

# Jumpers get their club off the ground

## It's 'frightening as hell,' says Aggie who tried

By KYLE CREWS  
"Feed out!" The nervous Aggie sits apprehensively at the open door of the small airplane 2,800 feet above ground level.  
"Get out!" The confident jumpmaster urges the student to step onto a narrow metal step outside the plane and hold on to the strut of the wing with his right hand.  
"Go!" The command is given to jump away from the airplane and the novice parachutist begins his return to earth at 16 feet per second.  
This scene is reenacted several times a month at the American Parachute Center in Gatesville, Texas. Located at the city's municipal airport, the Center provides the necessary training for anyone interested in participating in the sport of parachuting.  
David Regenthal is the owner of the Center and is a licensed instructor for the United States Parachute Association. His job is to instill the knowledge and confidence that is essential to the beginning parachutist.  
The school is housed in a converted metal airplane hanger. Inside the building are several long tables used for packing chutes and a dozen folding chairs grouped around a blackboard.  
There also is a wooden mock-up of an airplane in the hanger that is used to demonstrate the proper procedure for jumping from the plane. Two parachute harnesses are suspended from the ceiling. They are used toward the end of ground training to familiarize students with how to get out of planes in an emergency.  
The Texas A&M Sport Parachute Club, an organization which was recently re-instated as an official university organization, provides interested students with a means of learning more about the sport. There are presently 42 members in the club.  
Weather permitting, club members and other parachute enthusiasts utilize the Gatesville facility every weekend in an effort to perfect their skills at static-line jumps and free falls.  
"Students are required to make at

least five of the static-line jumps before progressing to free falls," Regenthal said. "They also learn how to pack their own chutes after they are cleared for free fall."  
Static-line refers to the 12-foot nylon webbing that automatically opens the parachute pack and pulls the chute out. While in this stage of their training, students use parachutes that are packed by riggers who are certified by the U.S. Parachute Association.  
Inexperienced jumpers are required to have a radio receiver strapped to the top of their reserve parachutes. Regenthal said he requires his students to be equipped with radios on at least their first three jumps so he has a means of communicating with them during their descent. By following the instructions, students can be corrected immediately if they make an error in navigating their parachutes.  
An average class at the Gatesville school consists of approximately eight students. They are instructed on the morning of their first jump in four major areas: canopy control, aircraft procedures, malfunctions and emergency procedures.  
Students are given a written exam at the end of their ground training which they must pass before they are allowed to make their first jump.  
They are also required to sign a statement which says that they feel that they have been adequately trained and know everything they

need to know prior to making their first jump. This serves as a means for releasing the school from liability in the event of an injury or fatality incurred during a jump.  
There were four injuries reported at Gatesville in the past year. Regenthal said that most of these injuries were the result of students not following training instructions.  
The most serious of the injuries occurred Oct. 30, 1977, when David Slater suffered burns over 35 percent of his body when he became hung on a high-voltage power line near the drop site.  
Slater, a Texas A&M sophomore finance major from Dallas, spent the better portion of the following months hospitalized for injuries.  
Jim Slater, brother of the accident victim, said that the younger Slater is recovering from the injuries but that he is still badly scarred.  
Regenthal said the most common failure in the parachuting equipment is referred to as pack disclosure. This term is used when the main chute does not open properly.  
When this occurs, students are taught how to activate their reserve parachutes.  
"It kind of feels like you hit a brick wall when the chute opens, but it is better than doing a P. L. F. (parachute landing fall) at 120 mph," Regenthal said.  
The reserve chute is equipped with a device that opens it automatically by means of an altimeter that

activates a gas cartridge if the person begins falling too fast for too long a period of time.  
Jack Shanklin and Ken Bost are among eight Texas A&M students trained recently in Gatesville.  
"Jumping out of the airplane was frightening as hell," Shanklin said. "I think that the training program they have is adequate, but it is kind of hard to get everything down in one easy lesson. My mind kept wandering and I kept thinking about what it would feel like to jump from a plane."  
Bost said that the feeling of falling through the air was hard to describe but that he definitely enjoyed it and wanted to jump again.  
"I feel that the training was adequate for someone's first jump," Bost said.  
Perry Dillon, president of the Texas A&M Sport Parachute Club, said that since they are now a recognized student organization they would apply for approximately \$2,000 of MSC Bookstore funds.  
Jerry B. Mainord, residence area coordinator for the office of Student Affairs, is a member of the Student Organization Board which granted recognition to the Sport Parachute Club.  
"I voted to recognize them because I felt that they met the required safety requirements for a parachuting organization," Mainord said. "They have qualified personnel teaching the sport and their equipment meets the necessary requirements. Our policy is that when a group of students desire an organization to promote their interest and there is no organization in existence to duplicate its activities, then we give it an okay."  
Mainord said that there was some concern among the board members regarding the safety of the sport but they were later convinced that the group would comply with all possible safety procedures.  
Col. Logan E. Weston, religious life coordinator at Texas A&M, is another member of the

exhibition jump for the king of land.  
"I think parachuting is a challenging sport," he said. "It's a thrill to conquer the unknown, to be able to maneuver your own body after jumping."  
Weston said that parachuting came a popular means of infusing enemy territory towards the World War II.  
He commanded a regiment of airborne Green Berets in Laos and Vietnam from 1961 to 1966.  
"As long as you follow safety cautions and regulations, parachuting is safer than driving a car on the road," Weston said.  
His accident occurred in Bangkok, Thailand, while doing an



This scene is re-enacted several times a month by the Texas A&M sport parachute club of the American Parachute Center in Gatesville, Texas. Located at the city's municipal airport, the Center provides the necessary training for anyone interested in participating in the sport of parachuting.

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SEATTLE -- Dog owners who neglect their canines to be vicious probably are encouraging such behavior, a dog psychologist says.  
T. Mark Stover, a humanologist who became interested in the canine psyche eight years ago, said last weekend that many bad dogs -- only bad dogs.  
"I'd say 90 percent of the behavior is human behavior," Stover said.  
One common mistake owners, Stover said, is their failure to recognize their pet is a highly intelligent creature who gets without sufficient attention.  
"That's why dogs run away because they're bored and looking for something to do," Stover said.

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