

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Tuesday, July 22, 2003

Getting high on life

Skydivers take an ultimate plunge with Skydive Aggieland

By Ashley Marshall
THE BATTALION

As the Cessna 182 with one seat rose to 7,000 feet, I held my 10-pound parachute tightly with both hands and thought, "Wait a minute — I'm supposed to be writing a story on skydiving — this wasn't part of the deal!"

Pilot Mike Lowe said, "ready?" and then proceeded to dip the plane quickly to create a weightless environment as we, and our helmets, floated inside the cabin for a few seconds.

This is a good day for jumping, I'm told. But then again, Dave Perkins said, "Every day with a blue sky is a good day for jumping."

Steve Dorsey, Dave Lund and Dave Perkins gave each other high fives as the plane door opened.

"Hold on to your sunglasses," Lund said as he, Perkins and Dorsey shimmied out the door holding onto the wing, and I glimpse a piece of the thrill these guys get from jumping out of airplanes.

Dorsey, Perkins and Lund work and hang out at Skydive Aggieland, located on Coulter Field off Highway 21 past Messina Hof.

"When we're not jumping, we're complaining about the weather that's keeping us from jumping," said Dorsey, a senior international studies major.

Perkins has skydived 125 times since

November 2003. Admittedly addicted to the sport, Perkins jokes he has spent his life savings skydiving.

"But you can always sell blood," Perkins said.

Dorsey, a member of the A&M Skydiving Club, works packing parachutes and has purchased 168 jumps by selling plasma and items in his house.

"Most of my lack of jumping is a function of not having enough cash," Dorsey said.

A person can skydive once with a tandem instructor on his back for \$165, but after significant training, licensed skydivers can jump for \$18.

This close-knit group of Aggies frequents the hanger at Coulter Field and lounges about the couches and pool table.

"There is a great family atmosphere here. We jump in the day and hang out at night," Dorsey said. "Last night we hung out over barbecue and drinks. That's part of the attraction — the people."

Although he used to get slack from people who thought skydiving was too dangerous, Dorsey said he doesn't anymore because most of his friends are skydivers now.

Looking up from the parachute he is packing, Dorsey grinned and said, "I'd be hard-pressed to find a reason to stop."

Even after his plane had a close call last May, Dorsey sustained his passion for skydiving. During takeoff, the engine

on the plane stopped, similar to an accident in 1999 which killed five Aggies. However, on Dorsey's flight, pilot Mike Lowe successfully made a forced landing in the nearby field with no injuries.

"He did exactly what he was trained to do, but in the worst possible scenario," said Todd Spillers, Skydive Aggieland's owner.

"We were very lucky," Dorsey said. Although he swears it is worth it, Lund said, "It's a calculated risk."

Despite skydiving's reputation, plane accidents are very rare and most of the accidents are from skilled skydivers performing harder stunts.

"Or from the occasional old man with a heart attack," Dorsey said.

"Statistically speaking, it's safer to jump out of a plane than to drive home afterwards. To me, it's not dangerous," he added.

Eighty percent of skydiving fatalities last year were from user error on landing.

Despite that fact, the parachutes rarely fail.

"The parachutes themselves are very safe. These things have been designed and redesigned for 40 years," Dorsey said.

Contrary to common misconceptions, skydivers are not "adrenaline-crazed-wackos with a death-wish," as Dorsey terms, but are people from all walks of life. Anyone from poor college students to the director of the George

