and prepared for two years of active duty in the Navy Reserve. I continued jumping, even though the weather seldom cooperated. Everyone at the drop zone was great, always giving tips and looking out for my safety. Deborah returned to Houston in the spring, and in early April she finally got to see me jump. I was working on 20-second freefalls, so I told her to lie on the ground and count. I was the third person to leave the plane at 5,500 feet. I didn't have an altimeter, so I counted. Deborah spotted me leaving the plane, counted to 18, and I pulled. I told her, "You count faster when you're falling at 120 miles per hour."

I was lucky that day and made a second jump. This time, they let me progress to a 30-second freefall from 7,200 feet. Again, I was the third person out of the plane. Unfortunately, I forgot to tell Deborah that this jump was 30 seconds. She counted to 19 ... 20 ... 21 ... 22 and started to panic. I finally pulled, but you can bet I got a lecture on the importance of communication.

I ended up with 17 jumps before leaving for the Navy. Deborah and my relationship grew, and we were married later that year while I was stateside. When I returned from a tour in the Philippines and Vietnam, Deborah and I restarted our married life together. After college and a few years fighting the Houston traffic, we moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where we raised a family and eventually retired.

I often dreamed of skydiving again, but I didn't pursue it due to other priorities. Then Deborah passed away unexpectedly in 2020 after 50 years of marriage. She was buried in her hometown of Jasper, Tennessee. One day after visiting her grave, I stopped by the Marion County Airport, the drop



zone for the Chattanooga Skydiving Company. I soon signed up for their AFF package, which consisted of ground school, two tandem jumps and seven AFF jumps. Everyone there was fantastic, especially the couple who did my training. Darcy was my tandem instructor, as well as the second AFF instructor on my first few AFF jumps. Michelle was my ground-school instructor and my AFF instructor on single-instructor AFF jumps.

I now have a new A license, A-97544. Reconnecting with skydiving has challenged me to be a stronger person and has given a new purpose to life. I am fortunate to have good health, because I have so much more to learn. I look forward to improving my skydiving skills and meeting new friends.

**Jack Flack** B-54820  
*Hixson, Tennessee*





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# WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES PARACHUTE ASSOCIATION

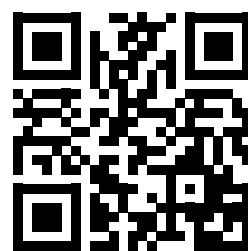
## USPA'S MISSION:

Founded in 1946, the U.S. Parachute Association is a not-for-profit membership association run by skydivers for skydivers. It is led by a volunteer board of directors that provides direction to a paid staff. Dedicated to supporting safe skydiving and those who enjoy it, USPA serves its approximately 42,000 members by promoting safe skydiving through training, licensing and instructor qualification programs; ensuring skydiving's rightful place on airports and in the air-space system; and promoting competition and record-setting programs.

## A FEW EXAMPLES OF WHAT USPA DOES FOR SKYDIVERS:

- Develops and administers training programs for beginner skydivers and produces the [Skydiver's Information Manual \(SIM\)](#), which outlines the Basic Safety Requirements for members, provides recommendations and contains in-depth information on both getting licensed and enjoying skydiving as an experienced jumper. The SIM is essential reading for students and experienced jumpers alike!
- Sets standards and develops training programs for skydiving instructors and produces the [Instructional Rating Manual \(IRM\)](#) to ensure that instructors are well qualified and have access to the best, most up-to-date educational materials. USPA's training programs are the gold standard worldwide!
- Interacts with local, state and federal government officials, including those of the Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Congress, state transportation departments and legislators to monitor bills and regulations that would affect skydiving. Administers the [Airport Access and Defense Fund](#) to help support drop zones that are facing regulatory action.
- Holds the [USPA National Skydiving Championships](#) and the [USPA National Collegiate Skydiving Championships](#) annually.
- Selects the [U.S. Parachute Team](#) that represents the country internationally at competitions such as the World Games and the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (World Air Sports Federation) World Championships. Supports the Team through the U.S. Parachute Team Trust Fund and the U.S. Parachute Team Inc. funds.
- Provides the framework and materials for drop zones to host [USPA Safety Day](#) annually on the second weekend in March and administers the U.S. Skydiving Safety Foundation to fund programs that enhance skydiving safety. Appoints a USPA Safety and Training Advisor for each skydiving location so that members always have a trusted source for the latest information.
- Staffs a [Membership Department](#) (with real human beings who actually answer the phone when you call!) on weekdays from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Eastern. The Membership Department issues USPA memberships, licenses, ratings, appointments and awards and maintains a database of credentials that members can access and update 24/7 at [uspa.org/me](https://uspa.org/me).
- Keeps members up-to-date on the latest in skydiving news and shenanigans through [Parachutist magazine](#), [parachutist.com](https://parachutist.com), [uspa.org](https://uspa.org), social media sites and e-newsletters. Promotes skydiving through national and local public relations efforts.





