

**23<sup>rd</sup> POPS Winter Meet**

**23-27 March 1994**

**Umatilla, FL**

# Umatilla Hosts Winter POPS Meet

Reported by ALICIA ANDERSON

The 23rd annual POPS Winter Meet hosted by Jimmy and Wilma Godwin of Paragators in Umatilla, Florida on March 23-27 drew competitors from sixteen states this year.

Almost half of the 60 competitors were the jump-starved folks from the frigid north and northeast. POPS members from Canada, England and the Netherlands represented the foreign contingent, gladly exchanging harsh winter weather for the blue skies of central Florida.

Experience levels in Umatilla ranged from several hundred to several thousand jumps, including Pennsylvanian Dave DeWolf, POPS-678, with more than 8,000 skydives and Carl "Smitty" Smith, POPS-3034, with over 8,500. For the record books, the oldest competitor at the '94 meet was 74 year-old Joe Richards of New York, POPS-3713.

Taking advantage of the seasonably good weather, the POPS organizers were able to complete the two-event meet in a single day.

The competition began with three rounds of traditional accuracy, won by "Smitty" with a total of only three centimeters.

The ever-popular Hit 'N Rock event

proved as unpredictable as ever. The most humorous of the POPS events, Hit 'N Rock is much more than a timed race involving accuracy and an old rocking chair. Creative competitors now wear spandex tights, even pantihose, as they dispense with helmets, goggles, gloves and jumpsuits in an all-out effort to remove their gear in a race to the rocking chair.

In spite of meticulous advanced planning, even the quickest competitors can't overcome all the elements. The best plans are often foiled by wind, tripping in the peas or forgetting to touch the pad before finally sitting in the chair. Everyone eagerly cheers on all the competitors, no matter where they land. Occasionally, it takes the slower POPS a few minutes to reach their mark.

The Hit 'N Rock event was won by "Ski" Chmielewski of Florida this year, who is also the current POPS world record holder for the event. His time this year: 4.2 seconds.

## POPS Big Way Records

POPStars were another highlight of the Umatilla meet, building before and after the competition. It's an exclusive skydive, open

## ACCURACY

1. Carl "Smitty" Smith	Florida	3 cm.
2. "Ski" Chmielewski	Florida	4 cm.
3. Ruben Garcia	Florida	11 cm.
4. Howard Burling	Connecticut	17 cm.
5. Bill Hector	Florida	23 cm.
6. Lew Sanborn	Florida	26 cm.
7. Dave DeWolf	Penn.	32 cm.
8. Bill Price	Florida	32 cm.
9. Larry Cordeira	New York	39 cm.
10. Bill Morrissey	Florida	39 cm.

## Hit N' Rock

1. "Ski" Chmielewski	Florida	4.2 sec.
2. Bill Hector	Florida	5.2 sec.
3. Larry Cordeira	New York	5.5 sec.
4. Ted Rose	Oklahoma	6.3 sec.
5. David Wall	Florida	6.7 sec.
6. Ed Haas	Penn.	6.8 sec.
7. Jim Rose	Texas	6.8 sec.
8. Donna Chmielewski	Florida	7.5 sec.
9. Vance Collie	Florida	7.6 sec.
10. Dick Rapacilo	Florida	7.7 sec.

only to members of POPS, and the formation is always a traditional star.

Commemorative patches are awarded to those who make it into an all-POPS 8-way or larger formation, but there's no guarantee that they'll build. Only five patches were awarded throughout the weekend.

*The 1994 POPS Nationals are scheduled for September 17-18 at Skydive Chambersburg, PA.*



Members of POPS attempt to build the number 70 over the Central Florida Parachute Center in celebration of perennial competitor Tom Morrison's 70th birthday.

MICHAEL GREEN

POPS members interested in the awards program can contact Len Zak, POPS-460, at (310) 542-3030 for information on POPS relative work, all-women, SOS and CRW patches.

The POPS organization continues to grow rapidly, adding several new members to the ranks of nearly 4,300 during the Paragators' winter meet. Among the newest members, Floridian Harvey Yawn, the youngest at Umatilla, turned 40 just before the meet. Not surprisingly, two of the seven new members participating at their first POPS meet—Jim Rose and Jim Casey—returned to the sport they began in the 1960s.

A significant number of new POPS are jumpers who started in the 60's and 70's who for various reasons, stopped jumping. Now perhaps because of increased skydiving publicity, or better equipment, they've happily returned to the sport.

Present only is spirit was Francisco Quintino Perez of Cuba, POPS-4064, who applied for a special visa just to compete and "to strengthen the bonds of friendship which unites all parachutists."

## POPS

Continued

Regretfully, his visa was refused by the government. To date, Perez is the only POPS member in Cuba. Expressing the universal POPS friendship, a card was signed by everyone at the banquet and sent to Perez in Havana.

With so many "new" skydivers joining POPS, organizers anticipate more and more large formation record attempts in the future. As a point of order, for any POPS attempt to be recognized as a record, two requirements must be met.

First, all skydivers must be currently registered members of the POPS organization before the jump, and their POPS number included with their name on the official roster. And secondly, the record formation must be photographed while complete.

Skydivers Over Sixty, a sub-faction of the POPS membership known as SOS, made several 8-way attempts after the competition. Member Peter Tijssen journeyed all the way from the Netherlands on his first American trip to be part of the SOS skydives. Unfortunately, bad weather moved in and the group came up short on time.

For more information on joining SOS, contact Pat Moorehead, POPS-572 and SOS-1, at (310) 630-5229.

