FALLING FOR A SPORT

50 YEARS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SKYDIVING

STEVE SWANN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks for help in gathering this history:

Colin Parsons
Geoff Cooling
Greg Smith
Trevor Burns
Jeremy Browne
Curtis Morton

All care has been taken in compiling this book but inevitably there are gaps. Jumpers' memories reaching back as far as 50 years are not always totally reliable. SASPC minutes for the period 1983 to 1992 have not been located and there were limits on how many people could be interviewed or who were prepared to offer their recollections. The author obviously doesn't personally know everyone who might have contributed – and if you have been overlooked, my apologies. This is however, a commemorative slice of the sport's colourful history. I've given it my best shot.

FRONT COVER PHOTOS

Ben Barclay, Helen Hayes, Paul Newberry and Darren McInerney over Langhorne Creek, 2008

Nicole Dowden takes a tandem passenger, 2011

Ted Harrison demonstrates his hand-held camera rig, 1962

Military surplus C9 'cheapo' canopy driven by Steve Swann heads for the Lower Light pit, 1969.

BACK COVER

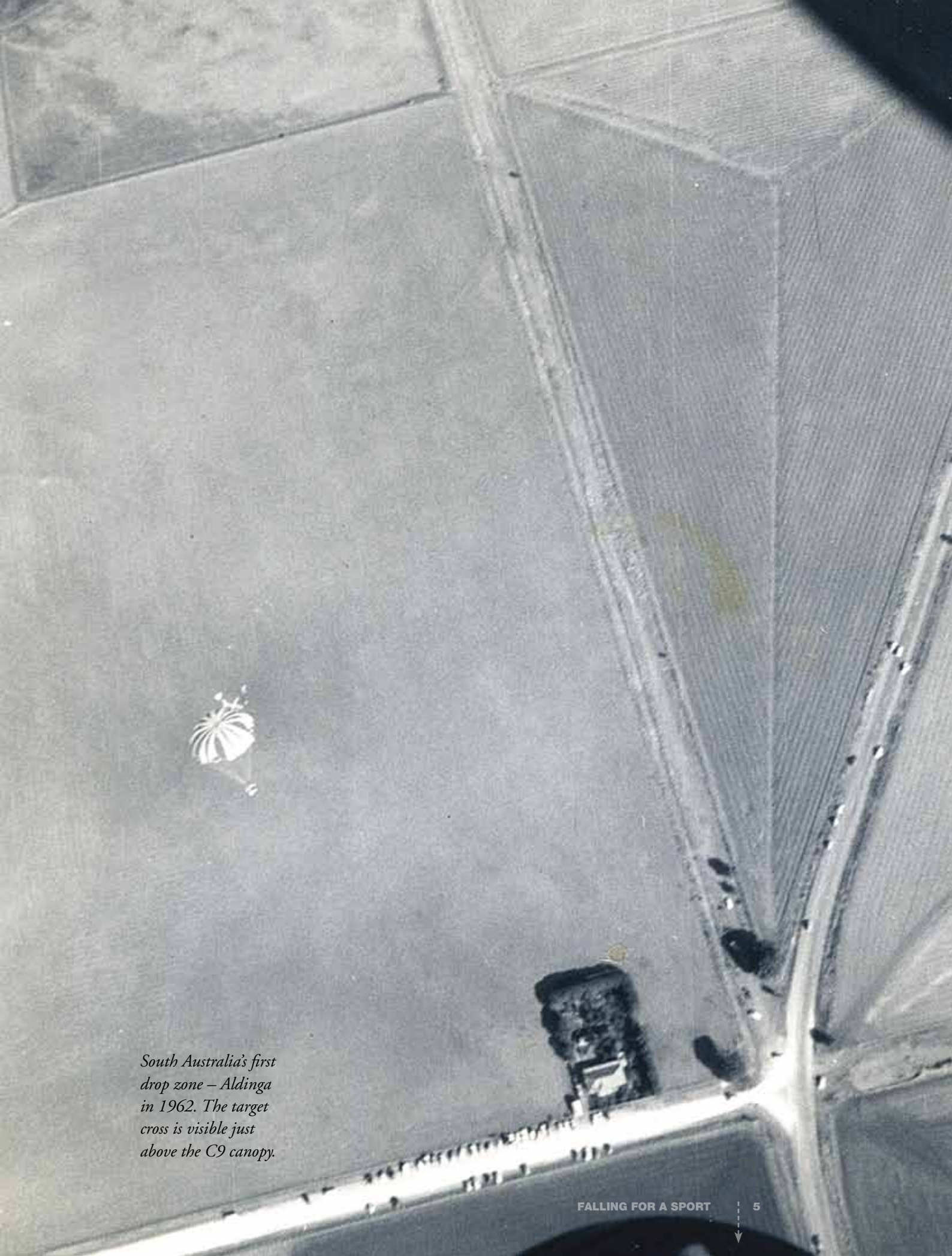
Al and Justin Gray exit over Lower Light, 2011.

The great photographs in this book have come from numerous sources, mostly resurrected from treasured old photo albums. In many cases the identity of the original photographer is unknown, so individual photos have not been credited. But all those who can be identified as contributing photographers are listed below, together with those who were interviewed or provided historical background. My apologies to anyone who has been overlooked.

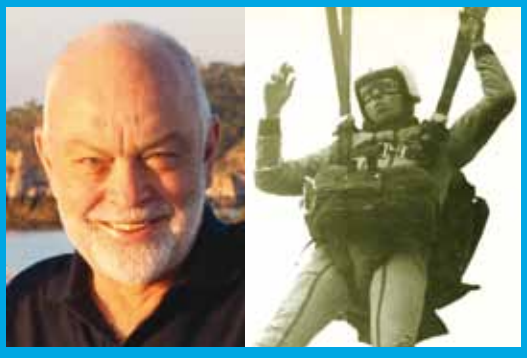
Vic Balfour
Ben Barclay
Graham Barrington
Steve Boldog
Leo Brogan
Brian Brown
Sue Brown
Max Chaplin jnr
Bob Cunningham
Neil Davis
Jason Ellul
Mick Flanigan
David Formby
Mike Goodwin
Alan Gray
Justin Gray
Ted Harrison
Mike Henderson
Mike Hughes
Bernie Keenan
Laurie McAvoy
Allan McEwen
Ted McWatters
Travis Naughton
Mick O'Brien
Dave Parsons
Adam Pemble
Keith Perrott
Graeme Ricketts
Glyn Roberts
Anthony Smith
Kevin Taylor
Peter Waller
Ken Walter
Ted McWatters
Grant Weckert
Andy Weir
Vernon Wells
Cathy Williamson
Erika Wiszniewski
Braydon Wynne

Donna Berthelsen and Narelle Hall (for interviews in the Australian Parachute Federation's oral history project, recorded in the late 1990s.

The Advertiser, The News, The Sunday Mail



South Australia's first drop zone – Aldinga in 1962. The target cross is visible just above the C9 canopy.



THE AUTHOR

Steve Swann started jumping at Lower Light in 1969, aged 19, when parachuting was still a fringe activity with only a handful of devotees – he was the only student on his course, run by Colin Parsons.

A rated instructor, senior instructor and, briefly, CI of the South Australian Sport Parachute Club in the 1970s, before being turfed out for daring to embrace the idea of commercialism (actually being paid to instruct), Steve retains a soft spot for the SASPC.

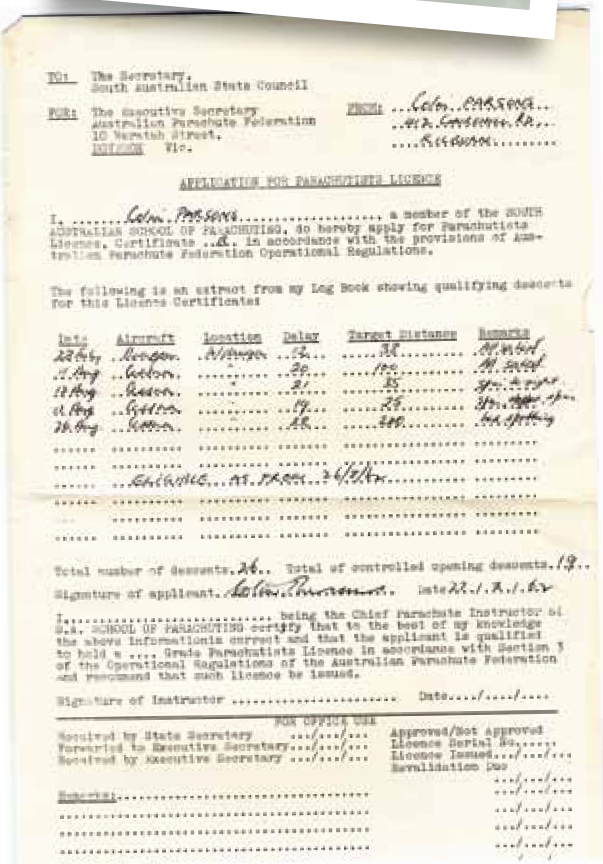
He was editor and publisher of *Australian Skydiver* magazine in the mid 1970s and counts himself lucky to have come into skydiving at a pivotal time – instructed, mentored and inspired by the sport's pioneers, jumping round canopies, and young enough to be in it at the birth of ram airs and CRW.

He returned to parachuting in 2008 after an absence of 22 years, jumping from Al Gray's Cessna 182 at his old stomping ground over George Quigley's farm at Lower Light.

Dedicated to the memory of

Bernie Keenan

1945 - 2011



TO: The Secretary,
South Australian State Council

FOR: The Executive Secretary
Australian Parachute Federation
10 Waratah Street,
[illegible] Vic.

FROM: Colin PARSONS
[illegible]
[illegible]

APPLICATION FOR PARACHUTISTS LICENCE

I, Colin PARSONS, a member of the SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING, do hereby apply for Parachutists Licence, Certificate ..B.. in accordance with the provisions of Australian Parachute Federation Operational Regulations.

The following is an extract from my Log Book showing qualifying descents for this Licence Certificate:

Date	Aircraft	Location	Delay	Target Distance	Remarks
22 Feb	[illegible]	Aldinga	12	38	[illegible]
[illegible] Aug	[illegible]	"	20	100	[illegible]
12 Aug	[illegible]	"	21	35	[illegible]
[illegible] Aug	[illegible]	"	19	25	[illegible]
26 Aug	[illegible]	"	22	200	[illegible]

ELIGIBLE AS FROM [illegible]

Total number of descents. 26 .. Total of controlled opening descents. 19 ..

Signature of applicant. [signature] Date 22./.?./.62

I, ... being the Chief Parachute Instructor of S.A. SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING certify that to the best of my knowledge the above information is correct and that the applicant is qualified to hold a .... Grade Parachutists Licence in accordance with Section 3 of the Operational Regulations of the Australian Parachute Federation and recommend that such licence be issued.

Signature of Instructor .... Date..../..../....

FOR OFFICE USE

Received by State Secretary .../.../...
Forwarded to Executive Secretary .../.../...
Received by Executive Secretary .../.../...

Approved/Not approved
Licence Serial No.......
Licence Issued.../.../...
Revalidation Due
.../.../...

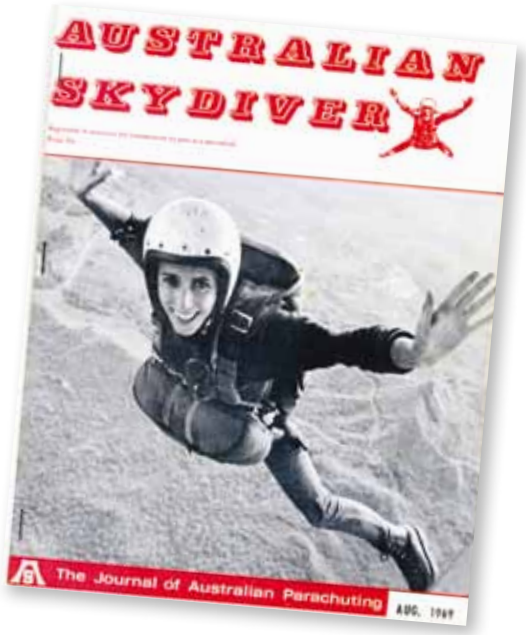
Remarks:......................................

Year	Event
1961	SA SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING FORMS AT PARAFIELD, **FIRST JUMPS AT ALDINGA ON NOVEMBER 19**
1962	South Coast Skydivers breaks away, jumping at Aldinga. Freelance Skydivers forms. SA jumpers Kathy Henderson and Don West in the first Australian team for a World Meet, competing in the US. First baton pass – Ted Harrison and Kathy Henderson. First lipstick pass in the British Commonwealth. Cathy Williamson and Bill Molloy at Aldinga.
1963	SA hosts 4th Australian Parachute Championships at Goolwa. SA's first fatality. Alf White dies at the Goolwa meet. Aldinga airspace shutdown by DCA. South Coast Skydivers moves to the first of two DZs at Mallala.

1963

Spencer Gulf Skydivers forms under Trevor Burns, jumping at Whyalla and Port Pirie.

SA School of Parachuting becomes the SA Sport Parachute Club, jumping at Mallala.



1964

SA jumper and Australian champion Don West dies at Mallala.

Susi Wright, Cathy Williamson and Brian Brown make the Australian Team for the 7th World Meet in Germany.

1965

Student Helmut Stech dies at Mallala.

Australian Championships held at Port Pirie.

1966

Australian Skydiver magazine moves to SA, published by Trevor Burns and later by Steve Swann and Bernie Keenan.

1967

South Coast Skydivers moves to Lower Light.

1968

Max Chaplin dies on a para scuba demo jump off West Beach.

SOUTH COAST SKYDIVERS AND SASPC AMALGAMATE AS THE **SA SPORT PARACHUTE CLUB**.

1970

DEVELOPMENT AT **LOWER LIGHT** TAKES OFF. PACKING SHED & SEAWEED PIT BUILT.

1971

Work starts on besser brick clubhouse, now known as the kitchen.

Visiting Sydney jumper Julie West dies at Lower Light.

Spencer Gulf Skydivers shuts down.

1972

First metropolitan sport parachute demo – Golden Arrows team jumps into West Lakes display village.

Visiting Sydney jumper Stephen Palmer dies at Lower Light.

Club house completed and new seaweed pit installed.

First landings on the packing lawn.

1973

Six-place Dornier 27 joins C172 UEV as a regular jumpship.

SA's first ram air jump – a dead centre by Col Parsons on his 800th jump.

1973

East Coast Skydivers arrive from interstate and set up a commercial operation at Sanderston.

1974

Terry Daniels dies at Sanderston.

East Coast Skydivers shuts down.

1977

Parachute and Skydiving Centre of SA established at Lower Light by Steve Swann and Bernie Keenan.

1978

PSCSA shuts down when Bernie Keenan moves to Sydney.

A group of 10 SASPC club members set up Starlift Pty Ltd to buy VH-DON.

Hygiene arrives at Lower Light.
Work starts on the toilet block.

FIRST SA NINE-WAY.
FORMATED LOAD WITH STEVE BOLDOG, MIKE KUPITZ, DAVE RAGGAT, HERB KAISERSEDER, MIKE GOODWIN, MIKE HENDERSON, MIKE HUGHES, VIC BALFOUR AND NEIL DAVIS.

Skysport begins operating commercially within the SASPC.

1979

First CRW bi-planes in SA. Mike Hughes and Andy Weir, Dave Raggat and Ian Wark.

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST QUADRA PLANE BUILT AT LOWER LIGHT. MIKE HUGHES, ANDY WEIR, IAN WARK, RAY CURRIE.

SASPC buys VH-DON from Starlift.

First night jumps in SA. Col Parsons, Steve Boldog, Vic Balfour, Mike Goodwin, Steve Smith, Ron Thomas, Herbie Kaiserseder and Joanne Kielbasa.

1980

Skysport Parachute Centre sets up at Lower Light as a separate entity from the club.

SA's first night 4 way RW, Vic Balfour, Steve Boldog, Neil Davis and Milo Sulda.

Lance Harrison dies age 65 of heart failure while under canopy.

Vic Balfour becomes SASPC chief instructor.

1981

SA's first 5-plane built in CRW: Ian Wark, Mike Goodwin, Steve Swann, Steve Boldog and Neil Davis.

SA first CRW team at Corowa Nationals – Quadratic: Mike Goodwin, Neil Davis, Jeremy Browne and Joanne Kielbasa.

SA first 10 way RW. Jo King, Ralf Jaeger, Allan Potter, Mike Goodwin, Phil Robins, Paul Barbaro, Neil Davis, Dave Raggat, Vic Balfour, Harry Haamers.

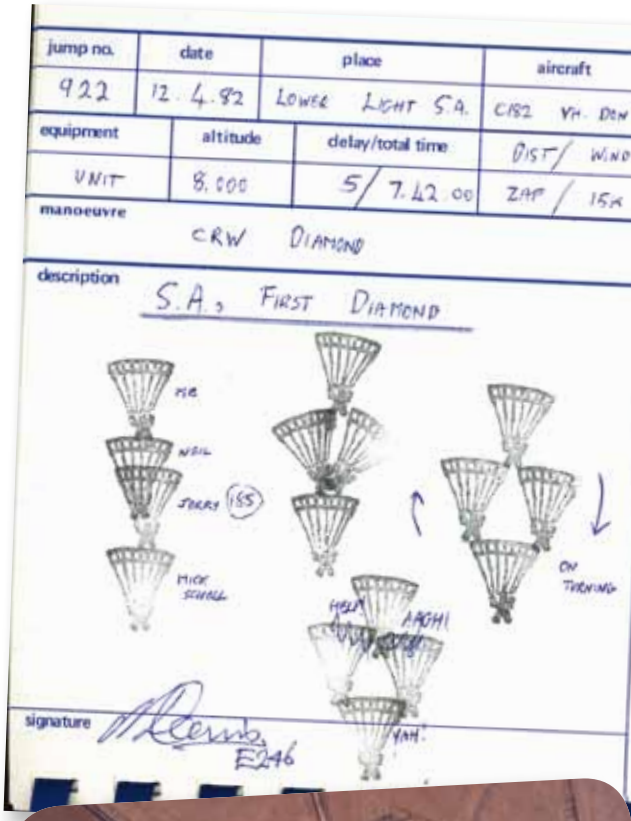
1982

First 6, 7 and 8 CRW stacks built. Jamestown. Louise Davis, Graham Barrington, Keith Perrot, Col Parsons, Mike Goodwin, Kim Williams, Neil Davis, Reg Eastaugh.

First night CRW – Neil Davis, Mike Goodwin and Jeremy Browne.

SA'S FIRST CRW DIAMOND: MIKE GOODWIN, JEREMY BROWNE, MICK SCHELL AND NEIL DAVIS

SA's first 10-man star built – Lower Light. Dave Raggatt, Vic Balfour, Mike Goodwin, Laura Davies, Lyn Driver, Neil Davis, Athol, Steve McMillan, Phil Robins and Jon McWilliam.



1983

Skysport's 180 SLT ground loops with a full load on board while taxiing to take off in the southern paddock.

Pat Bennett dies with 138 jumps.

1985

First Grand Prix demonstration jumps.

First 9 CRW at Lower Light. Mike Goodwin, Graham Barrington, Paul Castle, Keith Perrott, Louise Davis, Steve McMillan, Reg Eastaugh, Neil Davis and Steve Boldog.

1986

Skysport sold to Steve Boldog, Hagen Stehr and Chris Jay and moves to Strathalbyn.

Southern Skydivers forms, run by Vic Balfour.

1986

Accelerated freefall training introduced.

Football Park display jump fatality.

1987

Blue Skies forms at Lower Light. Greg Smith, Kevin Taylor and Gavin Nosworthy running tandems.

Southern Skydivers ceases operation.

Skysport ownership changes. Jeremy Browne joins Steve and Jan Boldog in partnership.

1988

Skysport Parachute Centre sold to members of the Skyspsort Parachute Club.

1990

SA Skydiving launched by Greg Smith at Lower Light.

Grand Prix seminars start at Lower Light.

1991

Skysport becomes Skydive Adelaide.

1993

George Quigley sells the Lower Light paddock to SASPC.

Pilatus Porter VH-MKT bought by Keith Briggs, Jon McWilliam and Mark Twigden.

Britten-Norman Islander VH-OBJ bought by Jeremy Browne for Strathalbyn DZ.

1994

Tony McAvoy takes over as CI at Skydive Adelaide with Laurie McAvoy.

1996

Greg Smith buys a C206 and moves SA Skydiving from Lower Light to Pallamana airfield.

1997 SA Skydiving moves to Rollo Hines' farm.

1998 Ralph Ford becomes CI and takes over Skydive Adelaide.

1999 Jan Honeyman becomes CI for SASPC at Lower Light.

Jan and Mick Honeyman move to Monarto with Greg Smith and operate tandems as Pilgrims Skydivers.

2000 Skydive Adelaide moves from Strathalbyn to Goolwa.

Graeme Godding CI becomes for SASPC at Lower Light.

Alan Gray buys VH-DNZ and bases it at Lower Light

2001

SASPC outsources operations to Geoff Cooling's Adventure Air at Lower Light with Al Gray as CI.

2003

Wingsuiting arrives at Lower Light, introduced by Erno Kaikkennan.

2004

VH-DON sold to Pete Lonnon and goes to WA.

Skydive Adelaide shuts down at Goolwa and sells out to Greg Smith.

Al Gray moves to Monarto with DNZ and takes over running Skydive Adelaide alongside Greg Smith's SA Skydiving.

2006

Al Gray moves back to Lower Light with DNZ and commences Adelaide Tandem Skydiving.

Geoff Cooling sells Adventure Air to Mark Gazley, who moves to Goolwa with VH-CDN.

2007

Greg Smith buys land out of Langhorne Creek and sets up a new DZ for SA Skydiving.

2008

Dale Elliot, Australia's first paraplegic skydiver jumps at Lower Light.

2009

SA jumpers Dale Butterworth, Al Gray and Dean Barrowcliffe take part in a new Australian record 26-way CRW diamond. And the next morning Dale and Dean are in the latest 36 way diamond record.

2010

SA jumpers Ben Barclay, Al Gray and Dale Butterworth in Australian record 105, 109 and 112 ways over Perris Valley, California.

2011

SKYDIVING'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED WITH A REUNION THE ROYAL ADELAIDE GOLF CLUB, GRANGE, AND A 4-DAY BOOGIE AT LOWER LIGHT.

GETTING IT OFF THE GROUND
THE BIRTH OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SKYDIVING

A chance 1961 meeting in a Hindley Street furniture store was the unlikely catalyst for the birth of sport parachuting in South Australia.

Ted Harrison, a young Adelaide newspaper reporter and part-time 'weekend warrior' with the Army Reserve, then known as the Citizens' Military Force, had only recently completed a static line parachute course. Pleased with his novel achievement, Ted took to wearing a modest lapel badge issued by the GQ parachute company.

It wasn't something the average man in the street would have recognised but it was spotted by a genuine World War 11 parachute veteran – the furniture salesman. And it was he who ignited Ted's interest in turning what was then still seen as a military-only activity into a brand new sport.

Even though he wasn't a war veteran, Ted was invited to a meeting of the Paratroopers' Association in a small North Adelaide hall. It was a gathering of former military jumpers – paratroopers, commandos and special forces. It was only 15 years since the end of the War, so experience and memories were still fresh.

The idea of forming a club of parachutists who jumped simply for fun emerged over a few beers and Ted used his newspaper contacts to try to drum up interest from the public.

A brief article in the *Sunday Mail* drew an incredible response. It invited anyone interested in forming a parachute club to show up at Parafield Airport on the following Sunday afternoon. About 150 people arrived. "Magic, absolutely magic – all these people came who wanted to become parachutists," Ted recalled later.

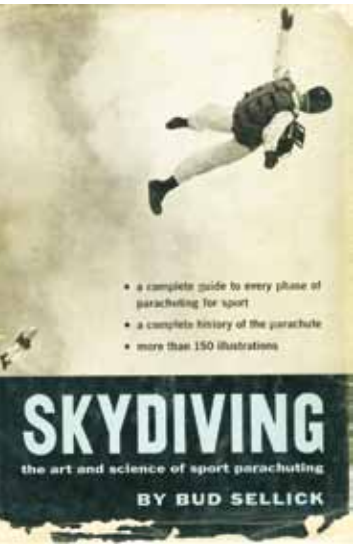
The gathering, in a hangar of the Royal Aero Club, was the launching pad for the South Australian School of Parachuting, an organisation which was to spawn generations of local skydivers. But it had a long gestation. Despite all of the enthusiasm, getting hold of suitable gear to actually jump was a major problem.

The would-be parachutists had a three-month wait for equipment to arrive from overseas. It was a time of intense, military style training – what else could they do to fill the time and maintain interest among the group?

"We used to meet at Parafield every Sunday morning for three or four hours," says Colin Parsons, one of the first and the most enduring of SA parachutists – he was still at it 45 years later.

"Amongst other things, we learnt how to do parachute landing rolls off a ramp which went up about 3 feet off the ground. We got so bored with training that we had contests to see who could run up the ramp at full pelt and leap the furthest through the air and then do a landing roll on to the bare ground."

Sunday morning training always resulted in bruised hips on both sides and no skin on the elbows but the result was that everybody in those days could certainly do a good landing roll.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE
South Australian School of Parachuting founder Ted Harrison and a copy of the Bud Sellick book 'Skydiving', imported from the United States and which helped educate SA's first parachutists.

While Ted Harrison was undeniably the driving force behind the fledgling organisation, he was hardly an experienced parachutist.

His CMF training meant he had logged just eight jumps – no freefalls, one night jump and all of them static lines out of military aircraft from 1,000 feet or lower – and none of them with a reserve, as was the Army practice in those days.

All of which meant the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) would not accept him as chief instructor. In fact, the bureaucrats were extremely wary of these new aviation arrivals. This was before the rise of the Australian Parachute Federation and control of the developing sport was in the hands of government employees who had no idea of what it was all about – let alone experience.

DCA rules of the time required that a chief instructor must have amassed 50 jumps.

Ted Harrison wasn't deterred. Returning from his Army parachuting course and pumped with enthusiasm, he searched around until he found Stan Kruszewski who said he was an old Polish Army paratrooper, from World War 11, with 400 jumps to his credit.

"Even though we only had his word for it that he was on old paratrooper and no documentary evidence, I definitely believed him," Ted recalled. "On one occasion, later, we jumped at Kooweerup in Victoria and Stan just went off the planet when he landed – he had a relapse and started gibbering in Polish and was very agitated and crying, because it had brought back memories of

TED HARRISON WOULD GO UP WITH A BOOK ABOUT FREEFALL PARACHUTING IN ONE HAND AND A PARACHUTE IN THE OTHER, AND WORK IT OUT AND COME BACK AND TELL US ALL HOW TO DO IT.

ABOVE *Claude Gillard about to board the Robby's Beaver for the successful 23,600 ft high altitude record jump at Virginia in 1961. The jump helped excite public interest in SA's brand new sport.*

what had happened in the War. They had a pretty bad time, the Poles." An obvious case, in hindsight, of post-traumatic stress syndrome.

"Stan was an absolute gentleman," said Ted. "But really he didn't offer much in the way of instruction, except his name and the fact that he said he had been an instructor in the Polish Army."

That was enough to keep the Adelaide bureaucrats happy though, as Ted discovered when he put forward Stan's name as the chief instructor for the new SA School of Parachuting.

"The Department had no bloody clue," Ted recalled. "They didn't know what to do because there had been no sport parachuting before this and they were a bit wary – but they accepted it because we had this initial affiliation with the Aero Club and we got away with it."

The group hired a hut close to the Aero Club buildings, another move which probably elevated its standing in the eyes of the DCA.

Col Parsons has no doubt it was Ted Harrison who drove things. "Stan became the 'paper' chief instructor who fulfilled the regulations and guided us through the static line stage, but Ted was the guy who had the ideas, read the books, stimulated the people and drove things forward," Col says.

"Stan had never done freefall. He had only done static line jumps, whereas Ted, as inexperienced as he was, would go up with a book about freefall parachuting in one hand and a parachute in the other, and work it out and come back and tell us all how to do it."

As the training dragged on during the lengthy wait for the imported gear to arrive, the trainees' interest was kept alive by the visit of four Victorian jumpers who had started sport jumping the previous year.

In September of 1961 these seasoned experts – Claude Gillard, Hans Magnusson, Bill Spark and Charl Stewart – crossed the border to set a new Australian height and freefall record at Virginia.

The jump, the State's first recorded civilian sport descent, didn't just excite the trainees – it was the perfect promotion to draw public attention to the sport's establishment in SA. Jumping from a turbo-charged De Havilland Beaver at 23,600 feet, they delayed their openings for 2 minutes and 6 seconds, a spectacular achievement for the time.

The long wait for gear also became too much for Ted and Stan. Some time in late 1961 they travelled across to Victoria to jump with Claude, Charl and Bill at Kooweerup, near Labertouche, to make their first sport jumps.

They must have been desperate! They got out of a Piper Tri-Pacer, a tiny four-place, strut-braced, high-wing aircraft.

"I landed in cowshit in a paddock with bulls and shit," Ted said. "That was absolutely, bloody magic. And all I can remember of my first sports jump – I was standing out on a wheel – it was just magic compared to the military bullshit with one chute. And now having a reserve as well – Oh! Christ Almighty!

"And jumping from twice as high – from 2,000 feet, which is a lot different to jumping from 800 feet. And, of course, they were just circular canopies, no slots, no steering lines.

MAX CHAPLIN,
PIONEER SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SKYDIVER, PICTURED AT MALLALA IN THE EARLY 1960s.

BELOW *The British X-Type Parachute.South Australia's first jumpers thumped in on this vintage gear, which was already a 20 year-old design in 1961.*

BOTTOM *A Dragon Rapide, of the type used for SA's historic first sport jumps at Aldinga in 1961.*

Brian Brown (left) and Ted Harrison in 1962. Overalls for jumpsuits and Ted is wearing a tie!.

PIONEER PARACHUTISTS

Among those who pioneered the sport in November 1961 and went on with it were Ted Harrison, Stan Kruszewski, Joe Mutch (never jumped), Charlie Horvath, Brian Brown, Trevor Burns, John Williamson, Cathy Williamson, Kathy Henderson, Susi Wright, Mary Summers, Joe Larkin, Max Chaplin, Jim Louth, Col Parsons, Graham Barrington, Bob Palmer, Don West, Michael Soph, Phil Edwards, Dave Shearer, Noel Comley and Sid Koronkevicius (pilot).

TOP *Sue Brown gets a gear check from Hans Magnusson with David Shearer in the background.*

ABOVE *Col Parsons gathers up his C9 'cheapo" after landing in the early 1960s.*

The only steering you had was to pull down on a riser or both risers to slow your speed."

Earlier, Ted had done his first jumps without the luxury of a reserve parachute, while still under the kindly influence of the military.

"It was only when we were getting briefed for our seventh jumps that the instructor Dutchy Hollands, who was a very famous Warrant Officer, went off and got the reserve. He came back and said 'this is a reserve parachute. This is what we use to train parachutists who are valuable!'

"And of course, it really added a lot of spice to jumping to not have a reserve, I'm telling you. We were all petrified and I defy anyone to say they weren't. Stand at the door and shit yourself. We never jumped with a reserve in the CMF and that's what made my first sport jumps such a breeze – because I had a bloody reserve. Oh, shit, nothing can happen to me – I'm fireproof, I've got a reserve."

Finally the wait was over. The first gear arrived – mostly British X-type static line rigs. And they were about as basic as they come. The X-type had originally been developed in 1940 and became the standard British Army rig throughout World War 11.

With a descent speed of around 7 metres per second, the 23 ft diameter canopies certainly gave the new jumpers cause to show off their hard-earned PLF (parachute landing fall) expertise.

The club's X-type chutes were mostly modified with a simple single blank gore – a section of canopy cut out to provide some very rudimentary drive.

But there were a couple of more sophisticated rigs in the first consignment – American-made B4 containers with 28 ft C9 canopies.

TRIGGER CLICKS FOR SKY-KISS PICTURES

'Chute falling thrills

The remarkable picture (below right) of two parachutists about to kiss while free-falling from 7,000 ft. at Aldinga last Sunday, was in itself a remarkable effort.

Eight shots

Rather dull

Flares out

THIS IS HOW PARACHUTIST Ted Harrison looks when he is taking one of his free fall sky-kiss pictures. The arrow points to his camera.

LATEST SKY KISS . . . Cathy Williamson and Hans Magnusson about to kiss 4,500 ft. above the fields of Aldinga.

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SUNDAY MAIL, Aug. 18, 1962—25

ABOVE *South Australian skydiving pioneer Ted Harrison demonstrates the hand-held camera he used in 1962 to capture Cathy Williamson (right) and Hans Magnusson making an historic lipstick pass over Aldinga. The story ran in the Sunday Mail. Ted, a journalist with The News, certainly wasn't photographed in freefall for the article. He would have posed on a bench in the photographers' room and then had the graphic artists hand paint out the inconvenient background.*

ABOVE *Drop zone facilities at South Coast Skydivers' Mallala operation in about 1965.*

"They were really pretty swish bits of gear, but they were only for the elite – Ted Harrison and the rest of them," says Trevor Burns, another of the originals who went on to big things in the new sport.

The first jumps were into a farm paddock near Aldinga, south of Adelaide – November 19, 1961. An old, fabric-skinned de Havilland Dragon Rapide biplane, originally developed in the 1930s as a short-haul British airliner, was the first jumpship.

It could carry six students per sortie and, with about 70 of the original 120 sticking it out through the long training and then turning up to jump, it took two full weekends to give them all their first leap.

One of those who jumped on the first day was Trevor Burns. He was the thirteenth, the first to exit on the third sortie.

"We were issued with log books that had enough space to record 25 jumps, which was considered more than enough," he says. "I don't think they envisaged that anyone would ever do more than 25 jumps.

"And our log books were numbered according to the order in which each student made their first jump. Even though I was number 13 my log book was numbered 12A. Our former World War 11 veteran instructors still harboured their old superstitions. No one was going to have the unlucky number!"

The Dragon, flown by Sid Koroncevicus, was rigged up military style, with a cable running down the length of the cabin for student static lines to be hooked up to.

Sue Brown (then known as Susi Wright) can't quite recall which load of the day she was on, but she thinks it was probably the second, as she had to get away on time to work as a trainee nurse back in Adelaide.

"I was the last out of the plane and I got stuck in the doorway because my parachute was on one side of the sill and my bum on the other and my arms weren't long enough to lift me over it. They're saying 'go, go, go' – I think they finally pushed me. As it happens, despite the delay I was the only one who landed on the 50-acre paddock, as the wind had come up to 15 knots, which is pretty stiff for a basic round canopy. Naturally I was dragged until a heap of the guys jumped on me."

Once the first batch of students had all made their first jumps, the ranks thinned out fairly quickly, with a hard core of 20 or 30 sticking with the sport.

They were a keen bunch. As operations gathered pace in 1962, the Dragon was usually flown down to Aldinga on Friday evening ready for an early start the next day.

But Trevor Burns recalls that even arriving at 7 am, in attempt to make the first sortie, was often futile. "The first time I arrived at the crack of dawn – first in, best dressed – I found Brian Brown, Dave Shearer, Susi Wright and a couple of others had slept in the aircraft overnight to claim first spots."

Another measure of their enthusiasm was the readiness to jump in winds of up to 20 knots or even more, not unusual on the south coast, close to the sea.

By now many of the jumpers who had become addicted to the sport had bought their own gear – usually the US Airforce B4 container with a 28 ft C9. These were usually

modified with a 5-TU or 7-TU steering modification. Basically, panels were cut at the periphery and rear of the circular canopies, in the shape of two adjoining, inverted 'T's and spanning either five or seven gores.

This made them much more responsive to steering from toggle input and, particularly in the case of the "radical, ultra hot" 7-TU, delivered reasonable forward drive.

But that forward speed of only about 5-7 knots was no match for a screaming 20 knot sea breeze.

"We were deliberately spotting for ploughed paddocks to reduce the risk of injury as we were dragged, rather than miss out on a jump," says Trev Burns.

But as the jumpers grew in confidence so did the inevitable personality clashes, and the original SA School of Parachuting split in June 1962. A breakaway group calling itself South Coast Skydivers formed under pioneer Max Chaplin, also jumping in the Aldinga area but at a different drop zone. "Max, of course, was a strong personality," Col Parsons recalls.

"Ted also was a strong character and, as is the way in parachuting, they couldn't get on together so Max formed a splinter group. I had friends in both groups so I jumped with both clubs."

Soon after, Brian Brown, Dave Shearer, Trevor Burns, Phil Edwards and Col Parsons formed a third group called Freelance Skydivers – its main aim was to do parachute displays. "We did the first demos that had been done in South Australia, in 1962," says Col. "We were just a few guys who were trying to become famous."

However, the split was the beginning of a slow decline for the SA School of Parachuting, which gradually dwindled in size. The sport's first two fatalities (in 1963 and 1964) and the attendant bad publicity contributed to the slowdown in what had been an amazing initial burst of public interest in the young sport. When Alf White died in April 1963 it was in front of a large public crowd gathered at Goolwa to watch the fourth Australian parachute championships. And Australian champion Don West's death in a relative work record bid the following year generated major headlines, further knocking confidence in the sport.

But a hardy core of regular jumpers battled on, with Max Chaplin's South Coast Skydivers reluctantly moving from the Aldinga area to Mallala when the old Department of Civil Aviation decided the southern airspace was no longer suitable for parachuting.

It was the tragic 1968 death of Max Chaplin, who drowned during a para scuba demonstration jump off the metropolitan coast at West Beach, which finally brought the disparate groups back together.

"After Max's death I was certainly the most senior parachutist in South Coast Skydivers, and Phil Edwards had become the guy who was more or less running the SA School of Parachuting," recalls Col Parsons. The two got together and decided that the conflict that had existed in the past wasn't necessary and tried to bring together the remnants of both groups.

"There weren't too many people jumping by then," says Col. "Because of rivalries and the fatalities, things had lapsed into the doldrums – and so we combined both groups into what we called South State Skydivers. But eventually, as things settled down, we resorted to the name of SA Sport Parachute Club."

It's a name that has endured ever since.