[USPA.ORG/JOIN](https://uspa.org/join)

## YOUR BENEFITS AS A USPA MEMBER:

- Your license and ratings credentials recognized by skydiving associations worldwide
- Ability to skydive at more than 200 USPA Group Member drop zones in the United States, and more than 120 International Affiliate drop zones
- A subscription to *Parachutist*, USPA's monthly magazine covering skydiving activity, safety and advice from expert competitors and educators
- Eligibility to earn licenses, ratings and awards offered by USPA
- Third-party liability insurance while skydiving at Group Member drop zones
- Ability to vote for your representatives on the USPA Board of Directors

## USPA'S VALUES STATEMENT

USPA is committed to promoting an atmosphere that allows our sport to be safe, inclusive and fun. We advocate for the dignity and well-being of all individuals and respect diverse traditions, heritages and experiences. We value inclusivity and reject discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief or any other attribute not related to performance or merit. USPA affirms its vision of a safe and healthy skydiving environment free of violence and any form of discrimination, including sexual or racial harassment.

## FIND USPA ONLINE



[USPA.org](https://uspa.org)

**PARACHUTIST**

[Parachutist.com](https://parachutist.com)



[SkydiveUSPA](https://skydiveuspa.com)



[SkydiveUSPA](https://skydiveuspa.com)



[USPA.org/store](https://uspa.org/store)

# HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

**J**uly 22, 2013, was the day that changed my life. A week earlier, a coworker and I had received a briefing that a new drop zone was opening in our patrol area. The owners had invited troopers from our station to come out and make a tandem skydive. The two of us showed up at the brand-new drop zone, Skydive Sussex in New Jersey, on the 22nd to start on our paths to becoming skydivers. From the moment I landed with my tandem instructor, I knew I had found a new passion. My instructor said he knew from the look on my face that I was hooked. He couldn't have been more right.

Over the course of the first few months of jumping, the staff at the DZ flooded me with information and advice. I slowly developed into a young skydiver who would beat the drop zone manager to the manifest office in the morning. The staff would frequently find me snoozing in my car in the parking lot after a night shift, eager to make the first load of the day. The first second out of that open Cessna 182 door was all the motivation I needed to keep coming back. There was nothing I looked forward to more than that split second.

Our AFF class had eight or nine people from various walks of life in it, and within two weeks we were all ready for our solos and looking forward to jumping with more people and experiencing new things together. No one seemed to care what anybody else did for a living, which was a nice change. As a law enforcement officer, family and friends constantly introduce me by saying, "This is my daughter. She's a state trooper," or, "This is my friend. She's a cop." Our DZ family didn't care. They just wanted us to jump and have fun, and they made sure we were welcomed into their community. They taught us to be safety-conscious jumpers, so when I and some junior jumpers decided to attend our first boogie in Puerto Rico, we had the voices of our drop zone operator, as well as the senior jumpers, echoing in our ears to be safe and smart.

Over the past 15 months, the people at my DZ have been a constant source of encouragement, support and inspiration.