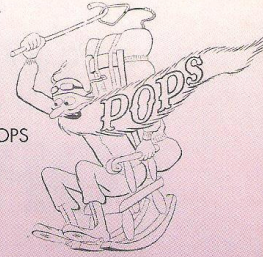
At Saturday evening's banquet, awards were given to the top ten finishers in both events. Then, in truly traditional POPS fashion, everyone attending stood up one by one

## How to Join POPS

Being over 40 years old and having made at least one parachute jump (tandems included) are the only qualifications it takes to join the Parachutists Over Phorty Society.

To get your POPS number, send \$15 for a lifetime membership, which includes a membership card, the famous POPS patch, a POPS roster, flyers for upcoming meets and more to:

**Alicia Anderson, Top POP**  
3350 St. Francis Place  
Long Beach, CA 90805



and introduced themselves, where they were from and how many jumps they had, improvising as they went along. It's a long-standing tradition, and it's the way POPS members renew old friendships and make new ones.

### A Look Ahead

The next POPS competition will be the 1994 POPS Nationals, scheduled at Skydive Chambersburg in Pennsylvania on September 17-18. Both the POPS and SOS organizations will host a boogie the week before, beginning September 14. For more information on the Nationals, call Skydive Chambersburg at (800) 526-3497.

Archway Skydiving Centre in Vandalia, Illinois will be hosting a POPS-SOS Meet

and Midwest Reunion July 9-10. The drop zone's phone number is (618) 283-4978.

Plans are still tentative for the 3rd POPS World Meet to be held sometime in 1995. Look for more details in upcoming issues of *Parachutist*. ■

### About the Author



Alicia Anderson, D-9821, took over as Top POP #9 last year at the 2nd World POPS Meet, again held in Umatilla, Florida. She also jumps as part of the California Aerial Circus demonstration team.

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see back for names



HIT 'N ROCK

L.TOR.

LARRY CORDEIRA 3RD

"SKI" CHMIELEWSKI 1ST

BILL HECTOR 2ND

3  
9  
4

PHOTO:

Alicia Anderson  
3350 St. Francis Place  
Long Beach, CA 90805  
U.S.A.

ACCURACY

L.TOR.

RUBEN GARCIA 3RD PL.

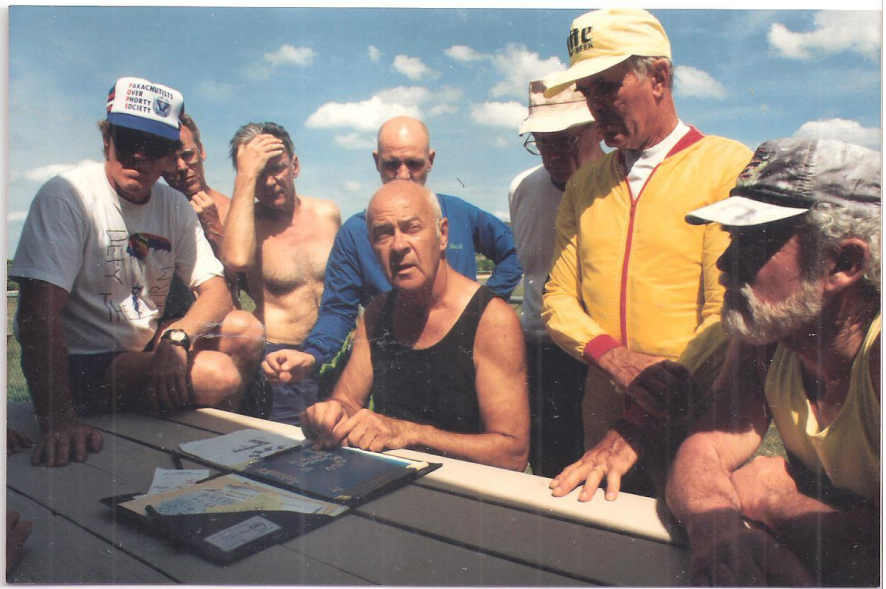
CARL "SMITTY" SMITH 1ST PL.

"SKI" CHMIELEWSKI 2ND PL.

3  
9  
4

PHOTO:

Alicia Anderson  
3350 St. Francis Place  
Long Beach, CA 90805  
U.S.A.



# 1

Umatilla, FL  
3-94

Umatilla, FL.  
3-94





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HIT 'N ROCK  
HARRY BELTON  
POPS 1189

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HITN ROCK  
JACK KIRK POPS 2097

3-94

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23rd Annual Winter Meet Umatilla, FL. ~~1973~~ March 1974

		ACCURACY			TOTAL	HIT # ROCK
		1	2	3		
1	CHARLES MARSH PA					
2	TED ROSE OH	4.36	2.66	0.13		6.3
3	MIKE WADE FL	0.15	0.56	3.42		7.8
4	SKIP GALLAGHER TN	5.00	3.00	4.27		
5	WAYNE POWELL TN	1.82	0.77	5.00		
6	HAROLD EBBY, JR. PA	5.00	5.00	0.78		9.8
7	GARY MILLER NC	3.62	5.00	5.00		<del>22.0</del> 22.2
8	GEORGE FREY NJ	0.16	0.02	5.00		9.2
9	G.D. WILLIAMS LA	1.40	1.39	1.39		13.3
10	HARRY BELTON NC	0.12	0.32	0.28		31.0
11	GRAHAM ST. CLAIR DE					
12	PAT MOOREHEAD CA	1.59	1.08	0.09		
13	DAVID CLARK NC	1.34				
14	JOHN REID MD	0.19	3.65	5.00		18.2
15	MARVIN EMMONS MI	5.00	5.00	3.55		
16	SKI FL	0.00	0.04	0.00		4.2
17	DONNA FL	0.00	0.00	1.40		7.5
18	HARRY ERVIN NC	0.63	1.90	2.67		14.5
19	WALTER KOHLHEPP NY	1.22	0.78	0.08		14.3
20	DAVE HOVAN FL	2.21	3.83	5.00		28.6
21	RUBEN GARCIA FL	0.07	0.01	0.03		10.7
22	LARRY CORDERO NY	0.01	0.03	0.35		5.5
23	BERNIE LARKIN	0.25	0.49	0.05		16.4
24	JOHN RIKK JACK PA	Re-Jump 84	0.32	0.14		8.2
25	JUDY WALL FL	5.00	5.00	5.00		22.0
26	DAVID WALL FL	2.11	3.47	2.00		6.7
27	GRAHAM GILBERT CANADA	2.19	2.72	2.25		14.5
28	VANCE COLLIE FL	0.74	0.08	5.00	deduct re-jump	7.6
29	ED HAAS PA	5.00	5.00	3.64		6.8
30	RICHARD GOCHENAUD PA	1.12	5.00	1.08		14.2