BELOW *Col Parsons kitted up in the early 1960s.*

THE 1960s

ABOVE *South Coast Skydivers members repacking on hessian mats at Mallala.*

RIGHT *Getting ready to board the Beaver at Virginia in 1962 (from left) Susi Wright, -?-, Mary Summers, Kathy Henderson, -?-,and Cathy Williamson.*

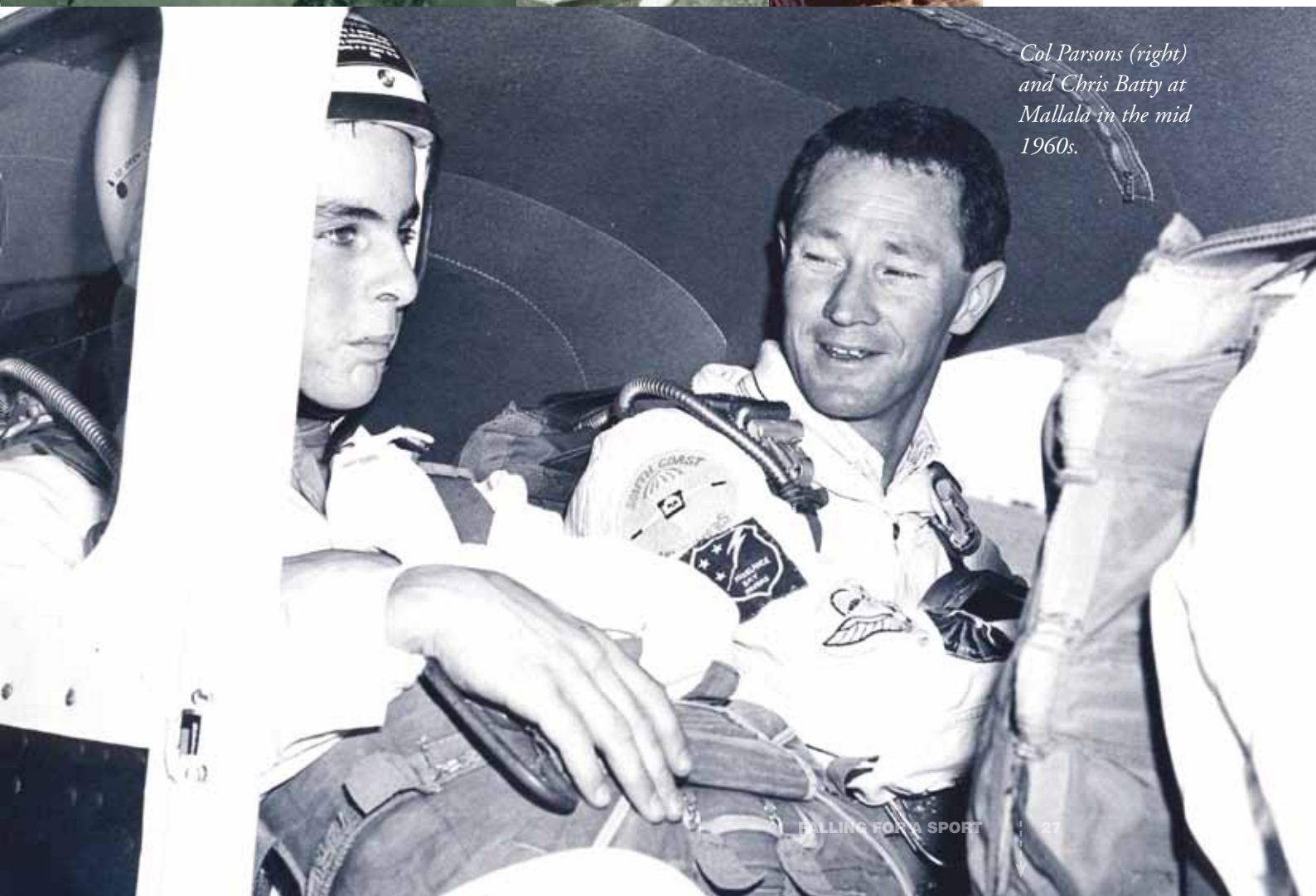
BELOW *Betty Chapman (centre), a key figure in South Coast Skydivers' day to day operations, pictured at Mallala.*

Trevor Burns makes his first terminal velocity drop at Aldinga on May 13, 1962.

TOP RIGHT *Debriefing: John Scott and Leo Brogan at Lower Light in the late 1960s. "If only we had another 1,000 feet."*

CENTRE LEFT *Kathy Henderson ready for a leap: 2-shot capewells, cross-pull ripcord and a stylish dashboard mounted on the reserve container. And the white boots!*

CENTRE RIGHT *Denise Brogan after her first jump at Mallala in the mid 1960s.*



Col Parsons (right) and Chris Batty at Mallala in the mid 1960s.

LEFT *Susi Wright, Cathy Williamson, Barbara Lewis and Beryl Blakemore on the "Ellenis" en route to the 1964 World Championships in Europe.*

LEFT *An SASPC function in the early 1960s, including Trevor Baker, Ted Harrison and Tony Mogridge (back row 2nd, 3rd and 4th from left), Mary Summers and Joe Larkin (back row, right), and Dave Prideaux (front row right).*

ABOVE *Max Chaplin and Rod Evans on the way up at Mallala in the 1960s.*

RIGHT *Brian Brown, Susi Wright, an unknown spectator, Beryl Blakemore and Phil Edwards at a demo at Edenhope, Victoria in February 1964.*

JOE LARKIN
THE 1960's LOVEABLE, LARRIKIN LEAPER


S.A. Mercenary Believed Killed In Congo

Parachutist

Retaliation

South Australian skydiving has always had its fair share of colourful characters. Joe Larkin, one of the 1961 originals, has to be right up there.

He was only around the new sport for a few short years but he left an indelible mark. A natural skydiver, Joe threw himself into early relative work, taking part in the new art of baton passing. "He was great fun, great – just mischievous," says Sue Brown, who remembers a charismatic larrikin.

But in 1964 Joe's sporting ambition to be part of a record-breaking baton pass at Mallala put him within a couple of hundred feet of joining Australian champion Don West as a fatality.

Believing they were on the verge setting a record, Don and Joe smoked it right down, with Joe taking the final pass at just 800 feet. He survived but Don West was killed.

Living on the edge appears to have been part of Joe Larkin's nature. Unable to accompany the 1964 Australian Team to the World Meet in Germany he reluctantly farewelled SA members of the team before they sailed from Outer Harbour, hinting to one or two: "Don't worry, I'll be there."

As the others set sail on the liner *Ellinis* for Europe, Joe was sorting out the proceeds of his own latest excursion – he is rumoured to have robbed a railway station in Victoria, where old used banknotes were in the process of being shipped back to the banks for destruction. It was said that he repeated the exercise later at another Victorian railway town and, now sufficiently liquid, bought an aeroplane ticket and flew to Colombo in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to meet the other jumpers.

Enjoying the brief stopover in the exotic port, the team members were lined up at the rail of the ship exchanging banter with local merchants who had come out in small boats in an attempt to sell their goods.

Among the merchants was one, dressed in local garb who was particularly insistent in his sales pitch, inviting the jumpers to come down to his boat to buy his wares.

"Finally one of us – I think it was Cathy Williamson – said 'Is that you Joe?' " Sue Brown remembers. "I didn't recognise him at all but as soon as she said it, I knew straight away it was Joe Larkin."

Reunited, Joe then travelled on to England with the team before they headed off to Germany for the World Championships.

His railway exploits never caught up with him, however. Soon after the Championships finished he travelled to South Africa, eventually joining up in 1965 with Colonel 'Mad' Mike Hoare's mercenary force fighting in the newly independent Congo. Apart from 'liberating' the people they sometimes liberated banks and the story has it that Joe came across a haul of gold bullion and decided it was better to get this right out of the country.

He and another mercenary got hold of a DC3 and flew it to neighbouring Angola. Newspaper reports of the time, said that the pair were forced by engine trouble to land as they flew back across Congo. They were jailed for four and a half years for illegal use of the aircraft.

Despite efforts from people back in Australia to secure his release, Joe was still in prison when a number of white men were dragged from their cells and executed in reprisal for Congolese defeats at the hands of Belgian mercenaries.

Joe Larkin was 26 years old.

ABOVE *Sue Brown (formerly Susi Wright) and Lyn Shaunnesy packing an X-Type static chute in the early days at Aldinga DZ. The white boots were a fashion with many of the female jumpers of the day.*

ABOVE *Social outing for 1960s SA skydivers. The group had gathered on the wharf at Outer Harbour in 1964 to farewell Brian Brown and Don McKern who were on their way (by ship) to compete in the 1964 World Championships in Germany. Other team members, including Susi Wright and Cathy Williamson, left on a later ship. Remnants of the paper streamers, which departing passengers and friends chucked at each other in those days before mass international air travel, can be seen littering the foreground. From left: Robyn and Trevor Burns, Carola Fritschke (obscured), John Favel, Margaret Butson, Max Evans, Dick Wright, Ted Harrison, Roy Butson, Susi Wright, Rusty Bunworth, Laurie Trotter, -?-, -?-, Hans Wochnick.*

SA LIPSTICK PASS MAKES THE HEADLINES

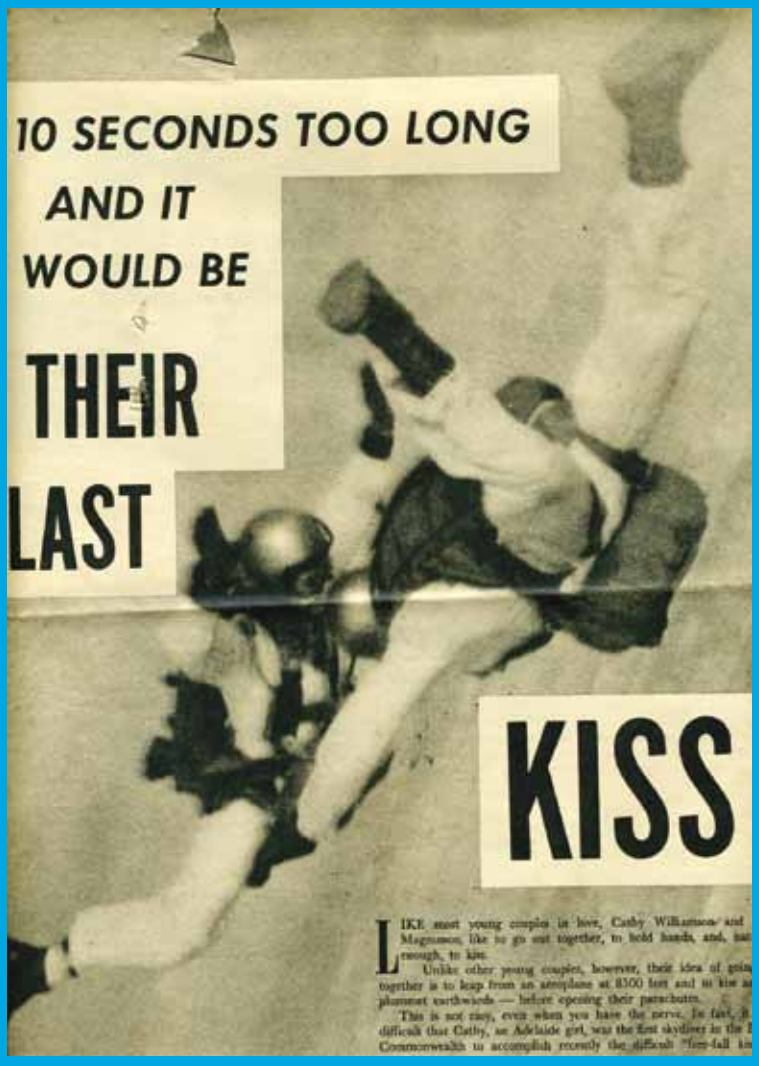
SA's Cathy Williamson, one of the pioneering parachutists who kicked off the sport in 1961, made the first ever lipstick pass in the British Commonwealth only months after her first jump.

The freefall kiss, recorded in July 1962 at 5,000 feet over Aldinga with Victorian jumper Bill Molloy, caught the attention of the national media and generated some great publicity for the fledgling sport.

A couple of months later Cathy did it all again – this time for the benefit of national pictorial magazine *Everybody's*, which ran a 4-page feature spread on the jump.

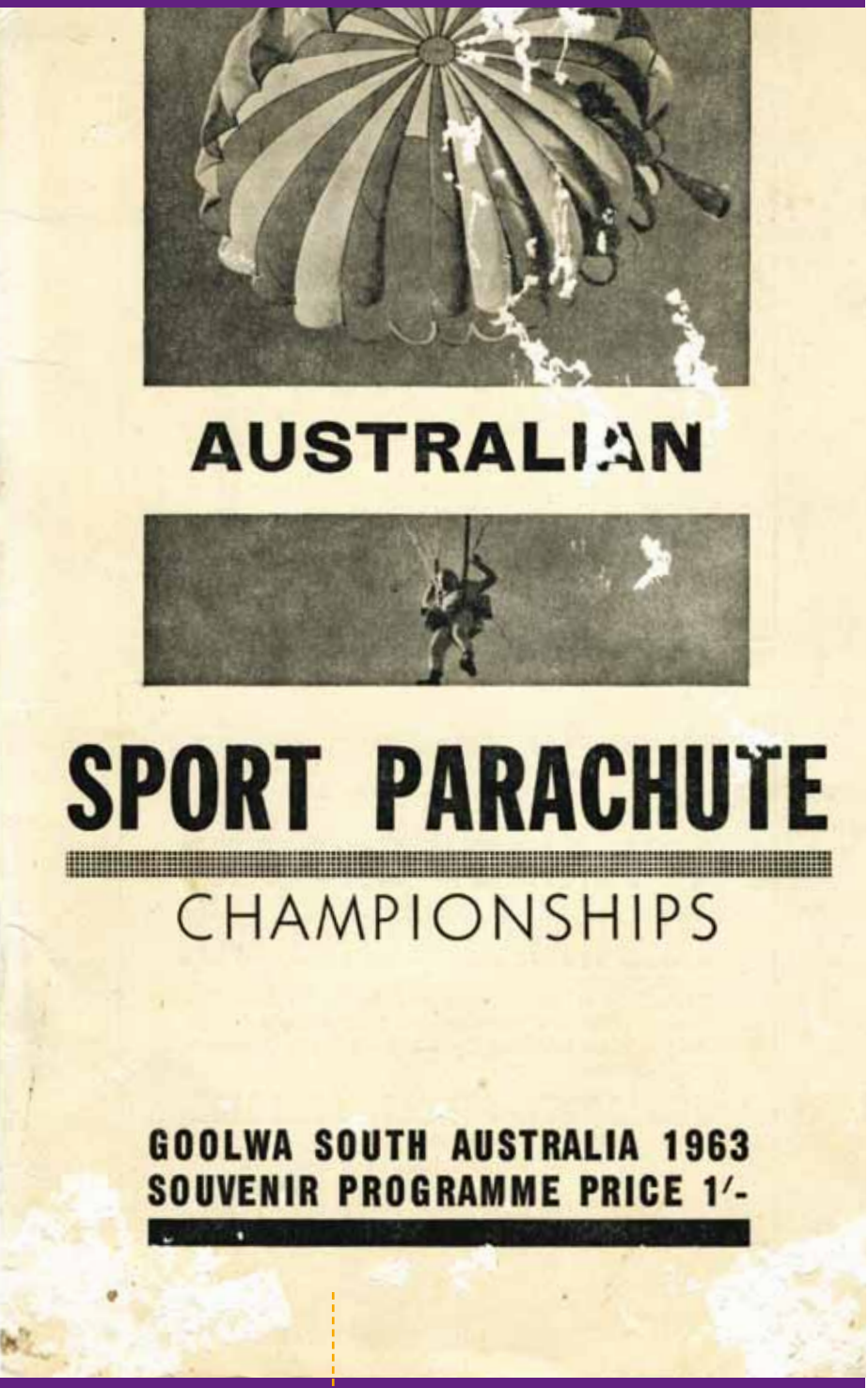
All the action – once again over Aldinga – was captured on camera by SA sport parachuting founder, Ted Harrison, who was also a journalist.

Cathy's partner for the lipstick pass this second time was another visitor from Victoria, Hans Magnusson. ✖



ABOVE *Dramatic coverage in Everybody's magazine.*

LEFT
Hans Magnusson, Ted Harrison and Cathy Williamson after the lipstick pass over Aldinga.



"NOT THREE YEARS AGO, STEERABLE PARACHUTES WERE VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT IN THIS COUNTRY," **TED HARRISON** WROTE.

ACCURACY SKILLS ON SHOW AT 1963 **GOOLWA NATIONALS**

It's the oldest discipline in parachuting. Before most people could even fall stable they could at least compete in the field of accuracy.

With crudely modified military surplus canopies barely capable of forward drive, accuracy was a challenge. Learning to spot properly was an essential ingredient of success.

As early as 1963 local jumpers were showing off their accuracy skills to a public still curious about this so-called "sport."

The fourth Australian National Sport Parachuting Championships were held at Goolwa in 1963, drawing a big crowd of spectators.

In his introduction to the souvenir program, sold to the public for one shilling (10 cents) at the event, organiser Ted Harrison noted that the meeting marked the coming of age of competitive parachuting in Australia.

"Not three years ago, steerable parachutes were virtually non-existent in this country," Ted wrote. "Landings in competition within 50 yards of a target were considered the peak of parachuting skill.

"During these championships, you will see parachutists consistently achieving competitive landings within mere feet of the target centre – a clear measure of the progress our sport has made.

"Freefall, too, a major part of competitive as well as recreational skydiving, was untried. Today Australian parachutists have accumulated hours of experience in this enthralling and still largely unexplored sphere."

OLD AIRCRAFT **ALTIMETER** DOES THE TRICK

Before purpose-built skydiving altimeters came on the market jumpers needed to be resourceful in how they kept track of time in the sky.

Stopwatches were a popular tool but old aircraft altimeters, like this Pioneer, were frequently adapted.

In fact, it was a requirement of the State Council, adopted in 1962, that all jumpers carry at least two instruments, including at least one altimeter, if they were attempting a delay of more than 10 seconds.

Appropriate alert zones were hand painted onto the old aircraft altimeters' instrument face and the unit was usually fitted into a metal "dashboard" secured to the chest-mounted reserve container using the bungee pack opening assist bands.

These dashboards frequently carried a separate, adjacent hole suitable for fitting a stopwatch, which was handy as a back up to the alti, useful for self-timing your own style set in freefall, or as an aid to spotting (used to time the descent of drifters.)

However, using ex aircraft altimeters wasn't without risk. In 1962 Area Safety Officer Noel Comley warned of the dangers in using altimeters with three separate needles – one for hundreds of feet, one for thousands and one for tens of thousands.

"The larger of these needles is not the thousands of feet but the hundreds of feet needle," he reported to the State Council.

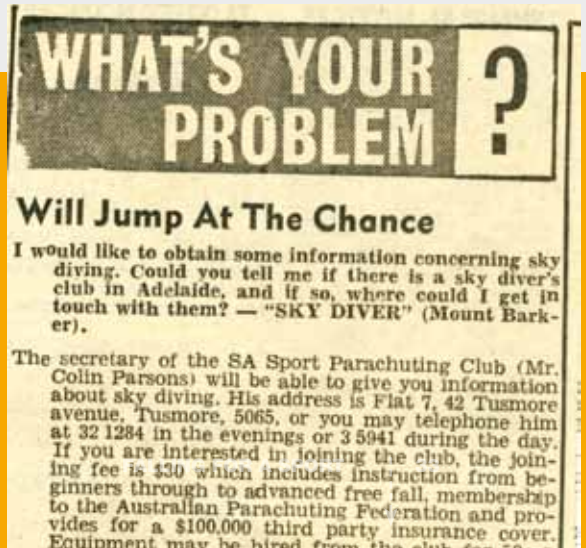
"Instances are known where these multi needles have caused confusion during freefall and at least one case of serious overdelay has been attributed to this type of set up."

Noel recommended these altis be removed from service until all needles except the thousands of feet had been removed or obliterated.

STRAPPED FOR CASH?

How would you have fancied a student course which took you all the way through to advanced freefall for just $30, including a year's SASPC and APF membership? And gear hire at at a princely 50 cents a jump?

It could have been yours back in 1969, as this item from *The Advertiser*'s "What's your problem?" advice column shows.



WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM ?

Will Jump At The Chance

I would like to obtain some information concerning sky diving. Could you tell me if there is a sky diver's club in Adelaide, and if so, where could I get in touch with them? — "SKY DIVER" (Mount Barker).

The secretary of the SA Sport Parachuting Club (Mr. Colin Parsons) will be able to give you information about sky diving. His address is Flat 7, 42 Tusmore avenue, Tusmore, 5065, or you may telephone him at 32 1284 in the evenings or 3 5941 during the day. If you are interested in joining the club, the joining fee is $30 which includes instruction from beginners through to advanced free fall, membership to the Australian Parachuting Federation and provides for a $100,000 third party insurance cover. Equipment may be hired from the club for

TOILET WARS

THE ENDURING POLITICS OF PARACHUTING

If this was a political history of South Australian skydiving it would have to run to several very thick and extensive volumes. Almost from the outset in 1961 the strong, self-confident personalities of parachutists have frequently clashed. The resulting schisms, breakaways, factions and feuds undoubtedly held the sport back in many ways, particularly when it was a still 'club' spirit and before the emergence of the commercial ethic which today drives the sport.

RIGHT *Members of the breakaway South Coast Skydivers at Mallala. The group was to become the most active of the early parachuting organisations in SA, until the tragic death of founder Max Chaplin in 1968.*

However, the competitiveness resulting from these jumpers jockeying for power and influence often lead to improvements and innovation.

And they were at it as early as just six months after getting the new sport off the ground. It was the personality clash between skydiving's 'founding father' Ted Harrison and a fellow 1961 pioneer, Max Chaplin, which injected the first touch of creative tension.

As Colin Parsons, another 1961 original, and later a psychology lecturer, observed: "It's a sport that breeds conflict because there is so much scope for individuals and individualism. In fact, it is encouraged in many ways. So I suppose a dominant person is certainly in the right environment to be able show it.

"You can look back to the early days when Ted Harrison – an effervescent and charismatic but volatile person – would show his temper and the plaster would peel off the walls."

Ted, South Australian School of Parachuting secretary, wrote to then jumpers in June 1962: "Fellow parachutist, you may or may not be aware that a parachute training centre to operate on a profit-making basis for its owners is in the process of being established by Messrs. Mutch, Williamson, Palmer and Chaplin, who have been registered as shareholders in a private company known as South Coast Parachutes Ltd."

Ted told his readers that there was no reason the formation of this organisation should 'force our School onto dissolution.'

"On the contrary, with a brand new committee comprised of enthusiastic, unselfish and dedicated parachutists, who can pull their weight together without being hampered by petty personal differences, the School will be free to develop parachuting in SA into the sport it could and should be," he said.

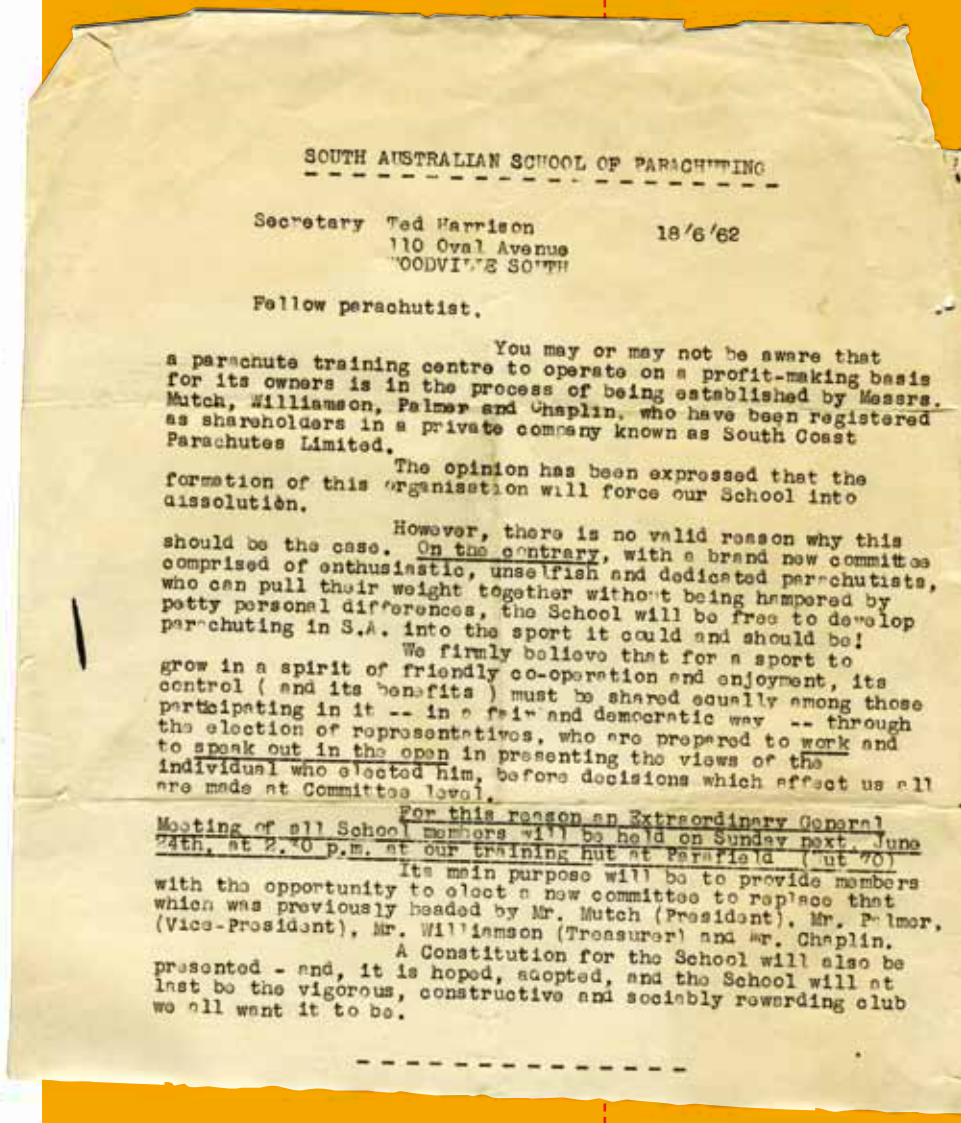
That drew a sharp response from the other side. Four days later jumpers received another letter, this one from Joe Mutch, in which he rejected Ted Harrison's claim that the four were out to damage sport parachuting.

"We decided to each put a sum of money into a venture called South Coast Parachutes, with the aim to make a profit which would be used to buy aircraft, a hut, plenty of parachuting gear and so on – and when these objects have been realised to then hand over to South Coast Skydivers," Joe wrote.

"The four have us have resigned from the committee of the SASP and will call a meeting of intending members shortly."

Sounds familiar – and it continued like this on and off for decades, until truly independent commercial operations finally emerged, leaving the club as little more than a social entity with no operational function.

As with most clubs in most sports, invariably the SASPC workload was picked up by only a few willing hands. Those who



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING

Secretary Ted Harrison
110 Oval Avenue
WOODVILLE SOUTH

18/6/62

Fellow parachutist,

You may or may not be aware that a parachute training centre to operate on a profit-making basis for its owners is in the process of being established by Messrs. Mutch, Williamson, Palmer and Chaplin, who have been registered as shareholders in a private company known as South Coast Parachutes Limited.

The opinion has been expressed that the formation of this organisation will force our School into dissolution.

However, there is no valid reason why this should be the case. On the contrary, with a brand new committee comprised of enthusiastic, unselfish and dedicated parachutists, who can pull their weight together without being hampered by petty personal differences, the School will be free to develop parachuting in S.A. into the sport it could and should be!

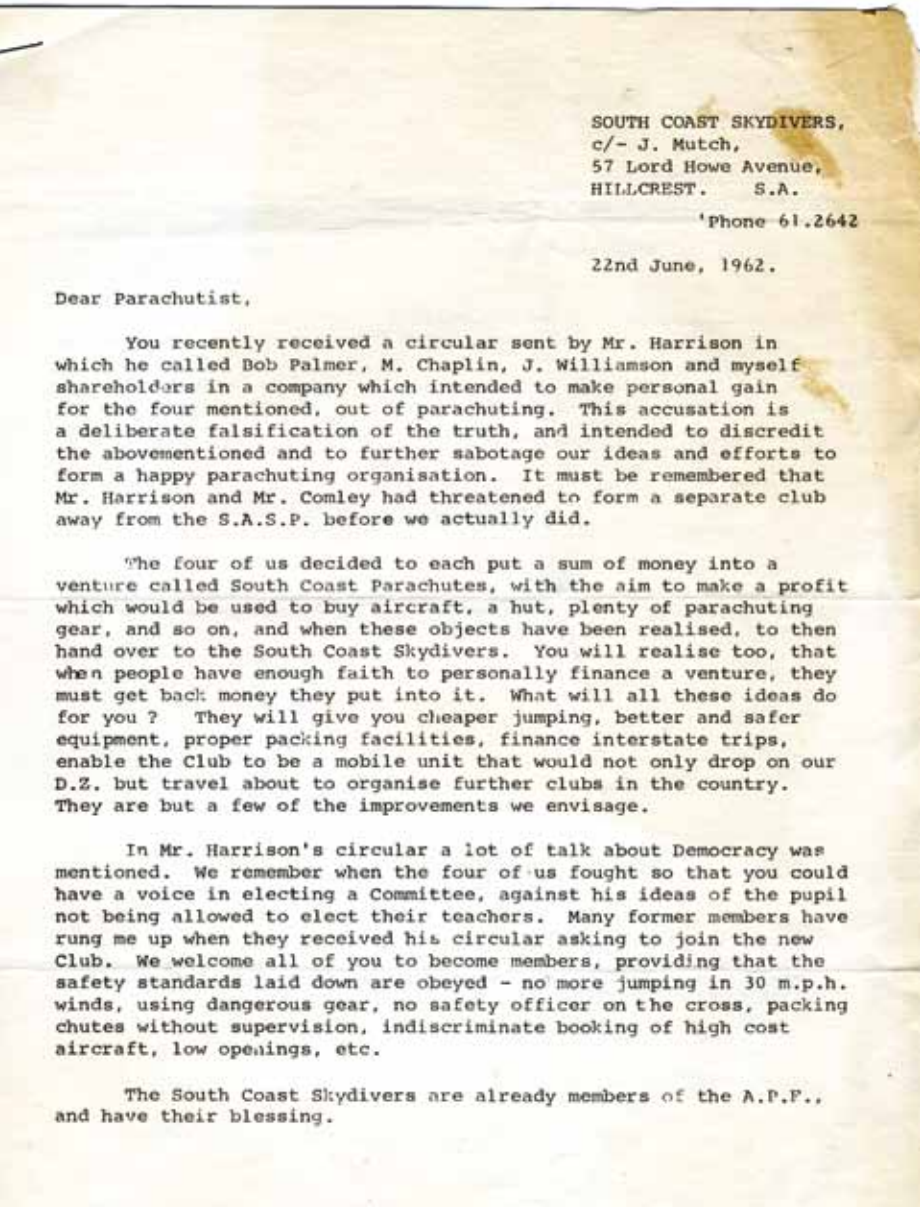
We firmly believe that for a sport to grow in a spirit of friendly co-operation and enjoyment, its control (and its benefits) must be shared equally among those participating in it -- in a fair and democratic way -- through the election of representatives, who are prepared to work and to speak out in the open in presenting the views of the individual who elected him, before decisions which affect us all are made at Committee level.

For this reason an Extraordinary General Meeting of all School members will be held on Sunday next, June 24th, at 2.30 p.m. at our training hut at Parafield (cut 70)

Its main purpose will be to provide members with the opportunity to elect a new committee to replace that which was previously headed by Mr. Mutch (President), Mr. Palmer, (Vice-President), Mr. Williamson (Treasurer) and Mr. Chaplin.

A Constitution for the School will also be presented - and, it is hoped, accepted, and the School will at last be the vigorous, constructive and sociably rewarding club we all want it to be.

THE WAR OF WORDS WHICH LEAD TO THE **BREAKAWAY** OF SOUTH COAST SKYDIVERS FROM THE ORIGINAL SA SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING IN 1962... TURN THE PAGE FOR THE RESPONSE.



SOUTH COAST SKYDIVERS,
c/- J. Mutch,
57 Lord Howe Avenue,
HILLCREST. S.A.

'Phone 61.2642

22nd June, 1962.

Dear Parachutist,

You recently received a circular sent by Mr. Harrison in which he called Bob Palmer, M. Chaplin, J. Williamson and myself shareholders in a company which intended to make personal gain for the four mentioned, out of parachuting. This accusation is a deliberate falsification of the truth, and intended to discredit the abovementioned and to further sabotage our ideas and efforts to form a happy parachuting organisation. It must be remembered that Mr. Harrison and Mr. Comley had threatened to form a separate club away from the S.A.S.P. before we actually did.

The four of us decided to each put a sum of money into a venture called South Coast Parachutes, with the aim to make a profit which would be used to buy aircraft, a hut, plenty of parachuting gear, and so on, and when these objects have been realised, to then hand over to the South Coast Skydivers. You will realise too, that when people have enough faith to personally finance a venture, they must get back money they put into it. What will all these ideas do for you ? They will give you cheaper jumping, better and safer equipment, proper packing facilities, finance interstate trips, enable the Club to be a mobile unit that would not only drop on our D.Z. but travel about to organise further clubs in the country. They are but a few of the improvements we envisage.

In Mr. Harrison's circular a lot of talk about Democracy was mentioned. We remember when the four of us fought so that you could have a voice in electing a Committee, against his ideas of the pupil not being allowed to elect their teachers. Many former members have rung me up when they received his circular asking to join the new Club. We welcome all of you to become members, providing that the safety standards laid down are obeyed - no more jumping in 30 m.p.h. winds, using dangerous gear, no safety officer on the cross, packing chutes without supervision, indiscriminate booking of high cost aircraft, low openings, etc.

The South Coast Skydivers are already members of the A.P.F., and have their blessing.

instructed without pay for the financial benefit of the club gradually grew less tolerant, deciding reward for effort was in order.

The 1977 breakaway from the club by senior instructors Bernie Keenan and Steve Swann, who formed Parachute and Skydiving Centre of SA, was the first attempt by instructors to have their unpaid commitment acknowledged. It wasn't a popular move but it did eventually inspire a new generation of jumpers to go for their instructor ratings.

Having another operation on the DZ taking students and demo income was a great incentive.

Years of voluntary, unpaid work – running the DZ, training students two or three nights a week in Bernie's backyard shed at Manningham and then motoring out to Lower Light and keeping it all going, while the usual suspects lay abed, waiting for the weather question to resolve itself, began to wear thin. There was considerable angst surrounding the fact that the club's only two fully active instructors at the time (both with senior ratings) could finally want some financial recompense for their years of voluntary effort – which had simultaneously included editing and publishing *Australian Skydiver* magazine at no charge.

A couple of years later attitudes had softened – or were at least waking up to reality. When Col Parsons, Steve Boldog and Ron Thomas moved their Skysport instructional operation out from the SASPC umbrella in 1980, setting up just down the paddock to the east, it was at first seen as an inevitable move. But the politics and recriminations soon surfaced again. Perhaps the low point came when a padlock was put on the Lower Light toilet door, ensuring that only SASPC members could spend a penny.

However, it is a measure of the generosity of spirit of most jumpers that no long-term grudges were ever really held.

And it was this atmosphere of rivalry in the early 1980s which certainly helped foster SA's then very prominent place in CRW – with teams from both SASPC and Skysport taking great delight in outdoing each other.

Now, of course, no annual general meeting of the SASPC would be complete without a touch of intrigue.

THE 1960s

ABOVE LEFT *Fred Turner at the 1965 Australian Nationals at Port Pirie.*

ABOVE RIGHT *Susi Wright at the 1965 Australian Nationals at Port Pirie.*

LEFT *Col Parsons hamming it up, Aldinga, 1962.*

THE 1960s

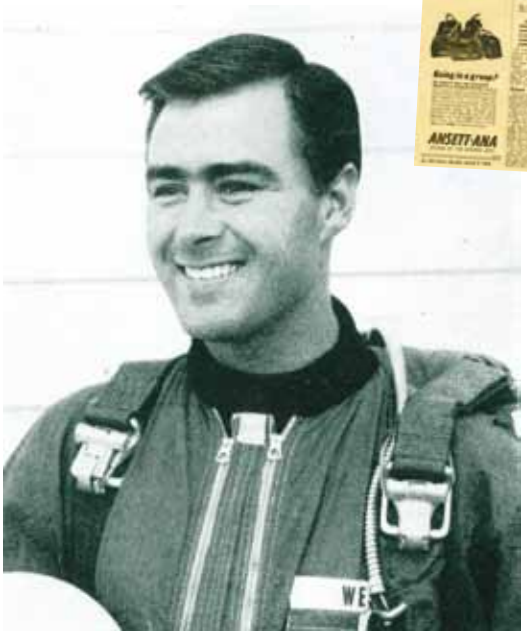
ABOVE *Max Chaplin's son Mark fills in some time at Mallala in the mid 1960s.*

ABOVE *Laurie Trotter, SA parachuting's 'grand old man' in 1966. Noel Weckert asleep on his feet, as Trev Burns noted on the back of this old photo.*

ABOVE *Leo Brogan's shot of his Paracommander mark 1 – the Blue Max pattern. The canopy was later owned by Bernie Keenan.*

ABOVE *Ken Walter's first jump at Lower Light circa 1969. Peter O'Neill putting his rig in the boot and Col Parsons and Leo Brogan in the background, getting ready for the next sortie.*

LESSONS FROM 1964 FATALITY **STILL WORTH LEARNING**



LEFT *Don West*

The 1964 death of SA jumper Don West, who went in while attempting a world record baton pass at Mallala, was headline news in Adelaide.

But for once the parachuting community couldn't complain about sensationalist headlines or sloppy newspaper reporting.

The graphic story which recorded the tragedy in the following day's edition of the afternoon daily newspaper *The News*, was written by Ted Harrison, the founding father of SA sport parachuting and a senior reporter on the then young Rupert Murdoch's flagship publication – and Ted was on the jump! He even took the photograph which accompanied the page 2 news story on Monday, March 9, 1964, capturing a missed baton pass early in the descent, between Phil Edwards and Cathy Williamson.

It was a classic case of loss of height awareness and fixation on the relative work – a story which, even today, warrants the attention of current jumpers.

Don was the last to exit at 12,500 ft with six others. Obsessed with breaking the record, he and Joe Larkin took it on down past the 2,000 ft opening height, mistakenly believing another pass would break the record.

As Ted Harrison reported, it was a futile pass – it only equalled the world record, a feat the team had achieved a month previously.

"But in a sky filled with nine milling, free-falling bodies Don may have lost count of the number of passes and may have believed he was making the vital pass which would have captured a world record for Australia," Harrison's newspaper story said.

"Another skydiver, Brian Brown, of Maylands, saw them inch agonisingly slowly towards each other as they continued to plummet at 120 mph. They appeared to be engrossed in the pass, oblivious to the nearness of the ground.

"As soon as they succeeded in the pass, Larkin realised the danger and opened his main parachute immediately.

"But it is thought that Don, being the more experienced jumper, with 280 jumps to his credit, decided to fall clear for a second or two longer. This would have eliminated the risk of their parachutes entangling if they had opened close together.

"Knowing how close he was to death, he used his fast-opening reserve parachute instead of the main parachute. The main parachute is specially designed to open more slowly to reduce the opening shock.