Through good times—both personal and professional—as well as bad, they have been there to lend an ear, give advice or point out how far I've come. From my first beer-rules violation to becoming a USPA C-License holder with a coach rating, these last 15 months have been a period of growth for me. I have enjoyed becoming a Big Sister with Sisters in Skydiving to welcome new women into our sport, developing into a productive member of the DZ and giving back.

The friendships that I have made and the skills that I have learned from this new family are priceless. All of them in their unique ways have opened my eyes to a whole new world. I owe so much to the DZO who trained me through AFF, the coaches who helped me study for my rating and the riggers and tandem instructors who cared enough to take the time to teach me. I can only hope to pass the knowledge and passion along to new skydivers when they show up with the same looks in their eyes that I had. My family at Skydive Sussex is just that: my family. We may all come from different walks of life, but in the air we're all the same: people with a passion for skydiving.

**Shauna Finley** | [D-34907](#)  
New Market, Virginia





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"Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn."  
-Benjamin Franklin

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY.



# WAYS TO FLY

It seems simple enough: Open the door, fall out of the plane and fall toward the earth. But what are skydivers if not competitive? Each year, there are local competitions at drop zones around the world, culminating in national- and world-level championship events where some of the most talented skydivers in the world gather to compete.

But how is “the best skydiver” judged? Competition events can be as simple as landing on a small target on the ground or as complicated as needing a small flight computer to provide data on every aspect of a skydiver’s jump. They can be team-oriented or purely individual. Let’s explore the different disciplines of competitive skydiving!

## WINGSUIT FLYING

Next time you’re in a jump plane, look behind you, closest to the pilot, for a wingsuiter! Competitive wingsuit flying is split into two categories—“Performance” and “Acrobatic.” In acrobatic wingsuit flying, a team of two performers flies through a set of maneuvers, filmed by a videographer. Performance wingsuit flying, however, is an individual discipline. These skydivers fly through a predetermined 1,000-meter altitude window and are judged by how fast they go, how far they fly and how long they stay in that window.

WILLY BOEYKENS



RANDY SWALLOWS



## FORMATION SKYDIVING

Teams of skydivers exit the plane with a set amount of time to complete formations and earn “points.” Depending on the level of competition, these teams can be as small as two and as large as 16 (or even larger in specific competitions). While there is usually a pattern of up to four formations that are repeated, these competitions have their own rules depending on where you are. Jumpers compete in formation skydiving on the national and world stage, but you’re likely to find informal competitions, welcoming to jumpers of all levels of experience, at a drop zone close to you!



## VERTICAL AND MIXED FORMATION SKYDIVING

Once you've spent the time building up your belly-flying skills, try something different! Vertical and mixed formation skydiving differs from standard FS in that skydivers turn on all axes while falling through the air. Turning to the side to grab your instructor's foot is already difficult—now give it a shot while you're upside down!



## CANOPY FORMATION

While freefall might seem like the most glamorous part of your skydive, it doesn't end when you open your parachute—just ask any canopy formation skydiver. These jumpers also complete formations, but it's while they're under canopy! In national and world competition, they compete in teams of two or four, and have to be experts when it comes to piloting their parachutes. If you think flying a canopy is fun, imagine doing it within earshot of several friends!





## ACCURACY LANDING

It's exactly what it sounds like: Land on the target! Accuracy landing is one of the oldest forms of skydiving competition and is something you can practice on each and every jump. At the highest levels, an automatic measuring device (or AMD) is placed at the center of a large air-filled tuffet. Landings are scored based on how close the first point of contact (hopefully your foot) is to the center of the target.



EDDIE PHILLIPS

## SPEED SKYDIVING

It might sound easy—point your head toward the earth and fly downward as fast as you can—but an incredible amount of calculation and math goes into speed skydiving. These skydivers reach speeds over 300 miles per hour as they fall, using a special device to measure their fastest vertical speed. Speed skydiving is the fastest non-motorized sport in the world!



DAVID CHERRY



## ARTISTIC EVENTS

This category, consisting of freeflying and freestyle skydiving, is where some of the most talented flyers in the world go to showcase everything they can do in the air. While both are team events, freeflying is executed by a pair of performers and a camera flyer, while freestyle skydiving features one skydiver and a camera flyer. In both, the camera work is an important part of the score. Artistic competitors design creative routines that take advantage of every dimension of flight.



