

# Skydiving: 'Quiet and calm' flight or really fast fall?

■ **JUMP:** Urban Moore, owner of Eugene Skydivers, took Emerald editor Thom Schoenborn for a fast ride

By Thom Schoenborn  
Managing Editor

As I was pushed from the airplane at 10,000 feet, my heart leapt into my throat. I flailed for three or four seconds, reaching madly with my hands for something to break my fall. The wind (along with the rapidly changing pressure) deafened me. Not that it mattered. I didn't scream. I thrust my hips forward into an arched position, and I flew.

Well, technically, I fell. I fell fast. No, I fell *really* fast. I could feel my face flapping in the wind. Urban Moore, the owner of Eugene Skydivers and my tandem partner, warned me not to breathe through my mouth before we jumped. I really should have listened. Breathing at 110 m.p.h. feels like a pumping a bellows into your lungs.

About 30 seconds later, the parachute opened. I won't say it was a terribly pleasant sensation (don't wear boxer shorts), but once we stopped accelerating and began floating, it was one of the most serene moments of my life.

On the ride down, Moore let me

## Reporter's NOTEBOOK

do some turns. We also practiced the landing flare-movement. To land, the parachutist pulls down hard on the two steering toggles. This pulls in the edges and rear of the canopy, acting like a big brake. We seemed to almost stop in the air.

I should mention at this point that during my brief tour of duty with the University ROTC program, I went to airborne school. The landings with military chutes are summed up neatly in the analogy, "ten pounds of shit in a five-pound bag." You hit the ground *REALLY* hard, kind of like jumping off the top of your house. Each parachutist has five points of contact. I think I only had three: feet-ass-head.

Moore assured me this landing would be much softer. While it wasn't a hard landing, it wasn't the jump off the curb I expected, either. I tripped and fell. So much for looking cool.

Moore is one of those people who, at age 49, has probably never stopped playing. He still doesn't know what he'll do when he grows up. I suggested he'll proba-

bly be dead by then, so why both- er worrying about it.

After graduating from the University in the 1970s, Moore searched around for something to do. He ended up enlisting in the Army during the Vietnam conflict. He proudly proclaims "no Northern Vietnamese Army soldier crossed that German border I guarded." During his three years there, Moore acted in official capacity as the assistant Non-Commissioned Officer of the Ski Patrol.

After being discharged, Moore went to Idaho, where he continued not to grow up. His jobs included professional skier (ranked 12th in the nation in 1978) soccer coach, trap shooter and hunting instructor.

Then, about 10 years ago, he got into sky diving. It is, as he puts it, his addiction. Since then, he earned the ranks of instructor of tandem and static line jumping from the United States Parachute Association. He counts among his most memorable jumps one from a B-17, a World War II bomber.

"You see the war footage on television, and there would be stuff flying around all over the place in those planes," Moore said. "You look at the stuff the enemy shot at them, and after having been in one, it's amazing they didn't all go down. You could

shoot a .22 at a B-17, and the bullet would go through both sides."

Another memorable jump for Moore was from a glider in Cottage Grove.

"I sat on the strut of the wing [before jumping] with the door open and talked in a normal voice to the pilot," Moore said. "It was so quiet and calm."

Quiet and calm are probably not the best words to use describing some of the things Moore has done it the air. He described something to me called "para-bungee." I don't know if this has been done anywhere else in the world, but he says it was invented here.

To para-bungee, two skydivers attach a 100-foot bungee cord to each other. Upon exiting the plane, one pulls his chute while the other bounces beneath. When the bouncing ends, the skydiver with his chute open begins to execute tight turns while the other swings around him. When the swinging skydiver attains a rather high circular velocity and the cord is stretched out, the swinging skydiver releases from the bungee cord and flies off.

This is called fun.

It isn't all fun, though. A lot of checking and rechecking goes into each jump. Each skydiver packs his own chute, and a professional rigger packs the reserve

chute every 120 days, even if it hasn't been used.

"The type of people that jump are the people you would want in a foxhole with you," Moore said. "They're dependable. They have to be. You count on every person you jump with." Skydivers have to be extremely aware of their surroundings as they plummet towards the earth. Mid-air collisions with other people can be bad, and a mid-air collisions with airplanes can be even worse.

"Two years ago, a skydiver clipped the vertical rudder of a Piper with his ankle," Moore said. "The plane lost control, crashed and killed four people. The skydiver had a swollen ankle."

Dangers aside, skydiving is pretty expensive to really get into. Moore estimates a used parachute costs about \$800 and lessons to be able to jump on your own cost another \$400-500. After that though, the cost drops dramatically. Prices are usually about \$1 per thousand feet high, plus \$2 to get on the airplane.

Tandem jumps for the weekend warrior are \$110 for students. That includes about an hour of ground school, the chute and the ride. The price of the courage (or foolishness) to do it, though, depends on the jumper.



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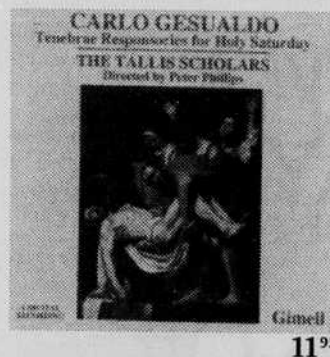


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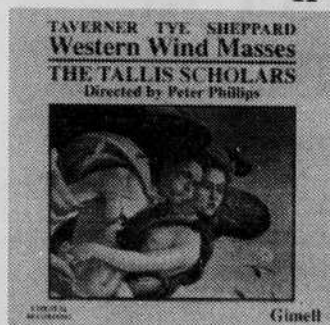
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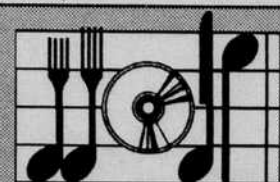


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