"But the extra second he delayed to fall clear cost him his life." ✖

1960s PARA SCUBA
JUMP GOES WRONG

Publicity for SA skydiving in the 1960s was frequently bad. But it didn't get much worse than this – the front page headline story in *The Advertiser* on Monday, February 12, 1968 reported on the death of local parachutist Max Chaplin, who drowned the day before while taking part in a scuba jump off West Beach.

Max Chaplin was one of the original SA skydivers who first jumped at Aldinga on November 19, 1961. The tragedy occurred at a time when parachuting wasn't even considered by the general public to be a sport – it was just a "daredevil" activity for people at the edges. The following extracts are from *The Advertiser*:

Skydiver lost in sea on mass airdrop

While hundreds of people watched from the beach, a skydiver vanished in the sea off West Beach yesterday after he and four others had parachuted from 3,400 feet wearing diving and underwater breathing equipment.

The skydiver, George Maxwell Chaplin, 45 of Osborne avenue, St. Marys, is believed drowned. He had sufficient air in his scuba equipment (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) for 10 minutes under water.

Mr Chaplin, who was president of the South Coast Skydivers' Club, was taking part in a club exhibition. He was married with four children. His wife watched the drop from the beach.

The most experienced skydiver in the club, Mr Chaplin was in charge of the drop. He was also a leader of the St. John Ambulance Brigade parachutists' squad. Mr. Chaplin was one of a "stick" of three skydivers who leaped from a single-engined Cessna aircraft at about 2 pm.

Two others leaped a few seconds later from a similar aircraft. Waiting on the water

ABOVE *Para-scuba jumpers in a training run for the fateful West Beach jump which cost the life of Max Chaplin (centre) in February 1968. The posed press photograph was taken on the Noarlunga reef. From left: Col Parsons, Max Chaplin and John Mate.*

LEFT *Bruce Marshall and Fred Rothe surrounded by spectators at West Beach after the 1968 para-scuba jump.*

ABOVE *Bruce Marshall (left) and Col Parsons about to depart on the West Beach water jump demo which cost Max Chaplin his life in 1968.*

were five surfboats each carrying a skin diver assigned to enter the water to accompany a skydiver as he landed.

Although the skydivers landed in a 200-yard group, it is believed that gusting winds carried them about a quarter of a mile from the target area.

This delayed the arrival of the surfboat and skin divers at the landing points and when they arrived there were only four skydivers on the surface.

It was intended that the skydivers should stay underwater for a few minutes before surfacing, after jettisoning their parachutes.

Each surfboat was marked with a number corresponding with the jumping order of a parachutist. The skydivers were supposed to hit the water as close as possible to their respective boats and unbuckle their parachutes just before hitting the water.

Then they were to swim towards their boats to be picked up. When it was discovered that Mr Chaplin had not surfaced a full-scale search was started. Off-duty members of the Police Aqualung Squad were called in and went to the scene. All five surfboats continued to search until dusk and the 5AD Surf Patrol aircraft circled the area for most of the afternoon to help in the search. Several lone surf skiers also joined in.

Mr Chaplin's main and reserve parachutes were found soon after the search started, but no sign had been found of him by dusk, when the search was stopped for the night.

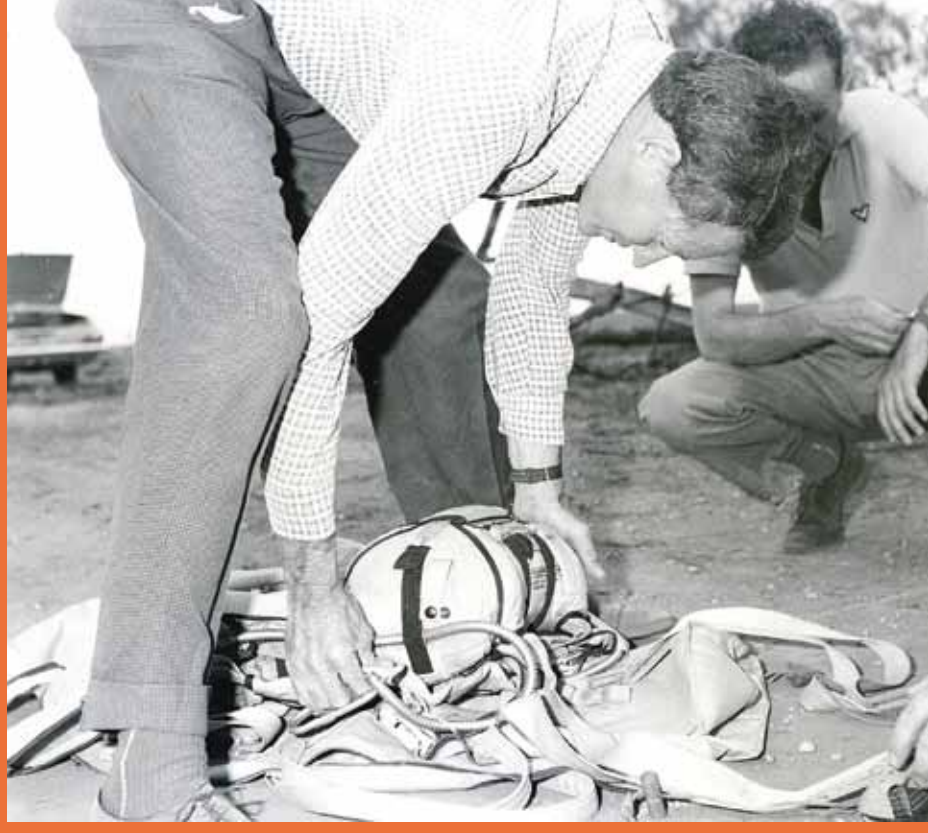
It will start again at first light, when police divers will search in widening circles about the target area.

A member of the skydiving club, Mr D. J. Formby, of Diagonal road Warradale, was in the second aircraft taking photographs of the descent.

He said it had been planned that the parachutists would leave the aircraft at one-second intervals, but the first to jump, Mr. Rod Evans, left the first aircraft well before the second, Mr. Chaplin. [Other members of the "para-scuba" team were Fred Rothe, of North Adelaide, Colin Parsons, of Glenside, and Bruce Marshall, of Beverley.]

"I assumed he had got a bit tied up in the plane, but he jumped after perhaps 10 seconds," Mr Formby said.

THE 1960s



RIGHT *Col Parsons assembles his new Security piggyback system at Lower Light circa 1969, watched by pilot George Palladij.*

ABOVE *SA's Brian Brown (left) with the men's Group Accuracy team at the 1964 World Meet in Germany. From left: Brian, Col King, Andy Keech and Bill Molloy.*

RIGHT *It didn't come any better than this in 1968! Advertisement from Australian Skydiver magazine.*

1960s

SPENCER GULF SKYDIVERS

South Australia's Iron Triangle region became a busy skydiving hub early in the sport's history. When Trevor Burns' work took him from Adelaide to Port Pirie in 1963 he decided he couldn't do without his weekly fix of altitude.

Despite having only 28 jumps under his belt and an "A" licence (A29) he set up his own club – Spencer Gulf Skydivers.

Trevor applied to the Australian Parachute Federation for an exemption against the chief parachute instructor requirements of the day – a "C" licence, an instructor rating and a minimum of 100 jumps.

"The APF, thanks to Claude Gillard, granted me the exemption after I sat for and passed the instructor rating examination," says Trevor.

He obviously had the right stuff – Spencer Gulf Skydivers operated for seven years, recording only one serious injury – crushed vertebra following a main canopy malfunction and an entangled reserve – and no fatalities.

Trevor was based in Port Pirie but the focus of jumping was at Point Lowly, just north of Whyalla and a short hop across Spencer Gulf.

The DZ was established on Tregalana Station on a large clearing covered in saltbush next to the road to Point Lowly.

Trevor struck a deal with the driver of a road grader doing maintenance work to carve out a 2,500 ft (800 metre) airstrip in the saltbush. Payment was a carton of beer.

The first structure was a pretty crude long drop toilet with a wooden frame, tin sides and no roof but by the end of 1963 a landing pit had been put in, using seaweed collected from the beach at Point Lowly. It was probably the only seaweed pit in captivity at that time.

The steel town's relatively small population nevertheless provided an enthusiastic stream of jumpers.

"We used to get a lot of guys coming through working in BHP, the steelworks and the shipyards. Many would only be living there for 12 months before moving on, so we often found that, towards the end of a year, we would have a healthy core of 15 or 20 active jumpers in the club," says Trevor.

"But come the New Year and there would just be four of us looking at each other

RIGHT *Spencer Gulf Skydivers' instructor Noel Weckert imparts a little wisdom at Whyalla in the early 1960s.*

BELOW *Noel Weckert (right) checks Pete O'Neill's gear at Whyalla in the mid 1960s.*

LEFT *Roadside advertising for a Spencer Gulf Skydivers' event.*

because the rest of them had packed up and gone off."

Spencer Gulf Skydivers' jumpship was a Cessna 172 which was based in Port Pirie, only a short flight away across the water. Trevor would often fly across the Gulf from Port Pirie on the Saturday morning and jump into the drop zone. Then after two days of operations at Point Lowly, staying overnight, he would fly back to Port Pirie and jump into the aerodrome – never waste tacho time!

"In the very early days of the club I often arranged for an Auster two-seater, VH-BYJ or VH-ASK to fly me from Pirie to Whyalla where I would jump in to the DZ or a dairy farm on the outskirts of the town," says Trevor. "Then I'd spend the day conducting ground training before flying flying back to Pirie and jumping (illegally) onto the aerodrome. There was no ground crew, of course."

Spencer Gulf Skydivers started off with pretty basic equipment, although the club didn't have to suffer the antiquity of X-types.

All of its eight or nine sets of gear was US Airforce B4 rigs and C9 canopies. Many of the regulars owned their own equipment.

"But it wasn't all that plentiful," says

ABOVE *Spencer Gulf Skydivers members in March 1964 at Tregalana Station homestead, near Whyalla. Standing (from left): Trevor Burns, Laurie Trotter, Ray Butson, Brian Brown, Noel Weckert, Bob Rowe and Fred Turner. Sitting (from left): Hans Wochnick, Rick Abraham, Carola Fritschke, Max Evans, John Favell, Keith Wilson and Joe Larkin.*

ABOVE *Spencer Gulf Skydivers' packing shed at Point Lowly near Whyalla in the mid 1960s. Note the aircraft door, removed for the day's jumping, and leaning against the wall below the sign.*

BELOW *Dave Shearer, one of the original core of SA skydiving's founding fathers, pictured at Point Lowly in the mid 1960s.*

Trevor. "On busy days I'd often lend my parachute to one of the students and I'd go and despatch them without wearing a rig. That was quite normal and you wouldn't bother about it – even though it was against the rules."

On one occasion the group was jumping a Cessna 180 and Trev had a female static line student to despatch on her third or fourth jump. All her previous jumps had been from a C182.

"On climbing out, she put her right foot on the step, leaving her left foot back in the cabin," says Trevor. "I got her attention and signalled that she should come back into the cabin and then place her left foot on the step so she could adopt a good exit position. She elected to try to swap feet without coming back inside. The result was that she missed the step, hung briefly by her hands from the strut then let go. However she didn't fall clear, as the step hooked under her seat strap and she was hanging under the aircraft. I climbed out as far as I could and had her grab my hand but there was no way I was going to haul her back into the aircraft. So after a close inspection of her rig to make sure there was no damage I had the pilot, Brian Stoekel, bank the aircraft steeply and I put my boot in the middle of her main container and shoved her off the step.

"It was the most stable exit she had ever made. Funny thing though, she didn't jump again. I've never been able to understand why!"

All this took several minutes and when it was all over Trevor remembered he still had a first jump student to despatch.

"I figured that after all that palaver, there was no way this guy was going to jump. I was wrong. His only comment was: 'Gee, she took a long time to get out' ".

One of Trevor's first students was Noel Weckert, a committed and talented skydiver who progressed quickly and went on to become Spencer Gulf Skydiver's "number two", the assistant chief instructor, a position he held with distinction until he moved to Townsville.

The two of them shouldered most of the work, particularly in the early days. It was hard work – training, despatching, packing all the gear, doing whatever it took.

But they gradually gathered a core of talented and willing jumpers – particularly people like Peter O'Neill.

Noel Weckert and his wife Sophie were later murdered in a roadside shooting in Queensland in the mid 1970s but he left a lasting impression on the jumpers of Spencer Gulf and the broader Australian parachuting community.

"One of the nicest gentlemen it has been my privilege to know," says Trevor Burns. "Noel was an habitual innovator and was always dreaming up modifications to gear – bearing in mind that our gear consisted of modified ex-military rigs.

"In the early 1960s staying stable in freefall was still a major issue, especially when it came time to dump. An American guy had invented a 'grip cord', which was a squeeze handle fixed to the palm of the hand and connected to the main ripcord. The idea was that when it came time to open, the jumper could maintain his spread – or the very latest "frog" position – and simply squeeze the "grip cord" to deploy the main."

After reading about this in the US *Skydiver* magazine, Noel decided to make his own 'grip cord' using a standard ripcord, some tie-wire, solder, what was then a new super glue called Araldite and a pushbike handbrake lever.

"He very proudly showed this to me and was a little upset when I made him modify it so it could be over-ridden by a normal ripcord," says Trevor. "Then he tested it out on a rel jump with me from 6,000 or 7000 feet. Come opening time and I could see him frantically squeezing the 'grip cord' – all to no effect. So he had to revert to the normal main ripcord.

"When we landed not a word was said. He threw the 'grip cord' into the corner of the packing shed and it lay there for months before someone – I suspect it was Noel – finally threw it out."

Trevor made his last jump at Whyalla in June 1968 and the focus of Spencer Gulf Skydivers shifted to Port Pirie where he and Peter O'Neill briefly ran a commercial operation on the airport grounds, before both moving to Adelaide.

Although this marked the end of Spencer Gulf's distinguished contribution to early SA skydiving, the name was to live on for many years, perpetuated in the annual Gulf Meet competitions.

TOP *SA parachuting pioneer Laurie Trotter at Point Lowly near Whyalla in the very early 1960s.*

ABOVE *Trev Burns (left) and Noel Weckert conduct a post mortem while walking back from the target area at Whyalla – September, 1964.*

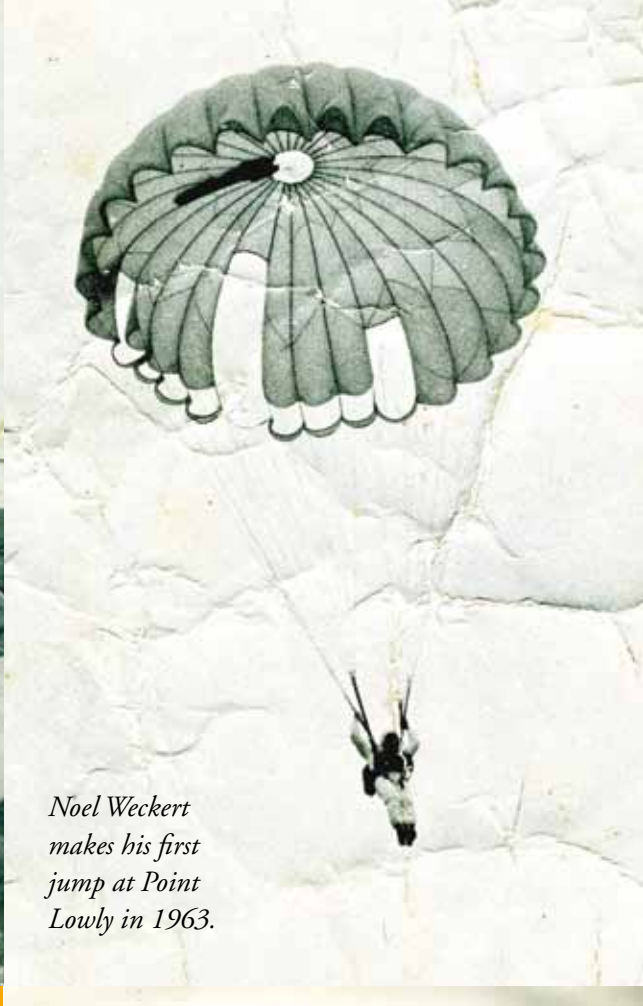
SPENCER GULF

ABOVE *Celebrating Noel Weckert's first baton pass, March 1964 at Tregalana Station homestead, near Port Augusta. From left: Noel, Brian Brown and Trevor Burns. Trev noted in his scrapbook that he "sat out in the wild blue yonder and watched."*

US VISITOR BOB RANNEY (FOREGROUND) AND FRED TURNER ON THE TELEMETERS AT THE 1966 SA STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS AT WHYALLA.

RIGHT *Phil Edwards and Trevor Burns at the 1966 SA State Championships at Whyalla.*

FAR RIGHT *Col Parsons and Leo Brogan at Point Lowly.*

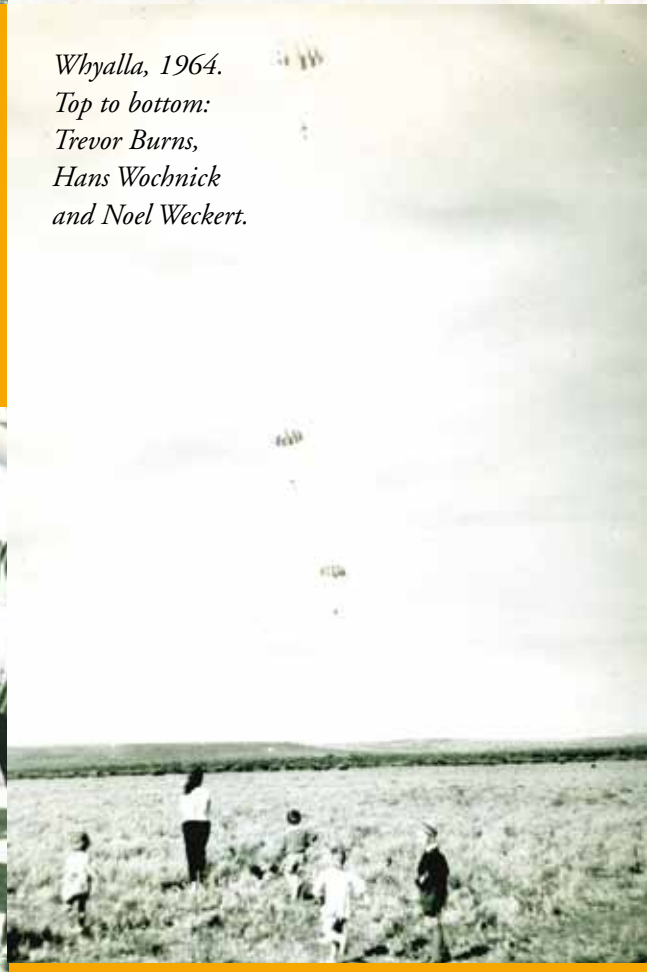


Noel Weckert makes his first jump at Point Lowly in 1963.

ABOVE *Noel Weckert's second jump made at Point Lowly in 1963. He recorded it as "soft" in his homemade logbook, even though the C9 canopy ended up draped over telephone lines.*

BELOW *Spencer Gulf Skydivers hot shots in the mid 1960s (from left) Trevor Burns, Hans Wochnick and Noel Weckert.*

Whyalla, 1964. Top to bottom: Trevor Burns, Hans Wochnick and Noel Weckert.



SPENCER GULF

Trevor Burns collapsing his canopy at Whyalla, September 1964.

BELOW *Phil Edwards (left) and Trevor Burns on a stinking hot Whyalla day, 1966.*

BELOW *Cold up there without a door! From left: Alan Clarke, Trevor Burns and Brian Coglin at Whyalla, 1964.*

ABOVE *Breezy landing for Trevor Burns under his XBO at the 1966 State Championships at Whyalla. He scored a 6.04 metre.*

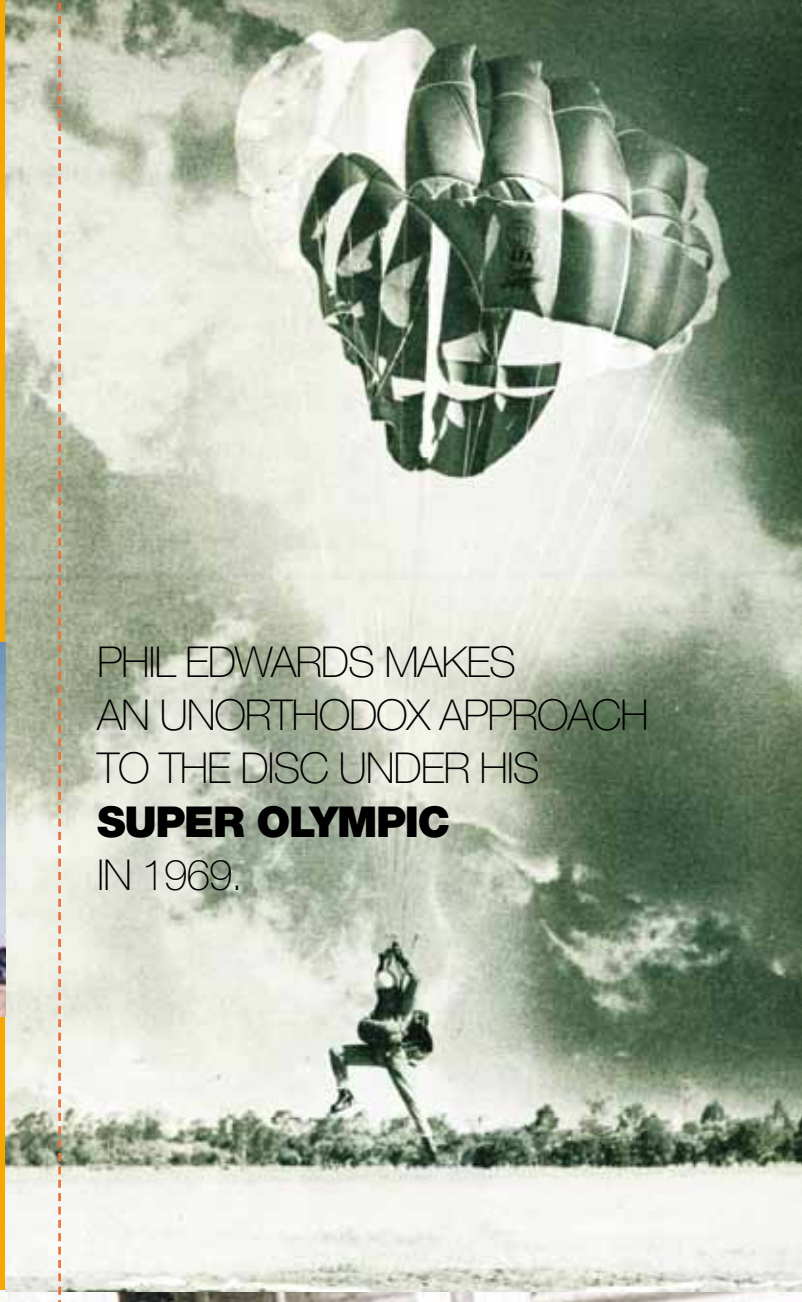
LEFT *Col Parsons heads for the disc at Port Pirie in 1969.*

BELOW *A trio of dags at the 1968 Gulf Meet – Noel Weckert, Pete O'Neill and Trevor Burns.*

SPENCER GULF

BELOW *Pete O'Neill landing under two canopies at Port Pirie around 1968-69. The main is the orange and white canopy on the left, while the reserve is the unmodified 24 ft on the right. Deliberately throwing the reserve was not uncommon as a training exercise. The reserve was not fitted with a pilot chute or deployment sleeve (bag) and jumpers in those days did not cutaway from a malfunctioned cheapo (military surplus roundie).*

BELOW *Zapped by weather. The Spencer Gulf Skydivers crew sits out the wind in 1964. At rear from left: Bryan Stoeckel (pilot), Rick Abraham, Helen Syms, Brian Abraham (obscured) and Trevor Burns. In the front, Bob Ketlow, Noel Weckert, Roy Butson and Jimmy Dolan.*



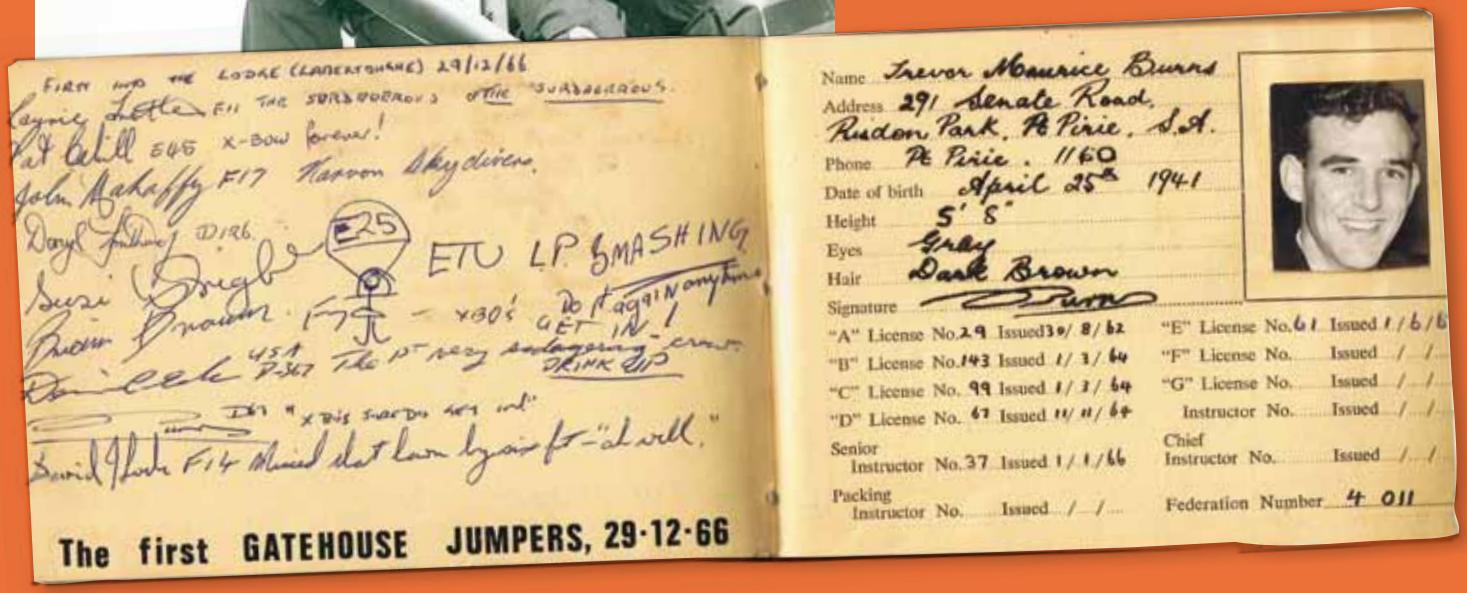
PHIL EDWARDS MAKES AN UNORTHODOX APPROACH TO THE DISC UNDER HIS **SUPER OLYMPIC** IN 1969.

THE 1960s

ABOVE *Lower Light looking north. Blown out – even the cars are pointed into the wind, along with UEV. Possibly 1969 or even 1970. The two trees are those now directly behind the besser brick clubhouse (kitchen) and adjacent to the shed where Al Gray keeps his tractor. The tap was a big innovation, fed by some polypipe laid from one of farmer George Quigley's sheep troughs up near the gate on Port Wakefield Road.*

LEFT *Leo Brogan and Manfred Rothe at Lower Light, circa 1968.*

LEFT *Col Parsons demonstrates the correct exit position from the 172 UEV in 1969. Note the blast-handle reserve ripcord on his then very new and very much state-of-the-art piggyback. And the personal touch – a stopwatch mounted under a metal cover stitched to the ski glove on his left hand.*



ABOVE *A later log book of pioneer SA jumper Trev Burns. Many jumpers of the era transcribed their earlier jumps from the SA School of Parachuting days into these more modern looking documents. The left-hand page is filled with sentiments from Trevor's contemporaries, who also made the first jumps into the notoriously tight Gatehouse lawn at the old Labertouche DZ in Victoria.*

JUMPSHIPS
GETTING THE LOADS IN THE AIR

ABOVE *VH- UEV in 1971. The three-place Cessna 172 was the mainstay of SASPC jumping for many years.*

BELOW *Regular skydiving pilot throughout the 1960s and 70s was George Palladij, pictured at Mallala with Max Chaplin.*

From one slot to 33 – jumpships have come in all shapes and sizes over the past 50 years. Everything from Tiger Moths and a tiny Auster to the visiting XL turbine and even an RAAF DC3, have carried South Australian skydivers aloft.

Along the way some fascinating old aeroplanes and some sleek and powerful performers have done the job.

Even in the sport's first year an amazing array of aircraft was pressed into service. Col Parson's log book records the old de Havilland Dragon Rapide along with a C172, C175, C180, C185, C210 and a Beaver in the first 13 months alone.

Later, colourful aircraft like a de Havilland Dove and the Dornier 27 were used, along with the occasional Cherokee 6 and Navajo.

But for the first 20 years SA skydivers were at the mercy of often unsympathetic aircraft owners and operators. The idea of jumpers themselves owning aircraft was a pipedream.

Walking up and down the flight line at Parafield looking for an aircraft became a sometimes depressing task for jumpers through the 1960s and early 1970s. Most aircraft owners were reluctant to see their pride and joy 'hammered' up and down, lifting jumpers who they also feared, often with justification, would damage the plane's interior with their bulky, clunky old rigs.

The Royal Aero Club of SA was a frequent source of aircraft through the late 1960s but the SASPC's relations with the club were bumpy – skydivers didn't quite fit the mould of the usual Aero Club member. Nevertheless, without the generosity of individual officers of the Aero Club at that time there would have been many bleak, jumpless weekends on offer.

Colin Parsons remembers the dreary days of tramping up and down the tarmac at Parafield, with caps in hand, trying to find an aircraft, only too clearly.

"Barrie Mead – the chief instructor at the RACSA – was often helpful in letting us use a Cherokee 6. But the trouble was that we could not consistently book the aircraft," says Col. "I think Barrie stuck his neck out for us, but had the Sunday-afternoon, private-pilot Top Guns bad-mouthing us for their own vicarious satisfaction. I also remember the

pontificating bastards at RossAir who would sniff haughtily and treat us as if we were lowest caste lepers when we went looking for aircraft to hire. The irony is that, when Neil Davis and I eventually represented Starlift Pty Ltd in the negotiations to purchase VH-DON, it was done through RossAir, in their offices. I still remember my impression of them being little more than used-car salesmen."

In 1970, a reliable Cessna 172 VH-UEV, owned by West Coast farmer Harry Ramsey, gradually became a regular at Lower Light, thanks to the efforts of pilot George Palladij. George, a seasoned jump pilot with some years experience by then and obviously keen to maintain the source of his free flying hours, was a skilled negotiator when it came to finding aircraft. His personal efforts helped maintain the relationship with Ramsey and UEV.

It wasn't the greatest jumpship by modern standards – three jumpers, no in-flight door, slow and a jump ceiling of 7,000 feet. But everyone loved it – mainly because it was there!

However, in mid 1971, the SASPC committee faced a crunch. Harry Ramsey,

RIGHT *South Australia's first jumpship, pictured at Parafield in 1962. "Sth Aus Air Taxis Ltd" was stencilled in blue on the otherwise all silver finish. The Dragon Rapide at the time was used as a freighter, for both charter and on a regular newspaper delivery run from Adelaide to Port Lincoln.*

FROM TIGER MOTHS TO AN RAAF DC 3, ALONG THE WAY SOME FASCINATING OLD AEROPLANES AND SOME SLEEK PERFORMERS HAVE DONE THE JOB.

BELOW *SASPC jumpers at Parafield in 1972 before flying in to Lower Light in the Dornier 27: Tony Schwerdt (pilot), Wayne Irons, Terry Angus, Phil Edwards, Roger Boquer (another pilot), Col Parsons, Steve Swann and Bernie Keenan.*

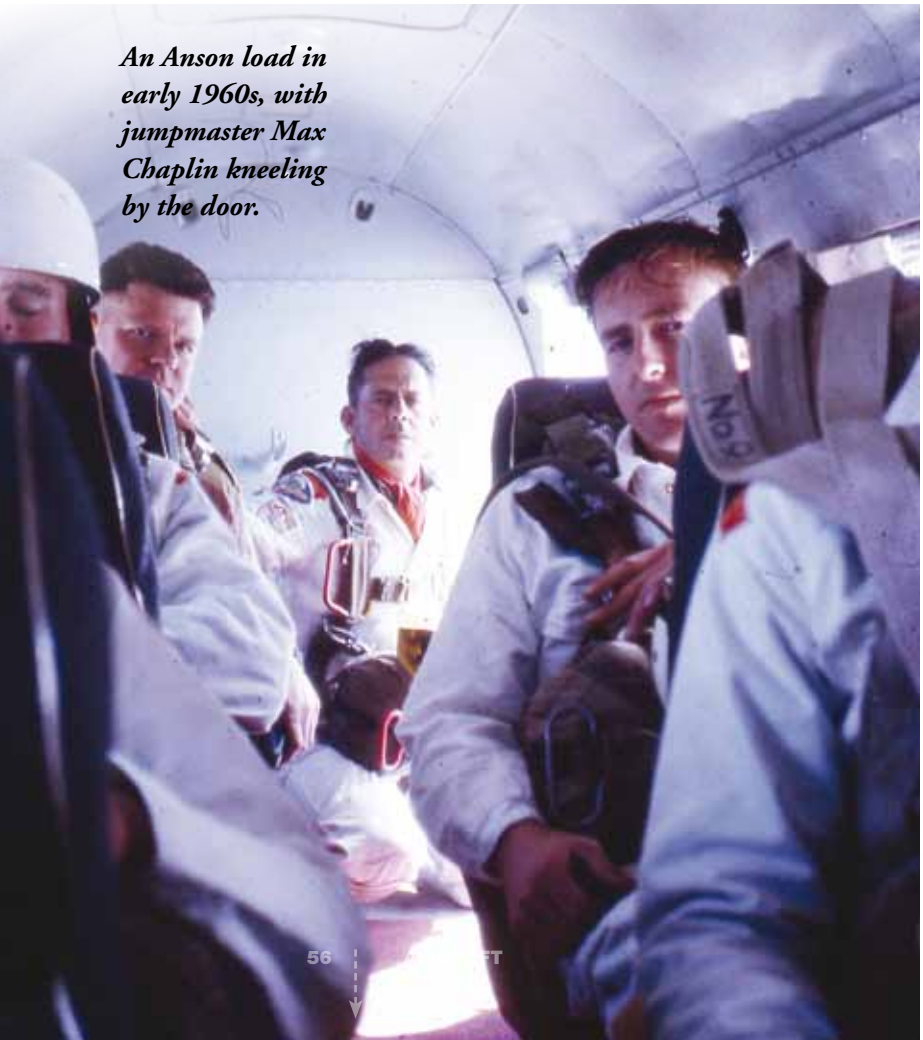
ABOVE *Brenton Miller, pilot and owner of Skytours Aircharters in the Dornier 27, early 1970s.*

operating in a struggling farming industry which was in and out of recession, decided he wanted to incur no further debts on UEV. George Palladij informed the club that Harry was faced with the options of either selling it or having someone take over the finance payments and running costs.

SASPC committee members considered the dilemma. They judged that, while taking over the aircraft would mean maintaining monthly finance company payments, insurance premiums and maintenance costs, they had no option if jumping was to continue. They had to immediately swallow $113 outstanding for insurance premiums, $132 for the finance company's monthly hit and an estimated $100 to $200 for a 100-hourly which was due in 10 hours. It might not sound like much but this was at a time when average weekly earnings were $70 and jumpers were paying about $5 to get to 7,000 feet.

They bit the bullet and took over UEV's running costs. Six months later the club felt sufficiently secure in the arrangement to authorise Bernie Keenan to signwrite UEV with the club's name.

By 1973 the commitment meant the SASPC had built a sizeable 'equity' in UEV which it was able to consume in flying hours. It was a comfortable feeling, made all the better by the arrival on the scene of the Dornier 27.

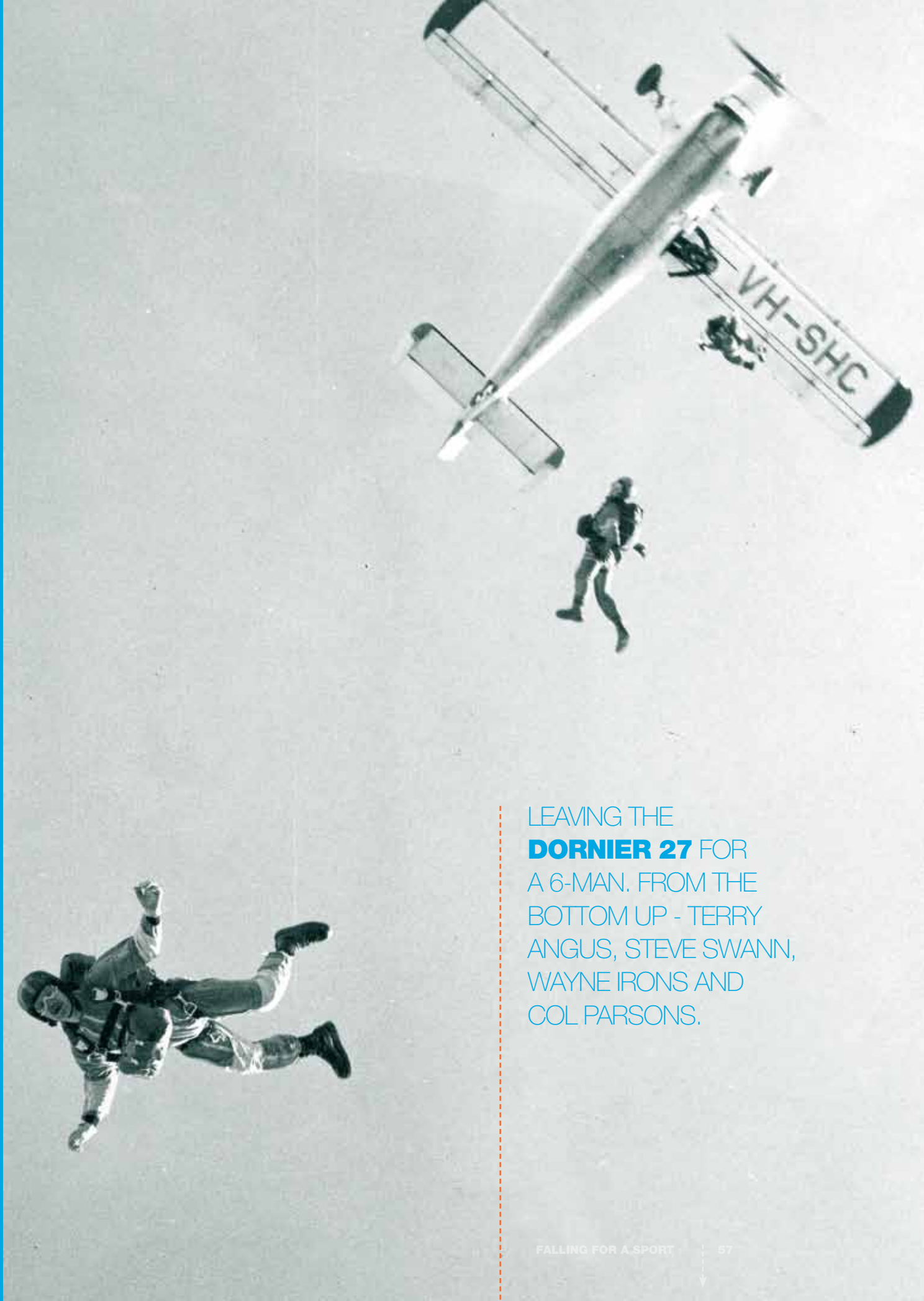


An Anson load in early 1960s, with jumpmaster Max Chaplin kneeling by the door.

