

SOS Meet

25,26 Sep 1993

Marshall, Michigan

Over-60 Crowd Competes in Mich.

by Gary Brooks

"Away above my head I see the strangest sight . . . It might not mean a thing, but then again it might."

The lyrics from "Fiddler on the Roof" would make an appropriate theme song for what Pat Moorehead described as the first "officially sanctioned Skydivers Over Sixty meet and boogie."

The SOS meet was held September 25-26 at Skydive Michigan in Marshall. Moorehead—active in the Parachutists Over Phorty Society—formed the equally informal SOS organization in 1992 after a 10-way dive at a POPS meet in Umatilla, Fla. The participants were all over the age of 60.

The Michigan event was small but unusual. The average age of the nine participants was 63.4 years with an average of 34 years in the sport. They had a total of 15,650 jumps between them, for an average of 1739 jumps.

John Gordon was the "newest" skydiver registered, having 180 jumps in his two years in the sport. El Harger was the first to climb out of an airplane, making his first jump in 1943.

The most experienced skydiver present was Pat Moorehead, with a total of 4150 jumps since his first in 1969.

The participants came to Skydive Michigan from places as diverse as California, Colorado, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Australia and New Zealand.

Three jump planes were available for the meet: a Twin Beech, Cessna 182 and a DeHavilland Beaver. Airport authorities at Marshall were very cooperative and allowed skydivers to lay out packing mats inside the cavernous hangar.

Airport manager Scott Southwell is a man of vision who welcomes all aviation sports at the airport. Besides skydivers, sailplanes, ultralights, paragliders, hot air balloons and general aviation traffic make Brooks Field one of the busiest uncontrolled airports in Michigan.

Southwell realizes that mainstream general aviation has stagnated economically—it's not growing. But sport aviation continues to expand at a healthy clip. So the Michigan operator has chosen to focus on serving those who fly for fun.

The airport is certainly one of the most interesting, too, drawing spectators every weekend to watch the activity.

After a few loads early Saturday morning, seven SOS members competed in a Hit and Rock event. A small orange hoop served as the target. A comfortable stuffed chair sat 40 feet from the target.

Moorehead jumped from 3000 feet to

demonstrate how the participants were to land, get out of their gear, touch the target and run to the chair.

One jumper had a fine, accurate landing. It looked like he might get an unbeatable score, until he realized that he had forgotten to loosen his chest strap. As he frantically struggled out of his gear, with victory slipping through his trembling fingers, he uttered some colorful phrases.

Two jumpers took over 30 seconds to correctly get from their initial landing point to the chair. Others did better.

First place went to Chuck Spidell with a score of 14.5 seconds—not bad for a 65 year old.

Jack Sousa scored 16.9 seconds to place second. He was followed by El Harger with 25.3 seconds.

Special honors went to 68-year-old Audrey Jackman who holds SOS #1 in New Zealand. By the time she jumped, the wind had picked up somewhat, and she landed on one of the fairways of a local golf course.

Judge Larry Skelding ran out to encourage her to keep going. She finished the jump—from touchdown to the chair—in 5 minutes 50.4 seconds.

Sunday's 8-way event was canceled due to bad weather.

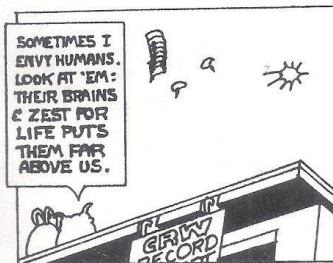
Awards were presented at a banquet Saturday night. Charles Vance also received his USPA Double Diamond award for his 3000th freefall.

The SOS has grown over the past year. The organization currently has 121 members from 26 states and nine countries. SOS has also contributed over \$400 to the U.S. Team Trust Fund.

As a skydiver approaching 51 years of age, it is nice to have something to look forward to when I turn 60. After all, some of our most beautiful jumps are made on sunset loads, aren't they?

(Gary Brooks is a pastor and skydiver in Lansing, Mich.) □

DZ Doggies by Craig Robinson



SKYDIVING OCT. 1993

SKYDIVERS OVER SIXTY

'S.O.S.'

Audrey Jackman.

With the formation of "SOS" in USA about 18 months ago really booming with 140 plus members, it was decided to form a branch in New Zealand.

Already we have four foundation members :

- #1 Audrey Jackman
- #2 Gordon Calder
- #3 Ralph Gardner
- #4 Phil Seaman

Audrey left New Zealand early last July for the big "OE" and while travelling in USA received news from Pat Moorehead that the first official SOS meet was to be held at Brooke Field Marshall Michigan September 25 1993. So she high-tailed it out of the Grand Canyon and on to a Greyhound bus and headed for Michigan. It happened to come within the time span of Audrey's "unlimited mileage" bus pass.

On arrival at Marshall 2 1/2 days later at 11 pm only to find herself stranded as there was no bus

station,, so after a 911 call, was delivered to Pat and Alicia Mooreheads Motel by a deputy sheriff, having been given a scenic tour of town by night on the way. We forgot to take a photo, but no handcuffs Darren.

There were seven participants in the competition but it wasn't called off through lack of numbers like one meet in New Zealand recently. As usual Audrey's accuracy left much to be desired, by landing out on the nearby golf course and finding a golf ball had mysteriously embedded itself in a cell of her canopy.

An enjoyable dinner was held and next day the weather was unfavourable for relative work so most people headed off but not before six american members approached Audrey and asked to join New Zealand SOS so now we have ten members.

If there are any more over sixties out there who would like to join please contact Audrey Jackman, 46 Totara Road, Whenuapai, Ph (09) 416-8221 or facsimile (09) 416-8661.



Audrey Jackman

Skydivers Over Sixty - Marshall, Michigan 1993. Back row (l to r): (DZ owner) John Gordon, Chuck Spidell, Lynn Humphries, Robert Rhyne, Jim Mazillo, P... (Judge). Back row: Chas Vance, Elsworth Hager, Audrey, Pat Moorehead, Jack Sousa.

*(l to r) Alicia Anderson - Top POPS #9 - USA
Patrick Moorehead - Top SOS #1 - USA
Audrey Jackman - Top SOS #1 - NZ*

