

POPS Meet

10 Jun 1972

Hastings, MI



HASTINGS

June 14, 1972

In Free Flight—Joe Vroman, 48, president of the Skyhawk Sky Divers, now based at the Hastings airport, was photographed in free flight before pulling the rip cord on his

A new spot for many in our area is attracting spectators each Saturday and Sunday as members of the Skyhawks Sky Diving Club, based at the Hastings airport, take to the air.

An interesting and thrilling hobby, the Skyhawks include people from many parts of this section of Michigan, headed by Joe Vroman, 48, of Lake Odessa, with Paul Leyrer, 46, of Portland, as vice president.

Both Joe and Paul are members of POPS (Parachutists Over Forty) which held a special contest at the local field Saturday, June 10. Winning first place in accuracy and overall was Larry Coddens of South Bend, Ind. Second went to William (Hank) Sweezy and third to Bob Ryan of Flint. Roy Grace of Davison won the "hit and rock" event. That's where the jumper tries for accuracy, the races to the "rocking chair" is rock."

Melvin Helmes of Ionia is the club's rigger and his wife, Lelia

parachute, Vroman has made 310 jumps and has had four malfunctions, necessitating use of his emergency parachute. He loves the sport, and the thrill—Banner photo.

Frances (Fran) is the only active woman jumper in POPS—and she's just 47. There is another POPS distaff chief, Marjie Bates of New England, but she doesn't jump as much anymore. There are about 650 persons all over the world who belong to POPS, a non-dues organization which conducts these special contests. There were 13 here Saturday, including Bill Smith of Milwaukee who used a Para-Plane type shoot.

Vroman, who made his first jump on Oct. 17, 1960, said he jumps for the sport and thrills—just as other men might golf, drive race cars or take part in other hobbies. "You can't describe the sensation, but there is a complete feeling of freedom once you leave the plane,"

Vroman said. "Once you leave that aircraft, you're on your own and no one can help you."

Vroman has had four malfunctions of his main chute in his 310 jumps. When that happens, you break away from your main chute to prevent entanglement, and then release your emergency parachute. The jumpers pack their own main chutes, but the emergency chute is packed by the Helmes, the rigger.

Vroman makes his living as a truck driver for Central Soya of Portland. He and his wife, Marjorie, have five children and five grandchildren. Joe also belongs to G.W.U.P.—Grandparents Who Usually Parachute Sundays.

Leyrer, who has never had a malfunction in his 94 jumps, explained that "Parachuting is a very forgiving sport. It isn't hard to make that fatal mistake, but when you know you have to do the right thing all by yourself, you'll do it right! And then you always have that second spare chute."

Leyrer works for Portland Products. He and his wife, Meredith, have four children, two of them active jumpers. Terry, 19, has had more than 200 jumps since starting when he was 16. Ken, 17, has made about 30 jumps.

The sport doesn't seem terribly expensive. The Skyhawks dues are \$2 a month and you furnish your own gear. Parachutes can cost from about \$60 to \$700. It costs to jump, but when you get that "sensation," the jumpers say it's worth it.

But some of us will get the thrill watching from Mother Earth!

