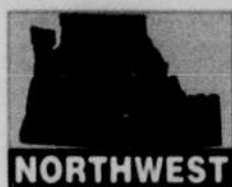


Man faces charges in Oregon skydiving deaths



SHERIDAN (AP) — In the 22 years Sheridan Sky Sports was in business, 13 people died parachuting from planes it launched from a dirt airstrip in this tiny western Oregon town.

The parachute center now consists only of an abandoned warehouse with broken windows. Operator Ted Mayfield closed the center amid investigations by the Federal Aviation Administration and county authorities.

Now, Mayfield faces manslaughter charges in the deaths of the last two people to die at the center, an 85-year-old man who died on his first jump and an experienced jumper whose chute didn't open.

Mayfield denies that he's responsible for anyone's death. His attorney, David Cuhns of Salem, said Mayfield probably would plead innocent to the charges.

"Ted truly doesn't think he's responsible for these folks' unfortunate deaths," Cuhns said. "He believes that they were trained well and equipped well. He doesn't see that he did anything that would cause their deaths."

Mayfield says skydiving is a risky sport and the number of deaths at his center, also known as Pacific Parachute Center, is not unusual given the number of jumps there.

Arleen Richman of the U.S. Parachute Association said

one death occurs in every 84,000 jumps. That means Mayfield's center would have needed more than 49,000 jumps a year to remain within the average.

Mayfield says only that his staff flew "thousands of jumps every year," with up to 1,000 jumps on a busy weekend in four planes averaging 40-50 loads of up to 10 people a day on busy weekends. That's conceivably as many as 800 to 1,000 jumpers.

An indictment charges Mayfield with "unlawfully and recklessly" causing the deaths of Lee Perry Sr. in February 1994 and Charles Schaefer in September 1993.

Schaefer, 33, a veteran skydiver, was killed when his parachute failed to open over the Sheridan Airport. He had made 53 recreational jumps, and his family said he was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division.

Mayfield's rigger license was revoked Feb. 18, 1994, after an FAA investigation of Schaefer's death. Investigators found that Mayfield had packed Schaefer's parachute with an automatic activating device that Mayfield knew had failed its last calibration test.

On Feb. 12, 1994, the 85-year-old Perry fell 4,200 feet to his death on his first jump when his main parachute failed to open.

Federal officials said in March that although Perry was a novice, he was given a parachute designed for experienced jumpers. When he jumped, the static line linking

him to the plane failed to deploy the main chute and a line that would have automatically opened his emergency chute was missing.

The U.S. Parachute Association had suspended Mayfield's instructor's rating a month before Perry's death.

In May, Mayfield was sentenced to prison for repeatedly flying airplanes without a valid pilot's license. He served his sentence at the Federal Correctional Institute adjacent to his flying center in Sheridan.

"I could see the airport and see what was going on," Mayfield said. "It was tough."

Mayfield was released in October after agreeing to stop doing anything related to aviation. Now, he says he's trying to sell his equipment.

"I don't know what I'm going to do for a living," he said. "I've spent the last 30 years doing something the FAA won't let me go back into."

Whatever Mayfield does, neighbor Jerry Purvis hopes the aviator doesn't do it in Sheridan. Purvis said he endured 20 years of parachutists damaging his fences and dropping clips, rip-cords, knives and other gear that ended up in his bales of hay, and sometimes his cattle.

"It's a mental strain all the time," Purvis says. "You can't concentrate on your daily work because you're constantly looking up to see what's going to fall on you."

The next court hearing is March 6, and Purvis says he plans to keep a close eye on the court case as it unfolds.

Seattle man helps untraditional couples make commitments

SEATTLE (AP) — Oh sure, Hamish Todd believes in that love-conquers-all business. He just wants to give it a little help.

To that end, the prolific poet laureate of Seattle's underground offers his latest venture: Hat and Boots Matrimonial Services.

Todd says he wants to assist those who (gulp!) want to make a commitment.

"That's a scary word to a lot of people," says Todd, 29. "But this thing is not about being scared at all."

It's about empowerment, he says.

"There are a lot of people out there who want to celebrate their commitment with their partner but don't associate it with the traditional form of marriage and its legal implications," Todd says.

"And there are others who can't be married legally because of their lifestyle, but still want to participate in a sanctioned ceremony."

That's where Hat and Boots steps in.

Todd's traveling matrimonial service is aimed at serving the needs of both same-sex couples and heterosexuals. He wants everyone to have the same opportunity to

celebrate commitment — there's that word again — even if their union doesn't fall under mainstream guidelines.

"There are so many people and different types of relationships out there that don't fit into the traditional systems," he says. "And frankly that's turned off a lot of people to the whole marriage process. What we're doing is a fresh alternative."

Aesthetically, the Hat and Boots experience is something akin to a nuclear meltdown at Graceland with Jack Kerouac at the controls.

Todd dons an outrageous tuxedo, complete with red-velvet heart iron-ons, and a modified frock. The "choir" is a portable stereo stocked with contemptible '70s disco hits and the pulpit is a makeshift stage decorated with kitschy Americana.

Todd also offers help with vows.

"Oh, I can improvise right along with them if they want," says spoken-word-smith Todd.

Spiritually, he says he wants to make it clear that modern relationships are a tenuous bargain between two people.

Happiness and companionship are the

bottom line, though the Hat and Boots ministries won't make any promises.

As an ordained minister with the Church of Universal Life, Todd can officially officiate for opposite-sex couples who present him with a marriage license.

