

POPS

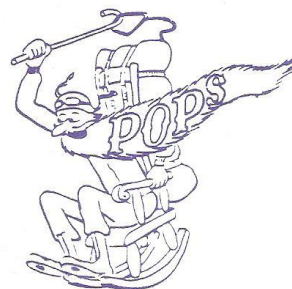
352 jumps in 24hours, Cheryl Sterns

9 Nov 1995

Raeford, NC

PARACHUTISTS OVER PHORTY SOCIETY

ALICIA ANDERSON , TOP POP
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TOPPOP Alicia Anderson presents World Champion, Cheryl Stearns with her POPS membership as she celebrates her 40th birthday July 1995 - see story attached.

Cheryl Stearns is one of our proudest and most enthusiastic POPS members. She sent in her POPS application almost a year before her 40th birthday. Cheryl spreads the word about POPS wherever in the world she is competing and soon after, I receive POPS memberships from that country.

TOP POP ALICIA ANDERSON AWARDS
WORLD CHAMPION CHERYL STEARNS
HER "POPS" MEMBERSHIP (#4795).

(RAEFORD, NC.)
15 JULY 95

PLEASE RETURN TO:

Alicia Moorehead
3350 Saint Francis Place
Long Beach, California
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On her way to a new world record, accuracy champion Cheryl Stearns closes in for another dead center.

forecasted and the skies had cleared, but the price was high winds and bitter cold. The forecast had called for a hard freeze warning, with lows down to 25 degrees.

Not only did Stearns have to fight the cold, but she had to struggle with the winds as well. Her original start time was to be 4:30 p.m. on November 8; however, high winds forced her to postpone the attempt by one hour so that she could get a better feel for the conditions with a couple of test jumps. But even after the one-hour delay and an official start time of 5:30, the wind continued to battle Stearns for the records. During the night at 2,000 feet the winds were 35 knots—hardly conducive to Parafoil accuracy. Coupled with the fact that the winds were constantly changing direction, Stearns had her work cut out for her.

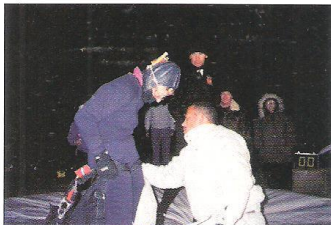
She had assembled quite a support crew to help with her efforts: 145 people were on hand to assist with rigging, packing and judging. Two tents were set up—one served as a food station for the support crew and the other as the rigging and changeover station. All bases were covered to give this record attempt a fighting chance.

Three More for the Record Books

REPORTED BY GLENN BANGS

While being interviewed by a local television reporter prior to her world record-breaking performance, Cheryl Stearns was asked how she felt about the safety of jumping from an airplane as many times as possible in the upcoming 24-hour period. Her response: "After over 10,000 parachute jumps, stepping out of an airplane for me is like someone else's stepping out of a car after pulling over to the curb."

Very few people, however, can pull over to the curb, step out of the car and set three world records in a 24-hour period as Stearns did on November 8-9 in Raeford, North Carolina. Of the three world records Stearns broke, one was her own: the most number of jumps in a 24-hour period (women's record). Additionally, she established a new record for the highest number of non-consecutive dead center landings



A member of Stearns' 145-person crew helps off-load gear after another nighttime dead center.

during a 24-hour period, hitting the electronic pad dead on for 188 jumps. And finally, she eclipsed Jay Stokes' record of 331 jumps in 24 hours (the overall record) by 21 jumps, with a total of 352 jumps. But it wasn't a smooth start...

Cold Temperatures, High Winds

November 8, 1995, broke clear and windy after the passage of a cold front that came through during the night. The good news was that at least the rain had stopped as



Keeping to a tight schedule, Stearns sheds her gear and readies for the next load.

Another key to her success, of course, was the pilot and plane support which consisted of two Cessna 182s and one Cessna 185. She needed all three aircraft in order to sustain the pace. Stearns had determined that in order to make this effort work she would have to make a jump every three minutes during the 24-hour period to



Top photo: Stearns marks the milestone of 352 jumps in 24 hours surrounded by friends, family and her support crew. Above: A victorious Stearns celebrates her three-fold accomplishment.