ORI KUPER

## CANOPY PILOTING

If some skydivers look forward to a gentle and easy landing after deploying their parachutes, canopy pilots aren't among them. These skydivers pick up an incredible amount of speed while under their parachutes, then level off as they approach the ground to "swoop" a pond. In standard canopy piloting, they're judged by their speed, distance after completing the length of the pond and the accuracy of their landing (with different jumps devoted to each). Canopy piloting also includes freestyle, in which these skydivers attempt certain tricks as they glide across the water. Though most drop zones don't have a dedicated pond, you might see veteran skydivers practicing their swoops in a separate landing area!

Though competitive skydiving might not be on your radar yet, it's one of the most fun ways to advance your skydiving skills and meet new people. Once you've earned your A license, ask other skydivers about casual competitions at drop zones near you!





Selections from past issues of *Parachutist*

Selections from past issues of *Parachutist*

**SKYDIVERS ESTABLISH MARYLAND STATE RECORDS**

On September 21, members of the Partnership for the Chesapeake Bay and the Baltimore-Washington Chapter of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation gathered at Gaylord's Chesapeake Bay Club in Maryland for a day of record-setting. The jumpers had enormous success, setting an all-time POPS 200 and 300 stone record. The year was a 100% stone record.

The second anniversary of the Partnership for the Chesapeake Bay and the Baltimore-Washington Chapter of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation was celebrated at the Chesapeake Bay Club in Maryland for a day of record-setting. The jumpers had enormous success, setting an all-time POPS 200 and 300 stone record. The year was a 100% stone record.

Pete Hunter (D) 2008  
David Hastings



...and being better able to find a good job.

**SAFETY CHECK**  
CALMNESS

[illegible]

# The Great Texas Chute Out

STAL TAYLOR



## Three More for the Record Books

REPORTED BY GLENN BANGS

[illegible]

...in order to make this effort work she would have to make a trip every three minutes during the 16-hour period to

**SAFETY & TRAINING:**  
**SKYDIVING HEALTH AND FITNESS**  
A BOLD MOVE—RANGE OF MOTION AND

Brought to you by Dr. Nancy Granger, DPT of Blue Star Physical Therapy  
10000 Old Columbia Road, Columbia, MD 21046

Exercises to help build stable landings after take-off are used to focus on the whole plane pattern and should include work on leg strength, strengthening of the body's ability to sense movement, core stability and proprioceptive input, powerful movements. Here, Lorna Petherick shows how the glide and leg movement to the point where the foot is released has been demonstrated three weeks after rehabilitation started. In this early phase of her recovery, Lorna will work on issues of mobility and single-landing technique.

While performing deep squats, the TKS device will help support your muscles as you move the full, active range of motion in the hips, knees and ankles. The TKS will also assist you with returning springs as you gain strength. Use your gloves with pads and practice your movements. When you make injury-free use will see results that you have not used recently as you may feel shaky or sore the next day.

**Start:** Stand with the TEE handle in your hands and your feet at shoulder-width apart.

**Actions:** Tuck your toes, stretching your legs back over your heels. Your arms may stretch to counterbalance, held at the knees and keep your spine vertical. This becomes a static yet respirable position as you rise to upright.

**End:** Tied up by using great plants and goods

During repairs allow the ground to warm and  
the soil to be replaced. The ground is indicated

activate your stress signals and help you get more comfortable putting off and accepting needs on a surface that may vary.

**Start:** Stand with the TBI handles in front of you and your feet at shoulder-width apart.


Photo: Info poster with facts of most significant social issues

### Cold Temperatures, High Winds

November 8, 2003 broke clear and was after the average of a cold front that came through during the night. The first snow was that it kept the rain had started.

inspiring to a light-colored, textured cloth for your  
and machine for the next time!

10



The group leader says the group is a "black and white" group.