SA skydiving moved up a notch in 1973 with the coming of the six-place Dornier 27. Brenton Miller, owner-operator of Skytour Aircharters, bought the Do27 VH-SHC after it ended colourful service with a group of Roman Catholic missionaries in New Guinea. The Sacred Heart congregation was represented in the aircraft's rego – SHC.

It arrived in Adelaide for sale in March, flown down by two Catholic priests and bearing the scars of years of tough service on rough strips – including the initials of natives carved onto the interior paintwork. The Dornier had carried live pigs and cows and once doubled as a maternity ward when a native woman gave birth to twins in flight. Within a month it had been sold and had a new mission in life – flying Adelaide's jumpers.

The arrival of the Dornier changed the face of SA jumping, giving the club access to an economical six-place machine. While it was not a great climber, getting six jumpers to seven grand was better than the meagre three that the C172 VH-UEV had been capable of and it injected a new enthusiasm into the ranks of relative workers.



LEAVING THE **DORNIER 27** FOR A 6-MAN. FROM THE BOTTOM UP - TERRY ANGUS, STEVE SWANN, WAYNE IRONS AND COL PARSONS.

ABOVE LEFT *Pete O'Neill ready for a Tiger Moth leap in the late 1960s.*

ABOVE RIGHT *The C172 UEV gets a once over at Parafield after the SASPC took responsibility for its maintenance and running costs in 1971. (From left) Kim Donaldson, Steve Swann, Col Parsons, Bernie Keenan and pilot George Palladij.*

And the Do27 was a great student jumpship as well – chucking two or three static line students out on a single run across the target was good economics, thanks to the Dornier's STOL (short take-off and landing) performance at low speeds.

The SASPC's arrangement with Skytours Aircharters helped the young company secure the aircraft at a time when jumpships of any kind were hard to find.

The club paid $1,000 up front to Skytours, which operated from a building on the corner of Sir Donald Bradman Drive and Marion Road – handy to West Beach.

Initially the club flew this credit out at the rate of $24 an hour, usually in the Dornier but occasionally in Skytours' 205. The initial contract guaranteed Skytours a minimum of 100 hours a year. But from April to December that year, keen Lower Light jumpers knocked up 128 hours and 1,058 jumps from Brenton's aircraft.

It was a win-win situation and Brenton Miller, and his cousin Bob, became a regular and colourful part of Lower Light weekends.

Inflation, however, was a major worry in the mid 1970s and charges gradually rose to the point where, in March 1976, the Dornier was finally sold by Skytours, depriving the SASPC of a much loved jumpship.

Amazingly Mike Hughes made his first and his 1,000th jumps out of the Dornier, the first jump at Lower Light and the milestone leap years later, after it was sold and based in Melbourne. It has long since gone to the Dornier graveyard.

At this stage the club, with reasonably healthy finances, began for the first time to seriously explore the possibility of buying an aircraft. It had to – there weren't many other options on the horizon if jumpers were to get into the air.

A number of preliminary studies had been made in preceding years, with approaches to banks to establish how much the club could borrow – but that was a complicated issue. Individuals would have to guarantee any loan and there was an obvious reluctance, particularly since only a handful of club members could ever be relied on to put in the hard work of running the club.

But by January 1976 things were looking up. Club president Bernie Keenan reported to the AGM that a loan had finally been approved by the ANZ Bank and that other banks were also being sounded out.

"We're in the process of locating a suitable aircraft," Bernie reported. "It will be either a 205, 206 or 185. We will have about $12,000 to spend and we won't make a move until we are certain of a good buy."

Within a couple of months the search had narrowed – a C205 had captured the committee's interest. It was a 1963 model with 9,000 hours up but it appeared to be

Ride up in the Dornier 27 in 1972. (From left) Steve Swann, Col Parsons (rear), Wayne Irons and Bernie Keenan. Note Bernie's Ricoh camera with the Newton ring sight, more famous for its role as an air-to-air gun camera accessory. The reserve-mounted dashboards are another interesting period piece, secured via the reserve bungees and with space for the altimeter on the left and a stopwatch (if you were a style junkie) on the right. The ubiquitous French boots fill the space between bodies.

10-man load at Parafield in 1974, before flying into Lower Light in the Dornier 27 and 205, both owned by Brenton Miller of Skytours. It was intended to be SA's first 10-man but ended up a six. Back row from left - Steve Swann, Bernie Keenan, Wayne Irons, Wendy and Robin Rose (Vic). Front row - Col Parsons, Phil Edwards, Trev Burns, Noel Weckert (Qld) and Terry Angus.

Off for an 8-man attempt out of the Dove at Lower Light in the early 1970s. (From left) Trev Burns, Terry Trewin, Geoff Brunsgard, Steve Swann, Bernie Keenan, Col Parsons, Ray Williams (Victoria) and Mike Tonks.

ABOVE *Tiger Moth jump coming up: Steve Swann and pilot/owner Ron Smith at Lower Light in 1970.*

ABOVE *The Lower Light crew ready for a 10-man attempt in February 1976 out of Dick Lang's Navajo, an occassional but very welcome jumpship. Back row (from left): Greg Miller, Dick Lang (pilot/owner of the Navajo and still going strong with his Desert Trek tours in 2011), Bernie Keenan, Ray Morgan (in door), Allan McEwen, Bill Starr, Col Parsons and Bob Cunningham. In the front row: Wayne Irons, Dave Jacobs and Steve Boldog. The star built to 7 before someone bombed it.*

the only suitable aircraft available within the club's financial reach.

An aircraft engineer's report into the 205 noted that it was in "reasonable condition" for its age and good value for money. Cautiously, the committee decided to proceed on a "try before you buy" basis, telling the vendors it would go ahead only if the aircraft could be used for a day's jumping before a decision.

The pressure was on – the Dornier had been sold and a Cherokee 6 which was frequently called on was unavailable for the next month or two.

The cautious approach proved a wise move. The 205 finally arrived at Lower Light for a "try and fly" on the Anzac weekend in 1976. After three sorties it wouldn't start – flat battery and a faulty generator. It was jump-started from a car and the idea was to run three or four more sorties without switching the motor off and then call it a day.

Club secretary Col Parsons recorded that on the first of these sorties the aircraft lost power just after the take-off run started. Pilot George Palladij was able to shut down and pull up safely without going through the fence at the other end.

After a careful run-up and check, another attempt was made. The Cessna got airborne with its full load, only to have the engine splutter and lose power at 1,100 feet.

It eventually got to 1,500 feet and, as Col recorded in a club newsletter: "Neville Reichman made the lowest exit he is ever likely to make. And with his big frame out of the way, the other four jumpers were able to exit at 2,000 ft."

The problem was reported later to be fuel injection troubles – mixture too lean. The aircraft's owners implied that it was probably pilot error, an explanation which didn't wash with the club, given George Palladij's 10 years

and hundreds of hours flying jumpers in fuel-injected aircraft.

My own log book entry from the following weekend sums it up: "Rubbish load. Base only with Bernie. 205 missing again – not much luck."

By June 1976 the SASPC committee was determined that, while suitable aircraft were available at reasonable charter costs, that they should be used. The idea of owning our own was on the backburner once again.

That was that – for a few years at least. Things came to a head again in early 1978, when Craig Spiel, the owner of the then regularly used C182 VH-DON, decided he would sell the aircraft. DON had been a reliable hire for the club for a couple of years and Craig himself sometimes flew it. But, having decided to sell and wanting to keep it in good condition for inspection by prospective buyers, he ruled out its future use as a jumpship while it was on the market.

Neil Davis, SASPC secretary at the time, says the club limped along for months, hiring individual aircraft out of Parafield. "It was often quite difficult to find them and operations would sometimes be called off because of lack of a suitable aircraft," recalls Neil. "Meanwhile, DON was just sitting on the ground at Parafield waiting for a buyer. So we talked amongst ourselves at the Robin Hood hotel and someone came up with the idea – why don't we chip in a couple of thousand dollars each and if we get enough of us doing that we'll be able to buy it?"

Starlift Pty Ltd was born. The community-minded co-operative consisted of Col Parsons, Neil Davis, Vic Balfour, Herb Kaiserseder, Jean Turner, Steve Smith, Norm Smith, Mike Henderson and Mike Hughes.

The idea was that, as the company made money by hiring DON to the club, it would progressively pay out the shares of people who wanted to leave the group.

Each of the members put in around $2,000 and club treasurer Herb Kaiserseder put in the hard yards helping to arrange personal bank loans for those who didn't

ABOVE *Moving VH-DON across the Port Wakefield Road in the 1980s – back to the dropzone from George Quigley's farm where it had been stored while awaiting a new engine.*

BELOW *Jo Kielbasa in VH-DON over Lower Light in 1979.*

ABOVE *The McWilliam clan celebrate Jon's birthday with a jump out of the Porter in November, 1994: (from left) Ben, Matthew, Jill, Jon and Luke.*

have the cash. With $22,000 in hand Neil Davis and Col Parsons approached Craig Spiel seeking to buy. "He was actually quite negative to begin with," says Neil, "even though he had a cashed up buyer on his doorstep. For some reason he didn't want to sell it to us at first." But with DON having sat on the tarmac for six months, buyers obviously weren't beating a path to Craig's door and the sale was eventually completed.

With DON now in the direct service of the club, a number of the original sponsors were progressively paid out from it's operating income and by March 1979 the SASPC committee had listed purchase of the aircraft from Starlift as a top priority.

Two months later the committee approved plans to borrow $12,000 from the National Australia Bank to buy DON.

Finances were still tight though and there was ongoing discussion about the need for demo income to be held by the club, rather than individuals, to help the cause. Mike Goodwin even arranged for a beer ticket machine to be installed at the Lower Light pub – along with a raffle. Every little bit helps.

On the way to 23,500 ft over Lower Light in the Pilatus Porter in 1994 – Ian Marks, Tony Lenger, Vlasto Zamecnik and Neil Davis. The aircraft was flown by Malcolm Lloyd.

VH-DON was an integral part of Lower Light parachuting until 2004. Several generations of jumpers still retain a soft spot for it. But for much of the time it had to share the sky with other aircraft.

For the latter part of those 20 years another 182 was based at Lower Light alongside DON. "Al McVinish from Queensland stationed a couple of different 182s there at different times, with a pilot," says Neil Davis. "The pilot basically fended for himself during the week and made money flying jumpers whenever he could. The arrangement with the club was that Al's aircraft would get the first four hours or so on a weekend and then DON would pick up the extra. And on occasions they were both going flat out."

And of course there were the big jumpships, which almost certainly marked the hightide of skydiving in SA, with two operating at different drop zones at one stage. Jeremy Browne's Islanders lifted jumpers at Strathalbyn into another dimension around the same time *(See separate story.)*

For several years in the late 1980s Sydney Skydivers' Phil Onis would bring his 16-place

Nomad to Adelaide, operating it at Lower Light for 10 days at a time and servicing both the hectic round of demo jumps at the Grand Prix motor racing events and lifting jumpers in the hugely popular Lower Light relative work seminars of the time. For a period in 1993 it was based permanently at Lower Light.

President Ted McWatters' annual report to the 1993 SASPC annual general meeting said that year's committee's first coup had been to "have the Nomad offered to us for a year and, even though we lost it early, we used this experience well and learned a lot about running a turbine at Lower Light."

Fortunately the gap caused by the Nomad's departure was filled very soon after by the arrival of the Porter.

The purchase of the ex-Australian Army Pilatus Porter in May 1993 was the beginning of what many believe to have been SA skydiving's golden era. Lower Light jumpers Keith Briggs, Mark Twigden and Jon McWilliam formed a syndicate to buy the aircraft, one of several being disposed of by the Army at the time.

It had a galvanizing effect on jumping. Ted McWatters' presidential report to the SASPC in June 1994 urged jumpers to continue their enthusiastic support of Keith, Mark and Jon "and use this aircraft so that it will remain here."

Jon bought the Porter outright from Keith and Mark in March, 1997 and it continued to be used for skydiving, mainly based at Lower Light, until 1998 when Jon moved with the Porter to Nagambie in Victoria. It was eventually sold and shipped back to Switzerland where it had been built – the last remaining Porter in use in Australia.

These two aircraft, the Porter in particular, injected a whole new wave of enthusiasm and

ABOVE *Race to the ground – the Porter in action at Lower Light.*

ABOVE *HALO at Lower Light out of the Porter in November 1994. From left (front) Keith Perrot, Vlasto Zamecnik and Neil Davis. (rear) Ralph Wulff, Ian Marks and Tony Lenger.*

talent into Lower Light. But it also meant that DON was not fully exploited.

Financial pressures again began to squeeze the club, which had undertaken a number of major expenditure projects in the preceding years – including buying the 182-acre paddock at Lower Light and connecting mains power.

In early 2000 there were serious moves to sell DON and a special general meeting of members was told there was no choice but to sell. The SASPC committee's intention was to sell the aircraft and enter into a contract with the operator to base it at Lower Light.

Members were informed that the engine account maintained for regular overhauls of DON had a zero balance, thanks to heavy maintenance requirements, and that $6,000 would have to be found from somewhere to top up the account. Every cent the plane earned for the next 1,100 hours would have to be saved, while the existing aircraft loan continued to be paid off, just to pay for the next engine overhaul!

A lot of ideas were tossed around in an attempt to salvage the situation, including a serious proposition from a group to set up "Friends of DON" which would buy the aircraft and lease it back to the club – echoes of Starlift all over again. But the motion to sell was carried.

However, there a number of unhappy campers after that meeting. Gary Gebhardt, a new arrival at the club, was one of those opposed to the idea of selling. "Not being a financial member at the time I refrained from uttering my gut feelings as to the recklessness of such a venture," he wrote in a later submission to members. "I could sense an air of gloom over the whole membership. It was no surprise to me that the motion would be carried. However, it saddened me to see a legacy that was inherited from previous generations of skydivers so easily abandoned. I wondered if past committees and members had ever dealt with a problem in this way. Would we ever have nourished ourselves on the culture that has developed here? Our heritage is the product of generations of hardworking dedicated skydivers passionately giving 100 percent energy to a common dream. So ask yourselves honestly, have you ever benefited from the fruits of their labour, have you done all I that you can to ensure that this legacy is at least left intact?" His comments were included in an open letter, calling for another general meeting to consider rescinding the motion to sell. His co-signatories were Neil Davis, Keith Perrott, Steve Renshaw, Pete Nonnan, Derrick Eilers, Denise Maule, Amanda Pashley and Mal Stevens.

By April of 2000 resistance to selling DON had built up sufficiently to warrant yet another special general meeting – this one bent on reversing the decision.

Even though by this time Al Gray had bought the 182 VH-DNZ and put it into service at Lower Light, there were those who worried about the loss of lifting capacity that the sale of DON might cause.

In a detailed briefing to SASPC committee members in the lead up to the special gathering of all club members, Geoff Cooling

looked at the pros and cons of selling DON and weighed up the options. He was against a rushed decision and obviously displeased with the state of affairs. "I am a little stunned by the perceived power that some of the committee members think they have," he wrote in a report to the members. "It is a club with financial members and they 'the members' are surely the power behind it and the committee is voted in to serve the best wishes of 'the members' through their experience. Sure, you have been granted certain powers to manage the day to day running of the DZ but you did not inherit the club's assets nor the role of God. Use your powers to buy a nice lawn mower or repair what's left of the wind blade, but when it comes to such major assets like the sale of the DON, then all of the club members have the right to be informed, educated as to the how's and why's of the intent and then asked to vote."

At the subsequent special meeting called to fill in the entire membership, only 20 of the club's 38 members bothered to show up for this crucial vote. Geoff Cooling told the meeting that DON had always made a profit. "The DON account was used incorrectly for facilities and the money has never been put back into the DON account. So when it needed a new engine there was no money in the DON account," he said. Neil Davis, a man with considerable experience of the club's operations, told the meeting (as recorded in the minutes): "If Lower Light sells DON and makes $50,000, what are you going to do with the money? Pay the bills. It's the club that needs to be put back on the rails – the problem is not the plane!"

The meeting voted 17 to 2 to rescind the decision. It was the dying embers of club spirit resisting the inevitable forces which would

VH-DON WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LOWER LIGHT PARACHUTING. SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF JUMPERS STILL RETAIN A SOFT SPOT FOR IT.

BELOW *DON helps Jeremy Browne (right) celebrate his 100th jump at Lower Light in 1989, accompanied by Joanne Kielbasa and others.*

DON at Lower Light in 2000.

ABOVE *Pilot and veteran jumper Neil Davis works on Adelaide Tandem Skydivings' VH-DNZ at Lower Light in 2009.*

eventually lead to the total commercialisation of skydiving in South Australia.

Only a year later the SASPC finances were again under siege. By February 2001 Parafield Refuellers had ceased the club's line of credit. Creditors totalled more than $30,000, including $10,000 for fuel, $10,000 for Aeroservices and $6,300 still outstanding on the aircraft loan.

Numerous ideas were tossed around, including subdividing the land at Lower Light and selling off two or three blocks and having a telecommunications tower erected on the land – an odd structure for a parachute club to consider having protruding into its airspace. While the committee went as far as to phone a real estate agent to inquire about values, the idea was considered to be risky, as new neighbours could present a problem with noise complaints – and it would take at least six months to generate revenue anyway.

The committee also considered opening its student operations up for private enterprise.

Finally a special general meeting was held in the hangar at the George Quigley Airfield on March 30, 2001 to put a series of make or break proposals to club members.

An overwhelming majority (23 to 2) supported the motion to open up Lower Light's student operations to private enterprise, noting that during past periods when student training had been driven by private enterprise the club had prospered.

After advertising for people interested in taking over the operations, the club received just one response to its advertisement for a chief instructor and private enterprise business proposal – Geoff Cooling. His offer was accepted and his Adventure Air took over training and tandem operations at Lower Light later in the year, with Al Gray as chief instructor and Al's VH-DNZ providing the backbone of lifting capacity. But DON continued to languish, frequently unused while the necessary 300 hours a year were clocked up on DNZ, guaranteed as part of the club's arrangement with Adventure Air and Al Gray.

What was dubbed a "special mini meeting" (whatever that may be) was held in late November 2003 and the future of DON was front and centre. Discussion again centred on the availability of backup aircraft, along with the continuing potential of DON to become a major drain on club finances. A stark picture was presented to members – based on the number of jumps currently made from DON, the SASPC would lose money.

Neil Davis reported that 200-300 hours per year was needed to break even. "DON is not just an asset, it is also a liability unless it is used enough. It wears out faster when it is not used than when it is used," he said.

Figures tabled at the meeting showed that DNZ was averaging 320 hours while DON managed only 70. The writing was well and truly on the wall.

This time the pro-sale voices finally won out and DON was sold in 2004, heading off to WA with new owner Pete Lonnon of Petes Parachuting – and closing a major, and frequently traumatic, chapter in the life of the SASPC.

PRANGS
AN ENVIABLE RECORD WITH AIRCRAFT SAFETY

In 50 years of aircraft operation for skydiving in SA there have been very few incidents or accidents. Apart from engine problems with a Cessna 205 which the SASPC was considering buying in the 1970s, Col Parsons, a veteran jumper and jump pilot, can't recall many significant events at all.

"Of course there were the flame-outs on descent in our early sorties with the Porter at Lower Light in the 1990s," says Col. "I had the first one when I was flying it and was viewed askance by the owners until one of them had the same problem. We then realised that if you point an aircraft almost vertically at the ground during descent you had better have enough fuel on board to cover the inflow points in the tanks! So much for running a minimal fuel load to make the climb times faster."

There were a couple of memorable occasions – Skysport's C180 VH-SLT was ground looped by a pilot who didn't subsequently get any return invitations to fly. And Skysport pilot and partner Warwick Blacker had the engine in the centre's C206 VH-UWL blow up on the business' last day of operations.

"Warwick did a superb job of the forced landing, putting the aircraft down on the strip and judging the landing roll right back into the parking area without power. It was the only time I have seen him with pallid skin and no 5 million watt smile," says Col.

"But in the 50 years of jumping we must have done thousands of hours – I've got 1,500 hours of jump flying to start with – without more than a few mishaps and no injuries. It's also interesting to contemplate the fact that several of the pilots used jump flying as a springboard into the RAAF and the airlines. I wonder if they will ever thank us for the leg-up?" ✖

BELOW *Skysport's VH-SLT after being ground-looped in 1983.*

The jumpers link hands over Edinburgh to set an SA record

Jump breaks record

FOG and low cloud couldn't stop 33 experienced skydivers from jumping into the record books late yesterday afternoon.

They set a new record for the largest free-fall formation in SA, breaking an unofficial record of 30 skydivers in formation, illegally set in 1995. The Australian record stands at 61 skydivers, while the world record is an astonishing 200.

Australian Parachute Federation area safety officer, Ms Jan Honeyman, said the formation was difficult to achieve.

"The difficulty comes in trying to get as many people into the one patch of air as quickly as possible," Ms Honeyman said.

"There were people scattered all over the sky and they had to work very hard to get back to the one space."

The jump was conducted at the Edinburgh RAAF base in Adelaide's north.

The skydivers pack into an RAAF DC3 for takeoff

The Advertiser August 31 1998

ABOVE *Great coverage in The Advertiser.*

RAAF DC3 DELIVERS A FREEFALL RECORD

A South Australian relative work record was set in spectacular style in August 1998, with local jumpers putting together a 33-way formation out of a Royal Australian Airforce DC3 at Edinburgh.

The jump, organised by Jan Honeyman, was a buzz for all those able to jump from the then soon to retire DC3.

RIGHT *Legenedary cameraman, Graeme Ricketts doing what he did best – capturing the DC3 relative work action.*

LEFT *Headed up in the DC3 over Edinburgh: (from left) Ron Hoey, Marcus Priem, Jane Richardson, Julie Verstergh, Shane Strudwick, Greg Smith, Kevin Taylor, Glenys, Darren Vickers, Fiona Pashley, Steven Boekel, Gemma Stevens, Mick Hardy and Matt Palmer. Photographer Wayne Van Dongan was also aboard.*

ISLANDERS DO THE HEAVY LIFTING AT STRATHALBYN

ABOVE *The Islander VH-OBJ at Parafield with chief pilot Russell Hawkins and owner Jeremy Browne in August 1995.*

While Lower Light was enjoying big capacity turbines, jumpers at Strathalbyn also had a taste of the big time.

When Skysport first relocated from Lower Light to Strathalbyn there were niggling problems getting hold of an aircraft on a regular basis.

"The SASPC owned VH-DON of course and we had use of the C182 VH-EHI for a while but some weekends it just wasn't available," says Jeremy Browne, who was by then an owner of Skysport together with Steve and Jan Boldog. "So in 1987 we started looking for something to buy. In those days a decent Cessna was about $35,000 and the idea was to get an early model because they were lighter. We ended up locating quite a nice 1966 model from Caloundra, Queensland."

The owner flew it to Bourke in NSW to meet the Skysport crew halfway for testing and appraisal. However, when they

RIGHT *VH-RBD at Skysport, Strathalbyn.*

ABOVE *Strathalbyn jumpers exit the Islander in 1994.*

got to Bourke and decided the Cessna 182 VH-RBD was suitable they discovered the paperwork hadn't been finalised on financing arrangements. "I ended up buying it on my credit card – or on three credit cards," says Jeremy, "And then we flew it back to Strath."

VH-RBD was the backbone of the Strathalbyn operations, under various managements, until 1993 when the DZ was operating as Skydive Adelaide.

Tony and Laurie McAvoy, of Skydive Adelaide, were cranking out plenty of students and tandems and put a proposal to Jeremy Browne, now the sole owner of VH-RBD, that the operation really needed a larger aircraft.

"At that time the Army was selling its Pilatus Porters," says Jeremey. "I looked at those at Essendon. In fact, a syndicate subsequently bought one for Lower Light. But I rang a number of clubs in Europe which were operating Pilatus and I just couldn't see that we were doing enough jumps – you needed to do at least 10,000 jumps a year to cover a turbine. We were doing about 6,000 to 8,000. So I talked with Grahame Hill who had been running Islanders at Wilton Parachute Centre in NSW and he reckoned they were a very good option."

Jeremy located an Islander in New Zealand and bought it in September 1993. Apart from being an ideal jumpship in good condition, he also couldn't resist the call sign – OBJ.

"OBJ was an old Lancashire beer that I used to drink as youth – Oh Be Joyful – appropriate," says Jeremy.

The Islander was an immediate boost for Strathalbyn, regularly lifting 10 jumpers to 12,000 feet and turning around sorties, up and back, in just on half an hour.

Because it was a twin engine there was no shortage of talented and ambitious young pilots lining up to fly, chasing their 200 hours to go commercial.

"I was able to get a very good chief pilot – Russell Hawkins – and we really set it up almost as a commercial operation," says Jeremy.

While it was there, the instrument rated aircraft offered considerable flexibility and some great night jumping. But in 1995 Jeremy decided to trade up. Graham Windsor, who had been president of the Australian Parachute Federation, was interested in buying VH-OBJ and he put him in touch with a company in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, which had an Islander it wanted to sell.

"It was their last petrol-driven aircraft and the deal was that, if I bought that one, Graham would buy OBJ. I flew over and looked at it and it was an absolutely beautiful aeroplane, maintained regardless of cost. I have to say, in hindsight, it was far too good to go skydiving."

That went into service at Strathalbyn as VH-OBL. However, as the 1990s progressed operations began to gradually slow. OBL was flying about 350 to 400 hours a year – not brilliant but enough for financial sustainability.

"By 1997 and 1998 we were down to about 250 hours," Jeremy says. "There's no way you can run an aeroplane like that on less than 300." Reluctantly he decided to pull it out of skydiving operations.

High jump into the big time

By LEANNE WEIR

Skydiving has soared to new heights in South Australia with the help of a new 10-seater aircraft.

The twin-engined Islander has given Skydive Adelaide the jump on the growing sport of formation skydiving.

Formation jumping, where four or more skydivers perform a series of choreographed moves while freefalling, has taken off in recent years.

However, aircraft size has restricted the number of jumpers on any one flight to four.

Until now, SA's top skydivers have had to travel interstate to jump in larger numbers.

Aircraft owner and skydiving buff, Mr Jeremy Browne, said the club's membership had doubled since the new plane had been bought in September.

"It's so much more fun when you're in a freefall with a group of your mates," he said.

Mr Browne said that until now, competitive SA skydivers had been disadvantaged because they did not have an aircraft capable of carrying eight jumpers – a popular number in formation jumping.

"We will now be able to train people up to a world standard," Mr Browne said.

The club had been booked for 160 training jumps in preparation for the national skydiving competitions, he said.

Tandem parachuting, where beginners are strapped to an instructor, and accelerated freefall, where first-timers jump with two instructors and freefall for a minute before opening the parachute, had encouraged many dare-devils.

TOP: Skydive Adelaide parachutists freefall in formation from their new 10-seater plane. INSET: Skydivers wait to jump over their Strathalbyn drop zone. PICTURE: CHRIS MANGAN

SOFTER LANDINGS, **ANKLES INTACT**

Flares were something on the end of your pants in the 1960s and 70s – not a technique designed to soften your landings.

When round canopies ruled, something more substantial than sneakers was called for as parachuting footwear.

The so-called French boots (they were made in France) were a must-have item for the serious jumper. Paraboots, selling at $29.50 a pair in 1970, were available in two styles. The "accuracy" version had a thicker, cushioned sole to absorb vertical impact. The "style" model was a slightly lighter looking boot with a thinner sole. You've got to wonder why though – arriving on the ground under an old round canopy was just as hard, whether you'd just done a style set or not.

Both boots featured excellent ankle support – and they looked a hell of a lot cooler than the army surplus stuff otherwise in use.

NO FACEBOOK, NO EMAIL BACK IN THE DAY

Long before the advent of email, urgent APF safety advice was conveyed by telegram. This message to the SASPC from then APF national safety officer Claude Gillard was hand-delivered by Post Office messenger, probably on a pushbike, to Col Parsons at his Tusmore flat in 1970.

It followed lengthy investigation of a recent Sydney fatality in which an experienced instructor (781 jumps) died at Wilton after a main-reserve entanglement. The investigation had established the cause of the main malfunction was an unsecured steering toggle snaring the pilot chute bridle.

This was before ram airs when brakes weren't set. Steering lines (with wooden toggles) simply sat in elastic keepers on the risers – easily dislodged while packing or just as easy to overlook.

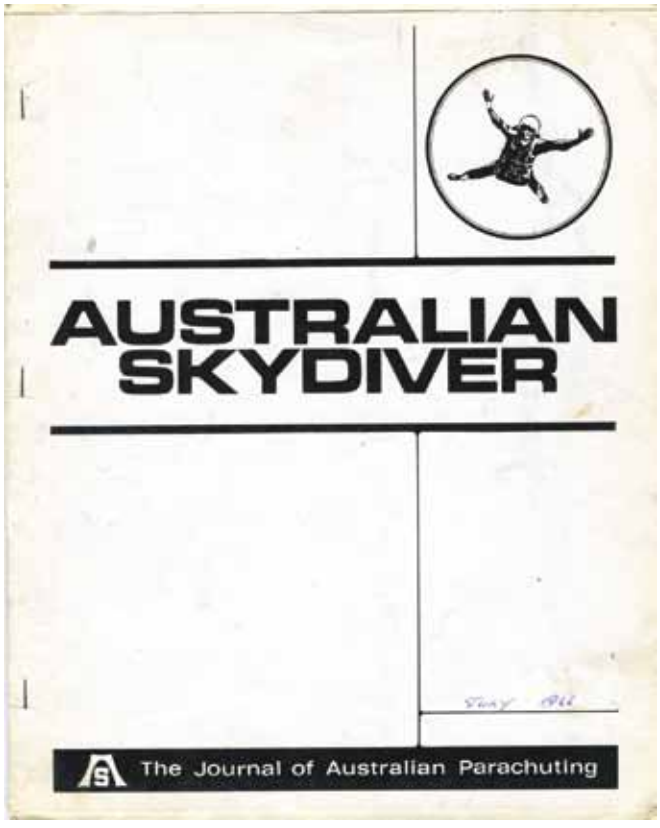
AUSTRALIAN SKYDIVER MAGAZINE'S **SA ROOTS**

South Australia was home to *Australian Skydiver* magazine for more than 10 years in the 1960s and 70s. Published by Trevor Burns at Port Pirie and later by Steve Swann, with the help of Bernie Keenan, in Adelaide, the black and white magazine was produced every two months and distributed to jumpers all around Australia.

This was before the Australian Parachute Federation became involved in subsidising its production and postage.

The magazine was produced in SA, on an entirely voluntary basis, using pre-computer age technology in an era long before digital photography, email or the internet.

LEFT *SA jumper Terry Angus and the old outside dunny at the Lower Light pub feature in an ASM advertisement in 1974, encouraging jumpers to subscribe to the magazine. The ad's message – "You don't pay for their jumping. Why pay for their reading?" – sought to discourage the few paying subscribers which ASM had from handing the mag onto their mates to read, without actually supporting the publication themselves. This was before the APF helped underwrite the magazine's production – you only received it in the mail if you paid for it.*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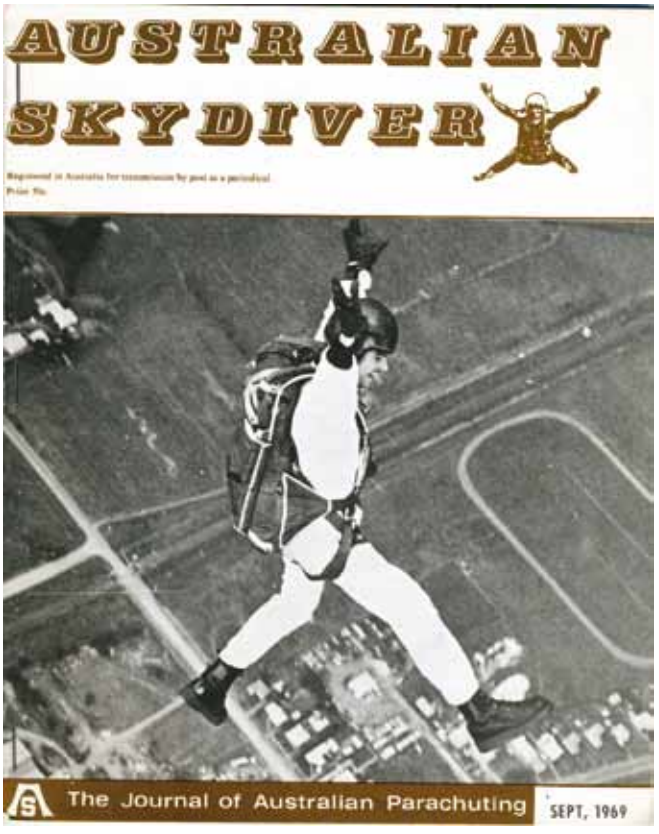
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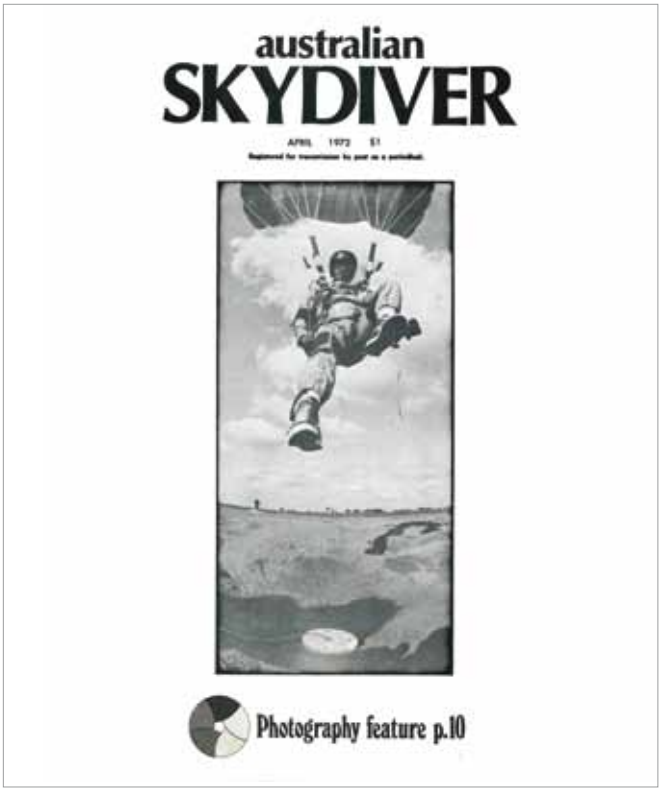
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CUTTING EDGE
SA'S FIRST BASE JUMPER

The term BASE jumping hadn't occurred to anyone at Lower Light until 1979. A few might just have heard of this deviant activity at the time – but it didn't really register. Not until Mike Henderson returned from an overseas trip!

BASE being BASE, I might have missed the odd secretive date or fact on this one – but until otherwise notified, Mike Henderson's leap from the famous El Capitan in California still ranks, for me, as the first recorded BASE jump by an SA skydiver.

When he stood in the paddock at Lower Light on his return and recounted his experience, it was greeted with disbelief. But Mike, a consummate skydiver and a safe and considered operator, had worked it all out.

On a prolonged DZ crawl through the United States (masquerading as a motoring holiday) with his wife Fran, Mike ended up in Zephyr Hills, Florida where he first saw the electrifying footage taken by Carl Boenish of his jumps, conducted the year before, from El Capitan, a huge granite formation in Yosemite National Park, California.

When Boenish made his El Capitan jumps in 1978, BASE jumping, as a discipline, did not exist, although two American jumpers had previously launched off El Cap back in the 1960s.

"Anyone who was around Lower Light in the 1970s will be familiar with Carl Boenish's earlier work. I remember, as a student, being mesmerised by *Sky Capers* and *Masters of the Sky*, viewed numerous times in Bernie Keenan's shed – our de facto clubhouse in those days," says Mike.

"As with most jumpers who see Boenish's BASE footage, the thoughts that went through my mind were 'Would I like to do that? Definitely! Could I do it? Hmm. Not so sure.' "

BELOW *Mike Henderson (second from right) on top of El Capitan for his 1979 BASE jump, right on last light.*

After the Florida Meet they headed back to San Francisco, detouring through Yosemite. This presented an ideal opportunity to check out El Cap.

The group entered Yosemite late in the year, as the first snows were falling. They were worried that El Capitan might not be accessible but the trail was still open. By this time jumping off cliff faces in the park was illegal, so they had to be discrete.

"On our first attempt we set off at about 9 am. We had been told it was about a seven-hour trek to the summit. By the time 4 pm came around, it was clear that we were nowhere near the top, let alone the exit spot. We must have lost the path at some point," says Mike.

"We retraced our steps and found the path again, but by this time it was too late to go on, so we stowed our rigs under some foliage and

made our way downwards. Leaving our rigs behind was our guarantee that we'd be back the following day."

The next day they set out earlier. After about five hours' trek, they were relieved to locate their rigs and continued on. But after another two to three hours, there was still no sign of the summit of the cliff. It was getting dark, and they weren't sure where they were. "We began to formulate a plan B – spend the night on the cliff and sleep in our canopies," says Mike. "But this would have worried Fran, our getaway driver, who was waiting at the landing point with the van – no mobile phones back then.

"So we pressed on, and as the sun was sinking behind Half Dome, we finally came out on the cliff top. We just had time to make our preparations and do the jump before the sun sank completely behind the massive rock formations surrounding the valley.

"We decided that Rob Colpus, Chris Bramhill and I would launch first in a loose arrowhead formation with Rob at the tip, while Geoff Sanders would try to get some photos of the exit. Geoff would then follow. Unfortunately by the time we actually made the jump it was too dark for photos, so we don't actually have any pictures of the launch.

"El Capitan is high. The edge is some 3,000 feet above the valley floor and it's about 1,500 feet before the scree steps out from the cliff face, so if you get a decent track going, you can easily get a good 10 seconds free-fall.

"I remember the exit in detail. 'One, two, three, let's go.' (Do I really want to do this?) Not being used to slack air I had a second or two of instability. After a bit of arm waving and wobbling I stabilised out, then put the arms back, and went into a track. I went head-down and as I looked between my legs I had a startling view of the cliff face accelerating past, seemingly just inches away. Then I looked

ABOVE *Mike Henderson's happy snap of the exit point for his 1979 jump.*

LEFT *The Hunchbacks of El Cap: ready for the climb to the top, rigs hidden beneath jackets. Mike is on the far left.*

over and saw Rob ahead and below, and Chris, stable and tracking, further across on the left." Mike recalls.