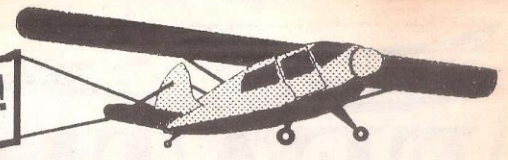
*Hit N Rock 3-1994 Winter Meet  
Unatilla FL.*

Name	Order	Jumps 1 . . . 5	Accuracy	Total	Hit N Rock			
1 SKI	16	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.04	4.20	
2 BILL HECTOR	41	0.02	0.13	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.23	5.20
3 LARRY	22	0.01	0.03	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.39	5.50
4 TED ROSE	2	4.36	2.66	0.13	0.00	0.00	7.15	6.30
5 DAVID WALL	26	2.11	3.47	2.00	0.00	0.00	7.58	6.70
6 ED HAAS	29	5.00	5.00	3.64	0.00	0.00	13.64	6.80
7 JIM ROSE	47	1.61	0.90	0.74	0.00	0.00	3.25	6.80
8 DONNA	17	0.00	0.00	1.40	0.00	0.00	1.40	7.50
9 VANCE COLLIE	28	0.74	0.08	5.00	0.00	0.00	5.82	7.60
10 DICK R	44	0.01	3.22	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.23	7.70
MIKE WADEL	3	0.15	0.56	3.42	0.00	0.00	4.13	7.80
RUSS MANHOLD	53	0.10	0.00	4.33	0.00	0.00	4.43	7.80
JOHN KIRK	24	0.84	0.32	0.14	0.00	0.00	1.30	8.20

### Accuracy Totals

Name	Order	Jumps 1 . . . 5					Accuracy Total	Hit N Rock
1 CARL SMITH	40	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	9.50
2 SKI	16	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	4.20
3 REUBEN	21	0.07	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.11	10.70
4 HOWARD <i>Prentiss</i>	34	0.10	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.17	10.70
5 BILL HECTOR	41	0.02	0.13	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.23	5.20
6 LEW SANBORN	43	0.10	0.02	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.26	10.50
7 DAVE DEWOLF	42	0.13	0.06	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.32	16.60
8 BILL PRICE	51	0.15	0.10	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.32	9.50
9 LARRY <i>C.</i>	22	0.01	0.03	0.35	0.00	0.00	0.39	5.50
10 BILL <i>m.</i>	31	0.20	0.15	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.39	99.99
11 HARRY BELTO	10	0.12	0.32	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.72	31.00
12 BERNIE	23	0.25	0.49	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.79	16.40
13 ARTIE	48	0.17	0.75	0.09	0.00	0.00	1.01	8.20

PARACHUTISTS  
OVER PHORTY!



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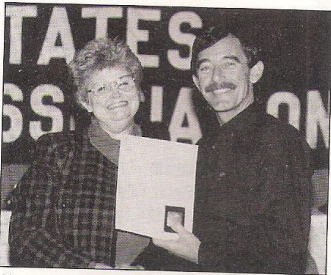


## Wings & Things

Continued



At the January, 1994 board of directors meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, National Director Al Gramando, D-3433, receives his 36-Hour Freefall Badge from USPA President Schrimsher.



Also in Utah, Schrimsher presents National Director Don Yahrling, D-4077, with his Quadra Diamond Wings and 60-Hour Freefall Badge.

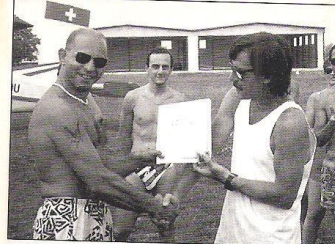


Acting Executive Director Clint Vincent, D-7624, is inducted into the Parachutists Over Phorty Society by Top POP Alicia Anderson at the Salt Lake City board meeting.

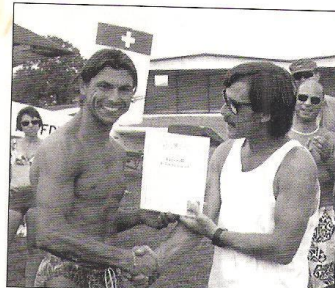


Finally from Salt Lake City, Schrimsher awards Emil Spadafora, D-3904, with his 10-year membership Certificate.

## Here and There



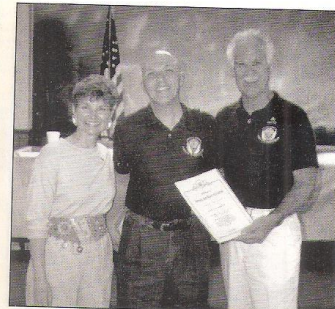
National Director Don Yahrling presents Giulio Borri with his Gold Wings and 12-Hour Freefall Badge at the Accademia Paracadutistica Italiana in Italy.



Also in Italy, Yahrling awards Graziano Damaschi with his 24-Hour Freefall Badge.