[illegible]

10



## FROM “PEAK EXPERIENCES IN SKYDIVING”

By Mike Horan | April 2016 Issue

Visit any drop zone and you'll soon start enjoying the good vibes. Skydivers are friendly, possess high energy and are extremely passionate about freefalling through the sky. Excitement is in the air, and it's easy to see why. Skydivers take premeditated risks by leaping out of perfectly good airplanes. It's what we do, and we love it. The daily camaraderie on drop zones is compelling and is one of the major things that attracts new skydivers to the sport. It's an activity filled with confident, competent and enthusiastic people.

However, there is more to it than that. New skydivers soon begin to understand what almost everybody on the DZ realizes: It isn't just surviving each skydive that matters; it's what happens during the skydive. And what happens on the next skydive could be that very special time when everything comes together for a great experience.

Special jumps can occur without warning and without any predetermination. It could easily be your first skydive. Perhaps it was the time you flew into your biggest formation. Whatever the particulars of the jump, if it positively changed the way you feel about yourself, chances are you were having a peak experience. These experiences can be some of the happiest and most thrilling moments of one's life. Without a doubt, peak experiences are people's healthiest moments.

Most skydivers fall into the category of healthy people. Self-actualizing skydivers use the challenges in this sport to develop their potential. The first jump is usually a remarkable experience. That first jump opens the door and lays the foundation for succeeding challenges. There is always a challenge on every skydive, some aspect that is new and different that the jumper could do better, faster or higher. It is overcoming the challenges of deliberate risk taking that helps skydivers develop individual potential and become more self-actualizing.



DAVID CHERRY



DAVID CHERRY



MARK KIRSCHENBAUM/HYPÖXC



# FROM “HOW TO BUY A USED MAIN CANOPY”

By Hollie-Blue Allum for Performance Designs  
July 2018 Issue

Without a doubt, there are some great deals on used parachutes in the marketplace. Many people choose to buy used, especially for their first or second sets of gear. If you do choose to buy used equipment, particularly a main canopy, you'll need to do your homework.

Although you can get a good value by buying a used parachute made by a manufacturer that you trust, this won't be the case if the parachute is not in decent condition. With that in mind, here's a guide that tells you what to pay attention to, red flags to watch out for, questions to ask and (apologies) a few reality checks.

## Visual Inspection

First, you're going to want to do a full canopy inspection and, if possible, have a rigger check it out for you as well. You'll want to pay attention to these high-wear areas:

- The top of the three center cells and the area surrounding the warning label near the tail
- The steering lines and the condition of the line set in general
- The slider grommets, channels (if applicable) and fabric

The condition of the overall canopy fabric is a big one to watch out for when buying used. One of the biggest contributors to canopy deterioration is sweat, with the greatest fabric degradation occurring to the top skin of the center three cells from the tail to the pilot chute attachment. Also, the sun's UV rays reduce the strength of the fabric, which shortens its lifespan, so watch for canopies that are very faded. You should also keep an eye out for impact holes and line burn.



SAMANTHA SCHWANN



JUAN MAYER





## History

Ask about the history of the canopy, which can let you know what else to watch out for. Don't get super hung up on how many jumps have been made on the canopy. You may find that a canopy has been jumped very little but still has issues. Dig deep and ask questions. Two big factors are:

- Location, location, location. It's essential that you find out where the canopy has been jumped. A canopy that's been jumped in hot, desert-like, dusty conditions or an agricultural area where pesticides are common will show premature wear.
- Is the seller the first owner or have there been multiple owners? The more owners, the less likely you're getting the full story on the canopy. Just because someone says it's in good condition doesn't mean it is (Sorry to remove those rose-tinted glasses, guys.)

When you ask questions about the parachute's history, keep in mind the types of use that can affect a parachute's condition over time.

- Has the canopy gotten wet? If a canopy was dried before use or if it dried asymmetrically, the fabric, tapes and thread could have undergone changes, which will create a change in the canopy's overall performance.
- Has the canopy been exposed to salt water? If the owner didn't rinse it properly or sensed it but handled it roughly and used excess agitation, the canopy could be damaged.
- How was it packed? If the owner repeatedly used bad packing practices and routinely put stress on one portion of the canopy, the canopy may have gone dimensional changes.
- What maintenance has the canopy undergone?
- Is it a high-performance canopy? If so, it likely has seen aggressive use, been swooped and been in ponds and probably has a high number of jumps on it. Therefore, it may have a great deal of premature wear.