"After about 10 seconds freefall I dumped. My canopy deployed cleanly but with two twists and about 90º off heading, flying parallel to the cliff face. We were using standard skydiving rigs. El Cap is a pretty forgiving cliff, and base jumping modifications were not really necessary – not that they existed in those days.

"From there it was a 60-second canopy ride to our landing area, El Capitan Meadows, where Fran was waiting with the getaway van. We rolled up our rigs, tossed them in the van and made a clean getaway."

Later that evening, as they were packing their canopies by firelight, a park ranger pulled up and stared at them "narrowly and meaningfully" from the cabin of his truck.

"Then he drove off. So it was a good clean caper," says Mike. "As far as I am aware, Rob Colpus and Geoff Sanders were the first British to do El Cap, and Chris Bramhill and I were the first Australians."

CHAMPIONS

MIKE HUGHES: ALWAYS REACHING FOR THE SKY

Competition was well and truly in the blood of one of SA parachuting's star students of the 1970s, Mike Hughes.

Mike, better known as Kimbies, spent 25 years in the sport and nearly 20 of those competing hard and at the very highest levels with his peers.

He was in a host of RW teams in 4 way, 8, 6, 10, 12, 16 and 40 ways and was a front-runner in CRW teams in the early years.

Mike won Australian national championships five times in 4 and 8 way relative work and was selected four times for the Australian RW Team for World Meets – a man with a major legacy at Lower Light.

LEFT *Australia's first quadraplane in the air over Lower Light in 1979. (From the top) Mike Hughes, Ray Currie, Ian Wark and Andy Weir.*

INNOVATORS

FREEFALL PHOTOGRAPHY THE HARD WAY

While every second jumper these days seems to carry a video camera or a GoPro, freefall photography in the 1970s was a rarity. And those shooting movies were in a distinct minority.

One of the few Australian jumpers shooting 16 mm film and the only SA jumper making movies of any kind in those days was SASPC's Bernie Keenan. Most amateurs were limited to the lower resolution 8 mm home movie format but Bernie, a television news cameraman with Adelaide's ADS7, could access state-of-the-art equipment through his work.

Bernie is pictured outside the Lower Light packing shed after a jump with his neck-stretching helmet camera rig, a 16mm Beaulieu news camera with hand held bulb release and Newton ring sight.

Opening under a high performance Paracommander roundie with something of this weight attached was a challenge and Bernie habitually braced his head with his right hand after pulling the ripcord.

BERNIE KEENAN COULD ACCESS STATE-OF-THE-ART CAMERA EQUIPMENT THROUGH HIS WORK AS A TV NEWS CAMERAMAN.

THE 1970s

ABOVE *SASPC's flying Norseman, Jake "Hagar" Peters at Lower Light, 1973.*

BELOW *Mike Tonks (left) and Col Parsons in VH-UEV circa 1971.*

ABOVE *Lower Light jumpers at a west coast demo in the late 1970s: Andy Weir, Ian Wark, Mike Goodwin and Mike Hughes.*

RIGHT *Hardy souls in the late 1970s – Mike Henderson, Vic Balfour, Herb Kaiserseder and Mike Hughes.*

ABOVE *Jill Swann and Sue Keenan celebrate the laying of the slab for the club house at Lower Light in 1971.*

BELOW *Bernie Keenan squeezes into Ron Smith's Tiger Moth at Lower Light in the early 1970s – only one shed there in those days.*

LOWER LIGHT'S FLYING DOCTORS

Dropzones and injury have always had a certain affinity and it was particularly so in the 1970s, when people were arriving at ground level under primitive round canopies.

But in 1973 Lower Light counted itself lucky to recruit two doctors in the May intake of new students. Mike Henderson and his mate Peter Lillee were among the 10 students who made their first jumps on that long weekend.

It was a high-powered couple of days, with the Dornier 27 frequently hot-loaded with static line sorties. Capable of disgorging two, sometimes three static line students on a single run over the target, the STOL (short take-off and landing) Dornier's low speed was a positive boon.

All 10 new students made their first two jumps on the Sunday and most of them turned up again on the holiday Monday to do one, two and in some cases three more jumps. A total of 36 static line jumps was made in those two days – and every student was jump-mastered and supervised in packing by just three experienced jumpers.

It was probably the high tide of club spirit in South Australia, given that none of those instructors was paid a cent and often they didn't even exit the Dornier after the students jumped, riding it back down to pick up the next load or get back into the packing shed.

Mike (known thereafter as 'Doc' Henderson) set a high standard for himself, which almost certainly hasn't been bettered since – he landed in the pit on three of his first four jumps. On a military surplus roundie!

When Mike left SA for an Army medical posting in 1974, the loss of his skills was lamented in the club's newsletter. "We'll miss his enthusiasm as well as his bone-setting skills at Royal Adelaide Hospital," newsletter editor Col Parsons noted. "At one stage in 1973 you could break a leg with the assurance of good treatment. We had Peter Lillee in Casualty, Mike Henderson in Orthopaedics, Cheryl Castropil in Post-Surgical Care and Derek Baggaley in Physchiatric Care."

What more could you ask? ✖

THE 1970s

ABOVE *Celebrating Col Parsons' 500th jump with a drop of bubbly – Bernie Keenan, Col and Steve Swann. Press photographer and jumper Bob Cunningham took the photo, which featured in the centrespread of the afternoon daily The News.*

ABOVE *Lower Light 1979. (From left) Jo Kielbasa, Neil Davis, Kym Williams, Vic Balfour and Renee Davis.*

Andy Weir brings his Paracommander into the Lower Light pit in the mid 1970s: chest-mounted reserve unhooked on one side.

LEFT *Col Parsons (left) sees off a Cherokee 6 load: Andy Weir waving and Dave Jacobs with the swish new piggyback.*

LEFT *Packing high performance round canopies on the Lower Light lawn in the 1970s. Ian Wark in the foreground.*

LEFT *Getting wet – Steve Swann (left) and Bernie Keenan before their water jumps into the lake at Goolwa, off what is now the Aqua Cafe. Roger Meadmore, pilot and owner of the floatplane and the then hugely popular Pancake Kitchen is on the far left.*

THE 1970s

Strato Star on approach, guided by Mike Hughes in February, 1978.

Windy Lower Light landing for Mike Hughes in the 1970s.

Col Parsons (left) and Steve Swann in the seaweed on their Paracommanders, 1970.

Al McEwen

ABOVE *Allan McEwen waits for his night jump slot in the late 1970s.*

ABOVE *Mike Henderson and Mike Hughes get ready for their first chopper jump while on a visit to the US in 1979.*

MILESTONES

CELEBRATING THE BIG JUMPS WITH A LITTLE GUNGE

Ringing the bell and dropping a carton on the bar – a civilised if costly way to mark a milestone like 100 jumps or 10,000. But it wasn't always so simple.

In the early days at Lower Light – the late 1960s and through the 70s – these occasions were celebrated with little more than fresh water and some healthy forced exercise – like a walk across the entire DZ in mid summer with a cement-filled basketball locked to your leg, ball-and-chain style, and then a cooling splash. Or a quick sprint across the DZ tethered to the back of a ute with a static line and then a refreshing dip in one of George Quigley's sheep troughs.

Pete Siebert gets the 100-jump treatment from Bernie Keenan, Steve Swann and Bill Glavin. 1971.

It later became far more calculating and messy. By the late 1980s it had come known as 'gunging', a term Greg Smith says refers to the revolting brew which was poured over often nude victims.

"Gunging was tailored to the jumper – if we had someone who was really nice and who wouldn't offend anybody we might tip petals over them. If someone caused a lot of trouble or was a rebel, then we'd strip him raw nude – we'd brew up these concoctions which were nearly two weeks old with alcohol, anything you could think of, food scraps even, and we'd pour it over him."

Greg recalls a particular 100 jump candidate. "Bob McKenny was a very prominent solicitor and ran his own law firm in Adelaide and he came out to the club and he saw the parties and he loved it. Bob came up to 100 jumps and I said, this guy is a solicitor and he's an older guy, we're not going to gunge him. Everyone agreed. Time went by and Bob, a very nice guy, came up to me and said 'Greg I notice I haven't been gunged.' I told him we weren't going to. He said 'Greg, I demand to be gunged.' Gunging was like an acceptance. You were part of the group."

The SASPC was one of the last clubs in the country to practice gunging. It had been raised at Australian Parachute Federation board meetings and clubs were officially warned that it was illegal and participants could be prosecuted. So much for tradition! And a new definition for PC!

ABOVE *Trevor Burns celebrates his 400th in the packing shed at Lower Light 1970. (From left) Steve Swann, Peter Siebert, Trevor and Bernie Keenan.*

LEFT *The 100 jump treatment for Al McEwen in 1974: a quick dash across the DZ tethered to the back of a ute with a static line and then a refreshing dip in one of George Quigley's sheep troughs, assisted by Col Parsons, Jake Peters and Steve Swann.*

ABOVE *Gunging 1990s style.*

LEFT *Kym Williams delivers Mick O'Brien into the Lower Light gunge in the mid 1980s.*

STUDENT TRAINING

FROM STATIC LINES TO AFF, STUDENTS REAPING THE BENEFITS

ABOVE *Rod Evans gears up Kit Gordie at Mallala in the mid 1960s.*

Students' rates of progression in the days before accelerated freefall training were glacial by current standards.

It was particularly so for the very first jumpers: the idea of falling stable wasn't even considered at the beginning.

"Now there's a great wealth of experience to draw on," says Cathy Williamson. "In 1961 it was trial and error. We were learning about frog positions, about spinning and how to control it as we went along. In fact, for the first four of our compulsory eight static lines you sat on the edge of the door and just sort of lifted yourself out into space – it was really a bit weird, in this foetal military position."

Once out the door and finally off the 'dope rope', early jumpers still had to master stability. For the talented few it was relatively easy. Others like veteran Col Parsons took longer.

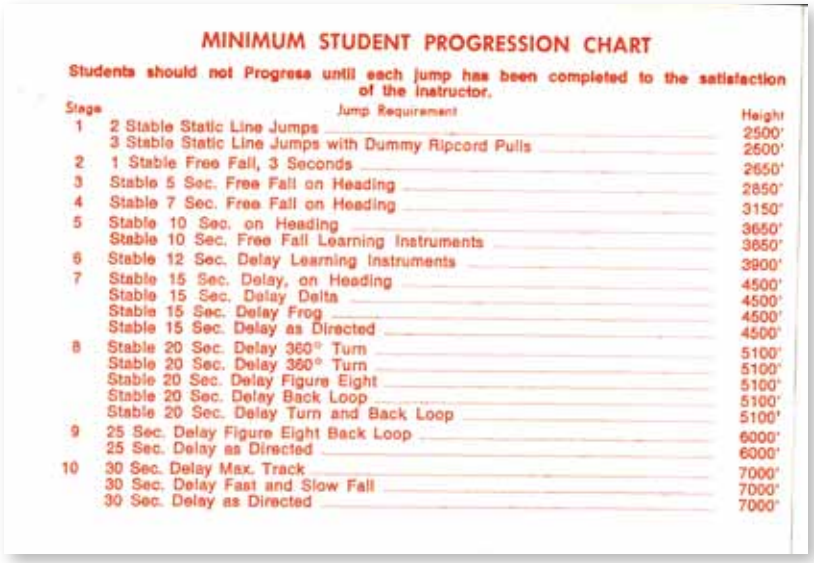
"I didn't do my first completely stable 30 second delay until I had about 50 jumps," says Col. "I'd get out at 7,000 ft, arch like crazy in the way that I had been told, and then spin all the way down to 2,500 ft."

Finally someone took a film of him exiting, itself a novel and exotic event at a time when even home movie cameras were rare.

"This showed that my problem was that the arch was so severe that there was really no arch. Nothing stuck out from the side. My arms and legs were pulled so far back and so stiff that there was no real arch," Col says.

Later generations of jumpers have reaped the rewards of this trial and error learning.

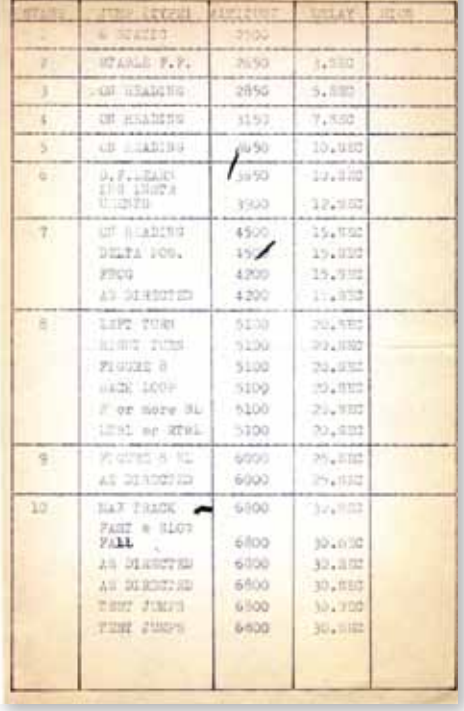
By the late 1960s a standardised freefall training progression table was in use in



MINIMUM STUDENT PROGRESSION CHART

Students should not Progress until each jump has been completed to the satisfaction of the Instructor.

Stage	Jump Requirement	Height
1	2 Stable Static Line Jumps	2500'
	3 Stable Static Line Jumps with Dummy Ripcord Pulls	2500'
2	1 Stable Free Fall, 3 Seconds	2650'
3	Stable 5 Sec. Free Fall on Heading	2850'
4	Stable 7 Sec. Free Fall on Heading	3150'
5	Stable 10 Sec. on Heading	3650'
	Stable 10 Sec. Free Fall Learning Instruments	3650'
6	Stable 12 Sec. Delay Learning Instruments	3900'
7	Stable 15 Sec. Delay, on Heading	4500'
	Stable 15 Sec. Delay Delta	4500'
	Stable 15 Sec. Delay Frog	4500'
	Stable 15 Sec. Delay as Directed	4500'
8	Stable 20 Sec. Delay 360° Turn	5100'
	Stable 20 Sec. Delay 360° Turn	5100'
	Stable 20 Sec. Delay Figure Eight	5100'
	Stable 20 Sec. Delay Back Loop	5100'
	Stable 20 Sec. Delay Turn and Back Loop	5100'
9	25 Sec. Delay Figure Eight Back Loop	6000'
	25 Sec. Delay as Directed	6000'
10	30 Sec. Delay Max. Track	7000'
	30 Sec. Delay Fast and Slow Fall	7000'
	30 Sec. Delay as Directed	7000'



South Australia but, having completed the minimum five static line jumps students then had to work all the way up to an "A" licence, virtually on their own in the air.

Mike 'Doc' Henderson's experience as a student of the 1970s was typical. He had little trouble proceeding through the requirements for his 'A' license – turns, back loops and finally a figure-eight with a back loop on the end of it. But then came the introduction to relative work, the first time students ever got to see an instructor doing anything other than peering out of the door at their fast receding bodies.

"My first task was to go base. Steve Swann was pinning me on that day. I exited the aircraft and did my usual impromptu acrobatics before I stabilised out and concentrated hard on maintaining a constant heading, wondering why the Lower Light pub kept moving across my field of vision every three seconds – left to right, as I recall. Somehow Steve managed to spiral in on me and effect the pin. My first two-man. Great!"

The next task was a little more complex – Mike had to pin the instructor. This was in the days when everyone exited the aircraft separately – no linked exits. In fact, relative work involving anything of the kind would have been considered 'cheating.'

"For this next jump Bernie Keenan was the base," says Mike. "Bernie was the prototypical base, par excellence. Solid, permanent and immovable like Buddha, the rock of Gibraltar in freefall. I remember he had this huge red and black canvas jumpsuit which was what prevented him from heading groundwards at warp speed. Well, I ricocheted off him a few times and eventually was able to grab a handful of jumpsuit and make it stick. Or maybe Bernie just got sick of being buzzed and grabbed me. I grinned at Bernie, and he raised his eyebrows as if to say 'WTF was that?' So, my first successful pin.

"That evening at the pub as the sun went down I was feeling pretty good as we had

ABOVE *Student training progression tables from the 1970s (left) and the mid 1960s (above).*

BELOW *Jumpers hamming it up with a static line student at South Coast Skydivers' Mallala DZ in the early 1960s.*

RIGHT *Noel Weckert checks out static line students at Point Lowly in the mid 1960s.*

a few beers. I was looking through my log book at the requirements for a 'B' license. I said, 'Hey Bernie, it says here that to qualify for a 'B', you have to demonstrate that you are a safe and competent relative worker. What exactly does that mean?' Bernie replied, 'It means you don't qualify.' My balloon was immediately deflated."

Steve Boldog, another standout student of the era who went on to run Skysport at Strathalbyn and who became a leading demo jumper, was a product of the same training regime.

BELOW *Steve Swann runs TV reporter Murray Nicoll through the static line exit procedure from the Dornier 27 in 1975.*

"On my first trip with the club down to Desert Downs at Keith I finally managed to break the frog hoo doo," says Steve. The frog was the tighter, belly-down position jumpers were required to adopt after mastering the basic, crucifixion-like stable spread. "I would pitch every time I went from the spread to the frog," he says. "Once that was sorted, I finished my training in the minimum number of jumps." Not all plain sailing though: on a 10 or 12 second delay during his student training, Steve had a total mal. "I remember looking up after the old round reserve had deployed and about 50 percent of the panels had blown out – that took care of the oscillations on the way down. Bloody hard landing though."

The end of static lines and this old style 10-stage training program was on the cards when Vic Balfour introduced accelerated freefall (AFF) training to Lower Light in 1986. The new technique had arrived in Australia three years before and, while static line training would take some time to finally die out, it was the shape of things to come.

Australia's first rated AFF instructor, SA jumper David Parsons, gained his rating much earlier, in Texas in 1982 under the USPA (United States Parachute Association) system. "It was well before the Australian AFF system got started via Paul Osborne," says David. "Another case of beer in this area

was due to me being the first AFF instructor who did not have to also be a static line instructor. I successfully argued to the APF that static line was irrelevant to the full range of skydiving and parachute skills that I was teaching in AFF."

Back at Lower Light from a six-month stint instructing in Alice Springs, Vic Balfour was keen to use his new AFF instructors rating.

"When I got back, I told the club I was happy to act as CI again but I wanted to run my own commercial operation," says Vic. "That was the start of Southern Skydivers and I bought three or four Pigmee student rigs with X-300 canopies and we started doing AFF.

"At first there was a hell of a lot of practice jumping – Greg Smith, Kevin Taylor and Gavin Norsworthy – were taking it in turns being the AFF student to polish up our skills and so they could get their ratings."

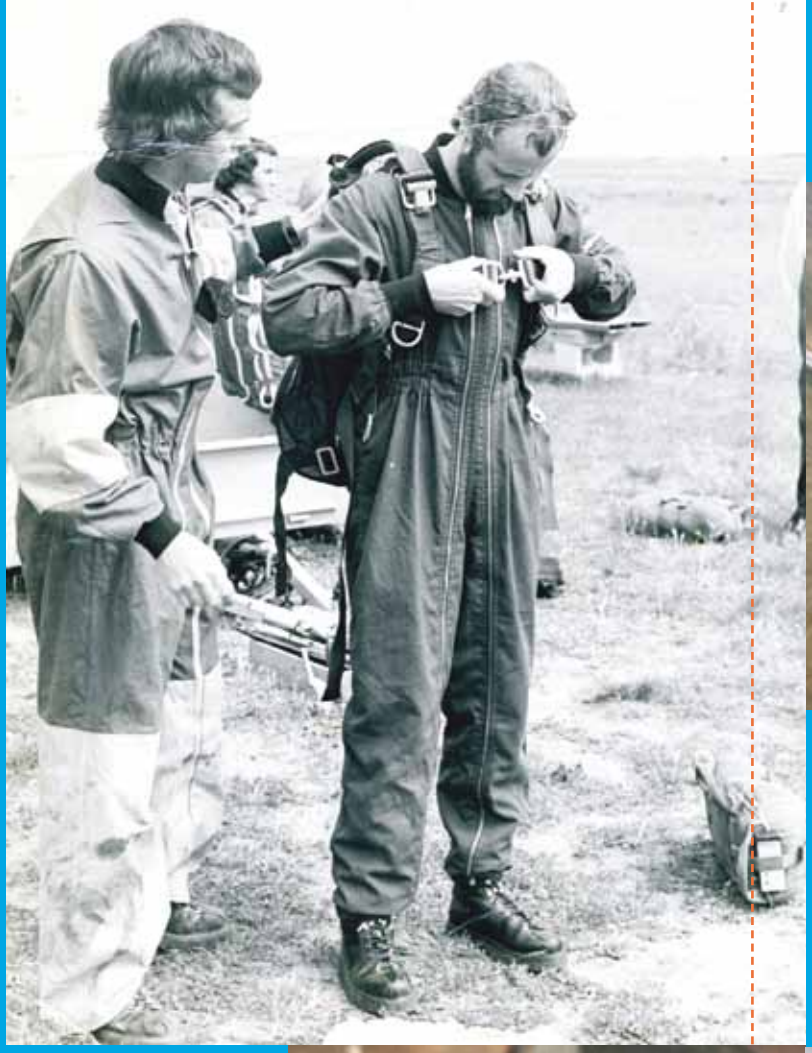
Greg was the first get his AFF rating, on a visit to Yarrawonga in May of 1986. Kevin, Gavin and Reg Eastaugh quickly followed.

Soon after, SA's first AFF student jumped – Peter Aberg got out with Greg Smith and Kevin Taylor and a week later the first female AFF student, Karen Beers, took to the sky.

"AFF was a huge leap," says Greg Smith. "It had a lot of criticism when it came in. People said it wasn't ethical to take a student into free fall without being attached via some sort of webbing to the aircraft. It was thought to be dangerous. But once it did

BELOW *Ken Walter being geared up for a static line by Leo Brogan (centre) and Trevor Burns. Bob Dohnt on the right.*

LEFT *Ready for the first freefall in 1969. Instructors Col Parsons (left) and Leo Brogan (right) give Steve Swann the once over. Note the Sentinel auto opening system fitted to the reserve and 2-shot capewells. No AFF in those days.*



ABOVE *Keith Perrott exits on an early freefall training jump in 1980 with Skysport Parachute Centre at Lower Light.*

BELOW *Student exams in the Lower Light kitchen (formerly the club house) in the early 1990s.*

ABOVE *Instructor Steve Swann gears up student Murray Nicoll in 1975. The chest-mounted reserve on the ground is fitted with a Sentinel automatic opener, tucked under the bungee cord on the side.*

LEFT *Static line hang up training for instructors Neil Davis and Mike Goodwin over Lower Light in 1983.*

ABOVE *Copybook static line exit by Skysport student Graham Archer over Lower Light in the mid 1980s.*

become established it was considered to be a good method – although very expensive, very labour intensive and you needed 10,000 feet.

"But AFF wasn't the routine offering that it is today. The thinking was that AFF was really good for the problem students: you were having a problem with a student on a static line then you would take him onto the AFF program."

While AFF was always offered to students, Greg estimates that in the early days around 90 percent of the students were still doing static lines, because of the cost differential and because it was so new.

Many students might have shown up at Lower Light intent on a traditional static line course but they still had to run the gauntlet of Greg, Kevin and Gavin, who were intent on winning students to the new cause.

"New students would come through the door, do a static line jump and then we'd get them at the bar and talk them into changing – we were so keen to get it happening," says Greg.

This enthusiastic first wave of AFF instructors was soon followed by Reg Eastaugh, Jan Heylen, Neil Davis and Mike Goodwin, operating under the umbrella of Southern Skydivers.

Meanwhile, Harry Haamers was Southern Skydivers static line instructor at this time, catering for those who opted for old style training.

Despite the obvious advantage of progressing much more quickly there was a price to pay. "Static line courses were still relatively cheap – about $110 compared to $280 for AFF, so it was a big factor for many people," says Vic Balfour. "But at least by then people could jump a square canopy on their static lines."

Novel as the concept of exiting with a student was, Vic says there were never any real problems making the transition.

"We were all experienced skydivers, good at relative work – but, as with static line students, you never knew when they weren't

Tom Murphy and Vernon Wells with an AFF student at Langhorne Creek in 2009

EDDIE MCLEAN DOES A DUMMY RIPCORD PULL (DRP) OVER SKYSPORT'S STRATHALBYN DZ IN THE 1980s.

going to do what you taught them to do.

"The big thing I learnt was that the difference in weight between the instructors and the students could wreak potentially hazardous consequences. One first jump student I had in those early days was about six foot five and solidly built – and there was little old me and Greg Smith being flung around the sky. We eventually got him stable and he pulled OK."

Neil Davis, who did his AFF instructor training at Yarrawonga with Paul Davis, admits to thinking at first that the practice was "a bit risky."

"Having someone possibly alone in freefall on their first jump at 9,000 feet was daunting but the more I investigated it the more I could see the benefits," he says.

"There was a case in point here in SA. We had a student, an Army type who suffered huge problems with nervousness. He did a heck of a lot of static lines and was always very anxious. But as soon as he got the opportunity he did an AFF course and he was through it in a week. I thought, if AFF can turn him around it can train almost anyone. I became convinced it was far superior to static line training."

Neil also cites the potential problems in putting static line students out on ram air canopies, as was becoming common at that time, as another reason he embraced AFF.

"Putting someone who is freaked out under a malfunctioned ram air off a static line seemed to me to be crazy," he says. "There were no serious injuries with ram air / static lines in my experience but there were several occasions with high potential – people completely zoned out. The consequences of not taking brakes off for example, not knowing what was happening, could be severe.

Dummy ripcord training jump for static line student Ronnie Hall in 1981.

Instructors Curtis Morton and Pete Wyllie with a student over Langhorne Creek in 2007.

RIGHT *Pete Anderson takes an AFF student out on stage 4 over Langhorne Creek.*

"Of course, now you still end up on your first jump under a ram air but there is a settling effect from having been in freefall with two instructors. There is a peak of arousal at opening time but it is nowhere near as high as the initial peak, particularly when it is your first jump.

"So from the student's perspective, sitting in freefall for 30 seconds with a couple of guys looking at you – it's situation normal, this is what they expected."

David Parsons, the country's first AFF instructor, says once the training method came in there was no going back. "Static lines were always an archaic way to teach what should be an enjoyable and highly-skilled sport. AFF and tandems brought our sport out of the primitive, military-based methods to the modern age. It was the vehicle on which the commercialisation of skydiving took off.

"But I remain disappointed that the club spirit that we all grew up with in skydiving before those days, seems to have largely gone – everywhere around the world."

INSTRUCTORS LEARN A LESSON IN NAVIGATION

Three of SA skydiving's most productive instructors in the 1980s came perilously close to dropping out of the sport – literally.

With the departure of Col Parsons and Steve Boldog to set up their new Skysport Parachute Centre, the SASPC needed an injection of fresh instructional talent.

Vic Balfour elected to fly to Victoria to do his senior instructor exam and take over as CI, while Neil Davis and Joanne Kielbasa put up their hands to get their instructor ratings at the same time.

The trio took off early one morning in a Cessna piloted by Peter King and headed for Labertouche in Victoria, where the weekend exams were to be held.

"The weather was pretty bad," Vic says. "But we pressured Peter to go for it. I remember flying across the Adelaide Hills and thinking 'bloody hell, I'm glad we can see the top of Mount Lofty, because those clouds were getting lower and lower. We cleared the Mount Lofty Ranges and headed off towards Melbourne and the weather got worse and worse. I was sitting in the front seat and Peter handed me a map and said 'start navigating' and I said 'I don't know how to navigate.' And he said 'Do you drive? There's the road, we're flying IFR – I Follow Roads.' Anyway it was getting lower and lower and lower and we were heading through Kilmore Gap. It was getting so bad that I was telling him to go from one side of the road to the other because – well, we just passed that hill across the road now there's another hill coming up . . .

"The guys in the back there were yelling 'give me the map, give me the map.' I give you the map, you might miss the next hill and we'll crash into it. Eventually the pilot said, 'bugger this' and did a banked turn and I looked out of the window and the wing wasn't very far off the ground at all. Air traffic control told him to go back to Kilmore and then on to Mangalore airfield. We were flying down the main street of Kilmore, reading the signs. So not only were we following roads, we were also reading street signs. We put down at Mangalore for a few hours and eventually the weather cleared and we took off once again and finally landed at Labertouche reasonably safely – although we did roll through the fence at the end of the runway."

They got their ratings, Neil Davis navigated back and the rest is history.

ABOVE *Instructor training in the late 1980s: Jo Kielbasa, Vic Balfour (as the dummy student) Col Parsons (rear - instructor examiner), Neil Davis and Herbie Kaiserseder.*

COMPETITIONS
THE GULF MEETS

ABOVE *Breezy landings for 1972 Gulf Meet competitors at Lower Light.*

The Gulf Meets – a long-lived element of South Australian skydiving competition – were the brainchild of Spencer Gulf Skydivers chief instructor and 1961 original Trevor Burns. For years they were billed as a 'fun meet' and later morphed into the State championships – but they finally petered out.

Although they began at Whyalla in 1966 as the Gulf Invitational Meet, proximity to a body of water wasn't always essential – in 1973 the Gulf Meet was held at Keith, in the upper South East. In the early days they were a huge drawcard for interstate jumpers, with some big and talented names making the trek to Whyalla.

When Trevor moved to Adelaide so did the Gulf Meet and by 1972 it was running for the seventh consecutive year over the Easter weekend, now at Lower Light. This year, apart from novice accuracy, it was run strictly as a relative work meet for the first time. The switch to a 5-man star competition was something of an experiment but it was so successful that there were plans for the 1973 meet to be a 10-man competition. In the end the usual lack of suitable aircraft ruled that out.

A large number of Victorian jumpers joined the locals in 1972, bringing the Labertouche Parachute Centre's C185 "Swampy" along with them to Lower Light, complete with its cow dung encrusted wings. The three interstate teams competed against a lone SA entry, Quigley's Quinns, who, never having jumped as a 5-man team before, ran comprehensively last. The fact that the Quinns (Trevor Burns, Bernie Keenan, Steve Swann, Col Parsons and Phil Edwards) only had a three-place C172 to regularly jump from in those days was a reasonable excuse.

Despite the usual afternoon advent of Lower Light's sea 'breezes' and some pretty tough landings for relative workers coming in backed up under their Paracommanders, there was only one injury for the long weekend – popular jumper and News Ltd press photographer Bob Cunningham suffered a badly broken ankle after making a low hook turn under his PC in the novice accuracy competition.

The following year the Gulf Meet moved inland. Advertising in the then locally published *Australian Skydiver* magazine, pitched at luring interstate jumpers to compete, pointed to the nearly four hours travelling time saved for visitors from over the border. "With all food, accommodation

ABOVE *The gathering at Quigley's Inn after a day's jumping during the 1972 Gulf Meet. The usual crowd was swollen by a very large contingent of visiting Victorian jumpers.*

and five competition jumps included in the $35 entry fee, this has to be the best value fun meet anywhere in Australia," the ad said. "Included in the fee is a 'roast vealer' presentation dinner with free grog after the competition is completed."

Once again a big contingent of Victorians showed up at the well-equipped Desert Downs farm-stay property for the Easter event. The appropriately named 'Star of Bethlehem' team was among the SA representatives.

The Gulf Meets slid from the parachuting calendar as the 1970s progressed but were resurrected in 1981 by Ian Wark. This event featured accuracy, relative work and a very spirited CRW quadraplane competition.

A team each from SASPC and neighbouring Skysport battled it out for honours in this still new and exciting field of parachuting.

The CRW competition awarded a point for each canopy in the formation and an extra one if you could put the formation into the pit. Jeremy Browne recalls that "Neil Davis steering the SASPC team almost made into the pit – and almost wiped the team out! Both teams got the four together and Neil was determined to put it in the pit. Eventually we were all close to the stall but we just missed – and almost all died!"

The club team was Neil, Jeremy, Vic Balfour and Mike Goodwin. My own log book records satisfaction with the speed of the last quadraplane built by the Skysport team (Ian Wark, Steve Swann, Steve Boldog

FAR LEFT *SASPC's Star of Bethlehem team at the 1973 Gulf Meet held at Desert Downs, Keith – Kim Donaldson, Phil Edwards, Wayne Irons, Bernie Keenan and Terry Angus.*

LEFT *Quigleys' Quins ready to compete in the 1971 Gulf Meet – Bernie Keenan, Trev Burns, Steve Swann, Col Parsons and Phil Edwards.*

ABOVE *Skysport's CRW team in the 1981 Gulf Meet: (top to bottom) Ian Wark, Steve Swann, Col Parsons and Steve Boldog.*

RIGHT *Thumping in for a 1.91 metre score. Trev Burns at the 1968 Gulf Meet at Whyalla.*

LEFT *Vic Balfour shakes things up at the 1984 Gulf Meet prize giving.*

and Col Parsons) but notes: "blew accuracy, drew the comp." A fitting draw to end an enjoyable contest at a time when South Australian CRW was gathering pace at a fantastic rate.

Jeremy Browne took over organising the Gulf Meet in 1982. Now it also doubled as the State championships, again held at Lower Light. Col Parsons came in the winner as the SA individual champion, with Steve Boldog second. Novice winner that year was Glen Staker. Meet director Graham Barrington and visiting Victorian judge Helen Grant presided over a mixed bag of events – style and accuracy, 2-way CRW, 4- way CRW rotations, 2 and 4-way RW.

The two-way sequential CRW was described by Helen Grant as 'exciting and innovative'. "The judges developed improved scoring methods to reduce the calling/ recording errors inherent in high scoring events," her post competition judge's report said. "The teams demonstrated a high skill level in those manoeuvres as shown by the high scores."

Poor weather slowed things down at the 1983 meet at Lower Light. The event was open to all comers but the title of South Australian champion was restricted to resident SA jumpers. With Helen Grant on deck again as chief judge, pre-publicity for the event invited anyone interest in qualifying as an APF judge to put their hand

ABOVE *Skysport's pilot Warwick Blacker hands out prizes to Neil Davis and Mike Goodwin at the 1981 Gulf Meet. Organiser Ian Wark in the door and Jean Turner taking it easy.*

up. Helen was assisted in the judging by Kym Williams, Betty Williams, Kerry Robbins and Reg Estaugh. Events again included 4-way RW, 2-way RW, style and accuracy. The CRW was unfortunately postponed.

The weather hex continued again in 1984, with the open accuracy called after four of the planned five rounds at Lower Light. No surprises in the first three placegetters: Mick O'Brien with a total of 0.07 for the four, Vic Balfour agonisingly close at 0.08 and Keith Perrott in third at 0.25.

Novice accuracy was won by Phil Carthlew while Col Parsons took out the style.

Five rounds of 4-way sequential RW put 'Curl Up and Die' (Vic Balfour, Dave Raggatt, Kevin Taylor and Gavin Norsworthy) on top. The 2-way RW was won by Funnel Web (Jan Heylen and Glen Staker).

ABOVE *Gulf Meet winners – Steven Renshaw, Glen Staker, Maryanne Robinson and Geoff Cooling.*

ABOVE *Pink Batts in action at the Gulf Meet. From the bottom, clockwise: Julie Astley, Lauri McAvoy, Phil Astley and Tony McAvoy.*

The Gulf Meet moved to Strathalbyn in 1987, under the direction of Skysport's Steve Boldog and chief judge Pat Dodd. State champion was Keith Perrott who also won the style.

Records of subsequent Gulf Meets are sketchy – many of them appear to have either been lost or forgotten in the past 20 years. Following is what can be salvaged from surviving archives.

The Riverland hosted the 1992 Gulf Meet, held at the Waikerie Gliding Club, under the eye of meet director Harry Haamers. The meet attracted three CRW teams, 11 in accuracy (five open and six novice) eight 2-way teams and six 4-ways. Not a bad roll up! Chute First (Smith and Jones) won the CRW. Keith Perrott was the accuracy winner for the tenth time and also teamed up with Neil Davis to take third place in the CRW. Rapid cuts (Greg Smith and John Clements) were second. Hi 5 won the gold in the 4-way open for the third year in a row.

Skydive Adelaide's Strathalbyn dropzone turned on great weather for the 1994 Gulf Meet. A pre-event press release issued by Jeremy Browne for the State Council said that about 50 competitors would compete in team freefall, individual freestyle and accuracy events. Among the competitors who the press and public were urged to come and watch doing their thing were: Kevin Taylor, Australian Freefall Team 1993; Keith Perrott, Australian Accuracy Team at several world championships; John McWilliams, Australian Freefall Team; Paul Maloney, Camera World Freefall Championships.

A busy competition schedule covered 4-way open RW, 4-way intermediate RW, 2-way RW, freestyle and open and novice accuracy.

WORKING BEES
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Having spent nearly 10 years packing in the open air – on hessian mats if they were lucky – Adelaide's skydivers finally had the funds and the location for their first building.

In 1970 a pre-fabricated galvanised iron garage was bought by the SASPC and erected by club members, thanks to the generosity of farmer George Quigley who allowed the structure on his property.

With a layer of gravel on the floor and three purpose-built plywood packing tables installed for roundies, it was a huge improvement. The theory was that with the three-place C172 UEV being the usual jumpship, three indoor packing spaces would be enough. But, when larger aircraft were used or there was a rush of hop and pops or student runs, many would still have to pack outside. And of course if the wind was from anywhere in the east it would blow straight in through the shed's open doors and up the centre of the tensioned canopies.

This gave impetus to the need for a packing lawn adjoining the shed. The area was fenced, to keep Quigley's sheep out, and a couchgrass lawn was sown. There was no reticulated water and initially George Quigley laid polypipe across the surface from one of his sheep troughs near the gate so the lawn could be watered. Water pressure was poor, however, and George occasionally supplemented the sprinklers by emptying the contents of his fire tank from the back of his farm ute onto the struggling patch of grass.

In February 1971 the SASPC committee asked president Mike Tonks, an Army engineer, to study costs and draw up plans for a 20 ft X 15 ft building, including a storeroom and verandah.

Mike reported back a month later and the project got the nod, with building to proceed in five phases: excavation and form work ($10), pouring readymix concrete for the floor slab ($250), professional bricklaying and joinery ($330), roofing ($70) and finishing off ($40).

It was an ambitious undertaking and it took a couple of years to complete, as competing demands on club finances and the perennial lack of willing workers slowed progress.

The clubhouse, which later became the kitchen, was first built with a small besser-bricked room in one corner, intended as a secure lock-up for club gear which could be left there during the week, rather than transported to and from the instructors' homes in the club's 6X4 trailer. But there was little confidence in leaving all that gear out at

BELOW *The SASPC clubhouse nears completion. It was decked out in bunting for that year's Gulf Meet. Note the old packing tables sticking out from the packing shed – the first building owned by the club.*

ABOVE *Laying the foundations and slab for the SASPC clubhouse at Lower Light in 1971 under the direction of Army engineer Mike Tonks (right).*

BELOW *Lower Light looking east from the packing shed in the very early 1970s. The Monaro GTS is roughly where the toilet block is now, a welcome replacement for the distant boxthorn bush down the paddock, which doubled as the ladies' toilet for many years.*

remote Lower Light and the storeroom, never really used, was eventually demolished.