At the 1993 POPS Winter Meet in Umatilla, Florida, National Director Pat Moorehead and Top POP Alicia Anderson present G.D. Williams, D-6210, with his 12-Hour Freefall Badge.



Also at the POPS meet, Chuck McElwee, D-5282, receives his 24-Hour Freefall Badge from Anderson and Moorehead. ■

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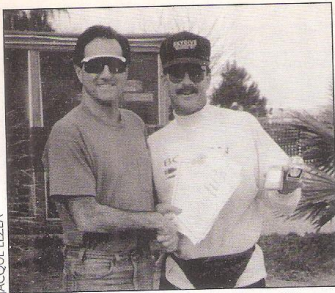
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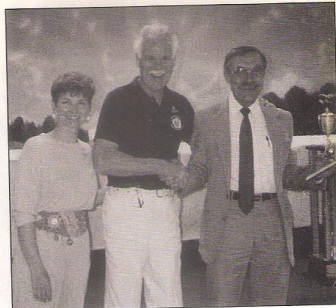
### ARCHWAY KING AIR 1994 SCHEDULE

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 July Skydiving Jubilee July 9-10  
 Octoberfest Oct. 22-23  
 15th Annual Chili Party Dec. 10-11  
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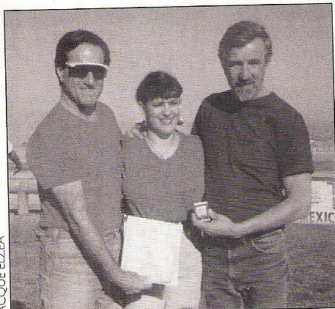


JACQUE ELZEZA

At Perris Valley Skydiving in California, Western Regional Director John DeSantis presents S&TA Art Paton, D-7422, with his Quadra Diamond Wings.

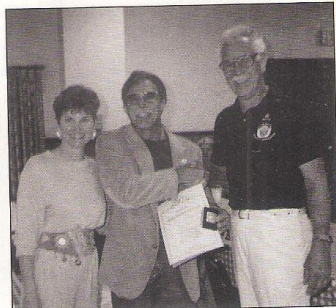


Also at the POPS winter meet banquet, Moorehead and Anderson present Dave Hoven, D-11896, with his Gold Wings, and...



JACQUE ELZEZA

Dave Keith, D-5441, receives his 60-Hour Freefall Badge from DeSantis at Perris Valley.



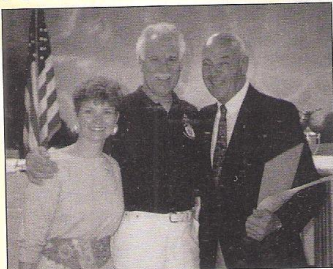
... Jack LaLonde, D-4865, with his 24-Hour Freefall Badge.



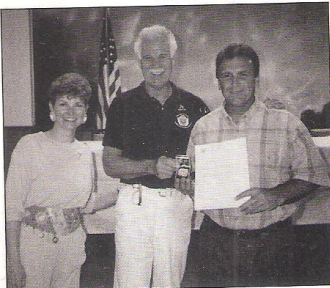
JACQUE ELZEZA

Finally from Perris Valley, DeSantis presents Charles Wickliffe, D-4069, with his 36-Hour Freefall Badge.

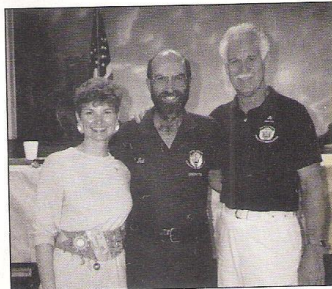
**POPS Winter Meet**



At the 1993 POPS Winter Meet banquet in Umatilla, Florida, Former Top POP Tom Morrison, D-2273, receives his 30-year membership certificate from National Director Pat Moorehead and Current Top POP Alicia Anderson.



Vance Collie, D-3745, receives his 48-Hour Freefall Badge from Anderson and Moorehead at the POPS banquet.



Finally from Umatilla, Ted Rose, D-1228, is awarded his 30-year membership certificate by Anderson and Moorehead. ■