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Three More Records

Continued



The local media followed the record event closely. Once again, Stearns represented the sport with grace and dignity.

remain on track. Her results would prove that she could top even that impressive turnaround time.

The Mechanical Advantage

Stearns' canopy of choice was the Parafoil by North American Aerodynamics. Due to its high toggle pressure, Stearns knew that she would never last the duration of the record attempt without some type of mechanical assistance to help her spiral down quickly. Cheryl Whitford, Dave DeWolf and Craig Van Camp developed a pulley system that allowed her to use very little muscle power to get her canopy out of the sky. The system worked by spiraling the canopy with the use of a mechanical advantage attached to her front "A" lines below the cascade. This handle and pulley system would allow her to get down within one minute of opening. Stearns said, "At the end of the 24-hour period, I had no muscle fatigue; in fact my arms were not even tired. I knew that I would have to prevent the fatigue that Jay Stokes encountered during his record attempt. The pulley system worked great."

In the Zone

Thanks to the efforts of Cheryl Whitford at the rigging and staging area, Stearns was jumping 12 very similar rigs during the record attempt. Whitford, with the help of some new Golden Knights, oversaw the activities at the "rig drop off and re-gearing station," ensuring that the equipment changeover was conducted smoothly, and more importantly, that it wasn't time consuming. Stearns later commented, "I can't say enough about Cheryl's [Whitford] help."

The rigging and changeover were the only parts of the record attempt that went according to plan. With the winds constantly changing directions, Stearns was fighting the elements to get back to the electronic pad for most of the night. The most dead centers she could pick up for the consecutive record was 11 at a time; she needed 41 consecutive dead centers for the daytime record and 21 for the night record. The winds successfully thwarted her attempts at both records.

When asked about the uncertain weather conditions, Stearns responded, "You know,

if I had waited 24 hours, the temperature would have been 20 degrees warmer and the winds near calm, perfect conditions. I had to go with the dates as planned because all of my support personnel had already committed to time off from work. Dave Johnson, a pilot and co-worker from USAir that I've known for 20 years, brought his own C-185 here for the record attempt. I was committed to these dates and had to go with what I had, conditions-wise."

And that is exactly what she did from taxi to landing, making 3-minute turnarounds during the day and 4- to 5-minute turnarounds at night. That is, except for the 3-hour period from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., when she was able to crank out an astounding 2:40 turnaround time.

After watching Stearns' performance throughout the following day, Major Mike Smith, executive officer for the Golden Knights, commented on her record-breaking 188 dead centers. "Our accuracy competitors don't have a leg to stand on complaining about a fatigue factor!" said Smith. "She's getting dead centers in her sleep!"

When asked later, Stearns said that she "found the zone" and was locked onto the target. And was she ever! Of the 352 jumps that she made, 53 percent were dead centers.

By 4:30 in the afternoon November 9, Stearns was beginning to show the strain of her efforts. She had tendonitis in both hands and a severe case of "road rash" from impacting on the inflatable tuffet, but amazingly enough, because of the mechanical advantage of the pulley system installed on all of the rigs she was jumping, Stearns had beaten the fatigue factor. She was tired, but her arms were still fresh and had no residual soreness. As of Sunday, November 12, her right hand was back to normal and her left hand still had a little soreness that would not allow her to close it around a Coke can.

For the Records

At 5:30 p.m., November 9, 1995, Cheryl Stearns, D-4020, the most successful competitive skydiver in the world, was in the world record books again for three categories: most number of jumps in a 24-hour period, most number of dead centers in a 24-hour period and most number of jumps in 24-hour period for the women's world record.

When asked what was next on her schedule, Stearns replied, "I'm going to take a couple of weeks off, then I'm going to Florida and start training hard for the Nationals."

There is little wonder why or how she is currently the world's most successful skydiver, and perhaps even the best in parachuting's short history.

About the Author

USPA Deputy Executive Director Glenn Bangs, D-4802, witnessed Stearns' performance in early November. Bangs, a former member of the U.S. Army Golden Knights, joined the USPA staff last August.