

Parachute-Jumping Craze Sweeping Country

Sky Divers Club In Valley Trains All New Members

With the advent of spring, a strange breed of men called the Rogue Valley Sky Divers take to the air and drop slowly to the ground.

These men have been caught up in a parachute-jumping craze which is currently sweeping the country. To the person who doesn't know what it's all about, parachute-jumping seems as insane and senseless as mountain-climbing.

But, not to those who do it. To these dare-devil sportsmen, sky-diving makes just as much sense as fishing, playing baseball or water-skiing.

Attracts Only A Few

By its very nature, a sky-diving club, like a mountain-climbing club, attracts only a few courageous souls. The current membership of the Rogue Valley Sky Divers is eight, all of whom are male and between the ages of 18 and 25.

At first glance, sky-diving would seem to be a dangerous sport. But, in the three years that the Sky Divers have been jumping, there have been no serious accidents.

The membership of the club is not limited. Lee Gossett, 22, of Eagle Point, who along with his brother Morton, 23, organized the group, said new members are always welcome.

There is no cost to join, and the club will provide complete training before letting you tumble from an airplane into the void of space. It will even help arrange for the purchase of an Air Force parachute and other needed equipment, such as a football helmet and heavy boots.

Receives Ground Training

Lee Gossett, who also jumps for a livelihood as a smoke-jumper for the forest service, says the new member receives two or three weeks of ground training prior to actual jumping. He points out that the greatest danger to the jumper is lack of proper training.

Gossett, a licensed "rigger," or chute packer, is himself authorized to provide instruction.

During ground training, the new member will see how a chute is packed and how it works, in addition to learning how to operate it. He is also trained in landing and jumping procedures, and what measures can be taken in case of an emergency.

Emergency Chute

A jumper wears two parachutes—one on his back as his main chute, and one on his chest as an emergency chute.

When the member has completed his ground training he is then ready to try "static" jumping. This means that the rip-cord which opens the chute is automatically pulled upon leaving the airplane. Static jumps are made from a height of approximately 2,000 feet.

When the new jumper has completed five successful static jumps, he is then ready for free-fall jumps. This means that he can pull his rip-cord at any time he pleases during his descent. Gossett said experienced jumpers sometimes go as high as 10,000 feet and over.

Two Selected Spots

The Rogue Valley Sky Divers do their jumping on Sunday afternoons at two selected spots in the valley—the Ashland airport and near the Old Stage rd. west of Central Point. They either rent airplanes or use one belonging to one of the members.

When the sky-divers jump they usually aim for a large piece of canopy which has been placed on the ground. Parachutes are maneuvered by pulling on one side of the chute or the other during descent.

Gossett said the club plans on having contests with other sky-diving groups in the Pacific northwest. He said he knows of similar clubs in Portland and Corvallis and in many other cities throughout the country.

While sky-diving is attracting more and more converts all the time, it would appear to be a safe bet that most sportsmen will continue to assert themselves in activities which are a little closer to terra firma.

Sky diving is another example of the diversity of outdoor sports and activities that are available to residents of the Rogue valley.

Thorough Watering Best for Gardens

Irrigation is an important factor in the Rogue valley, whether for commercial purposes or for the homeowner.

The two types of irrigation are frequent, light irrigation, and less frequent, thorough watering, according to Clifford B. Cordy, county agent.

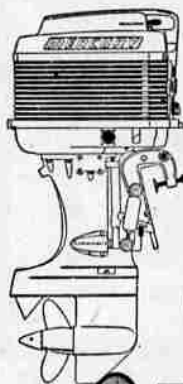
Thorough irrigation, one or two weeks apart, is best for most plants. More frequent irrigations are desirable for young plants. Cordy recommended applying one inch of water every five days during hot weather. The amount can be determined by placing a can midway in the sprinkled area until the water is one inch deep.

Underwatering is common when sprinklers are used, he said.



READY FOR TAKE-OFF—Three members of the Rogue Valley Sky Divers and their pilot prepare for take-off at the Ashland airport prior to one of their recent parachute-jumps. While some people do it only in case of emergency, these men jump from airplanes for the fun of it. They are (left) pilot Ron Maxwell, Ashland; Mort Gossett, Eagle Point; Ed Logan, Central Point; and Dick Zediker, Talent.

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