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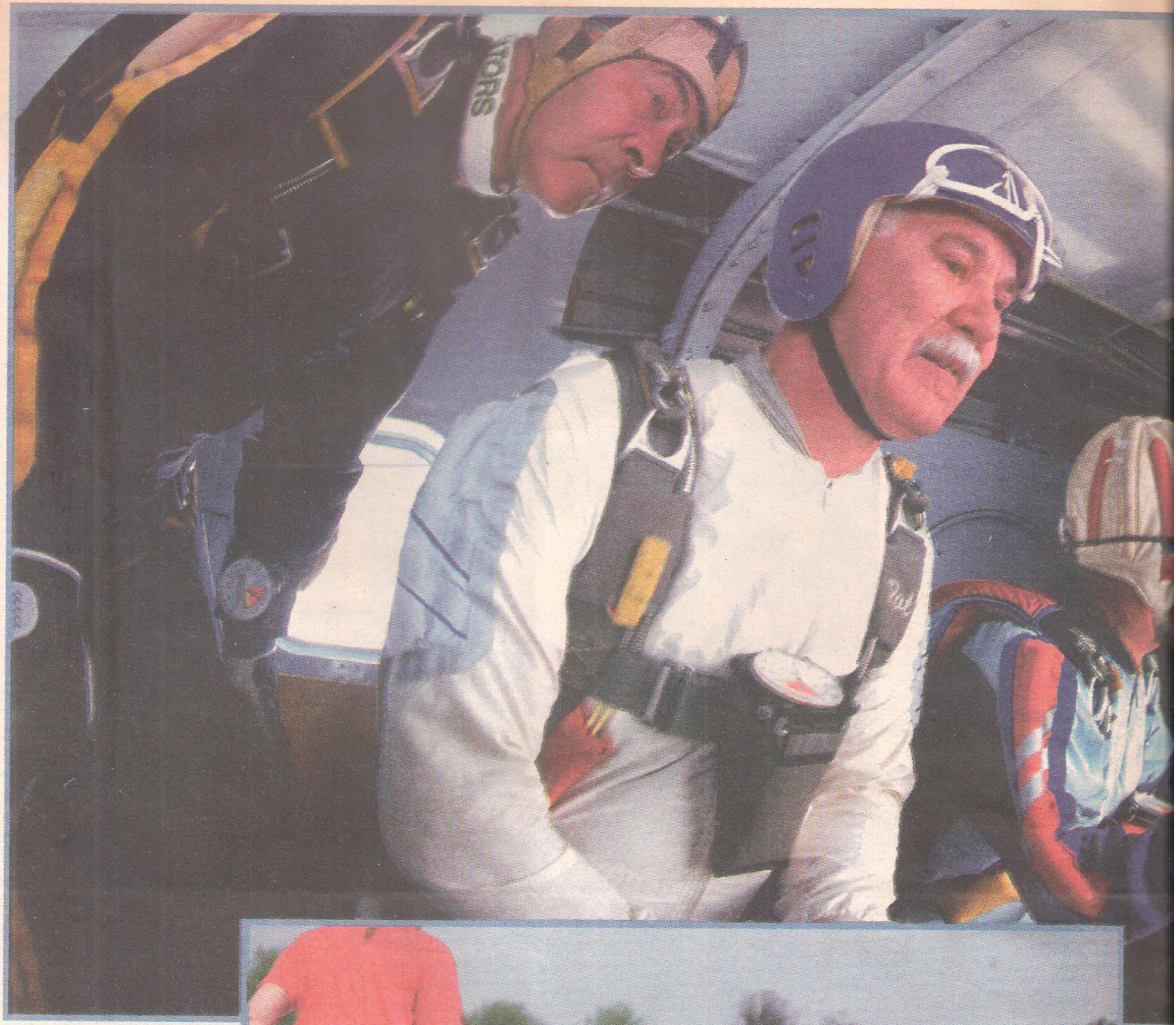
# Florida

A photograph of a person skydiving. The person is wearing a white t-shirt, dark pants, a helmet, and goggles. They are suspended in the air, holding onto the harness. Above them, the large, dark canopy of a parachute is visible, with many lines extending down to the person. The background is a clear blue sky.

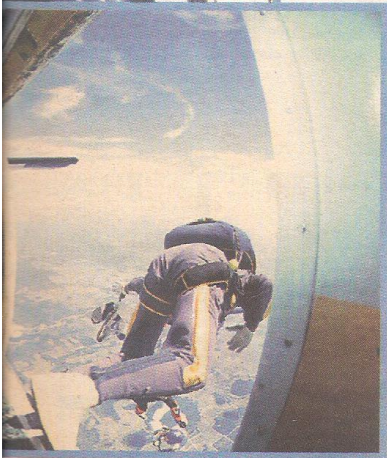
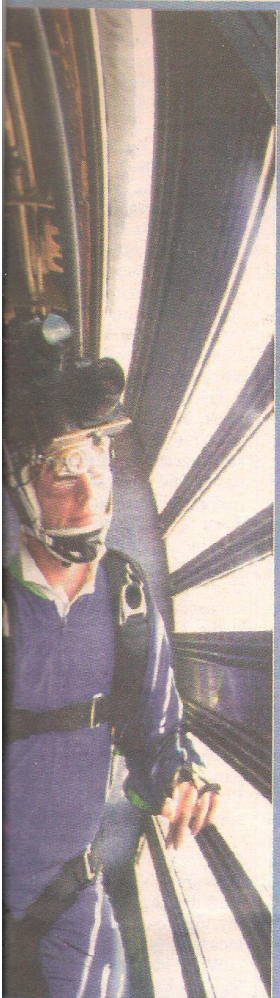
## SKY DIVING ANYONE?

Forget tennis and golf. These retirees have discovered an exciting alternative. They jump out of planes.

PLUS: MIKE THOMAS SUITS UP FOR MIDLIFE



*Tom Morrison, Pat Moorehead, Don Wright and Marvin Emmons (above) prepare to leap. Moorehead, founder of Skydivers Over Sixty, rises with a grin after nailing his target perfectly. Morrison, 70, dives from a plane high above Umatilla (far right).*



# SKYDIVERS O V E R 60

*In this club, the older they are,  
the easier they fall*

TOM MORRISON'S GRAY-FRINGED BALD HEAD AND LIGHTLY lined face are tanned a toasty brown. The lean, 6-foot-2 Pennsylvanian is hanging out in Florida again, playing hooky from his specialty advertising firm.

He is sitting in the shade now, concocting a kinetic work of art. He is plotting the most efficient way to arrange 15 human bodies, falling through the air together at 110 mph, to shape the numerals "70" when viewed from the ground. This is how Tom Morrison is marking his birthday: leading a team of sky divers in their 40s, 50s and 60s in a formation that forms his age.

What is a proper, prosperous 70-year-old businessman doing hurtling around the sky like some daredevil kid? What, for that matter, are his friends in their 40s, 50s and 60s doing jumping out of a perfectly good airplane with him, two and three-fifths miles over an orange grove? Besides helping Morrison celebrate his birthday, they are celebrating their own vitality at ages when some men and women think it's a big deal to play a set of tennis or a round of golf.