Later, jumper Maggie McIntyre donated another galvanised iron shed from her suburban backyard and club members dismantled, transported and re-erected it on the DZ. It's now the shed where Adelaide Tandem Skydiving houses its tractor.

Decent toilet facilities had long been an agenda item for club committees through the years. Males could simply wander out into the crop for a quick slash but females were forced to trek down the paddock to the east, where a lonely but healthy boxthorn bush offered some screening – or head down to George Quigley senior's Lower Light hotel.

In 1978, thanks to the efforts of Neil Davis, work finally started on a proper toilet on the DZ. Things were beginning to become civilised.

Shelter and convenience for the jumpers was one thing but eventually aircraft storage on the DZ also became a realistic ambition.

In 1981 the SASPC committee first seriously considered building a hangar at Lower Light. With the cost of ferrying VH-DON from Parafield coming close to $1,500 a year plus wear and tear, it was thought it might be prudent to house the aircraft on the DZ. A hangar would also allow jumpers to pack their now commonly used ram airs out of the sun and wind.

A suitable light industrial shed would cost around $4,000, the committee was told, as investigations proceeded.

It was 1989 before the building project really took off. Ted McWatters, who had just started jumping, was a handy type with a set of tools. "When I first got there Greg Smith, Glen Bolton and Harry Hammers were the instructor Bs around the place and they had Kyle Sellicks helping them build an aircraft hangar," says Ted. "So while I was waiting around for a jump I'd climb up on the roof and help them do a bit of building – recommend a bit of roof bracing here and there so the thing wouldn't blow away and generally helped out. I helped finish the shed off and then I decided it needed a bar, then a mezzanine floor, then a sun deck and then a manifest area. This expansion process went on for six years – we just kept finding little projects to do.

"I'd be out there with Peter Warlock and

Splash Moloney. We loved the place so much that we'd often stay out there on Mondays and try and con a pilot to go out do a couple of extra jumps and plant a few more trees – it became compulsive."

His efforts didn't go unnoticed. In 1993 Ted was put up for election as president. "By then I'd put the manifest room on the end of the hangar, put an old verandah on the side of the hangar and that became the camera room. I turned the old club house into a commercial kitchen and doubled the size of the toilet block and added two more toilets and another couple of showers and a urinal and a big gen-set generator. The power was connected a bit later."

The improvement was marked: Greg Smith recalls his first impression of arriving at Lower Light was the toilet block. "That was the first thing that knocked me over when I drove in and you pulled into the car park and faced a toilet block – someone would come out of the toilet. Ted would say 'we've got to change that and he extended it out. Ted McWatters was a big part of change out there."

Building the hangar at Lower Light.

RIGHT *Celebrating the completion of the sundeck adjoining the hangar at Lower Light in the early 1990s. The project was one of many spearheaded by Ted McWatters.*

KEEPING TRACK

LOGBOOKS A FASCINATING RECORD OF OUR PAST

Log books – a thing of the past? Quite possibly they're headed that way but the passing of written records might be cause for regret for future jumpers.

The Facebook generation exchanging notes about how easy it is to log their data on iPhone and other gadgets might like to ponder their distant old age and how they will extend the history that we've recorded here.

One notable and very talented young SA jumper alerted us on Facebook in mid 2011: "i export the data from my Neptune (Protrack) to the iphone app. i dont actually write anything, my written logbooks last jump is something like 204 lol."

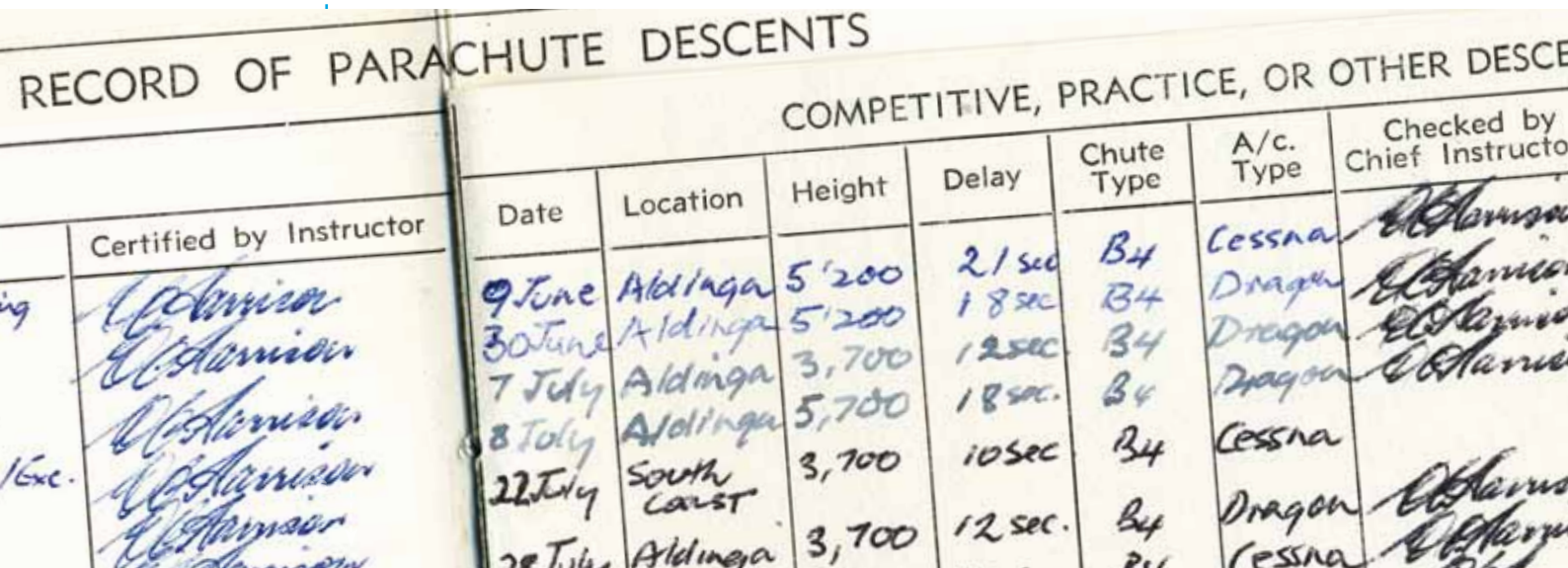
As Calum Hunter puts it: "I don't know many people who have more than 300-400 jumps who still log – they pretty much leave it up to the Protrack or Neptune loggers.

"I have two Neptunes, one in the helmet and one on my wrist and I import that data to the computer and then export it out to the iPhone app. I include comments about who the jump was with and what type of jump it was, what canopy and what drop zone and what aircraft but that's about it really.

"It might have something to do with the number of jumps that people are doing now. I did 14 in two days at Nagambie recently – that's a lot of time to be writing details about each jump and I wouldn't have had time in between jumps."

But at least he's still using the iPhone app's ability to record written comments and not simply relying on data captured from his Neptune.

It might be tedious and old-fashioned but a written record not only preserves potentially historic events, it also gives jumpers something to look back on other than bits and bytes, impersonally captured by an airborne computer. Compare that prospect with these historic hand-written


RECORD OF PARACHUTE DESCENTS

	Certified by Instructor
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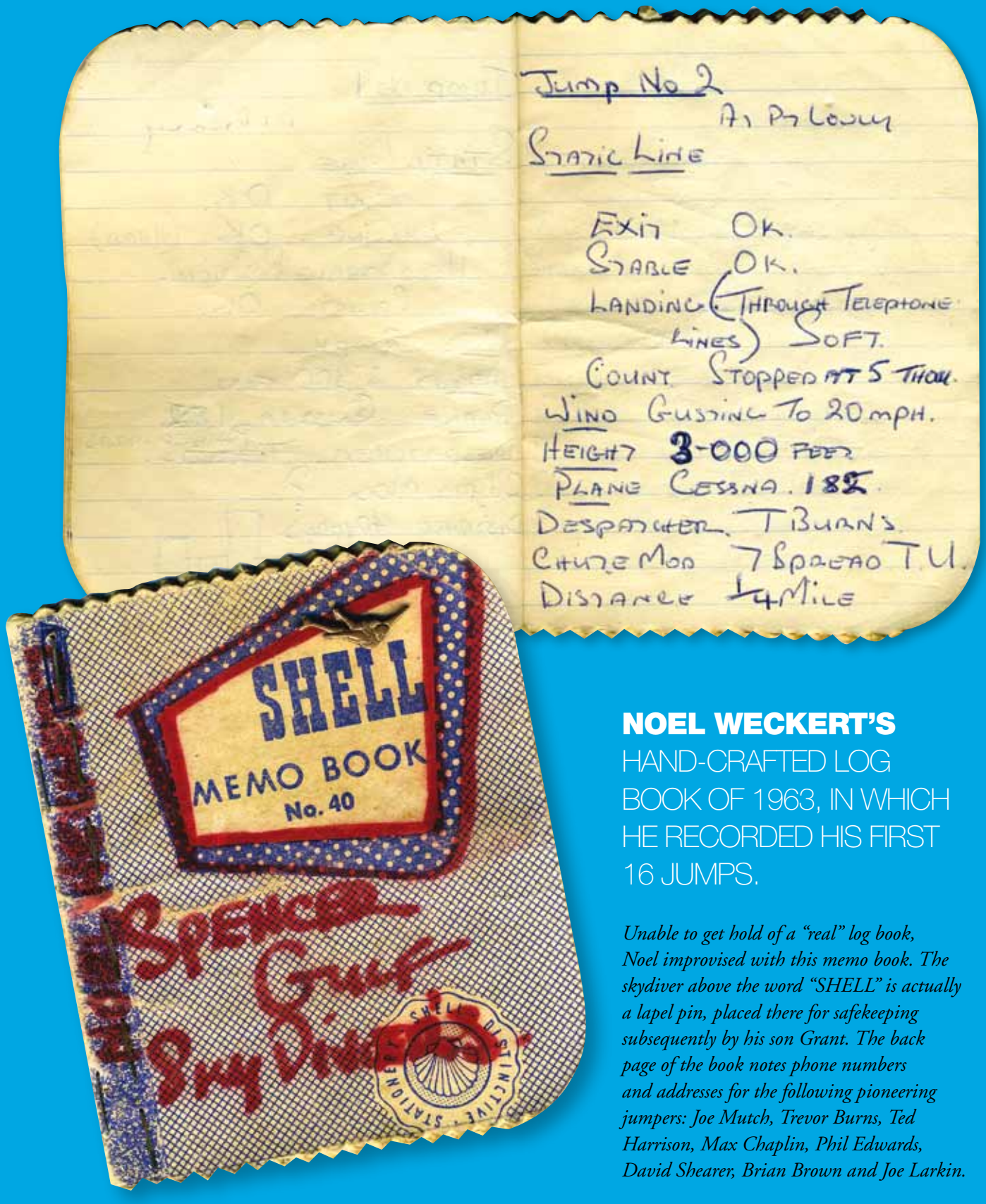
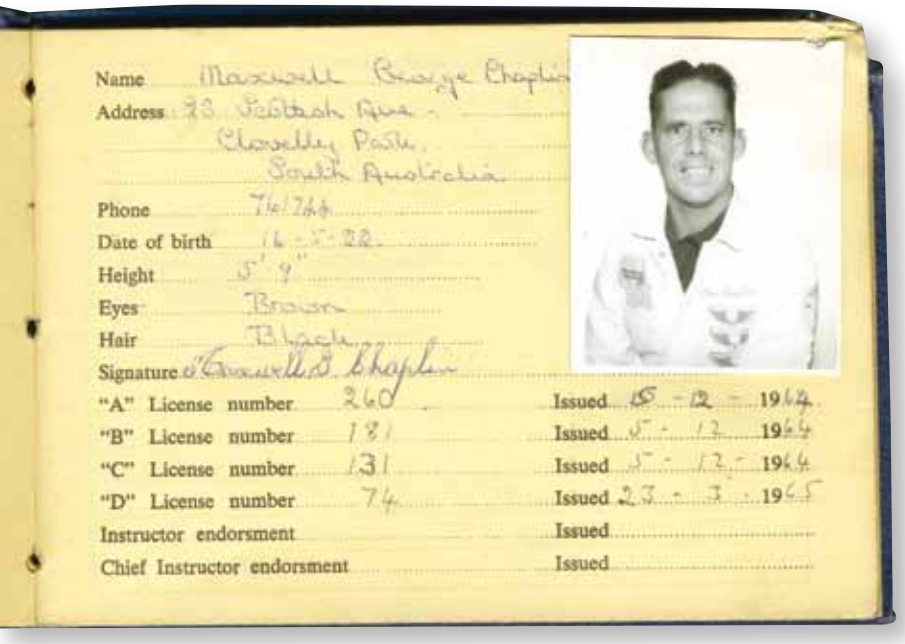
COMPETITIVE, PRACTICE, OR OTHER DESCE

Date	Location	Height	Delay	Chute Type	A/c. Type	Checked by Chief Instructo
9 June	Aldinga	5'200	21 sec	B4	Cessna	
30 June	Aldinga	5'200	18 sec	B4	Dragon	
7 July	Aldinga	3,700	12 sec	B4	Dragon	
8 July	Aldinga	5,700	18 sec.	B4		
22 July	South Coast	3,700	10 sec	B4	Cessna	
	Aldinga	3,700	12 sec.	B4	Dragon	
					Cessna	



NOEL WECKERT'S HAND-CRAFTED LOG BOOK OF 1963, IN WHICH HE RECORDED HIS FIRST 16 JUMPS.

Unable to get hold of a "real" log book, Noel improvised with this memo book. The skydiver above the word "SHELL" is actually a lapel pin, placed there for safekeeping subsequently by his son Grant. The back page of the book notes phone numbers and addresses for the following pioneering jumpers: Joe Mutch, Trevor Burns, Ted Harrison, Max Chaplin, Phil Edwards, David Shearer, Brian Brown and Joe Larkin.



gems (below) from the log book of Mike Hughes, a star SA student of the 1970s who went on to represent Australia in relative work in several World Meets and make history in early CRW:

Jump 29, November 1977: *First 2 way pin with Warky, cruised together in no time, the bastard kissed me but I knew it was coming. It's official, my life has changed, I'm addicted, amazing sensation this Relative Work stuff!!*

Jump 89, April 1978: *Intentional cutaway – Tied Strato Star main lines in knot, let it stream & cutaway with one-and- a-half shot capewells, with extra front mount reserve. What a blast, great opening. Push to have it part of the training, many not so keen!*

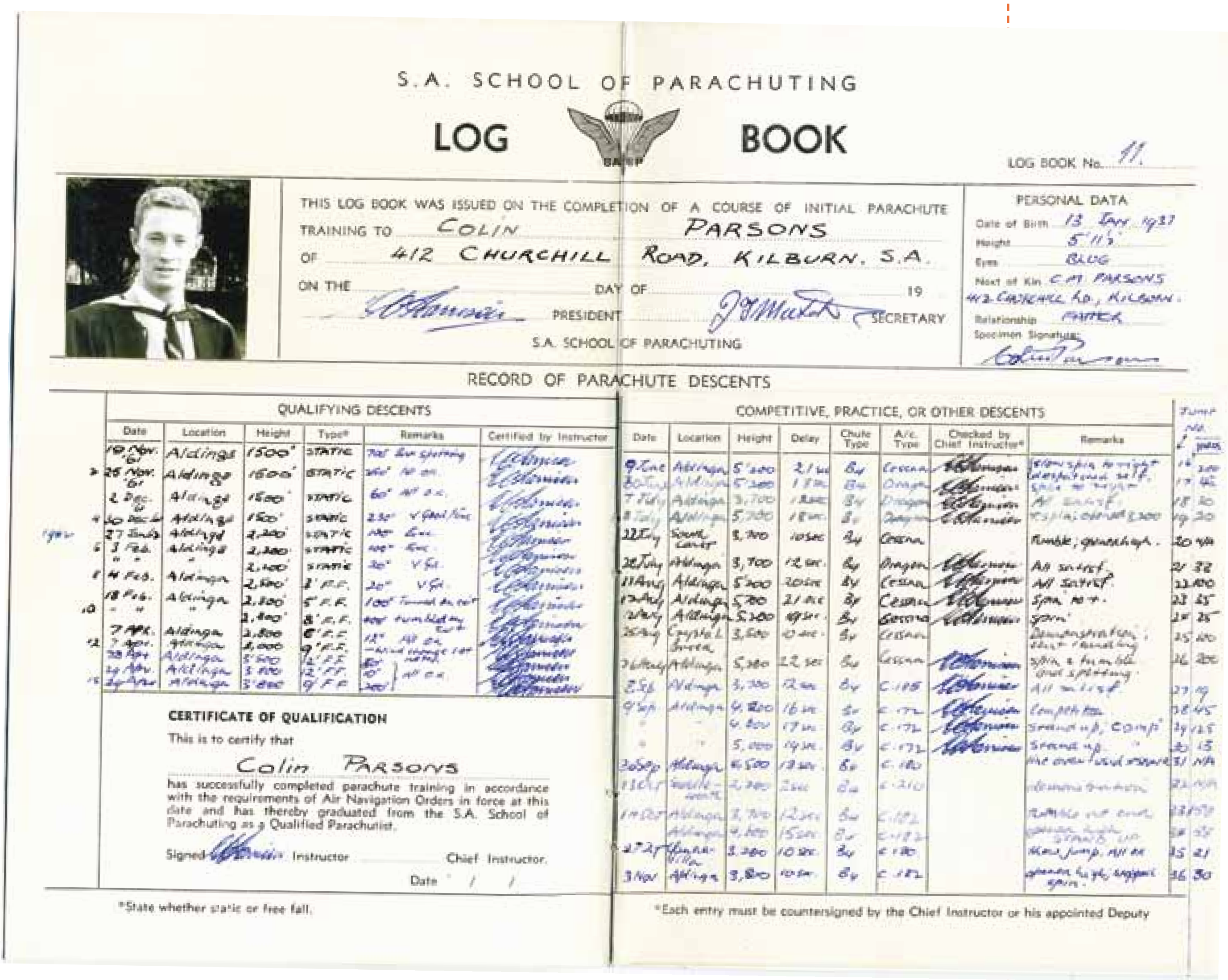
Jump 166, September 1978: *First all-SA CRW link with Warky. Took a while but went together smooth as a baby's bum. Here we go – it's not over at track off!!*

Jump 300, February1979: *First Nude jump over SA. Did 2 point 4 way – Star, Donut & then First Nude CRW with Ratsak over SA, possibly the world!*

Jump 416, September 1979: *Attempt Tri-Plane, Weir has mal & chop, me & Warky land Bi-Plane into Lower Light Pub.*

Jump 471, November 1979: *First Quadra Plane over SA & probably Aust. Magnificent. Boys were screaming!*

Jump 541, January 1980: *Birdman Rally Demo. First Bi-Plane at big Demo, big crowd & live TV coverage. Link took a while, maybe crowd pressure but went together smooth & right on target! Bob Cunningham behind the lenses.*



S.A. SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING

LOG BOOK

LOG BOOK No. 11.

THIS LOG BOOK WAS ISSUED ON THE COMPLETION OF A COURSE OF INITIAL PARACHUTE TRAINING TO COLIN PARSONS

OF 412 CHURCHILL ROAD, KILBURN, S.A.

ON THE .... DAY OF 19

PRESIDENT SECRETARY

S.A. SCHOOL OF PARACHUTING

PERSONAL DATA

Date of Birth 13 JAN 1937

Height 5' 11½"

Eyes BLUE

Next of Kin C.M. PARSONS 412 CHURCHILL RD, KILBURN.

Relationship FATHER

Specimen Signature

RECORD OF PARACHUTE DESCENTS

QUALIFYING DESCENTS

Date	Location	Height	Type*	Remarks	Certified by Instructor
19 Nov. '61	Aldinga	1500'	STATIC	[illegible]	
25 Nov. '61	Aldinga	1500'	STATIC	[illegible]	
2 Dec.	Aldinga	1500'	STATIC	60" All O.K.	
30 Dec.	Aldinga	1500'	STATIC	[illegible]	
27 Jan.	Aldinga	2,200'	STATIC	[illegible]	
3 Feb.	Aldinga	2,200'	STATIC	[illegible]	
" "	"	2,400'	STATIC	30" V.G.	
4 Feb.	Aldinga	2,500'	3' F.F.	20" V.G.	
18 Feb.	Aldinga	2,300'	5' F.F.	[illegible]	
" "	"	2,400'	8' F.F.	[illegible]	
7 Apr.	Aldinga	2,800	6' F.F.	[illegible]	
7 Apr.	Aldinga	3,000	9' F.F.	[illegible]	
28 Apr.	Aldinga	3,500	12' F.F.	[illegible]	
29 Apr.	Aldinga	3,500	12' F.F.	All O.K.	
29 Apr.	Aldinga	3,500	9' F.F.	[illegible]	

CERTIFICATE OF QUALIFICATION

This is to certify that Colin PARSONS has successfully completed parachute training in accordance with the requirements of Air Navigation Orders in force at this date and has thereby graduated from the S.A. School of Parachuting as a Qualified Parachutist.

Signed .... Instructor .... Chief Instructor.

Date / /

*State whether static or free fall.

COMPETITIVE, PRACTICE, OR OTHER DESCENTS

Date	Location	Height	Delay	Chute Type	A/c. Type	Checked by Chief Instructor*	Remarks	Jump No.
9 June	Aldinga	5,200	21 sec	8/4	Cessna		[illegible]	16
	Aldinga	5,200	17 sec	8/4	Dragon		[illegible]	17
7 July	Aldinga	3,700	13 sec	8/4	Dragon		All satisf.	18
8 July	Aldinga	5,700	18 sec	8/4	Dragon		[illegible]	19
22 July	Sports Centre	3,700	10 sec	8/4	Cessna		Tumble; [illegible]	20
28 July	Aldinga	3,700	12 sec	8/4	Dragon		All satisf.	21
11 Aug	Aldinga	5,200	20 sec	8/4	Cessna		All satisf.	22
12 Aug	Aldinga	5,700	21 sec	8/4	Cessna		Spin.	23
	Aldinga	5,200	19 sec	8/4	Cessna		Spin	24
26 Aug	Crystal Brook	3,500	10 sec	8/4	Cessna		Demonstration	25
	Aldinga	5,200	22 sec	8/4	Cessna		Spin & tumble	26
2 Sep	Aldinga	3,700	12 sec	8/4	C.195		All satisf.	27
9 Sep	Aldinga	4,200	16 sec	8/4	C.172		Competition	28
		4,800	17 sec	8/4	C.172		[illegible] Comp.	29
		5,000	19 sec	8/4	C.172		[illegible]	30
30 Sep	Aldinga	6,500	13 sec	8/4	C.180		[illegible]	31
13 Oct	[illegible]	2,200	2 sec	8/4	C.210		Demonstration	32
14 Oct	Aldinga	3,700	12 sec	8/4	C.182		[illegible]	33
	Aldinga	4,200	15 sec	8/4	C.182		[illegible]	34
27 Oct	[illegible]	3,200	10 sec	8/4	C.180		[illegible]	35
3 Nov	Aldinga	3,800	10 sec	8/4	C.182		[illegible]	36

*Each entry must be countersigned by the Chief Instructor or his appointed Deputy

Jumps 557 & 558, April 1980: *Last jumps Lower Light, pack the kit & off to Melbourne & the big pond. 3 way RW with Balfour & Harry & a Hop n Pop.*

Jump 846, December 1980: *Corowa. New Aussie 9 Stack Record. It's a long way to the top!*

Jump 986, September 1981: *Demo Jumps into Birdsville Races, 17 way Star, CRW & alcoholic poisoning.*

WHAT A WEEKEND, WE'RE REALLY **PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES** NOW, I CAN SEE THEREGULATORS COMING, THE FUN POLICE WILL BE SENT INTO ACTION. ENJOY THESE DAYS WHILE WE CAN!

DEMOS

DISPLAY JUMPERS GRAB THE LIMELIGHT THROUGH THE AGES

Nothing is more likely to appeal to the attention-seeking psyche of parachutists than the demo. But display jumps are considerably harder to come by now that the sport has clocked up 50 years. The general public has grown used to the idea and the spectacle of people hurling themselves from aircraft for fun – it's no longer novel.

But there have been numerous memorable display jumps in SA over the sport's first half century – jumps which pumped welcome funds into the sport and left old jumpers with some great memories.

Here's a taste of the limelight:

In the days before *Google Earth*, an application to the then Department of Civil Aviation for approval to do a display usually involved a costly personal visit to yet another government department. The State Lands Department in Adelaide had a nice little earner from parachutists who had to order blown-up black and white copies of their aerial photos of intended demo targets. DCA required these as part of the approval process but they would frequently take a couple of weeks or more to be produced and handed over the counter from their Pirie Street premises. And then, if the demo didn't go ahead, you were left with a large, expensive souvenir.

RIGHT *Sue Brown getting set for a demo in the early 1960s. Two altimeters in an easy-to-view dashboard.*

SA's first jumpers were an active lot on the demo scene – especially considering they were people with 25 to 30 jumps and using cheapos, the old military surplus C9 canopies with very limited drive and steering ability. At the Saddleworth Show in October 1962 Col Parsons was the drift marker, as usual, with Brian Brown spotting.

"As I climbed out onto the wheel my reserve popped without me noticing it," says Col. "Brown just calmly leaned out and put his hand over it before disaster happened and I climbed back in."

Sue Brown (formerly Susi Wright) particularly remembers a demo on Kangaroo Island in the early 1960s. Climbing for a 60-second delay – ambitious for any demo, let alone one on basically modified round military surplus canopies – team members anxiously advised the spotter "not to put us in the drink". They could see schools of sharks in the clear water off the promontory where the target was located.

ABOVE *Demo jumpers make an entry to AAMI Stadium (Football Park) in May 2008 – the largest number of canopies ever to go in there. Jumpers were Greg Smith, Nic Dowden, Al Gray, Adam Pemble, Vlasto Zamecnik, Mark Gazley with a radio prize winner, Dave Williams with Mark Ricciuto (football hero), Vernon Wells with Ali Carle from Triple M radio, Pete Wyllie with radio prize winner, Dylan Tempest, Tom Murphy, Scott Grist, Stephen Boekle, Damo Winstanley, Pete Anderson and Curtis Morton.*

LEFT *A fast, hard landing under the Para Plane at Football Park for Steve Swann in September 1976. A near stall on final, induced by the drop-off of wind speed once the canopies got below the height of the grandstand, gave all three jumpers hairy landings that day. Col Parsons and Bernie Keenan also jumped for the crowd of more than 40,000. It was the first time jumpers had ever gone into the stadium.*

But four of them did end up landing in the water – including Sue.

"It was the first time I'd ever done a 60-second delay and we had smoke on our feet," she says. "When I got to the 30-second mark I started to get a little nervous. Habit you see – I was just so used to pulling the ripcord at 30 seconds.

"I ended up pulling high, basically because I thought I'd fallen enough. After I opened I just took off and thought 'my God I'm going to miss the island, I'll be out in the sea.' "

But the winds were wildly variable at different altitudes and, having passed the oval target, Sue was finally forced to choose between landing among jagged rocks at the top or bottom of a small cliff or go for the water, and rely on her life jacket.

She chose the water and attempted to inflate the life jacket before hitting the water but the cartridge didn't respond. Then she recalled the drills which required her to be free of the main when she entered the water. Easier said than done with old two-shot capewell releases.

"I went in to the water with whole rig still on, thinking I would go straight to the bottom. But I didn't, I hardly went under. It was probably the air trapped in the reserve (chest-mounted in those days). I must admit that at about 200 feet above the water I yelled out to boat we had on standby to pick me up first. But no, they picked up all the boys first and then came to me. 'You alright Sue?'

"What I didn't know was that all they could see was this red canopy that I had just dyed the night before, running red in the water and they thought I had been gotten by a shark. Oh no, she's still got two legs – wonderful.

"I think it was Ted Harrison who did the spotting for that – he was a notorious later for poor spotting."

RIGHT *Birdman Rally demo onto Glenelg beach for Keith Perrott.*

The first demo on dry land in the inner metropolitan area was in January, 1972. The Golden Arrows team jumped into the still largely untouched sandhills at West Lakes to publicise the development of the new West Lakes Display Village. Col Parsons, Trevor Burns and Steve Swann got out of the C172 VH-UEV in 20 knot ground winds and put their Paracommanders right on target, although Steve recalls it was only the quick action of TCO Bernie Keenan, who grabbed the crown lines of his PC, which stopped him being dragged into the barbed wire fence separating spectators and the target area. The demo was regarded as the catalyst for persuading DCA (the Department of Civil Aviation) to allow future displays into areas such as football grounds and parks around Adelaide.

A tight target area next to the then new boat ramp at Saint Kilda Beach in March

TENT LANDING FOR PIONEER SA DISPLAY JUMPER

Colin Parsons, one of SA's parachuting pioneers, had a memorable 25th jump, landing on top of a sideshow tent at the Crystal Brook Show in April 1962.

Col, 25 at the time and a member of Freelance Skydivers, had got out at 3,500 feet, jumping a basically modified 28 foot military surplus C9 canopy.

A photographer from *The Advertiser* was on hand to grab this shot of Col on top of the "knock-em down" tent and to record how close he came to decorating the ferris wheel.

"The DZ was an oval which is quite small even by today's standards with a grandstand on one side and a railway siding behind it. On the other side were all the sideshows with a ferris wheel," Col recalls.

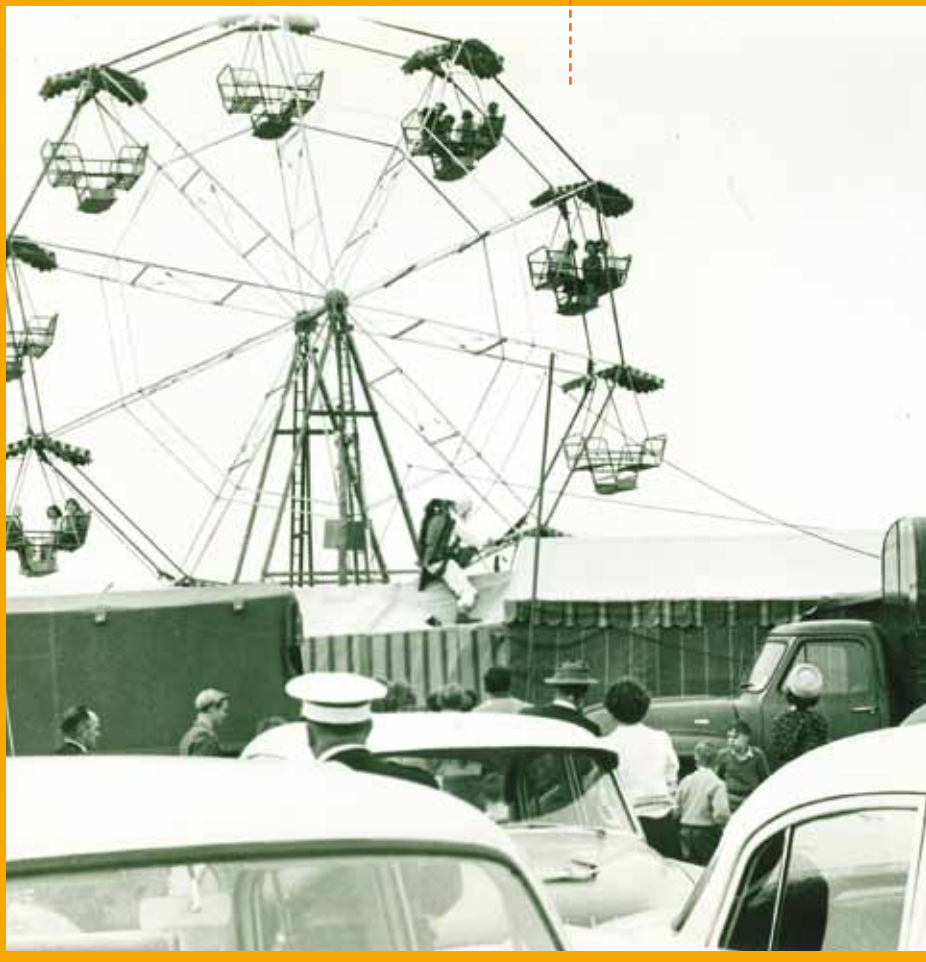
"So out of the aircraft I went – with just 24 jumps under my belt. After a 10 second unstable delay, I opened up and saw that I must have been three quarters of a mile from the damn oval. But as I started drifting back I could see that I was going to make it."

But Col's big error came when he reached the edge of the oval where there was a double row of parked cars all the way around. He started to tum into wind to land in the centre of the oval, but those TU modified canopies didn't exactly turn on the spot.

"When I looked ahead I saw this ferris wheel coming and just lifted my legs up and shut my eyes – but then I had this amazingly soft landing, associated with a big cracking noise. I didn't feel any pain, so I opened my eyes to find myself up to the waist through the top of a tent and hanging over the ridge pole. I had landed in sideshow alley, and all the people there were stunned. They didn't know whether I was hurt because they had also heard the big crack.

"However, it didn't come from me but from the ridge pole which I had broken. I realised I wasn't hurt so I looked at them and waved. They immediately burst into relieved cheers and applause. The intrepid birdman lives!"

It was at this point that a little woman ran out from the tent through which Col was hanging, looked up at him, literally stamping her feet on the spot and as red as a beetroot, and said, "I hope this isn't going to go on all day."



KAPUNDA HIGH SCHOOL FETE IN 1985: **MIKE GOODWIN** AND **IAN WARK.**

1974 sticks in Steve Swann's memory. Three jumps out of the Dornier 27 were all on target, although his spot on the second jump caused a few anxious moments. The five jumpers got out at 5,500 feet over the water and built a four-man star (nobody even dreamed of dragging them out in those days), with Victorian visitor John Middleton coming in fourth with hand-held smoke.

They opened their Paracommanders to find themselves considerably deeper than was comfortable. It was a case of loosening chest straps, knees up, unclip one side of the chest-mounted reserve, check the lifejacket and fingers crossed. Everyone got back, right on target.

Allan McEwen, a frequent jumper with the Golden Arrows in the 1970s remembers an inauspicious demo on round canopies at West Lakes, to mark the beginning of development around the then new lake. "Whoever spotted unloaded us over bloody Glenelg Surf Club – or so it seemed," says Al. "I was low man on my Russian Paracommander and only just made it onto the promontory of land adjacent to the celebrations. Terry Angus also made it there – just. Everyone else was flat out finding blank spots among the crowd in which to land."

After celebrating a little too much following a successful Port Lincoln airshow demo in the 1970s the Golden Arrows members crammed, overloaded, into the aircraft for the return to Adelaide – and unceremoniously dragged the tail on take-off. Then, halfway home Al McEwen was badly in need of a leak. Unable to contain himself, Al managed to fill a plastic bag. While the pilot yawed the aircraft, Al opened a side window and let it rip. At more than 200 kph would have made an ugly mess of farmer Brown and his tractor.

ABOVE *Over the hump – Mike Goodwin's 1984 camel landing.*

Football Park is a popular destination for demo junkies. The first display there was in September 1976 when Col Parsons, Bernie Keenan and Steve Swann jumped in on the original, un-slidered Para Planes. These monsters, with their old 'rings and ropes" reefing system on the top of the canopy as the opening shock inhibitor, still managed to deliver some teeth-jarring openings, even on short delays. However, they gave demo jumpers a lot more confidence than the round Paracommanders they were replacing. The three all had pretty solid landings as, used to old fashioned round canopy accuracy techniques, they weren't quite expecting the wind to drop out as their canopies got below the level of the single grandstand. Col and Steve both landed in near stalls.

A tight country pub beer garden made a great target for accuracy champion Mick O'Brien during a 1985 weekend of jumping in the bush. After a pleasant day's leaping at the local airfield the group checked out the pub for suitable nearby landing areas for a couple of sunset loads. But, equipped with a Parafoil and a formidable reputation for competition accuracy, Mick decided the beer garden would do him, while every one else went in to a nearby open area.

"It was a good steady accuracy approach and waiting for me was the white beer coaster which I duly struck with my right heel," says Mick. His performance received rapturous applause from the locals but not all had been convinced of his ability. Many moved well away from the landing point, not believing that he was going to be spot on. The publican bestowed free meals and drinks on those who jumped as a sign of appreciation. However, one local was surprisingly grateful for Mick's performance.

"This bloke kept coming up to me throughout the night, offering to buy my beers. I was a bit perplexed at all the adulation and back slapping but the thumbs up, nods and winks I was getting was a real puzzle."

It was only the next morning back at the airfield that other jumpers filled him in. His new-found best friend had apparently wagered with a girl he fancied in the pub that Mick would hit the target, despite the deep scepticism of many locals, including the girl. The bet: if Mick missed and she won, the local would have to wear a dress to the pub every night for week. If he won, she would sleep with him that night. "And he didn't even come out to the airfield on the Sunday to thank me!"

Mike Goodwin's 1984 claim to a State, Australian and World record is unlikely to be challenged any time soon. Landing on the back of a camel in the middle of the Bordertown speedway is a specialty not often embraced by skydivers anywhere. The jump was witnessed by 4,500 people at the inaugural Bordertown camel races.

Graham Barrington clearly remembers a demo into the Adelaide Showgrounds at Wayville in the 1980s. As Area Safety Officer, Graham had only recently issued a ban on the use of surplus phosphorus flares, which had become available through a couple of dodgy outlets, fearful of the consequences should bits of the powerful chemical fall on the public. Exiting over Goodwood, he watched a fellow jumper open and, despite his ruling, ignite one of the outlawed flares under canopy – only to see it sever its retaining line and fall free towards the Leader Steet entrance of the showgrounds. Several expletives and prayers passed Graham's lips. They were answered (the prayers, at least) as the flare landed in a backyard swimming pool.

Phil Luff famously landed on the roof of the Coles supermarket at Whyalla dressed as Santa in the 1980s. Santa landed awkwardly and had trouble walking but fortunately the real Santa (or at least someone more rotund) was waiting on the roof and descended the ladder to the waiting kids below.

