Page 8 THE BATTALION

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 jump-

master 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. "Gol" 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 Reganthal is the owner of

the Center and is a licensed instructor for the United States Parachute Association. His job is to instill the parachutist. The school is housed in a con-

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verted metal airplane hanger. In-side the building are several long tables used for packing chutes and a dozen folding chairs grouped around a blackboard. to pack their own chutes after they are cleared for free fall."

There also is a wooden mock-up of an airplane in the hanger that is nylon webbing that automatically 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.

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

bers and other parachute enthusiasts utilize the Gatesville knowledge and confidence that is facility every weekend in an effort to essential to the beginning perfect their skills at static-line jumps and free falls. "Students are required to make at

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Static-line refers to the 12-foot opens the parachute pack and pulls the chute out. While in this stage of their training, students .use parachutes that are packed by rig-gers who are certified by the U.S. arachute Association.

Inexperienced jumpers are remergency. The Texas A&M Sport Parachute strapped to the top of their reserve parachutes. Reganthal said he re-quires 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 e club. Weather permitting, club mem-instructions, students can be cor-rected 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 with a device that opens it automati-cally by means of an altimeter that

in the event of an injury or fatality incurred during a jump.

There were four injuries reported at Gatesville in the past year. Re-ganthal 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. Reganthal said the most common failure in the parachuting equipment is referred to as pack dis-

closure. 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," Reganthal said.

The reserve chute is equipped

activitates a gas cartiridge if the per-son 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 ecognition 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 equip-ment 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.

gious life coordinator at Texas His accident occurred in A&M, is another member of the Bangkok, Thailand, while doing an

Center in Gatesville, Texas. Located at the city's munici airport, the Center provides the necessary training for any interested in participating in the sport of parachuting. Student Organization Board who exhibition jump for the kingd voted for the recognition of the Sport Parachute Club. land.

This scene is re-enacted several times a month by the Te

A&M sport parachute club of the American Parach

"I think parachuting is a gra Weston said he was satisfied that the group would comply with the approved safety regulations. challenging sport," he said." thrill to conquer the unna to be able to maneuver your

Weston has participated in 995 successful parachute jumps during his career as an officer in the United States Army. He broke his back on the 996th jump.

"It was my own stupidity that caused the accident," Weston said. "I should have prepared a better landing position but I was too busy avoiding obstacles such as the pointed roof of a pagoda and a ca-

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came a popular means of in enemy territory towards the World War II. He commanded a reginal airborne Green Berets in T Laos and Vietnam from 19

1961 'As long as you follow safet cautions and regulations, p ing is safer than driving a the road," Weston said.

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T. Mark Stover, a hur chologist who became inte the canine psyche eight y said last weekend that the many bad dogs -- only bad

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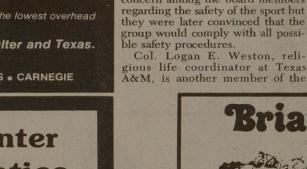
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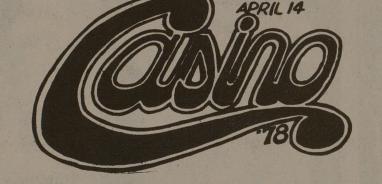
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University Center Scheduling Notice

Applications for Meeting Rooms in the University Center Complex for recognized student organizations, clubs, and governing bodies will be accepted for the 1978 Fall Semester (Aug 28-Dec 15) in the Scheduling Office, 2nd floor, Rudder Tower beginning at 8 a.m., Monday, April 17, 1978. Application forms may be obtained in the Scheduling Office.





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