## Fly Before You Buy

How many times have you bought a used car on Craigslist and not asked to drive it before buying? Fingers crossed, the answer is never. When it comes to buying a used canopy, flying it is an essential step. When you fly it, ask yourself how it performs compared to others of the same model and size. If you've never flown a canopy of the same model and size, ask someone with knowledge and experience to fly it for you.

## Buy At Your Own Risk

By taking the proper precautions, you should be able to purchase a great second-hand parachute. Most manufacturers will be happy to answer questions about their products and help you through the purchasing experience whether the canopy is new or used.

However, there are always risks. If you find that your newly purchased parachute needs a checkup, contact the manufacturer, who should be able to fully inspect it and make any necessary repairs. To avoid this heartache, do your homework ahead of time. Happy shopping!

CHERYL BROWN



BRIAN BINDER





# FROM “GETTING PAST THE DOOR MONSTER”

By Brian Germain | July 2015 Issue

New skydivers often need help to get through a seemingly impenetrable barrier of fear, especially the common obstacle that many people have affectionately termed the “Door Monster.” Although no single answer helps everyone, solutions do exist.

Fear is normal. In fact, if you are in danger and aren’t feeling a heightened level of arousal, you are not executing your survival skills as powerfully as possible. We need a certain kind of adrenaline that wakes us up and prepares our bodies for action. This is healthy fear.

If you are feeling fear, your mind is telling you that you are not ready to move forward with the situation as it is. But if a few parameters changed, you might feel quite differently. The human brain can shift from terror to optimal experience quite quickly once certain aspects of safety are addressed. You may just need to take a step back and do things in a more organized fashion in order to soothe the fear. It is also possible that you simply need to move more slowly, breathe more fully and not let the situation cause you to go any faster than your brain can think. It is also possible that your fear, which has arisen to assist you in saving your life, is providing exactly what you need. If you remember while you’re standing in the door that it is your intense, sane desire to survive that is causing your heart to race, you may decide to simply enjoy the sensation and ride the wave of emotion into a feeling of empowerment, increased awareness and preparedness. Our interpretation of our reality is ultimately what decides our experience.

In skydiving, the biggest dangers do not usually come from outside but from within. Stay calm and keep thinking. Sometimes the right thing to do will be to ride the plane down. Sometimes it will be to charge into battle with your hair on fire and a wild smile upon your face. In the end, you will figure out what to do if you simply slow down and rationally consider what you can do to feel better. If you make feeling good your number-one priority, you aren’t likely to find yourself in a situation that you cannot handle. If you use fear as part of your emotional guidance system that leads to safety, fear can become a tool and even a friend.



BERT NAVARETTE



BERT NAVARETTE





GEN MONTREUIL

## FROM “PROFILE: DAN BRODSKY-CHENFELD”

By Brian Giboney | July 2009 Issue

It is funny when you think about the public's perception of skydivers. They look at the adrenaline junkie, psycho-criminals they've seen in movies and figure that this must be a good example of who skydivers really are. Then they come to a drop zone and see men and women between the ages of 18 and 80 from around the world, people from every conceivable walk of life and not a psycho in the bunch (well, just a few, anyway).

When friends ask me about skydivers, I explain that as kids we dreamt of flying. To some degree almost all little kids do. What separates skydivers from the rest is that we had the courage to go for it. Skydivers are dreamers who dared to try.



*The full, original versions of these articles can be found at [parachutist.com](http://parachutist.com) under the “Back Issues” tab when you search their respective issues of the magazine.*

KAREN LEWIS DALTON





# HOW SKYDIVING CHANGED MY LIFE

I waddled my way to the edge of the plane door with a strange man strapped to my back. I thought to myself, “What did I sign myself up for?” My tandem instructor screamed, “Out! In! Out!” and as quick as that, I was plummeting to the earth at 120 mph. I didn’t know that this moment would be the beginning of an unforgettable journey.