Something exciting is happening to Americans as they grow older. Like the geriatric couples who dipped into the Pool of Youth in the movie *Cocoon*, they are becoming and more adventurous. They are pushing back the fences, invading playing fields they would not have dreamed of entering just a few years ago. They are charging into games everyone thought were reserved for 20-year-olds.

This ultimate game of self-assurance and adrenaline has captured Tom Morrison and his friends.

Morrison took up sky diving when he was 39. He had been a hard-core golfer, but he gave that up when he was 43 because golf took too much time away from jumping. He has made more than 7,600 jumps and has no intention of quitting — though he surely has had reason to: He suffered a nasty

BY DON SIDER • PHOTOS BY JOANN VITELLI

break of his right ankle in June 1993, when a sudden change in the wind tossed him into a rough landing. Eight weeks later he was back on his feet and back in the air. He never seems to get enough.

"Some people have a limit of three or four jumps a day," he says. "I go right to the end of the day. Most days we get in six or seven."

Says his wife, Elaine: "He can out-jump any kids on the block."

Morrison isn't alone. Joe Richard, who divides his time between Saratoga Springs, New York City and Cocoa Beach, is 74. He made his first jump when he was 43.

He did 50 a year until he retired five years ago. Now, with plenty of time on his hands, he does 150 a year, sometimes as many as five a day. He's made more than 3,100 jumps.

"I'm a 'rush' person," Richard says. "With sky diving, the rush is never over."

Lenny Aikins, who lives in Washington state, is 78. He does 200 jumps a year. Last year he came in eighth in a paraski meet, landing his parachute on a hilltop target and then skiing downhill against the clock. (His daughter and son-in-law tied for fourth place and his 16-year-old granddaughter finished 10th.) Aikins made his first jump when he was 44 and stopped counting when he passed 4,000. He has been retired since he was 65. Why does he still sky-dive? "If I didn't do this," he says with Zen-like logic, "what would I do?"

ON THIS WEEKEND, MORRISON, Richard and 60 other graying and balding sky divers from throughout the U.S. have converged on a dropzone called Paragators in Umatilla. They have come for a meet sponsored by POPS, the Parachutists Over Phorty Society.

POPS was created 28 years ago to give the then-handful of men and women in the sport who were older than 40 the kinship of flying with their fellow fuddy-duddies. The group has more than 4,200 members now. Two years ago, at the annual POPS meet in Umatilla, 10 members staged the world's first all-60-and-older formation skydive. With that was born SOS, Skydivers Over Sixty, which has more than 160 members. The "Top POP," or president of POPS, is 47-year-old Alicia Anderson, a marketing executive from Long Beach, Calif. The founding father of

SOS is her husband, beer-and-wine bar owner and retired firefighter Pat Moorehead, 62.

The POPS spirit is captured in the Florida vanity plate on Swede Rundquist's Toyota Land Cruiser, which reads: STUNTMN. The 63-year-old Rundquist is a movie stuntman who lives in Winter Park. He has had more than 1,100 jumps.

This weekend's contest, like all POPS meets, has two events.

The first is common to all sky-diving meets: Each contestant makes three accuracy jumps from an altitude of 3,500 feet onto a five-centimeter-wide target. Each is scored on total distance from the target. The jumpers glide down, one by one, approaching the target with a fierce determination, as if this were the most important moment of their lives. The winner ends up with two dead centers and one landing just three centimeters from the target.

The other event is a POPS specialty: Hit and Rock. Each contestant makes one jump from 3,500 feet, trying to land near the target. He or she then strips off the parachute, steps onto the target and runs 40 feet to plop into a rickety rocking chair. Each one is timed from touchdown to plopdown, but there's no finesse here. The jumpers crash into the pea gravel pit surrounding the target and fight their way out of their parachute harnesses. They become enmeshed in their canopies and trapped in their suspension lines. They trip and stumble and lunge for the rocking chair. The winner sets a record with a time of 4.2 seconds.

SOME POPS AND SOS MEMBERS, SUCH as Tom Morrison, made their first jumps as paratroopers during and after World War II. But more and more sky divers are only getting started in their 40s and 50s.

Bill DeKlavon, 56, a shower-door manufacturer from Pembroke Pines, has been at it for 10 years. "I've always wanted to do adventurous stuff like that," he says. "But when I'd talk with my wife about it, she'd ask me to wait till the kids were grown."

When his youngest was a sophomore in college, DeKlavon drew up a list of 20 things he wanted to try. At the top of the list was sky diving.

"I'd never done anything like it before, and I

just loved it," he says. That was some 660 jumps ago.

"I still have 19 things on my list to do," he says.

Ron Mason, 53, a veterinarian from Naples, started two years ago. He has more than 350 jumps.

"I fished all my life," he says, "and I loved it. But since I started jumping, I haven't been fishing twice. Every weekend I'm figuring the quickest route to the drop zone."

Mason's medical history includes four back surgeries and a spinal fusion. "Without a doubt," he says, "I'm more agile, more limber and more pain-free than I've ever been since my first back surgery when I was 20 years old."

OK, sky diving may not be medically accepted therapy for chronic backache or arthritis, but anecdotal evidence hints that in many cases it does not hurt and even seems to help.

Some jumpers believe that the opening shock when their parachutes inflate is like traction, stretching the kinks from their spines. Others believe it is just the zest of it all that makes them feel as good physically as they do mentally.

Parachuting used to be brutal on backs and bones. With the traditional round parachutes, many of them old military surplus models, every landing was a controlled crash.

Student sky divers practiced PLFs (parachute landing falls), trying to absorb the shock of hitting the ground by rolling from the balls of their feet to the sides of their thighs to their backs in one smooth move. More often they landed like a

sack of potatoes, and limped away to steel themselves for the next bruising landing.