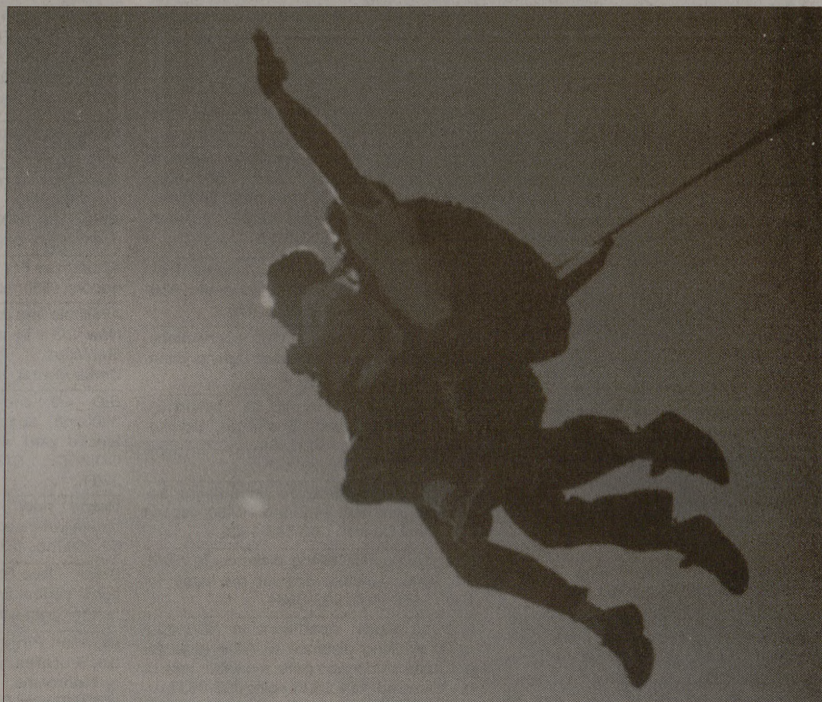


PHOTO COURTESY OF PABLO PERAZZOLI

Bill Hall, an A&M graduate student, takes the ride of his life with tandem instructor, Dave Lund, a senior history major.

Bush Library frequents Skydive Aggieland, he said. "We're all about living life," Lund said. "You've not truly lived until you've gone skydiving — and people wonder why birds sing."

FEEL THE BEAT

Cory Morrow Full Exposure Write On Records

This new CD/DVD combination is worth the wait for Cory Morrow fans. With three studio tracks and 13 tracks from a 2002 concert in Austin, the set provides a good example of a Morrow concert while still paying attention to his songwriting.

Of the three new songs, "21 Days" is already receiving statewide airtime on country radio. Morrow wrote "GTMO Blues" after a visit to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and does a good job painting a picture of what servicemen's lives are like on the base.

While the DVD of the Austin concert isn't spotlessly produced, there are plenty of crowd shots and additional

footage that fans will enjoy. The fact that the DVD is included for free with the CD makes this a must-have for Texas country music fans.

-True Brown



Pat Green Wave on Wave Universal South

Texas country music recording artist Pat Green's new album, "Wave on Wave," might sound a little different compared to his previous works, but before you start trashing all of your Pat Green CD's and apparel, give the new album a spin or two.

While it is a different sound, the quality is better than ever. He has grown up over the past few years, he got married and is expecting his first-born child soon. This new maturity is evident in his songwriting.

The title track from the album is already getting major airtime around the state and is popping up on charts across the nation.

Green wrote and co-wrote 12 of the 13 songs on the album,

and every song is as good as the last.

He may not be hanging out at "George's Bar," or heading "Southbound 35" on this album, but the CD is the best one yet from start to finish.

-Dallas Shipp



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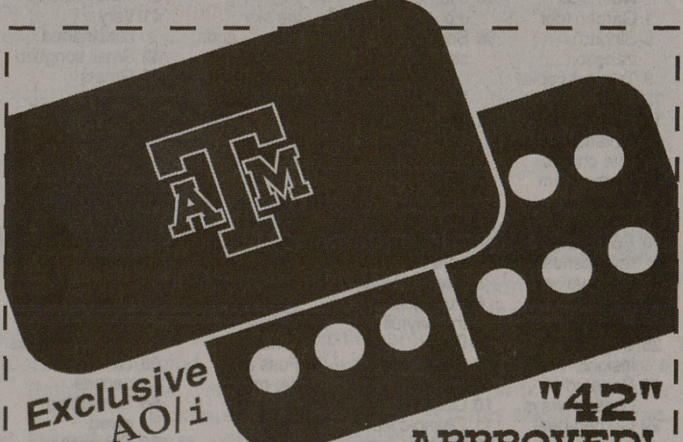
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