At the age of 19, my parents surprised me with a tandem skydive, as they always knew this was something I wanted to try. I had talked about going for years. When the opportunity presented itself, I felt naturally hesitant. Although I was cautious, the thrill seeker within me pushed forward. I can remember that day like it was yesterday: It was cloudy, chilly and quiet. I played it cool and acted fearless, but in all reality I wanted to turn and run. Needless to say, I fought through the apprehension, and when I returned to the ground safely, I felt slightly intoxicated and liberated. I stumbled over to my parents and said, “Yup, I’m getting licensed.”

The AFF course was everything but easy for me. I questioned myself constantly, and fear was a common emotion on every jump. In fact, most of my fellow skydivers would notice my instant change on the plane. I would quietly sit there, face pale white, close my eyes and play the skydive in my head from start to finish. But every time I exited the plane, it reiter-



ALEX KELLY

ated that this was where I belonged. I underestimated myself, as I performed well on almost every jump and obtained my license within two months. I was determined and dedicated to the sport.

When I came off student status, it was nerve wracking. No one was there to hold my hand anymore, and I found myself wondering if I was really cut out for this sport. I was a young girl and felt intimidated and overwhelmed. But what I found in myself that I never knew I had before was my will. I had the will to continue, to progress and to test every limit possible. Before I knew it, I was sit-flying at 45 jumps, obtaining my B license and jumping as much as I could. I set goals for myself, and I would reach them and exceed my own expectations.

Skydiving didn’t change my life, it defined my life. It has opened a whole new adventure and given me self-awareness. It was the first time in my life that I felt confident. I found strengths within myself that I did not know I possessed. I didn’t want to work hard just in the sport; it motivated me to do better in general. I became more productive and goal driven in my overall life.

Aside from that, skydiving gives me an indescribable feeling that I am so grateful for. It is an ultimate escape from all my troubles and makes me appreciate the beauty and peacefulness of the world in a different perspective. After all, how many people can say what the world looks like from 14,000 feet in open air? The person I was before never viewed life as a gift. I now see every day as an adventure and have the ability to feel like I can accomplish any challenge, goal or obstacle that comes my way.

**Samantha Hopkins** | B-36043  
Vernon, Connecticut



JULIE HOPKINS



If you see a camera flyer in the air, smile! Here, photographer and videographer Norman Kent flies below a formation skydive at Skydive Perris in California. If that seems like a lot of skydivers in the air at once, don't worry: Kent is capturing a world-record attempt by the group Skydivers over Sixty, or SOS, whose members are all over the age of (you guessed it!) 60.

**Photo by Craig O'Brien**





# ADVICE FROM THE PROS

**F**or more than 20 years, columnist Brian Giboney, author of the monthly *Parachutist Profile*, has been asking the same question to the greatest skydivers in the world: “What advice do you have for students?” If you’ve made it this far into the *Starter Mag*, we sincerely hope you’re ready to get back in the air and pursue your A license, but before you board that jump plane, take a moment to heed this advice from the best of the best!


**E**njoy where you are in your training, and don’t get ahead of yourself. Someday, you’ll have gobs of jumps and long for those early jumps again. If you can’t wait to be an ace skydiver, then get coaching and tunnel time and as much advice from active, experienced jumpers as you can. Don’t cut corners—you will pay the price.

—**Chris Salcone** | California  
Former U.S. Freefly Team member

**R**emember that the experienced jumpers are just like you. Yeah, they have more jumps, but as humans, they are just as shy and uncertain, and they also have unrealized goals. The guy with 1,000 jumps wouldn’t mind jumping with you, but he is always going to choose the load with the people who have 2,000 jumps, because he, too, wants to progress. So you need to be patient and interact with these people on a human level. Hang around on rainy days or after dark, and get to know people. Once the experts are friends, they’ll find time to foster you. But if you just come out on a nice day, stand in a corner and then leave in a huff at 4:00, why the hell would they want to deal with you?