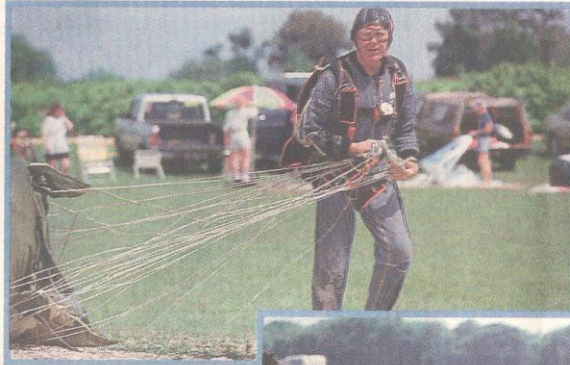
Then, 20 years ago, "square" — actually rectangular — ram-air L parachutes became popular. Now a jumper can steer these 20-mph wings through the wind to a specific spot and land as gently as a bird, "flaring" just before touchdown to reduce the speed to zero at the moment the jumper's sneakers hit the ground. Almost every landing is a soft, stand-up landing.

"I've always contended that jumping is a mental activity rather than a physical activity," says Monty Libert, owner-operator of the Florida Skydiving Center in Okeechobee.

"It's really not that physically demanding," agrees Marty Jones, owner-operator of the Air Adventures sky-diving center at Clewiston. "This is one of the few sports where motor skills and hand-eye coordination isn't essential. Sky diving is much easier than golf."

Libert has taken a paraplegic man on tandem jumps, and three years ago Jones jumped with then-86-year-old Many Joyce of Singer Island, a self-described "gutsy old broad," strapped to his chest.

Tandem jumping has opened the sport to men and women — especially older men and women — who never before would have considered such a thing. Tightly L hooked to the parachute harness of an instructor, the tandem passenger enjoys all the thrills of leaping from a plane with none of the fears of being alone or of doing something wrong and getting killed. Tandem jumping



*Howard Waterbury, 59, hits the ground running after diving 3,500 feet in the Hit and Rock event. The goal is to land in the target area, unbuckle your gear and then sprint for the rocking chair. Once there you plop down and rock, of course. But you have to be quick — the record time in the contest is 4.2 seconds.*



has become the method of choice for one-time thrill-seekers and first-time student sky divers.

It is pricey to learn to sky dive and to keep doing it. A single tandem ride typically costs \$165. An eight-jump training course costs \$1,130. Rides to 12,500 feet, the usual altitude for experienced jumpers, cost \$17. New gear, including main and reserve parachutes, harness-and-container system, jumpsuit and helmet and accessories such as an altimeter, runs \$4,000 or more.

If older sky divers tend to be more stable economically than younger skydivers, they tend to be more stable emotionally too.

Dave Clark, 64, a retired paratrooper with 6,300 jumps, still teaches sky diving to soldiers at Fort Bragg, N.C., as an Army civilian. Comparing the ways of older jumpers with those of young jumpers, he says: "We see young guys trying to do things we know don't work. It's the same with the way we live our lives compared to theirs

— we drink less and we go to bed earlier. We're not trying to re-capture our youth. We're just enjoying life."

Whenever 20-year-old hotdogs gig older jumpers about their cautious ways or creaky bones, the older jumpers fire right back: "I have jumpsuits older than you!"

Bill DeKlavon says, "I enjoy being the oldest guy on the load. I get in the plane and I say, 'See? You have to be an athlete to do this.' They look at my potbelly and they say, 'Right. . . .'"

**IN THE AIR OVER THE ORANGE** grove at Umatilla, Tom Morrison's formation is out of the plane and taking shape.

You can see them etched against the blue sky. One by one, they slip into position, putting together a credible "70."

Afterward, on the ground, someone asks Morrison how it feels to be that old and still be sky diving. He gives him a cold stare.

"I don't use the word 'old,'" he says. "I prefer mature."

*Don Sider has been a skydiver for 30 years. A former Time correspondent, he now contributes to People magazine and Modern Maturity. He lives in West Palm Beach.*

# Rigger's Notebook

by Jim Bates

## POPS/SOS Parachutists

It's been written before in this column that there are many misconceptions about parachuting. Many people have an idea that it's a "tough guy" thing. They have recollections - likely based on photographs and movies - about military parachutists thumping into the ground awkwardly, at high speed, tumbling crazily, legs and arms flailing while the jumper struggles to recover from a "crash and burn" landing and get back on his feet, ready to carry on with a mission.

Fifty-plus years ago such landings were sometimes experienced by Army paratroopers when military parachuting was being developed as a war weapon and learning was more or less by doing. There were a lot of aches and pains and injuries, and, unfortunately, sometimes a fatality.

Today's military parachutist has the benefit of different and much better equipment, high technology fabrics and hardware, sophisticated training, and landings are softer. Furthermore, landing injuries are usually slight, brought about because an individual did something incorrectly in doing a PLF (parachute landing fall).

There is civilian parachuting - better known today as skydiving. It is practiced worldwide after a beginning in the early 1950s with skydivers ranging in age from teenagers to nonagenarians. There have been a lot of 16-year old jumpers and it's no longer unusual to learn that someone else past age 90 has made a first jump.

At one time the age of 40 disparagingly meant any person was "over the hill" - but no longer, and that applies to skydivers, too.

Within the skydiving community, there's a quarter-century-old group of men and women parachutists known as POPS - an acronym for Parachutists Over Phorty Society. The worldwide group recently issued membership number 4,254.

(In the spirit of good nature - not to be outdone by "kids" - and adjunct group of POPS members formed SOS - "Skydivers over Sixty"; card-carrying membership already exceeds 100 and keeps growing.

As competitive as any other group of skydivers, POPS members regularly compete in parachuting skill contests.

