

Aggie Parachutists Say 'Gig Em' On Way Down



rigging For Jump
... Dick Brown, '64



Dave Mueller, '62
... from 5,000 feet

By RONNIE BOOKMAN
Battalion News Editor

How many ways are there to jump out of an airplane? Not too many, probably, but 27 Aggies, calling themselves the Texas A&M Parachute Club, have found a new twist.

As each one exits straight down from an average of 7,000 feet the familiar "Geronimo!" is not to be heard. A hearty "Gig 'em!" has taken over.

"This isn't a diversion for lunatics," Bob Richards, '61, official Parachute Club of America safety officer, is quick to tell the curious. "It's a sport, with definite rules and regulations, just like baseball or football."

Richardson, a veteran of some 53 jumps, has been an avid parachutist since February of 1961. He is not an officer of the A&M club, but a representative of the national organization.

On Jan. 7 Richardson and Tom Carpenter, '62, club president, completed the difficult "baton pass." Both men jumped from 12,500 feet and then maneuvered close enough to each other to pass a baton, slightly over a foot long, between them before pulling their rip cords.

The A&M organization is not an official campus club. But, they are trying for recognition. They have their own clubhouse, at Bryan's Coulter Field, and are now in the process of buying their own plane, a Cessna 170.

Other club owned equipment includes 22 parachutes, jumping helmets and packing tables.

Since the club's beginning in October of last year, they have sustained only one minor injury, a sprained arm. All of the members have made at least one jump.

The A&M Parachute Club has applied for Parachute Club of America recognition and is also qualified and has applied for National Collegiate Parachute League affiliation.

"Actually, the sport of skydiving is much, much safer than deer hunting, or even football," said Richardson. "When you consider how many people were killed while deer hunting or playing high school football last year alone, there is no doubt of the safety of the sport."

According to the club members, the extreme emphasis on safety and the rigid following of safety regulations is responsible for the low accident rate.

"Before we allow anyone to jump the applicant has to meet physical requirements as well as complete the PCA approved training course for beginners," Richardson continued. "The novice cuts his teeth on static line jumps in which the rip cord is automatically pulled for him. Then he progresses to the free falls, where he waits for a certain interval before pulling his cord."

Dave Mueller, '62 from Dallas, assistant group leader of one of the club's three groups, listed the progression of free fall jumps for beginners.

"The first free fall attempted is the five-second delay in which the jumper waits for five seconds before opening," he said. "The new jumpers must do three of these perfectly before going on to the ten-second delay. After three of these he must do 15-second delays, and then on to 20-second, 30-second and 60-second delays."

During the delay time the jumper may execute maneuvers such as glides, loops, barrel rolls, smoke bomb maneuvers and baton passes.

Another maneuver is spot jumping, or trying to hit a predetermined target by controlling the parachute's drift.

Lt. Col. Jack Rose, of College Station, is serving as unofficial sponsor for the club. Rose is a senior parachutist and is currently advisor to the Army reserve in Bryan.



Pre-Jump Conference

Bob Richardson, '61 (back to camera) confers with Jim Werner, '62 before a jump. Richardson, a Parachute Club of America safety officer with 53 jumps, supervises safety procedures in the A&M Parachute Club. (Photo by Joe Leboeuf)



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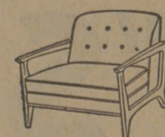
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