Same-sex marriages are not legally recognized in the state of Washington and couples cannot be granted marriage licenses, but that doesn't diminish the ceremony.

"It's unfortunate that the state doesn't approve," says Todd. "But this isn't about the state approving. This is about making a pledge to another person and meaning it."

Hat and Boots makes its debut, appropriately enough, on Valentine's Day. The venue is the hyper-hip Crocodile Cafe and Todd had three takers lined up for the festivities: a lesbian couple; a straight couple that eloped but never had a ceremony; and a pair of twentysomethings motivated to take a step, just not THE step.

"My girlfriend wants to get married, but I think this suits me better," says Raymond Black, 22, of the latter pair. "Nothing is

guaranteed anymore so this is more realistic when it comes to life in the 90s."

Todd doesn't think his service will belittle the importance or reverence associated with marriage.

If anything, he says, it will expose more people to the process.

"It will show them that I can take this dreadfully serious," he says. "I'm even willing to give couples follow-up counseling, because I honestly want their marriages to succeed."

A divorced and self-proclaimed recovering Lothario might not be the first person one would look to for such guidance, but who's counting?

Todd and his girlfriend/partner Amy Carey say they'll travel wherever their services are needed — nightclubs, backyard parties or parking lots — and charge a meager \$25 for a wedding package that includes a photo.

By early summer, they plan to take their show on the road on a flatbed trailer. They may try the ultimate counterculture-entrepreneur fantasy — hooking up with the Lollapalooza Festival.

Woman charged with assault of 4-year-old son

SEATTLE (AP) — A Montana woman was charged Monday with first-degree assault of a child, accused of injecting fecal matter into the intravenous solution being administered to her hospitalized 4-year-old son.

Nashelle Lynn Wood, 24, of Columbia Falls, Mont., was held on \$150,000 bail. If released, prosecutors asked she have no contact with her son, Bradley, or with any other minors except in the presence of a responsible adult.

The boy was in good condition Monday, said Dean Forbes, spokesman for Children's Hospital and Medical Center.

When she was arrested Wednesday at Children's, Wood had a syringe, a needle protector and needle, and four empty needle protectors in her jacket pocket.

"The syringe has been tested and found to contain bacteria

consistent with feces," according to charging papers from the King County prosecutor's office. A full evaluation was under way.

"The needle has been found to contain E. coli bacteria," the papers said.

Authorities were called by doctors, who recognized possible evidence of Munchausen by proxy syndrome. In such cases, a parent does something to a child that requires medical attention for the child. The action, apparently taken out of a need for attention from doctors, may put the child at risk of death or serious injury.

Wood brought her son, Bradley, to the hospital Jan. 29 for treatment of a Tylenol overdose.

At the hospital, he developed a serious infection unrelated to the overdose, according to court

documents filed by Deputy Prosecutor Kristin Richardson.

Urine samples indicated the presence of E. coli bacteria in the boy's bloodstream. The child almost died, and underwent surgery to remove his gall bladder, court papers said.

Every time he appeared to be recovering, doctors would find renewed infection despite use of a wide range of antibiotics.

On Feb. 8, two doctors and Wood were in the child's hospital room when he asked his mother three times to show doctors what she had behind her back. She denied she had anything.

When she left the room, doctors asked Bradley what she had been hiding behind her back.

"The child replied that it was the 'thing you give shots with,'" Richardson wrote in charging papers.

In response to questions, Bradley said his mother had been using the device to give him medicine by injecting it into the IV tubing.

Hospital officials called police.

Wood had told nurses the Tylenol overdose was the result of the child's suicide attempt, raising doctors' suspicions. She also reported a long history of illness for the boy, including a cold medicine overdose at age 2.

Doctors had started to consider the possibility that Wood might be injecting feces into Bradley's IV. E. coli bacteria shows naturally only in the bowel and should not show in the blood, charging papers said.

Parents in such cases often have some medical training, according to charging papers. Wood, who is unemployed, has said she had training as a certified nurse assistant.

15% Student Discount
IHOP
Good only at these locations:
Broadway • Gateway
345-9976 • 747-1024
Must present UO or LCC student I.D.
Not valid with other discounts.
Valid for I.D. holder only.

WUNDERLAND
5th STREET PUBLIC MARKET
VIDEO GAMES
683-8464
VIDEO ADVENTURE
VALLEY RIVER PLAZA
NEAR THE CINEMAS
1011 Valley River Way • 344-2822

SELF SERVICE COPIES
ALL DAY EVERY DAY
3¢
The Copy Shop
Open Mon-Fri 8-8 Sat 11-6
Between Patterson & Ferry - Right on 13th
485-6253

DIM SUM
Every Sun 11 am - 3 pm
This Week's Special
Phad Thai \$4.75
CHINA BLUE RESTAURANT
Try our dinners, too!
879 E. 13th • Upstairs, Next to UO Bookstore • 343-2832 • Take Out Available

ALL WELCOME
Introduction to Ruhani Satsang Science of Spirituality
• short video
• brief meditation instructions
• one-half hour meditation
Thursday, Feb. 16, noon-1:00
EMU Century Room B
For additional info. 345-8644

Study Japanese this Summer!
Intensive six-week program at Lewis & Clark College in Portland July 18-Aug 27. Study Japanese language (all levels) & culture courses in economics, literature and history. Earn 12 hours of UO credit while living and studying with Japanese students. Outdoor wilderness trip included. Prior language study not required. Financial aid, scholarships available.
Oregon/Japan Summer Program
222 SW Columbia, Suite 1750
Portland, OR 97201
1-800-823-7938 opleannb@aol.com