

**POPS**

**CRW record attempts**

**10-12 Mar 1995**

**Raeford, NC**

# POPS Over Raeford

REPORTED BY BOB WILLIAMSON and BRYAN SCOTT



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In an attempt to break the existing POPS canopy formation record, this 15-way came up two short.

“Fearless Fosdick,” that memorable character and symbol of the Parachutists over Phorty Society, was included in the ceremonies on March 10-12 when 15 POPS and 15 PUPS (Parachutists Under Phorty) set out for a CRW weekend at Raeford, North Carolina, just for fun.

Mike Lewis, a new inductee into POPS and the point man of a CRW seminar tour sponsored by Performance Designs, led the way. Lewis arrived with a set of loaner PD Lightning canopies while Bob Williamson and Larry Westby, both seasoned POPS, organized 30 jumpers who took part in the camp.

Awaiting no late arrivals on Friday morning, the Raeford Express Twin Otter got the nod, and the CRW dogs set out to break the POPS canopy formation record. It was 21 degrees on the ground, and all jumps were made from 12,500 feet. After breaking the ice (and adding extra woolies), the first load was up and gone by noon. The temperature had risen to 45 degrees; still nobody muttered a word about the 20-degree temperature at altitude.

Right off the bat, a mixture of 15 POPS and PUPS built an 11-way diamond kite. Slow to dock, but dock he did, one particular POP on his fourth CRW jump ever, made the grade. As the day went on, more individuals began filtering in and the group had completed four practice jumps by dark, including two 12-ways and one 13-way.

If anyone thinks that POPS is just a split gaggle of “old geezers,” think again. There are no “old geezers” in this sport at all. The POPS credo has always been: “You don’t quit skydiving ‘cause you get old, you get old ‘cause you quit skydiving.” And

throughout the weekend, that motto held fast. “Don’t quit” was the battle cry as they devised their plan to break the previous record, a 9-way stack. They had enough people to easily set a new record, and nobody wanted to cut anyone just for the sake of a 10-way. The group voted to keep jumping, and they did.

At first, it didn’t seem to be a big deal. A few loads of old-timers chasing each other under canopy. But the newbies soon took notice; these guys were serious. The entire drop zone started paying attention, and little by little, the weekend event began to take on a spirit of its own.

## Doing It Right

With the help of CRW photographer Bryan Scott, a full video critique was made after each jump. The entire DZ got into the viewing sessions at the end of the day where each participant got a personal critique from Lewis, a former national CRW champion. His analysis helped to improve each POP’s flying skills, and he related just how to share this combined knowledge with other CRW enthusiasts.

Saturday awoke with a bang and 30 CRW POPs and PUPS took to the air and didn’t look back for one minute. Diamonds, stacks, planes and side-by-sides were happening all day. Then it was time to “declare” the record jump...and that was done by POPS agreement.

“Go for broke, take the POPs and build one,” was the attitude. The 15 PUPS took off and formed their own group and continued to build wedges, stairsteps, diamonds and side-by-side stacks until dark. The POPS group declared a 15-way diamond kite as their official attempt. The skydive went well, but built to only 13.

Gene Paul Thacker, USPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Director and chairman of the board, served as the official judge. Following international record standards, he was duly notified of the declaration before each attempt. Organizer Bob Williamson ensured that everyone was a current POPS and USPA member, registered for the attempt, in-date and ready to go.

All the cameras were checked and rechecked by Bryan Scott. The pilots were briefed and the loads were closed to all PUPS. (But they continued to show off their prowess all weekend with from their own Otter.)

## Top of POPS

“Fearless Fosdick” and his band of POPS loaded the Raeford Express. Upon ignition, the Raeford dragon awoke and winked its eye, but to no avail; the group of POPS was not to be refused.

The next jump was a 15-way diamond kite again. And again it built to just 13, the bottom biplane arriving just before breakdown.

Jump number three was a 15-way crystal kite that built to 12. The next attempt was a 15-way hourglass, ending at 13. So they trimmed it down to a 13-way crystal kite for their fifth attempt; again, only 12 got in.

And finally the POPS attempt was reduced to 12, this time a crystal diamond formation that ultimately built to just 11. They had tried and tried, but the new record never materialized. But it wasn’t for a lack of trying, mind you.

POPS wraps #1 and #2 were awarded on jump number four without further discussion. On the second to the last attempt, one POP received his 4-stack, CCR and CCS as he closed the nine-way diamond base—an ironic number considering he had only nine CRW jumps to his credit.

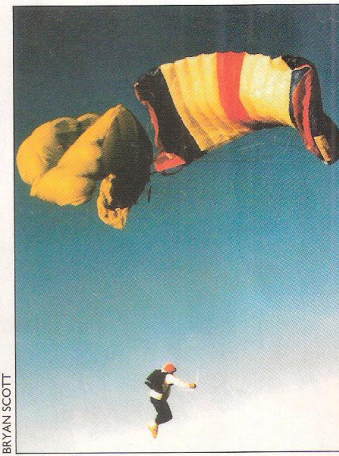
Even though the record still stands at only a 9-way stack, it’s an impressive precedent for this growing faction of USPA members. An estimated 20 percent of USPA’s membership comprises the POPS and SOS (Skydivers Over Sixty) sub-groups. The population is rapidly increasing; five new POPS members were signed up at this event alone. The place to get info on becoming a member of POPS is Alicia Anderson, (310) 633-1266.

Gene Paul Thacker and the family and staff of Raeford Aviation deserved a big round of applause for providing that old feeling of fun, good friends, spirit and great jumping that was apparent to all the entire weekend.

The POPS 24th Annual Winter meet was held late last month in Umatilla, Florida. Look for a write-up in the May issue. ♦

## About the Authors

Bryan Scott, D-10625, was team cameraman for the 1992 national champions, Tampa CRW. Bob Williamson, D-11752, is a Master parachute rigger, pilot and CRW advocate who operates the Do Drop Inn Parachute Loft in Charlotte, North Carolina.



BRYAN SCOTT

Author Bob Williamson cuts away after a POPS wrap during the record attempts.