The 23rd Annual POPS Winter Meet was held during March 23-27

directly on it or by touching it after moving to the disc from the actual landing point) then scrambling to a rocking chair positioned five meters (16-feet-plus) away at the edge of the target-pit.

The organization's "Top POP" Alicia Anderson, a highly experienced exhibition parachutist, tells how this year's Hit 'n' rock event went:

"This always unpredictable and very humorous event is a timed race that involves accuracy and an old rocking chair, but it is much more than that.

"Creative competitors now wear Spandex tights (even pantyhose); during the final stage of an approach they dispense with helmets, goggles, and gloves - some even kick off shoes, all to give them an advantage in removing their gear as fast as possible before they race to the rocking chair. All the best plans can be (and often are) foiled by the wind, by tripping in the pea gravel, or forgetting to touch the target disc before they finally sit in the chair.

"Everyone eagerly cheers on the competitors, no matter where they land. Occasionally, it takes competitors minutes to reach the chair."

As eager contestants land they are spurred on by excited spectators. Getting a "dead-center" landing (0.00 centimeter distance), or even landing within a meter or so of the five-centimeter disc, is a great advantage in this "time is precious" event. Even missing a dead-center landing, a contestant might only have to take a short step to touch the disc, or easily scramble on hands and knees from farther away to make mandatory disc contact.

In parachute gear of recent generations of equipment and development, "quick release" snaps that clipped into V-ring fittings on leg and chest straps were a valuable feature for getting out of a harness quickly. But as skydivers kept wanting smaller and lighter-weight equipment, bulky harness fittings were among the first hardware to be redesigned and reduced in weight. Thinner, lighter-weight webbings

and engineering changes in harness design resulted in customary hardware being discarded in favor of leg-strap webbing that could be threaded through slim-profile lightweight adapter fittings that created adjustable "step-n" harness loops for a jumpers legs. That design change meant that it was more difficult to get out of a harness after a jump, because snug-fitting webbing had to be unthreaded through adapters to loosen leg loops to get out of a harness. That bit of extra work & brief delay didn't mean anything on a customary jump.

But to a determined Hit 'n' Rocker, the greater difficulty translates into more time needed for removing a harness. Clever and agile competitive Hit 'n' Rock jumpers learned to loosen thread-through leg loops as they sat in the harness while descending toward a target, striving to make loops large enough so they would readily slide down legs once the jumper was on the ground. All that would be left was to shed the harness and dash for the disc first, then race to the rocking chair. Time was precious!

Just in case leg loops could not be enlarged enough while under the canopy, some really competitive POPS jumpers took to wearing outfits made of smooth, form-fitting elasticized fabric (the aforementioned Spandex) of the sort seen in workout gyms) as a jumpsuit, so to speak; substituting the different costume in place of a customary jumpsuit so a harness wouldn't hang up on fabric when shedding a harness. (An alternative smooth-surface wear item for the economy minded who didn't mind ribbing from peers was inexpensive pantyhose.)

Top POP Anderson noted: "The 'Hit 'n' Rock even was won by 'SKI' Chmielewski of Florida, who is also the current World Record holder for this event. His time in this meet was 4.2 seconds.

"POPStars were made before and after the competitive events. Five jumpsuit emblems were awarded to members who participated in their first all-POPS eight person freefall formation ... Seven new applicants joined the POPS ranks ... Skydivers Over Sixty (SOS) attempted several eight-person freefall formations but weather prevented success. The third POPS World Meet in 1995 is being planned. This year's POPS Nationals will be held in Chambersburg, Penn., on Sept. 17-18 with a POPS/SOS Boogie during Sept. 14-16.

Over the hill at 40? Really?

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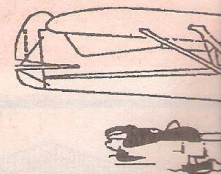
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As competitive as any other group of skydivers, POPS members regularly compete in parachuting skill contests.

The 23rd Annual POPS Winter Meet was held during March 23-27 at the Paragators Drop Zone in Umatilla, Fla. This now-traditional competition/social event always draws contestants from across the country, and from across its borders, too.

This year POPS jumpers came from 16 states and others came from Canada, England, and the Netherlands.

Two of the most experienced contestants have each logged more than 8,000 jumps. Carl "Smitty" Smith (POPS #3034) of Florida and Dave DeWolf (POPS #678) of Pennsylvania (a longtime Master Parachute Rigger and parachute rigging instructor).

The oldest competitor was 74-year old Joe Richards of New York.

The two-meet event began with Accuracy (precision in landing nearest to a minuscule centimeter target) and that three-jump contest was won by "Smitty" with a total distance of three centimeters (1.17 inches) - a remarkable accomplishment considering that jumps were made from 3,000 feet.

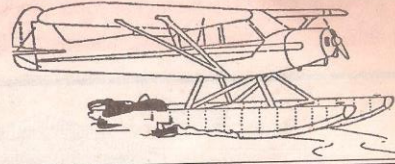
A fun highlight of a POPS meet is "Hit 'n' Rock" - a timed event in which jumpers must get out of a parachute harness after touching the "dead center disc (either by landing

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- g - What world famous aviator flew combat while a civilian and shot down a Japanese Sonia.



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*Clockwise from top:  
Bernard Shaw, 1st Top POP Downunder with  
John Kinton new Top POP at the Ettamogah  
Pub.*

*Ettamogah Pub Accuracy Meet  
Interesting landing/approach by Ken Hills.  
Photo: Pauline Robson*

*Ettamogah Pub Accuracy Meet  
Another interesting landing/approach by  
Maggie Cox.  
Photo: Pauline Robson*

*Recently resigned Top POP Bernard Shaw  
during the last World POPS Meet in Florida.  
Bernie was heard to say:  
"The older you get – the better it is"  
Photo: Tony Edwards*