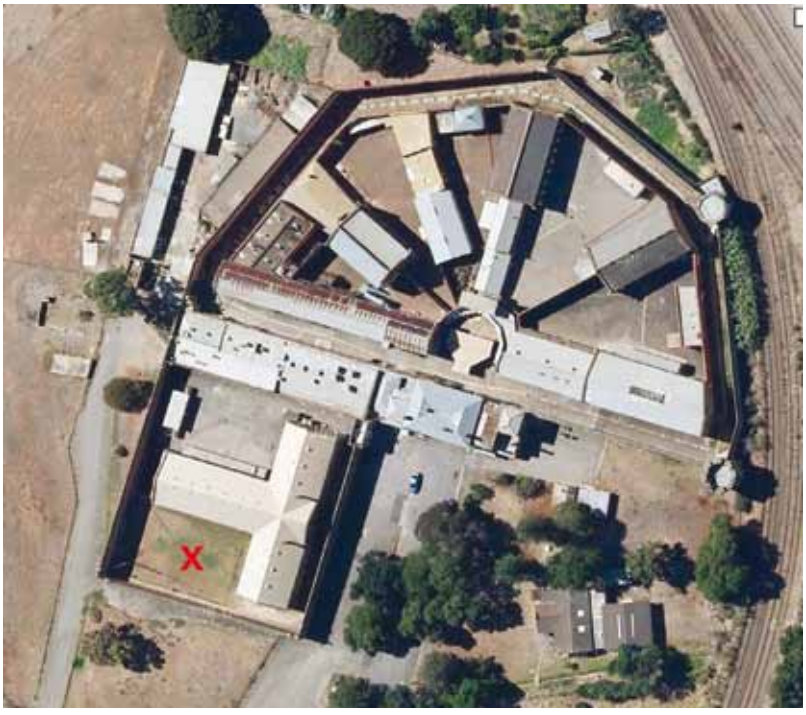
Greg Smith, who has done a demo or two, reckons his most spectacular was the World Lawn Bowls Championship at West Beach in 1996. *(Photo on page 127)*

Greg and Peter Waller went into a bowling green which had grandstands on two sides and a huge 30 feet high TV scaffold set up by the ABC on the third side, to enable their filming. The fourth side was the club house. And they did it carrying massive flags – Wally with a 1,000 square footer and Greg flying 2,000 square feet behind him. "When we were doing our practice jumps we missed the pit several times," says Greg. "We thought if we miss the pit we're going to miss the bowling green. I remember circling over the top, we'd been given the green light – the wind was only about 4 or 5 knots and Wally leant over and said 'Miff – this is either going to make or break the resume.' " They both got in.

Ian Wark almost certainly pulled off one of the most brazen illegal demos in SA skydiving history. A regular at the Highway Inn on Anzac Highway, Plympton in the 1980s, Ian had told a number of fellow jumpers on several occasions that he aimed to jump onto the central, grassed median strip outside the front of the pub. We all took it with a pinch of salt.

Graham Barrington bumped into Ian at the pub one day. "He said 'come here', walked out the front and announced 'I landed there'," says Graham. "And I was the Area Safety Officer! My reaction was 'yeah, righto Warky.' But 12 months later I met the pilot who flew the plane. He thought the jump had been into the school oval opposite the Morphettville Racecourse, just down the road. But Ian actually jumped onto the median strip."

BELOW *Trevor Burns does a water jump demo off the jetty at Port Lincoln in May 1970.*



Keith Perrott's late afternoon jump into a high-walled exercise yard at the Adelaide Goal in 2010 would have to rate as the most challenging SA display on record.

He was asked to asked to drop into a small courtyard behind the prison walls, as part of music video being shot by local, internationally known band, the Hill Top Hoods.

"Mine was a small sequence," says Keith. "The whole video was shot around the old gaol and a lot of it was to do with zombies and weird and wonderful creatures of the night."

Adelaide Tandem Skydiving chief instructor Al Gray had the commission to do the job. But he called on Keith after a couple DZ rehearsals of his own at Lower Light showed that he and his "clapped out accuracy equipment were not up to it."

The target, no bigger than a tennis court, was surrounded on two sides by a very high brick wall and three-storey cell block buildings on the other two.

Keith visited the site several times, both day and night, to psychologically prepare himself and check things out.

"On the day that I actually did the first of two planned jumps, I arrived over the top of the landing area and was actually far too high and almost passed it. The ground wind was going in one direction and the upper winds were going at 180 degrees the other direction so that's why I got pushed over the top so quickly – I was actually going down wind. But purely by I guess instinct and personal experience I managed to quickly do a 360 degree turn and pull myself back behind the target again and then when I came in, it was a nice flared landing."

Keith made it look like it was a walk in the park but to those who know about small areas it was a great save.

"Unfortunately the gaol is right on the main traffic line for regular passenger transport coming into Adelaide Airport. I had no chance to do a drifter run to see what the winds were doing – actually the on-board weather stations on the commercial aircraft said that there were 20 knot winds at exit height.

"At the exit attitude of 3,000 feet the strong wind wasn't there at all. I actually chose the exit point just again purely on experience rather than going by the weather report given to us. It worked out very well because we only had about a 20-minute window to do the display and then we had to clear

ABOVE LEFT *Mike Goodwin and Ian Wark, regular and talented demo jumpers throughout the 1980s.*

ABOVE RIGHT *Keith Perrott's target for what must be South Australia's toughest ever demo – the old Adelaide Gaol.*

DEMOS

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE *Andy Weir and Mike Hughes bring a biplane on to Glenelg beach for New Year celebrations in 1980. What a well behaved crowd! Andy and Mike, jumping under the team name "United High", left a Cherokee Lance flown by George Palladij at 4,000 feet and had their bi-plane going by 3-grand.*

ABOVE LEFT *November 1962 demo at the Craigburn Carnival at Blackwood, in aid of Minda Home. The un-named jumper was from South Coast Skydivers.*

LEFT *Steve Boldog puts in a precision effort at the Royal Adelaide Show in 1983.*

the area." The jump was at about 4.30 pm and there was another scheduled for 8.30 pm when it was going to be pitch black – perfect for zombies.

"I packed my equipment after my practice jump and before I was going to do the second jump and I asked them to turn on the lights to illuminate the court yard area so I could see it all from the ground," says Keith. "For some reason the court yard lights had been decommissioned and they would not operate at all. So we thought about it and then the ground crew organiser Al Gray decided he had some night flares with him and he was going to fire one of them up and that would illuminate the yard for me. But I was a bit concerned because with such limited light I wouldn't be able to see the rooftops of the buildings clearly.

"Depth perception at night is always tricky and if the smoke from the flare stayed at ground level like a fog or a mist then I would have no idea where the ground was and that just made it too risky. I didn't do the second jump."

Studio enhancement of the afternoon's film meant the footage could be darkened to simulate night and Keith made it into his first music video, albeit as a stunt double for Al Gray. It was Al who had a small speaking part. His role called for him to hand out pornography and medical supplies to the 'inmates' and then be eaten by zombies – a role which, possibly, required no acting ability at all.

SA's accuracy king, Keith Perrott, had a memorable first demonstration jump – into the Birdman Rally on Glenelg Beach in the 1980s, jumping with Steve Boldog and Col Parsons. They exited a helicopter about 100 metres off shore past the end of the Glenelg Jetty. "Col Parsons and I got out either side of the helicopter and joined to make a two-way formation and then split up to open and landed on the beach.

"But of course, had I needed my reserve, which in those days was still a roundie, I'm not sure where I would have landed.

"The wind was marginal at 15 to 20 knots which meant a round reserve landing could have been a long way inland. By the time we came in under canopy to land it eventually dropped off to about two or three knots."

Trevor Burns performed his share of Father Christmas jumps over the years. "Whenever I did, I always arranged for a somewhat more portly Father Christmas double to take over after I landed to do the actual handing out of presents and so on, as I wasn't really into the Ho-Ho-Ho side of things," says Trevor. "Another reason for the double was my concern that if I went in, how were the parents going to explain that to their kids, what was going to happen to Christmas? For that reason I always took an extra little care whenever I did a Father Christmas jump. Funny how we prioritise things."

One of the Golden Arrows' Santa jumps in 1981 could have done with a little more

BELOW *Photograph from the afternoon daily The News of January 17, 1965. The caption said: "One of the six skydivers who parachuted into the sea at Grange, landing just out from the jetty. A rescue launch is heading for the parachutuist."*

rehearsing from the ground crew. Steve Swann was appearing in the red suit on a Christmas picnic display at the River Park, Saint Peters. The jump, with Ian Wark, went off nicely but the post-landing performance didn't go down well with a local newspaper reporter. "Very exciting it was to see Santa plummeting to earth and making a perfect landing in the parklands," she wrote in *The Australian.* "But his groundcrew were clearly not North Pole helpers. For a start, they shouted at the children to keep clear of Father Christmas. Then they kept calling him by names such as 'Steve' or 'Ted'. Now any self-respecting child knows the only christian name for Santa is 'Nicholas'. And he's far too old to be leaping out of planes."

Jeremy Browne and Mike Goodwin couldn't get enough of the excitement after a night jump into the Whyalla Show in the mid 1980s. Jumping with the Chuting Stars team in fairly rugged weather they got out amid a lot of cloud and between patches of rain. Having made it successfully onto the showground they were on such a high that they then proceeded to ride the Graviton (a vomit-inducing sideshow) for about 10 runs.

Normally demos in the 1960s consisted of the same everyday jumps made on the drop zone spiced up with identical jumpsuits and a bit of smoke here and there. Sometimes, however, jumpers looked to do something a little extra in order to attract the customers, usually a country show society or the organisers of an air pageant.

In September 1966 the newly formed Golden Arrows display team was booked to perform it's first demo at that year's Ceduna Show. "As part of our advertising blurb we trumpeted a drop of lollies attached to party balloons as an added attraction for the kids,"

YOUNG AUSTRALIAN Edited by Lucy Tegoney

Santa's drop-in visit doesn't fool the children

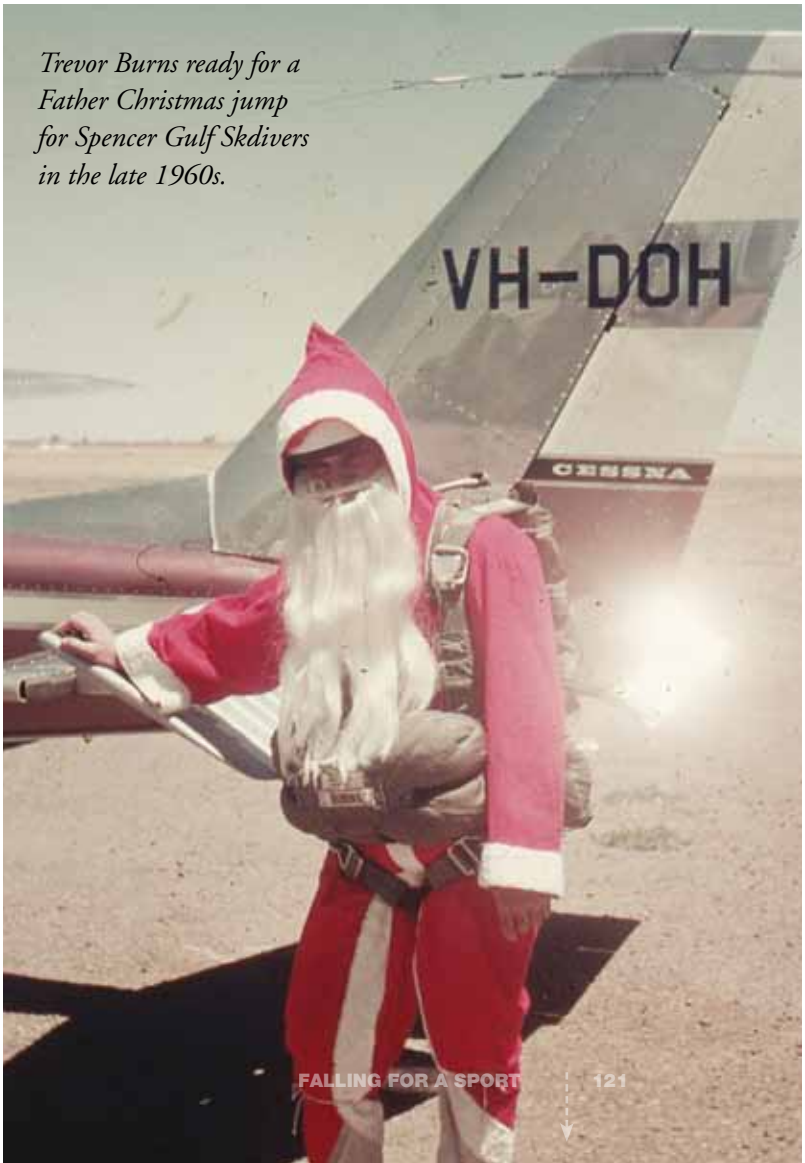
ODD SPOT

Adelaide's Golden Arrows parachute team is offering Christmas party organisers a "parachuting Santa" service. For $250 (half to charity) Santa will "drop into your Christmas function" on or within five metres of a target.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CHUTE DOESN'T OPEN?

THE KIDS WILL KNOW YOU DON'T EXIST ANY MORE

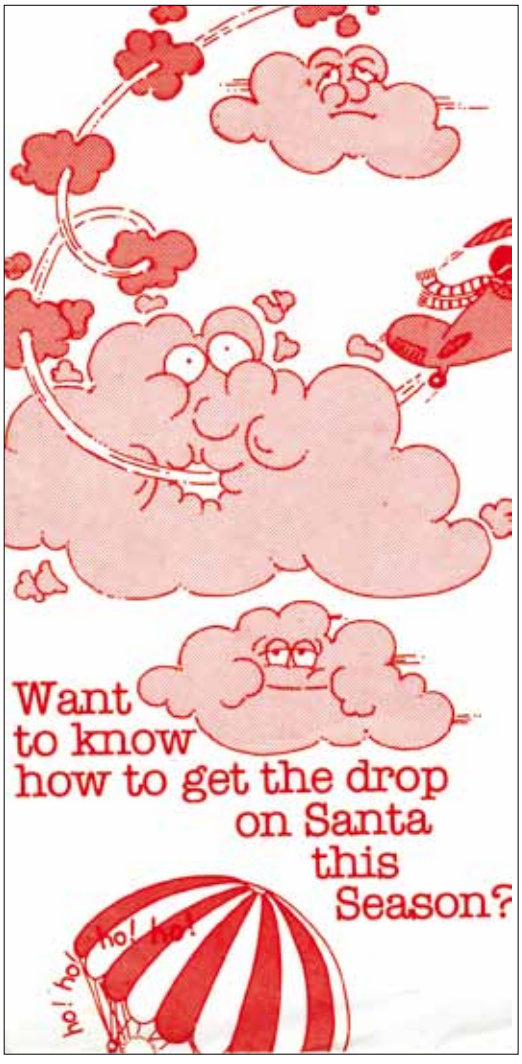
INDEX TO PAGES



Trevor Burns ready for a Father Christmas jump for Spencer Gulf Skdivers in the late 1960s.

recalls team organiser Trevor Burns. "It seemed like a simple idea at the time. The show people requested the lolly drop as part of the display so we went about working out how we were going to do it – naturally more sensible people would have figured this out before advertising the attraction, but then it was generally acknowledged that we weren't sensible people.

"We began experimenting with party balloons fitted with little net bags containing a selection of lollies: the aim was to get a rate of descent low enough that a balloon with it's cargo of lollies wouldn't hurt anyone it hit on the head. After a series of drop tests from a tower we ended up with a balloon payload of one Mintie and two jelly beans, this was a little smaller than we had anticipated but it was too late to do anything about it before the demo.



RIGHT *Promotional flyer for SAS 10 television in the early 1980s. Channel 10 ran TV commercials, promoting the jumping Santa as part of their Christmas Appeal. The Golden Arrows donated proceeds of their demos to the Appeal, making jumps all over the metropolitan area.*

"On the day of the demo we made a couple of jumps, operating the Cessna 172 from the paddock adjacent to the showgrounds before setting to blow up as many party balloons as we could fit in the cabin of the Cessna. With the door in place the pilot and I took off with him batting balloons out of his way so he could see to fly.

"We had not actually tried this before (naturally!) but figured that the balloons would take some getting out of the aircraft. The plan was for me to wedge the door open with my leg and then feed the balloons out into the slipstream. Anticipating trouble getting the balloons out I opened the door as we passed over the showgrounds at about 1,000 feet on our jump, or should I say balloon, run."

At this point the pilot thought it might help if he opened the window of the left hand door – it seemed like a good idea at the time.

"However this was another example of us making things up as we went along," says Trevor, "As soon as he did so the interior of the aircraft became a whirling, kaleidoscope of coloured balloons, accompanied by a sound like a tearing cloth and every last balloon ejected itself out the door and into the slipstream – right over the showgrounds. Naturally the balloons sailed off downwind and as we watched a swarm of kids charged out of the showgrounds and chased the balloons across several paddocks, leaping fences and trampling crops."

Sue Brown was also on the jump. "When the parents realised that the kids weren't coming back there was another crowd going after the kids. So by the time we did our beautiful demonstration jump and landed

there was nobody there – we'd lost our crowd," says Sue.

The team made one more jump before hastily packing up the aircraft and escaping, just as the first of some very pissed off kids came trudging back, having run for miles to claim their reward – one Mintie and two jelly beans!

Inspired by the epic 1969 film *The Gypsy Moths*, starring Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr, the Golden Arrows decided to add a cutaway jump to the team's repertoire at an air pageant on the Port Pirie aerodrome.

"To carry out the jump I borrowed Pete O'Neill's new Crossbow piggyback rig," says Trevor Burns. "I tied a length of 2,000 lb tubular nylon to the main harness, forming a second belly band, to which I clipped a standard T7A reserve fitted with a pilot chute."

A left-hander, Trevor lashed a sharp knife in a scabbard to the right sleeve of his jumpsuit. The idea was to exit the aircraft at 3,000 ft and immediately deploy the extra reserve so as to lessen the opening shock, then, at 2,000 feet cut the reserve away by cutting though the tubular nylon, freefall for a few seconds and then deploy the main.

A classic *Gypsy Moths* routine.

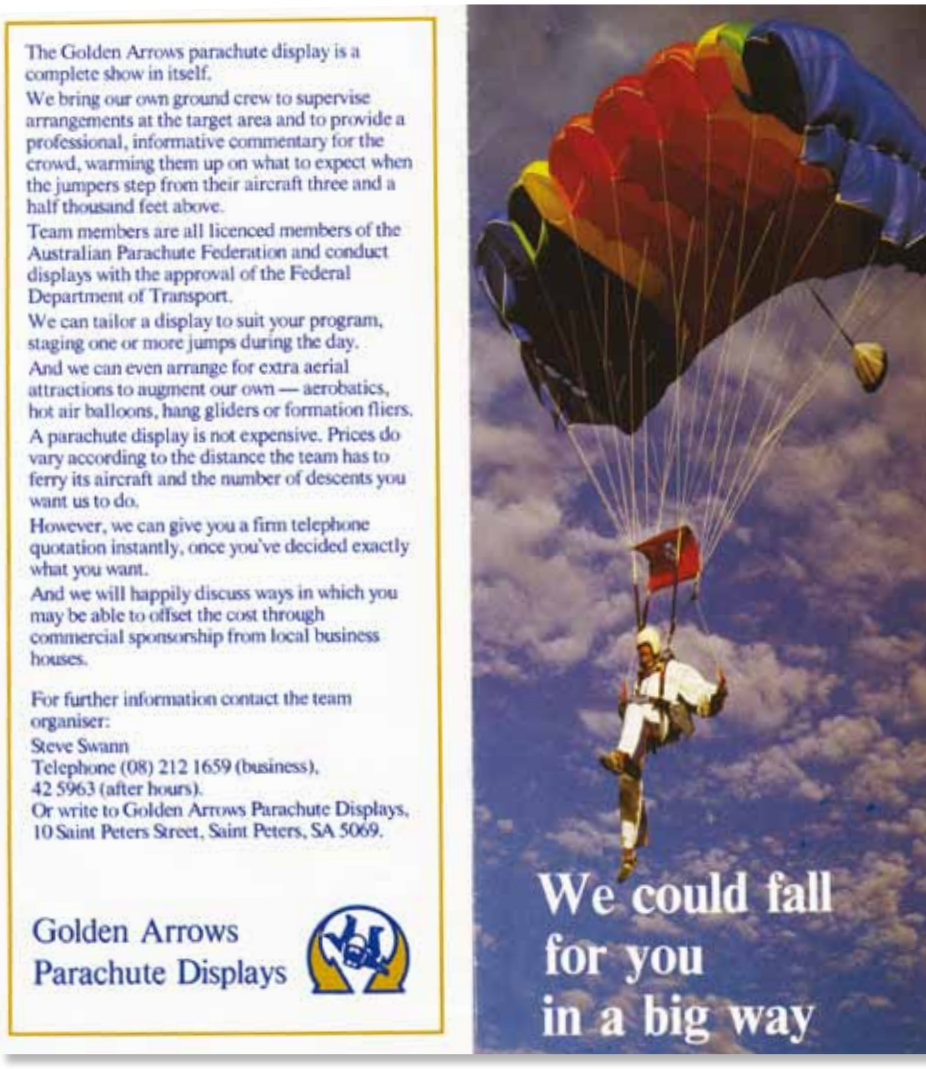
"However, on exit I instinctively assumed a normal stable position before realising that I needed to be on my back," says Trevor. "By the time I achieved this I was almost at terminal velocity and on deploying the T7A I experienced lots of nice, silvery worms before my eyes and it took a little while before I managed to stow the reserve ripcord and draw the knife to cut the T7A away.

"Because of the attachment points I was hanging under the canopy in a back to earth position. After what I figured to be a suitable time under the T7A, I cut it away and, with some difficulty, having no airspeed to work with, rolled face to earth – and the earth was right there! I dumped the main immediately and ended up hanging under the main at an estimated 600 to 700 feet – I wasn't wearing an altimeter."

While all this was going on one of the other team members, Pete O'Neill, was commentating over the public address system and had just informed the crowd that Trevor obviously intended to land under the T7A.

"Then I cut it away," Trevor recalls. "I think Pete was particularly concerned because I was wearing his pride and joy! The crowd just assumed that the jump had gone off perfectly as planned."

Keith Perrott wasn't squeezed for aircraft space on a Strathalbyn demo in January 1999. He was jumping into the Soldier's Memorial Park rotunda at the finishing of a stage of the



ABOVE *Golden Arrows display team promotional brochure from the early 1980s.*

ABOVE *Royal Adelaide Show demo landing by Jeremy Browne in 1989.*

Tour Down Under bike race. High winds had put an end to jumping at Skysport's Strathalbyn DZ and Keith had the exclusive use of the Islander to himself.

"On the drifter run the pilot didn't circuit back so I could follow the drifter down as was the usual procedure," he says. "I chose an exit a long way out of the town and backed it in all the way with two small flags hanging under me," says Keith. "I couldn't slow my drift past the target and was heading for the local public swimming pool. Then as I got below some very tall (200 ft) pine trees I was suddenly going downwind back to the target. I landed okay and was cheered by the crowd.

"Later on that day Graeme Gooding who was the CI of SASPC and watching from a pub balcony in the main street said: " I take my hat off to you, I don't know how the f..k you did that on a Parafoil but geez it looked good."

The most active display team in the late 1980s was the Chuting Stars, based at Skysport, Strathalbyn. Their high-profile demos included the Royal Adelaide Show, the Adelaide Grand Prix, Globe Derby Park, Wayville Speedway and a number of prominent television advertisements as well as numerous country shows. Team members were Steve and Jan Boldog, Jeremy Browne, Graham Barrington, Colin Parsons, Louise Davis, Mike Goodwin, Scott Prideaux and Kym Williams.

Mick O'Brien and Keith Perrott won't forget their November 1999 demo into Berri's Fluviafest on the River Murray. The deadly duo were to land on a pontoon moored in the middle of the river. They had no chance to practice and on the day it was nil wind and raining. "The surface of the pontoon was very smooth aluminium and, with wet plastic target panels, it was like an ice skating rink," says Keith. "Mick landed first with such a thud, feet then bottom, that the crowd heard the sound from the bank. I followed him in and he was frantically calling out to me on approach warning of the slippery surface. I hit and did the best knee bend ever to stay up."

He didn't jump. He was pushed!
Al Gray relishes a demo he did into RAAF Edinburgh in the early 2000s as part of the base's open day. It was originally supposed to be a team from Lower Light jumping from a Caribou on separate passes with the Army's Red Berets team. "The Red Berets weren't happy with this arrangement," says Al. "It would detract from their show and we were dangerous louts on fast canopies. So I told them, fine: they could do it themselves. But they needed someone to jump the RAAF ensign, a monster 5,000 sq foot flag, and they had nobody who could do it at the time. Then they wanted me to jump it with them but no other Lower Lighters. I said no."

The RAAF then cancelled the Red Berets display and put the Lower Light team up in the Roulettes rescue chopper instead.
Nice one Al!

"So there were, about eight of us in the chopper, and me with this f.....g huge flag. I had to lie on the floor to hook it up then needed to be lifted up by the others and

helped to the door with my tandem rig and this big flag. I couldn't jump – I just fell out."

It was a case of two out of three ain't bad at a demo into the Mundulla showgrounds in 1973. The target, surrounded by towering South East gum trees and littered with horse jumps, was tight by any standards and more challenging for the four Golden Arrows team members who were on Paracommander roundies. The first two jumps were spot on but the team pushed it a touch too far on the last. With the winds coming up, Phil Edwards, Col Parsons, Bernie Keenan and Steve Swann went ahead with a scheduled rel jump with smoke from 8,500 feet.

A deep, deep spot proved too deep and the four were left looking for alternative landing sites as they came in over the town. They managed to make it to the cricket ground, a block or two from the showgrounds. But it too, was surrounded by monster gums, one of which claimed Bernie's canopy.
"I remember shouting out 'shit' as I crashed in to the branches, quite high up in the tree," said Bernie. "Luckily the Mount Gambier SES was part of the show display and all the guys joyously used my situation as an exercise. Within minutes, they had a team on the job and retrieved the canopy." Bernie wasn't injured except for scratches and amazingly only a few tears in his PC.

The first Wine Bushing Festivals at McLaren Vale in the early 1970s were a highlight on the calendar of the Golden Arrows demo team. The tight little oval on the outskirts of the town, surrounded by wine sampling tents and trees, was a welcome accuracy challenge for round canopy jumpers. But as Bernie Keenan recalled, it was the opportunity to spend an afternoon jumping barefoot into huge vats of grapes that was the

VIC BALFOUR AND **MIKE HUGHES** AT THE ROYAL ADELAIDE SHOW IN 1981.

real attraction. "Helping out with the crushing and drinking lots of bottles of McLaren Vale's finest."

The name of the pilot has been lost (or possibly suppressed) but a mid 1970s demo at the Port Lincoln airshow had a diverting beginning. The team had gathered at Adelaide Airport to depart in ... in ... Sorry! Can't remember which aircraft. One of the jumpers had inadvertently kept some car keys which urgently needed to be returned to someone else but the team was already running late. The plan was hatched.

A very low pass along a beach somewhere near Brighton, or somewhere; someone held someone else's legs as they leaned out the door; and the keys were delivered by someone to whoever was waiting on the beach. Somewhere.

A Waikerie Air Show crowd got more than the usual display in the late 1970s. A four-man star from 12,000 feet had the added spice of four different smoke colours – courtesy of parachuting's own 'Milo Minderbinder', Gene Birmingham. The Vietnam war, and the Army ordnance sloshing around at the time, had its up-sides.

Bernie Keenan remembered getting out at 12 grand, building the star and then turning it so that the four smoke colours twisted together. "Then we broke it, tracked away, turned back and rebuilt the star," he said. Spectacular! But then Bernie had a mal and chopped away on to his brand new GQ round reserve. "Because the weather was so good and the spot excellent, I was on the GQ at about 1,000 feet, still smoking and managed a standup landing right in front of the crowd, which clapped and cheered. I heard later that they all thought the cutaway - smoke - reserve routine was just part of the show!"

When local jumpers first started doing demos into the Royal Show at Wayville the job was simply to land in the arena, as close as possible to the centre of the oval. Given the gear in use in the late 1970s, even that task was enough of a challenge.

"We'd have eyes the size of fried eggs on jump run as we looked out the door at the hazards surrounding the Showgrounds," says Col Parsons. "They were also the days of sitting in a doorless Cessna, sometimes circling for 20 minutes after the drifter had been dropped as we waited for the Show people and Air Traffic Control to clear us. Just enough time to make one wonder whether the wind had changed and what the hell was I doing this for anyhow, having private visions of landing on a power line along Goodwood Road or being chewed up by a train on the western side of the Showground or skewered on a stump-jump plough in the agricultural machinery display area."

But as the years went by the task became progressively more difficult as both the Show officials and the jumpers themselves sought to avoid a simple repetition of previous year's display and increase the entertainment factor.

"And so we moved from landing on the cross, to landing on a metre square piece of masonite covered with balloons which were filled with powder so that they made a good sight when we stomped on them," says Col. "The next year the task involved having the board towed across the arena behind a quadbike, thus presenting a moving target. The towing was done by a Showgrounds clown who just happened to have done some jumps interstate and understood a bit about our glide angles on approach and was able to surreptitiously speed up and slow down the bike to make the job easier."

On one of those displays Mike Goodwin used his homemade 'bomb' which was a piece

of pipe stuffed with black powder and wadded tightly at each end with an electric detonator which he controlled with a remote hand trigger.

"Goody did a fantastic job, landing on the balloons, pressing his trigger just as he did so, disappearing in a huge cloud of smoke and deafening everyone within 100 metres in the process. I always worried about the wadding not blowing out of the end and having the pipe disintegrate, taking Goody's right foot off with it," Col says.

As it turned out, the device was banned later by the Civil Aviation Authority on the grounds that radio interference might make it detonate in the aircraft!

The next Royal Adelaide Show challenge was to land on an 8 X 5 trailer and then later on to the back of a 3-tonne truck.

Steve Boldog and Col Parsons did the truck demos, nearly always succeeding in hitting the middle. "We had thick gym mats laid out in the tray and marked the aiming point with a couple of BandAids forming a cross, " says Col. "Once we set up on final we could see the BandAids and then did not take our eyes off them. I guess maintaining constant feedback from the approach to the aiming point is one of the secrets of good accuracy but I also used to think that 'What you can't see, can't hurt you'. Don't look at the hazards!"

On one of those Wayville Showgrounds jumps there was a strong northerly blowing (probably 20 knots or so) ahead of an approaching front. The two were worried about the wind shear from the grandstands (amongst other things!) but got around that by having the truck parked in line with a gap between the stands through which the wind was howling.

"At least it overcame the windshear problem even if the venturi effect increased the wind strength," Colin recalls. "On drifter run I timed its descent, then on jump run did the usual thing and flew the same length of time to the upwind side before we exited. Talk about an act of faith. We were at least a mile upwind, well beyond the Richmond oval, with tiger country all the way back.

"But it shows that sticking to your own rules works, because we both made it, albeit front-risering down against the wind as hard as we could once we got back to the Showground at about 500 feet."

BELOW *Greg Smith at the 1996 World Bowls Championships demo, which he did with Peter Waller.*

1986 FOOTY PARK
FATALITY A TRAGIC BLOW TO THE SPORT

Demonstrations are supposed to be powerful promotional tools for skydiving – as well as a buzz for jumpers. But a display into Football Park at West Lakes in October, 1986 was neither. The early evening jump went ahead in weather that had been atrocious most of the day, involved alcohol and ended in a fatality in front of a crowd of thousands.

The tragic jump set the sport back dramatically, slashing student inquiries and leading to a drop in demand for demos in its wake for several years. Local jumper Ian Wark organised the display. He was joined by fellow members of the Fosters Flyers, three Victorians in Adelaide for the Grand Prix, which was then sponsored by the brewer. It ended up being a very, very bad look for Carlton and United Breweries – Peter Wyer, the 42 year-old who died after his canopy slammed him into a grandstand, had a blood alcohol reading of 0.16.

RIGHT *Ian Wark as TCO for a demo, on the roof at Football Park in the early 1980s, with radio and smoke.*

The Friday evening jump into an Australia-Ireland Gaelic football match occurred in highly questionable weather. While there were lulls in the wind, television news footage and witness statements to the later Coroner's Court inquiry, showed rain sheeting across the ground at times, in strong, squally south-westerly bursts. The Department of Aviation approval for the display had listed a number of conditions, including ground winds of no more than 8 knots in the 10 minutes immediately before the jump and a maximum wind aloft below exit height of 15 knots.

The four jumpers exited a helicopter at about 3,000 ft. Three landed safely – the first just inside a boundary fence, according to a witness statement to the Coroner, possibly indicating that the winds were an issue. The next two also landed safely but much closer to the target cross.

But Peter Wyer did a radical right turn on approach and the right hand side of his canopy tucked under, sending him spinning into the side of a section of the concrete stand in the stadium's north-eastern pocket.

A witness, an off-duty police officer, told the Coroner he saw Wyer "descending quickly from above the centre of the stadium and moving in a north easterly direction." The Coroner's report says the witness "got the distinct impression the parachutist was going to crash into the seats located in a grandstand. He observed the person pulling the cords to the canopy and then the parachutist went into

Alcohol affected skydiver's capabilities, Coroner finds

A skydiver killed when he crashed into a grandstand at Football Park last year had consumed enough alcohol to affect his ability to control his parachute in an emergency, the Coroner's Court was told yesterday.

A blood alcohol analysis conducted after the incident had shown the man to have an average alcohol reading of .161, the State Coroner, Mr K. B. Ahern, said.

Mr Ahern warned there were hazards involved in sports like skydiving and it was essential that skydivers were in full possession of their faculties. He was giving his finding into the death of Peter Hugh Wyer, 42, of Nelson Street, South Melbourne.

Wyer had been one of a four-member team to jump in a skydiving display at Football Park before a Gaelic football match on October 24 last year.

Wyer had appeared to lose control as he descended into Football Park, had crashed into the grandstand roof and had died of massive internal haemorrhaging.

Mr Ahern said a blood alcohol analysis on Wyer after the accident showed he must have drunk a reasonable quantity of alcohol a few hours before his death.

"I think it is of some significance that the other three members of the team, who presumably had not consumed any alcohol, were able to complete their jumps safely in the same conditions," he said. "It is my view that the alcohol consumed by the deceased did affect his capabilities."

"Presuming that he was placed in a situation of emergency, which might well have happened during the course of his descent, then his reaction and ability to make a correction was no doubt impaired due to the consumption of liquor."

A Bureau of Air Safety report into the accident also had found that Wyer's handling of the jump was consistent with his judgment being impaired by alcohol.

Mr Graham John Barrington, of the SA Parachuting Federation, told the court about an eight-hour rule relating to the consumption of alcohol before a jump. He agreed that if a jumper had a fairly substantial blood alcohol reading, then jumping would be a "rather dangerous undertaking".

One of the team members, Mr Ian Wark, told the court they had left West Beach Airport in a helicopter and had jumped at a height of about 3000 feet (1000 metres).

Mr Wark said he had landed safely and had watched as two other team members also landed safely. He had then seen the fourth member, Wyer, take a radical right-hand turn. The right side of Wyer's canopy had appeared to tuck under and he had tried to reinflate the cells.

The canopy had gone out of control.

a spin, which he described as approximately 8 ft in diameter. The person then fell some distance and apparently slammed sideways into the front of a cantilever roof."

The Advertiser reported the following day that Peter Wyer was hanging for two minutes as his parachute was caught on the iron roof of the small stand. He died from massive internal haemorrhaging.

Whatever the weather conditions, alcohol was clearly a factor. Wyer, whose blood alcohol was measured at 0.16, had been grounded the day before the fatal jump, the Thursday.

Area Safety Officer Graham Barrington had fronted him at Adelaide airport at about 3 pm, where the Fosters team and local jumpers were together preparing for a mass jump over the Grand Prix track.
Graham said Wyer appeared intoxicated and he grounded him. As it turned out, weather conditions forced that mass jump to be abandoned.

While Ian Wark and Bill Kenny both strenuously denied any knowledge of Wyer having consumed alcohol on the day of the fatal jump, the helicopter pilot who had flown them said that he had "noticed a strong smell of alcohol .... on the little bloke." And the pathologist reporting to the Coroner said it was clear there had been a large alcohol intake on the day of the fatality and that there was no way it was a residual level from the day before.

On the ground at Football Park and commentating for the team was APF stalwart Claude Gillard. He was unaware of the alcohol issues.

The resulting State Council moves for disciplinary action, revoking the display licences of Wark (10 years) and Kenny (6 months), generated very considerable angst and a lot of correspondence from various bodies. Bill Kenny went as far as to engage solicitors to argue his point.

In the end the demonstration bans stood. The sport suffered for several years. But a talented jumper was dead – after some very doubtful judgements and the involvement of people who should have known better.

Skydiver killed in display accident

By MICHELANGELO RUCCI

One of three skydivers in the Foster's Display Team died last night after crashing into a concrete grandstand at Football Park

Peter Wire, a Melbourne parachutist, was taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The hospital said he had died shortly afterwards.

Wire, 30, was the third skydiver to enter Football Park in a parachuting display before last night's third composite football Test match between Australia and Ireland.

Wire appeared to be thrown against a section of the concrete stand at the stadium's north-eastern pocket by the strong south-westerly winds gusting across West Lakes last night.

Team commentator, Mr Claude Gillard, said the accident was caused when Wire's parachute could not be controlled.

"He tried to parachute in quickly and one side of the canopy folded under him," Mr Gillard said.

"He had no control over it then."

After hitting the concrete wall, Wire was hanging for two minutes as his parachute was caught on the iron roof of the small stand.

Police and St John Ambulance crew treated Wire at the ground while Football Park ground staff carried a Jordan frame stretcher to the grandstand.

The other two members of the team landed safely, but the wet and windy conditions pushed them off their target in the centre of the ground.

SKYSPORT
SA's FIRST COMMERCIAL PARACHUTE CENTRE

South Australia's first sustained, large scale independent commercial skydiving operation, the Skysport Parachute Centre, emerged in early 1980.

Col Parsons, Steve Boldog and Ron Thomas had established an arrangement with the club six months earlier, under which the new Skysport would train SASPC's students.

But in January they made a clean break. The club committee accepted their decision to set up their own distinct operation, a hundred metres or so to the east of the SASPC's buildings.

In an open letter to all SASPC club members, Col, Steve and Ron spelt out their reasons for the move and how they would run their business.

BELOW *Skysport partner and pilot Warwick Blacker.*

"It has been obvious to all of us who are regular participants in sport parachuting in SA that the lack of any alternative to the sole club presently operating has led to many difficulties and limitations," they said. "There has been a rather long history of recurring episodes of inter-personal conflict, disputes over the 'right way' to conduct various operations, allegations of unwarranted authoritarianism and so on. These difficulties have been accentuated by the lack of any choice between alternative styles of operation.

"In addition the existence of a single club without the challenge for development which comes from competition/association with other clubs or centres, has led to a very limited rate of growth. While the club is comfortable at present, with some facilities and its own aircraft, there is not much to be seen for 19 years of continuous operation.

"This is particularly evident if one makes comparisons with organisations of similar vintage interstate and overseas. It would appear that the old saying 'united we stand, divided we fall' does not apply to sport parachuting development. The places where things are happening are places where there is the spur to development which comes from commercial competition and friendly rivalry."