—**Bryan Burke** | Arizona  
National and International Meet Director





**D**o not ask, "What happened?" from a gurney; Ask, "What could happen?" from the picnic table.

–**Matt Cline** | Tennessee  
U.S. Army 101st Airborne veteran

**T**ake the time to learn as much as you can. Knowledge is power in this sport. Learn to spot well. Learn equipment well. Learn everything you can about canopy control.

–**Rick Horn** | California  
Former AFF Certification Course Director


**O**pen your eyes! There is an infinite amount of stimulus coming at you. Smell the sky. When you can do this, you will truly know what it means to be alive.

–**Brian Germain** | Maryland  
Canopy expert and author of "The Parachute and its Pilot"

**G**et some instruction early on when learning something new to prevent learning any bad habits. Also try to learn and do something new every year, whether it's with freeflying, canopy skills or belly skills. Set some goals for yourself at the beginning of the year, and try to complete them by the end of the year before setting more.

–**Christopher Combs** | Ohio  
Freefly organizer





**F**ly in the wind tunnel as soon as you can and as often as you can afford. You'll learn at an accelerated rate and will avoid any bad habits. Get good coaching to improve skills in the air and under canopy. Jump a lot!

—**Eliana Rodriguez** | Arizona  
*Formation Skydiving World Champion*

**F**ind and bond with a mentor or advanced instructor, ask as many intelligent questions as possible, and jump, jump, jump. Remember, if you're smiling, you're learning—that's what the greatest part of our sport is all about, laughter and life. Emphasize the positive, forget the rest.

—**Mollie Mercer** | Pennsylvania  
*Canadian Formation Skydiving National Champion*

**B**e a sponge. Never stop being a student. Always ask questions. The moment you think you know it all, you're about to get hurt or hurt someone else.

—**Angela Hsu** | North Carolina  
*Vertical Formation Skydiving National Champion*

**B**eware of your ego. It's easy to get caught up in what others are doing when you need to focus on the most important part of your skydiving career—building a good foundation. Also, make sure you're in the sport for no one except yourself.

—**Melissa Nelson** | Colorado  
*Head-Down Formation Skydiving World Record holder*







**T**here is a lot of information to be absorbed at the beginning of your skydiving career, but never lose sight of the fact that you learn more in the air than you ever will on the ground.

**–Pip Redvers**

*Former instructor with more than 20,000 jumps*

**W**hen you see the people jumping that you look up to, skill-wise, what you don't see is all the training, all the fails, all the exploded jumps and all the laughs with friends between where you are and where they are. Keep smiling and enjoy the progression.

**–Katie Hansen-Lajeunesse**

*Freely National Champion*



**D**on't give up. Ask those of us who are willing to jump with you when you get off student status. We want you to have fun and stay with us.

**–Pat Moorehead**

*Demonstration skydiver and founder of Skydivers Over Sixty*



No matter what kind of plane you jumped from during your first skydive, it's one of many kinds of aircraft you'll have the opportunity to exit once you've earned your license. Look around your drop zone and you might see small Cessna 182s or turbine-powered Twin Otters, tailgate-exit Skyvans or a PAC-750, specifically designed for skydiving. At boogies and other special events, you'll see even more specialty aircraft, including helicopters, hot-air balloons and more! Here, Doug Pinkham and Linnea Norby exit a Sikorsky 59T helicopter above Skydive Perris in California.

**Photo by Kevin Kierce**

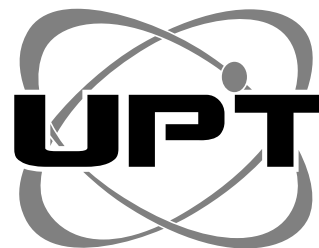




So now you've learned a little about the basics of the skydiving world—but this is just the beginning. There's so much more to learn and experience, and there always will be. Look around your drop zone and you'll see skydivers who can't wait for you to join them. Ask questions. Make friends. Enjoy the wind on your face two or three miles above the planet. And most importantly, have fun.

**The sky is waiting for you.**

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