They told SASPC members they had no intention of detracting from the club's operations or engaging in mutually destructive actions such as body snatching, price wars or mud slinging. However, they firmly believed that a State with a population of one million had plenty of scope to support at least two skydiving organisations.

Col Parsons and Pat Irvine leave Skysport's VH-SLT in 1982.

During late 1979 the three had inspected several potential drop zone sites within 60 or 70 km of Adelaide, thinking it would be best to open a completely new parachuting scene. In the end they opted for Lower Light, believing it would deliver greater promotion for the sport and offer mutual advantages to both Skysport and the club. Farmer and landlord George Quigley gave the nod for Skysport to locate its facilities 100 metres down the paddock.

Acknowledging that the withdrawal of Steve Boldog and Col Parsons would leave the SASPC with just a single instructor and two jumpmasters, they offered to delay the start of their operation to give Vic Balfour time to gain his senior instructor rating and for Neil

ABOVE *Steve Boldog exits Skysport's VH-SLT in the early 1980s.*

ABOVE *The recently completed Skysport Parachute Centre club house at Lower Light in 1981: Jean Turner, Gail Wood, Kevin Taylor and Steve Boldog.*

BELOW *Skysport's pilots lined up at Strathalbyn.*

Davis and Herb Kaisersedder to upgrade from jumpmaster to instructor ratings.

Skysport's first jumps at Lower Light were at the end of January 1980 but they had run the first course a few weeks previously at Millicent, jumping at Glenroy station near Penola.

Civilised facilities were needed at once and a clubhouse with verandah extensions on each side and an adjoining storeroom was built at the end 1979 ready for the move. "Steve and I spent most Friday afternoons at Lower Light adding to the infrastructure and by the end of February 1980 we had the packing lawn area fenced off, some trees planted, and the lawn seeded," says Col Parsons, "the latter process being done under the supervision of Jean Turner, a tiny powerhouse of energy who was a propagator at the Botanic Gardens – and with the indefatigable help of a teenage Kym Williams. In late February we turned on the sprinkler for the first time and Jean then camped out there in her car for the next two weeks – in summer heat, no toilet or shower, no cooking facilities or power, flies by the million – in order to water it regularly and talk to the trees."

Ron Thomas opted out of the partnership about a year after Skysport's launch, as his work as a crop dusting pilot took him to the South-East. His professional contacts had been relied on to help find weekend aircraft. In the meantime, Col Parsons had met Warwick Blacker through a Cessna 180 syndicate to which they both belonged.

"Warwick was the state manager for Thai Airways, had many useful contacts, was a keen pilot and general all-round good guy," says Col. "When I suggested he replace Ron in the partnership he didn't hesitate and

became our chief pilot. He also did one jump just to know what it was like 'out there'."

Steve Boldog, the other original partner left Skysport a year later and became chief instructor with the neighbouring SASPC. "Col and Warwick had different directions and ambitions with the parachute centre to mine, and I was also involved in starting up a crash repair business," he says.

The Cessna 180 VH-SLT, which had been used by SASPC jumpers on the occasional weekend getaway to Desert Downs, a farm-stay property at Keith, was bought by Skysport in early 1980. It became a reliable workhorse, lifting jumpers over Lower Light every weekend, most often flown by Skysport partner Warwick Blacker.

But its trouble-free run came to end in August 1983 when an unwise, stand-in pilot started a take-off run downwind, changed his mind, ground looped and wrecked it on takeoff.

Jumpers Mike Schell, Ross Williams, Louise Davis and Graham Barrington were aboard. "He was facing downwind doing an engine warm-up, then powered on and realised it was downwind and turned sharp left – and ground looped," says Graham.

Warwick and Col had to write it off and bought the C206 VH-UWL to replace it in November 1983. "We operated it until Skysport was sold in 1986," says Col.

By then Warwick had been transferred interstate and could only offer little input and Col was offered an overseas study leave by the university.

"So we sold it but the new owners only bought the business, not the aircraft – unfortunately the motor blew up with Warwick flying it on our very last day of operations. He did a superb job of the forced-landing, putting the aircraft down on

STUDENT EXIT ON AN **ARGOSY CANOPY** AT SKYSPORT STRATHALBYN IN 1986.

the strip and judging the landing roll right back into the parking area without power. It was the only time I've ever seen Warwick with pallid skin and no five-million watt smile."

Ironically, the profit that Warwick and Col made from the sale – everything except the aircraft, including 70 students waiting to be trained – was all blown when UWL's engine destroyed itself on that last day. "However, we had operated SA's first commercial parachute centre for six years and come out square, so must have done something right," says Col. "We did better, I guess, than the old saying: 'If you want to make a small fortune in aviation, then start with a big one.' "

Millionaire pioneer Port Lincoln tuna fisherman Hagen Stehr, was an enthusiastic jumper with the SASPC at the time Skysport came on the market. He and his accountant Chris Jay had embraced skydiving with a passion. Hagen, whose CleanSeas company has since won worldwide acclaim for its success in breeding southern bluefin tuna in captivity, was keen to see parachuting advance beyond what the SASPC was then able to offer.

"Hagen and Chris talked about a bigger and better parachute organisation than SASPC," says Steve Boldog, CI of the club at the time. "They must have been saying the things I wanted to hear. Having been part of a commercial skydiving operation, I wanted to be there again." The deal was done and Hagen, Chris and Steve became the centre's new owners at the beginning of March 1986.

The three decided to move away from Lower Light to the Strathalbyn airstrip – a fresh start. "We also felt the relationship with SASPC would not be as strained and we could concentrate on building a new Skysport," says Steve. But by April 1987, Hagen and Chris decided to leave the business and Jeremy Browne bought in as a partner with Steve and his wife Jan. "This partnership was made in heaven," says Steve Boldog. "Jerry was terrific with administration and was also a jumper and understood the nuts and bolts of the sport. Jan was the chief book keeper, and regularly

ABOVE *Relative work at Skysport's Strathalbyn DZ in 1987: Reg Eastaugh, Graham Barrington, Neil Davis and Jeremy Browne.*

manned manifest and various other roles at Strath."

Skysport in its prime was training about 320 students a year and its population of experienced jumpers continued to grow. In addition a new display team was formed, called the Chuting Stars. "These were hectic times considering some weekends we had up to four demos, students and novice jumpers to cater for and then student training the following week on Tuesday and Thursday evenings along with student enquiries through the week and pub night on Wednesdays," says Steve.

"To add a little more mayhem the Grand Prix and the accuracy comp in the south parklands, and the Royal Show jumps completed the insanity. I remember clearly on some weekends leaving home at Modbury at 5.30 am on Saturday morning for the DZ, arriving home at about 10.30 pm that night and then doing it all again on Sunday morning."

By now Skysport was well endowed with instructors – people like Leigh Collins, Jerry Browne, Graham Barrington, Louise Davis, Keith Perrott, Kym Williams, Mike Goodwin and Col Parsons, who both flew and despatched.

The Cessna 182 VH-RBD was bought by Skysport in 1987, relieving the constant worry about where to find the weekend's aircraft. For the first year the regular aircraft had been a hired Cessna 182 VH-EHI, but this was put up for sale in April 1987.

"VH-RBD was the backbone of the Strathalbyn operations," says Jeremy Browne. "That was our regular aircraft for quite a while and after a time we put a proper in-flight door on it. And then when the finances got a little tight I ended up buying it from Skysport and leasing it back to them. Then in about 1988 we found we just weren't making any money out of it. By the time we paid for the aeroplane, the fuel and the gear and all the rest – it all just got very difficult."

The Skysport partners told their dedicated crew of regular jumpers that they couldn't afford to keep it going and suggested they turn it into a club and run it with a commercial student operation within it.

Skydive Adelaide was born.

THE 1980s

ABOVE *Chilly jump coming up at Bordertown for Reg Eastaugh, Phil Luff and Alan Champion in 1983.*

LEFT *Graham and Louise Barrington at Skysport, Strathalbyn.*

ABOVE *Night jumps from DON in 1980 – Harry Haamers, Ian Wark, Paul Barbero, Ralf Jaeger and Vic Balfour.*

LEFT *SA four-way CRW team Quadratic at Corowa in 1982 – Jo Kielbasa, Jeremy Browne, Mike Goodwin and Neil Davis. And lined up before the jump, opposite page, top*

THE 1980s

ABOVE *Keith Perrott's view of Mike Goodwin.*

LEFT *Pat Irvine leaps from a glider flown by her husband Bob at Gawler in February 1981. The exit was recorded at 4,000 feet.*

GEORGE QUIGLEY (ABOVE RIGHT) TALKS WITH NEIL DAVIS OUTSIDE THE CLUB HOUSE IN THE 1980s. THIS IS THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTO OF GEORGE. THE LOWER LIGHT FARMER WAS A STAUNCH AND GENEROUS SUPPORTER OF SKYDIVING ON HIS PROPERTY FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS.

Cocktail party in the club house, late 1980s.

Steve Swann at Football Park, September 1981.

DEMOS

GRAND PRIX DISPLAY JUMPS SET THE STANDARD

The Grand Prix demos into Adelaide's international motor racing event were undoubtedly the highpoint of South Australian display jumping in the past 50 years.

Dozens of jumpers took part in the high profile event, landing on various targets around the east parklands site – big-ways over the city, CRW and tandems into pit straight and spectacularly good accuracy onto the starting grid – these demos had it all!

1985 The very first Mitsubishi Formula 1 Grand Prix, in November 1985 had the city abuzz and the display team, all Lower Light Skydivers demo jumpers, set the standard for the seven years to follow. The driving force behind this first motorsport involvement was Mike Goodwin who had the vision

BELOW *Spectacular RW over the 1990 Grand Prix.*

and was appointed by the State Council of the Australian Parachute Federation to coordinate the effort.

On the first jump they put together 16 in a planned 20-way and landed in Victoria Park. Later the same day, just before the start of the main race, Neil Davis, Mike Goodwin, Steve Boldog and Keith Perrott, attempted a quadraplane over the track, filmed by Reg Eastaugh.

"We only succeeded in a tri-plane with Keith close at the finish," says Mike Goodwin. "Neil and I rode a biplane on to the grid, but experienced some bad turbulence, just clearing a crash fence by a mere four feet. Underpants were checked after clearing the track."

The following day they got 18 in on the 20-way, with 16 people in to Victoria Park and the determined foursome again headed for the main track and pit area. Once again Neil Davis and Mike Goodwin landed a biplane on the start/finish line. Mike was flying the chequered flag from his leg – it was presented to Glen Dix to start the race in his inimitable style.

"It was an awesome feeling coming down the straight over millions of dollars worth of race cars lined up on the grid," Mike recalls. "The implications of landing on them did cross my mind. Afterwards we were then invited to see the start from above Pit Lane. I just remember the noise as deafening and then they were gone. It was a relief when all was done and dusted, enjoying a beer at the after race party at Memorial Drive and the skydivers personally thanked by then SA Premier, John Bannon."

On race day, the morning 20-man relative work jump was cancelled on jump run, so the afternoon jump was changed from accuracy to the RW jump, says Jeremy. "We got 17 in, the accuracy squad went onto pit straight and Reg Eastaugh and I built a bi-plane and landed in Victoria Park." Not a bad debut!

ABOVE *Mike Goodwin brings it into pit straight .*

NEIL DAVIS AND **MIKE GOODWIN** HEAD INTO VICTORIA PARK.

1986. The following year the jumpers planned a different format for the Grand Prix, doing a combination of 20-ways and mass drops. The committment was extensive and a Nomad was ferried from Alice Springs to help deliver the aerial program. Jeremy Browne and his committee did the considerable legwork required, with Jan Boldog as chief ground crew. Jan was the first non-jumper in Australia to gain the official display organisers licence.

This was the year of SA's 150th celebrations, so funding was a little more generous. On race day they did a mass drop of 41 canopies in the air at once. "The mass drops were very popular with the organisers and the public, but the jumpers preferred the RW – the problem was that most people couldn't see the jump, even with smoke," recalls Jeremy Browne, who organised the demos. "It was very cold – 13º C at 12,000 feet, especially sitting in the back of the Nomad with no door!"

To capure the action Jeremy arranged for Jas Shanan who had made the skydiving movie *Walking on Air* film to come over and film the events.

The 1986 event was sponsored by Fosters and local jumpers were lumped together with the visiting Victorian "Fosters Flyers" display team, a group which organiser Jeremy Browne found to be "unreliable". Their presence in SA would end up damaging the sport's reputation, as a fatal accident at another Adelaide display during the same weekend proved.

On race day the jumpers did a mass drop of 41 canopies in the air at once, exiting the Nomad and twin-engined Cessna 402s in formation at 4,000 feet. Steve Boldog's summary of the event, presented in a 1986 Skysport Parachute Centre bulletin, remarked

on the spectacular success of this jump: "Twenty onto the helipad and 20 onto the oval at Prince Alfred College."

Meanwhile, Neil Davis and Mike Goodwin did their usual biplane and flag on to the start/finish line. "But this time we added further special effects with a 12 gauge type noise on landing, engulfing us in smoke – a sort of 'land and self destruct' visual and audio effect which went down well," says Mike. The other two SA precision team members, Steve Boldog and Keith Perrott were on the same jump. Aunger, the prominent motor accessories firm, partly sponsored the local jumpers. Their canopies, carrying the Aunger logo, made a great promotional impression on the thousands of revheads in the pit straight stands and around the track.

Bad weather was a factor, affecting some of the practice jumps, however. A combination of strong wind and a bad spot gave a number of jumpers outlandings in nearby Norwood on one occasion, some having missed the Prince Alfred College oval. However, overall the series of displays was another great advertisement for the sport – even if Steve Boldog did list in his summary of GP highlights: "The look of absolute relief on the faces of Jerry and Jan after the last jump."

1987. A smaller budget meant there were no large aircraft available for the 1987 Grand Prix. Three Cessna 182s in formation were used over the four days. A neat quadraplane was put together over the top on the Saturday by Graham Barrington, Reg Eastaugh, Jeremy Browne and Steve Boldog.

And then there was the by now mandatory precision jump on to the starting grid, this time performed by Vic Balfour, Kym Williams, Col Parsons, Keith Perrott and Mike Goodwin. Both Keith Perrott and Col Parsons landed right on the start-finish line. According to Mike Goodwin's log, the main race day included two spectacular displays – a 10-way star and then a three-aircraft mass canopy drop with the same five precision jumpers on to the grid.

Col Parsons will never forget the buzz of those jumps. "The Formula 1 cars were still mainly in the garages but the edge of the track was lined with millions of dollars worth of telemetry gear for the different teams, let alone the grandstands and main corporate entertainment suite with all the heavies looking on," Col says.

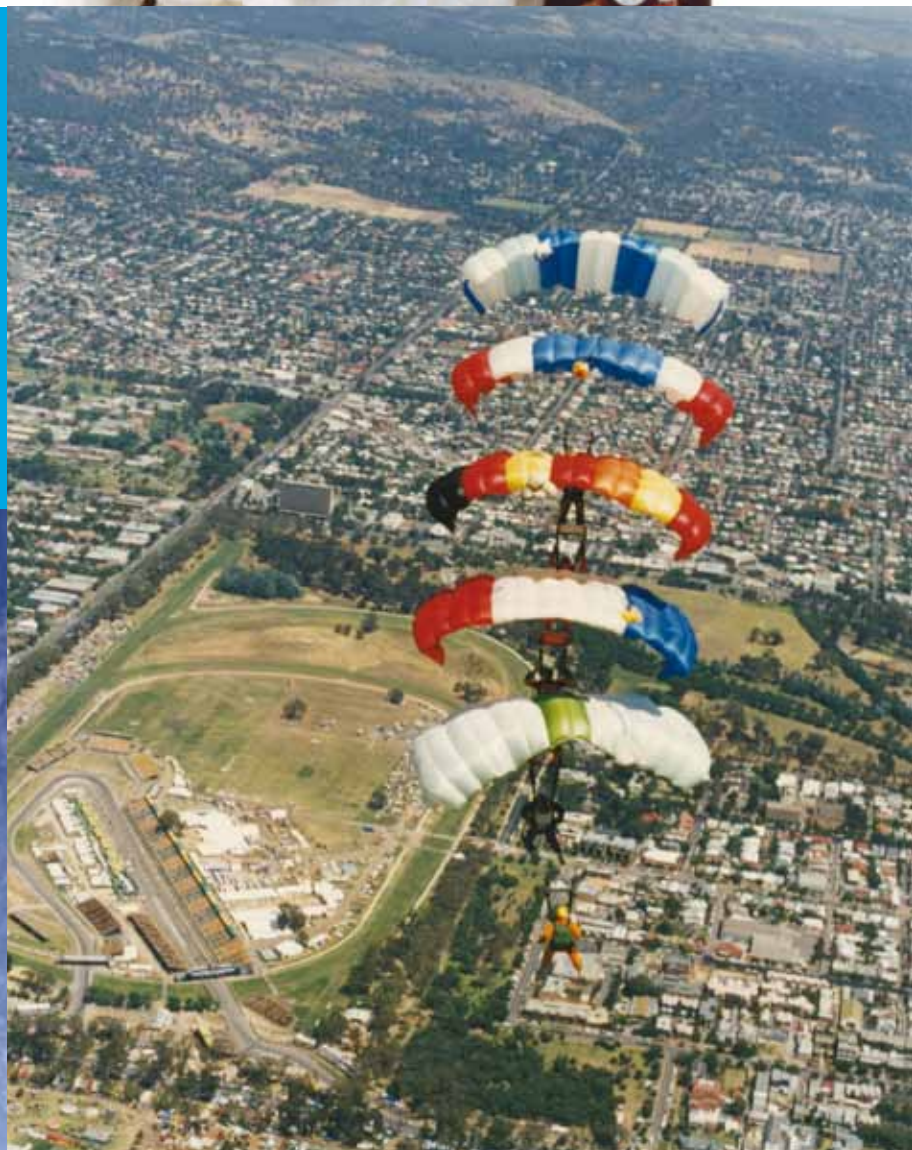
"I don't remember doing much other than keeping my eyes on the start-finish line with absolute funnel-vision and gently adjusting

ABOVE *First Day Cover for stamp collectors wanting to commemorate Adelaide's first Grand Prix – carried by Mike Goodwin on two mass jumps over Victoria Park in 1985.*

ABOVE *Mike Goodwin, Neil Davis, Keith Perrott and Steve Boldog on pit straight.*

RIGHT *Louise Davis, Graham Barrington, Reg Eastaugh, Jeremy Browne and Steve Boldog get it together for the 1988 Grand Prix.*

BELOW *Mike Goodwin puts the Aunger canopy on target.*



the glide path to keep the cross hairs lined up. It was only after landing that the noise from the crowd penetrated. Then, of course, we felt like heroes – as if the mob had come to see us rather than the Formula 1 drivers."

An issue in 1987 was the inclusion of the Army Team "Red Berets" team.

"They didn't want to work with us," says Jeremy. "But, as we suspected, they were not experienced enough for this type of demo and there were out-landings and a serious injury."

1988 Australia's Bi-Centenary celebrations helped inject extra funds into the jumping budget for 1988, but in the end all the local jumping was done from three Cessna 182s, according to Jeremy Browne who once again organised the show.

Army jumpers from the Red Berets team were also part of the action, jumping from a Nomad. The quest for variety and novelty continued, with jumpers landing simultaneously at various points around the track, to give more of the crowd a close-up taste of the action.

"Steve Boldog and I drew the short straw and got the chicane at the end of pit lane," says Mike Goodwin. "The downside of this target was the huge red gum trees and wind sheers. The upside was 'soft' gravel laid there for errant cars to run off into if they couldn't make the corner."

It was first and only time this was done during the entire Grand Prix series. On the main race day they formatted three aircraft again, with 15 canopies, including CRW, and plenty of smoke. And it was the fourth and last time Glen Dix was to receive the flag from Mike Goodwin. Formation 10-way relative work and a great piece of 5-way CRW over the track put the icing on the cake.

Winky Dink, the Channel 9 children's television character from the show of the same name made a 'tandem' jump with Steve Boldog, filmed from the aircraft and again providing great positive publicity for the sport.

The mass drops were again the most popular jumps, but of course the jumpers wanted RW. "There was a trade off," says Jeremy. "I did a tandem onto the track with regular Lower Light jumper Wendy Jenkin as the passenger, but decided there was too much chance of a bad landing damaging tandem sales. So we landed on the Prince Alfred College oval." Jeremy also got a little light relief from his organisational burden and was able to make track jumps, including on race day near the start/finish line.

A great pentaplane over Bartels Oval on the Friday gave the CRW community a much deserved plug – Louise Davis, Graham Barrington, Reg Eastaugh, Jeremy Browne and Steve Boldog put it together, with Scott Prideaux taking some great pictures.

1989 Bad weather year marred the 1989 event, with the Sunday race day jump aborted, after a wet weather car practice delayed the whole program. However, the highlight for the jumpers was a pass down pit lane at 250 feet in the back of an Army Caribou with the tailgate down before climbing and joining the Army's Red Berets team in a mass jump. "It was like the wings were on the top of the stands," says Mike Goodwin. Col Parsons remembers looking out at the Gulf as they climbed out of Adelaide Airport and seeing a black, scudding line of mean looking thunder clouds bearing down on them a few miles offshore with torrential rain pouring out of them.

"As usual we had to wait for the signal to jump from Race Control and the ATC

coordinators," says Col. "As we cruised around the suburbs at 3,500 feet awaiting our slot, I checked the progress of the thunder clouds each time my window pointed in that direction. When I could see that Grange and Semaphore had disappeared into impenetrable sheets of rain I thought that the jump must surely be called off – or that we were all going to be scattered over the metropolitan area once the gust front arrived. Fortunately we got the green light at that moment, made the jump into the Park, and all ran like hell to shelter just before Hughie dropped his bucketsful. I often wondered what the pilot of the Caribou was thinking as he had to fly back to Adelaide Airport in that lot."

Organiser Jeremy Browne brought in a Nomad from Phil Onis of Sydney Skydivers for the occasion. It was also used for highly successful relative work seminar at Lower Light. A total of nine jumps was made in conjunction with the Army and the Caribou. "The decision was made to combine the display with an RW seminar which would incorporate the squad selection, and to select the best jumpers regardless of where they came from," says Jeremy. "There is no doubt that the seminar was a great success with 719 jumps being made from the Nomad, which was here for two weeks." Display jumps originated from Lower Light and Adelaide to allow seminar jumping to continue at Lower Light but this did cause the odd headache with operations and transport.

While the Nomad was in Adelaide it was also used for a wedding jump which attracted more great publicity for the sport. Tony and Laurie McAvoy tied the knot after a jump from 12,000 feet over Adelaide. Everyone involved made a leap – except the celebrant. Jeremy Browne even took the bridesmaid, Jo Hardy, into the ceremony as a tandem passenger.

A special solo jump for Mike Goodwin that year, was an early evening Saturday leap, on to the grid, landing in front of hundreds of runners lining up to follow the circuit as a road runners event. "To then run the race along side Lisa Ondieki (Martin) – the silver medallist in the previous year's Olympic

BELOW *The Grand Prix relative work squad in 1988.*

Here's how to fly the flag high

Parachutist Geoff Cooling captured this view of fellow skydiver Keith Perrot with the giant Australian flag high above Lower Light yesterday.

. . . while taking th plunge

Parachutist Keith Perrott jumped 2km above Lower Light yesterday to display the 90sq m Australian flag thousands of Grand Prix patrons will see fall to the ground at this year's race.

The picture was taken by fellow skydiver Geoff Cooling during a jump above the small town, about 50km north of Adelaide.

Mr Perrott and other skydivers from the South Australian Parachute Council are planning several jumps over the Grand Prix weekend, often landing on Pit Straight.

The flags, made in Sydney, have been used in aerial displays at previous grands prix and were seen by spectators at Glenelg's first SA National Football League game this season, when Mr Perrott landed the flag in the centre of the Glenelg Oval.

Mr Perrott, who has jumped at all the races, said he hoped to have eight of the flags, each weighing about 15 kg, in the air for every jump.

The Grand Prix Board is expected to approve the jumps in a meeting on Wednesday.

ABOVE *1986 Grand Prix demo jumpers on the way up in the Nomad.*

ABOVE *The 1986 Grand Prix relative work squad ready to board the Nomad.*

marathon – was something else. After the first 100 metres, her backside disappeared into the distance, running being only a pastime for me!"

Things didn't always go to plan in subsequent Grand Prix displays. With bad weather some years, a few jumpers were splashed over town with poor spots. "I recall one late afternoon practice jump where Neil Davis and I broke a biplane off, making little headway over the top of the mechanic bays," says Mike Goodwin. "He front-risered to clear the buildings and landed among the cars on pit lane, his canopy draped over a vehicle. I landed in Minardi's 2 X 2 metre back yard with similar obstacles. The mechanics thought it was fantastic. Jerry Browne, who was organising, was not amused – but no damage was done, only bruised egos."

On occasions the local talent had to share the sky with visiting interstate jumpers – either the Army or teams from across the border representing a Grand Prix sponsor.

"The Army always made us look good, by landing in grandstands and so on," recalls Mike Goodwin. "One guy tried to knock over an old gum tree in Bartells Oval. He didn't succeed, but he managed to break a hip. And interstaters did similar on big flag jumps, dropping a huge 20 kg lead shot bag on a car in Victoria Park and splitting another open over the track. Lead shot on the tarmac and racing cars don't mix. The complete track had to be swept!"

The challenge of jumping with flags sticks in Col Parsons' mind. "We were soon asked to jump with the 800-square-foot flags carrying the sponsors logos," he says. "They packed up like a small suitcase and had to

be worn on the front which made moving around in the aircraft and getting up off one's backside on jump run an issue. And they slowed the canopies down once deployed but we all seemed to have no trouble with them."

On one of those flag jumps the team got out of a Nomad at 5,000 feet. There was no drifter run, with the spot being calculated theoretically from wind data obtained from the aviation forecast. "I was well back in the load of about 12 or 15," says Col, "and after barrelling out behind the others found myself in freefall over the Feathers Hotel at Burnside. Victoria Park seemed very distant and out on the horizon where the earth was flat and ships fell off to their doom. But whoever the guru was who calculated the spot deserved a medal – we all got into the target and people living along Greenhill Road had a lovely private display of a line of flags cruising down their street."

1990 The 1990 Fosters Grand Prix, was organised by Glen Bolton and consisted of the by now usual grid landings. However, it was very special for Mike Goodwin. "I made my last solo skydive, jump number 2,128 on November 4, with Jon Williams, Keith Perrott and Col Parsons, on to the starting line with the chequered flag for the last time." He sold all of his gear after that and went scuba diving for the next chapter of his life. What a high to go out on!

Ted McWatters, one of the SASPC's renowned hard workers and now a life member, made his Grand Prix debut in this year – and counts himself lucky to have had the opportunity. "My first RW team, Social Habits, was nominated as the base of the 16-way diamond that went into the 1990 Grand Prix," says Ted. "But then Paul Osborne, who was organising the formation, found out that I only had 220 jumps and he wanted me off the demo. But the others applied pressure and got me back on. I was probably the least experienced person ever to jump into a Grand Prix." Before the jump Paul Osborne, concerned for the stability and durability of the formation, had warned participants not to be looking down – they should be looking across, keeping the diamond flying nice and level," says Ted. "It was at about 4,500 feet when the photo was taken of the 16-way diamond over the top of the Grand Prix and there was just one person looking down – it was Ted McWatters. The thing was flying beautifully and you just had to enjoy Adelaide coming up."

1991 The last in the series of epic demos, the 1992 Grand Prix, was organised by Tony McAvoy and featured jumps with huge flags, a relative work load flying in from Lower Light in the Nomad and a mass drop on race day. A great way to finish a spectacular run of displays which exposed tens of thousands of people to the thrill of the sport.

BELOW *Keith Perrott spot on the start finish line - where else?*

1980s

FESTIVAL CITY ACCURACY COMPETITIONS

South Australia celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1986 and a generous State Government was making money available for hosting national sporting events.

The APF State Council, driven by the enthusiasm of Jeremy Browne, applied for funds to run an accuracy competition in Adelaide's South Parklands at Eastwood and got the nod.

An accuracy meet was considered to be the only type of competition which the general public could see and really appreciate. Jeremy and Louise Davis organised the event, which offered $1,000 first prize money and attracted leading jumpers from around the country.

BELOW *Jeremy Browne sinks it in during the 1988 competition.*

The inaugural Festival City Accuracy competition, held in what is now the "mad Month" of March, was won by Victorian jumper, Phil Allen in a super tight finish against Perth jumper Mike Dyer.

In a welcome piece of positive publicity for the sport, *The Advertiser* reported that until Phil Allen's last jump Mike was leading with three dead centres out of his six jumps. In the end Phil, who jumped barefoot and bare-headed took the prize with only a 3 cm margin in his aggregate score. Local accuracy hero Keith Perrott finished fifth.

Aircraft problems caused some changes in organisation for the following year's event. "We had to do one run at 3,500 feet instead of individual runs at 2,500 feet," says Jeremy. Aircraft operated from Adelaide Airport with jumpers being ferried by car. The 1986 contest also yielded another great piece of promotion for the sport – Channel 10 reporter Mike Smithson jumped into the South Parklands with tandem pioneer John Chapman from Victoria.

Alison Quick from NSW won the 1987 meet with a score of 0.06 from six jumps. Backing from the Australian Bicentennial Authority again meant the 1988 competition offered $1,000 prize money.

Unfortunately the weather was poor and the combination of lack of interest from local SA jumpers, the introduction of landing fees at the Adelaide Airport and the brewing war between SASPC and Skysport jumpers spelled the end of the event.

THE BICENTENNIAL

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PARA-FOIL

1986 FESTIVAL CITY ACCURACY WINNER **PHIL ALLEN** WITH JEREMY BROWNE AND LOUISE DAVIS.

Phil Luff powers into the pit, 1987.


SURF

1980s

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Mike Goodwin claimed SA's first exits from two aircraft on the one jump with his May, 1986 jump from both a balloon and a hang glider.

Taking advantage of the presence of Australia's largest balloon at the Seppetsfield International Hot Air Balloon Championships, Mike teamed up with hang glider pilot Chris Hunter for the world's first official 'one up, three down' flight.

"We climbed to 4,250 feet and then went into a descent mode of 600 feet a minute to give the hanglider some airspeed when it was released," says Mike.

"We released at 4,000 feet and this was potentially the most worrying moment, where a flip over of the glider could be the worst scenario. All went well though and we flew around on the hang glider looking for lift. I cutaway from the glider at 2,400 feet, using an Eagle Wrap cutaway specially made by a rigger, and a hand-sewn body sling of seatbelt webbing. I dumped at a respectable height once I got some air speed! Adrenaline jump!"

Chris is up in the air over plunging to earth

By KENN PEARCE

Six years ago Hackham West clerk Chris Hunter saw a segment on TV about hang-gliding and knew the sport was for him.

On Saturday in the Barossa Valley, Chris, 27, will have the chance to demonstrate what he's learnt since then.

At the Seppeltsfield International Hot Air Balloon Championships, Chris and parachutist Mike Goodwin — a veteran of 1600 jumps — will attempt the world's first official "one up, three down" stunt.

It involves the pair being hoisted aloft by Australia's largest hot-air balloon and set free at 5000 feet.

The pair — complete with smoke flares and other suitable pyrotechnics — plan to circle the balloon and try aerobatics before Mike releases his parachute at about 2500 feet. Chris will then follow him down in the hang-glider.

That's how it should work. But Chris admits the stunt is not without its risks.

The "very worst situation" he had planned for was that his hang-glider would flip upside down.

That would be countered by Mike releasing his 'chute early, leaving Chris to correct the craft.

"Another thing it could do is that it could just keep on tumbling, in which case there's a very good chance the glider could break up," he said.

Should that happen the pair plan to release both their 'chutes and come "down in one lump" with the glider.

The planned stunt had been a personal ambition for three years.

"The Sultan," the hot-air balloon being used for the stunt, will dwarf the other 49 balloons expected to take part in the nine-day balloon meeting.

Standing 33 metres (100 feet) high and more than 20 metres (60 feet) wide when fully inflated, it will be piloted for the stunt by US world champion balloonist David Levin, of Colorado.

The record attempt is planned to begin soon after 7 a.m. on Saturday, although bad weather may force it to be moved to another morning over the long weekend.

Chris is hopeful the stunt will be included in the *Guinness Book of Records* if successful.

Overseas entrants in the championships will be bringing hot-air balloons to the Barossa from the US, the UK, Switzerland, Germany, Hong Kong, Canada and NZ.

The event has been organised by the SA Balloon and Airship Club as part of the State's Jubilee 150 celebrations.

CHAMPIONS

KEITH PERROT HAS EYES ONLY FOR THE DISC

Mention accuracy in South Australian parachuting and the name Keith Perrott pops up every time. For more than 30 years Keith has been fixated on the target and, now in 2011 approaching 6,000 jumps, he has represented Australia 14 times in teams at International competitions.

Keith started jumping in 1980 as a student at Skysport Parachute Centre, Lower Light.

Like everyone else at the time he had to do the requisite 100 jumps on round canopies (the military surplus C9 cheapos at first and then Paracommanders) before he could graduate to squares.

But once he made the transition (at first to a Light Cloud and then an X-228 seven-cell) he didn't waste any time developing his now trademark skill – hitting the disc.

In 1982 he attended his first Nationals. "I was still jumping with the X-228," says Keith. "It was just an Australian-made all round canopy which we used for relative work, CRW, accuracy – everything, including displays. The Parafoil came later when I could afford one."

Three years later Keith joined his first Australian team in 1985. "We competed at Dookie Agricultural College in Victoria. Some Asian teams came and competed and it may have been the start of what is now the Asian Pacific Parachute Association."

If you measure success in the number

BELOW *Keith Perrott in his natural environment – the pit at Lower Light.*

of medals won, Keith's best individual performance was in China in 1993. Although Australia was invited, he was the only competitor who attended – others had work commitments. It was worth the effort. Keith picked up a bronze medal for accuracy and bronze medal for the overall individual. With an accuracy score of 11 cm over 10 rounds that medal was well deserved.

The other solitary discipline of skydiving – style, the series of turns and backloops in which jumpers compete against the clock (and themselves) – has also featured in Keith's competition history. "It's not a well attended event in Australia any more but in Asia and in Europe it's still very strong," says Keith. "It's is one of the classic events that, along with accuracy, go right back the sport's beginnings." Keith's best competition score for a standard style set (right turn, left turn, back loop and then repeat it – 360º ending on heading) was 7.95 seconds.

But accuracy continues to be his main focus. "The way things are structured now there are a lot of tandem jumps being done and you can only get an individual slot on the aircraft each time it goes up because we only use Cessnas at Lower Light," says Keith. "By the time you put two tandems in there, there's only one spot left. So I do accuracy purely because there are not many things you can do on your own."

Locally Keith gets his continuing competitive spur from a couple of individuals, particularly Mick O'Brien. "Mick shares the same passion for classic style

ABOVE *Tricky target? Call Keith Perrott.*

ABOVE *Keith Perrott and fellow SA accuracy specialist Mick O'Brien after a demo at Barmera in 2010.*

RIGHT *Keith performing at an Army Nationals. The electronic scoreboard reads 0.0.*

RIGHT *Keith Perrott with his lineup of national and international trophies, as well as the State Council's perpetual trophy for accuracy.*

and accuracy," says Keith. "We have spent many years together both as good friends and fierce competitors at a host of competitions on a local, national and international level. Due to our common interest in accuracy and both holding the highest display 'A' licence available we have also enjoyed and shared many tight display jumps all over the State. Mick has his own unique character and he is always keen to pass on his knowledge to anyone at short notice and once you have received a lesson, believe me it is an experience of a lifetime. Just ask someone who has had the pleasure!"

Vlasto Zamecnik, a more recent arrival on the SA skydiving scene, is another performer Keith looks up to. "Vlasto is very well skilled in all aspects of the sport. It doesn't matter what questions you may put to him he will always give an opinion along with advice on tandems, CRW, relative work, style and accuracy. We also have been on several Australian National teams attending World Championships over the years."

Keith has always been known as a meticulous packer – only three malfunctions in close to 6,000 jumps over 31 years. "I'm extremely fussy – I just don't like scaring myself too much. Keeping the anxiety level at a manageable level is a path to self-preservation."

THE 1980s

LEFT *SA's "jumping granny", Jean Turner exits Skysport's VH-SLT in 1981.*

BELOW *Tri-plane with George Quigley's farm house in the background. (Top to bottom) Ian Wark, Steve Swann, Steve Boldog. The photo was taken from a Channel 7 news helicopter which was shooting a current affairs feature on the Golden Arrows display team.*

ABOVE *Tony McAvoy exits Skydive Adelaide's VH-RBD for his 200th jump, followed by Laurie Groff.*

ABOVE *On the way up in Strathalbyn's Islander: Leigh Wharf, Mick Flanigan and Andy Horton.*

STRATHALBYN
THE SKYDIVE ADELAIDE YEARS

The new look Skydive Adelaide Inc began operating at Strathalbyn in June 1988 after the closure of Skysport.

An enthusiastic committee got on with job of breathing life into the new club. Inaugural president was Scott Prideaux and the committee included Gail Wood, Frank Erdt, Steve Jones, Kym Williams and Dave Parsons.

To this day, Skydive Adelaide, and its stalwarts Tony and Laurie McAvoy, continues to have a very special place in the hearts of many SA skydivers.

ABOVE *Closing popped gear on a Skydive Adelaide student: Andy Horton and Daniel Preston.*

ABOVE *The Skydive Adelaide crew assembled at McDonalds, West Lakes, just after Skysport had been sold to members of the new club in 1988. From the bottom up (to the best of our knowledge): Steven Jones, Eddy McLean, Gail Wood, Laurie Groff (McAvoy), Michelle Parsons, Mike Goodwin, Louise Davis (Barrington), Tony Smith, Graham Barrington, Col Parsons, Tony McAvoy, Frank McGann, Mal Stevens (outside left), Alan ? 'Lil Dude' (outside right), Scott Prideaux, Joe ?, Dean Conry 'Big Dude' (upside down), Sharon Russell (outside right), Dave Parsons, Julie Conry and Graeme Ricketts.*

LEFT *Strathalbyn 1998 – Alison Wells' 100th jump. Tony McAvoy, Ralph Ford, Fiona Pashley, Marie McAvoy, Alison Wells, Daniel Preston, Mark Pincombe and Dave Williams.*

THE 1990s

ABOVE *Formation over the Strathalbyn airfield in 1998. Clearly visible on the right are the holes marked out for planned vineyards which spelt the end of the DZ as a safe skydiving centre. Pictured are Dave Williams, Marie McAvoy, Laurie McAvoy, Luke Oliver, Daniel Preston, Paul Berryman, Vernon Wells, Alison Wells and Tony McAvoy.*

RIGHT *Skydive Adelaide jumpers in the Adelaide parklands after the 1989 wedding jump of Tony and Laurie McAvoy.*

LEFT *Team Garibaldi over Strathalbyn – Haig Burnell, Glyn Roberts, Vernon Wells and Matt Palmer.*

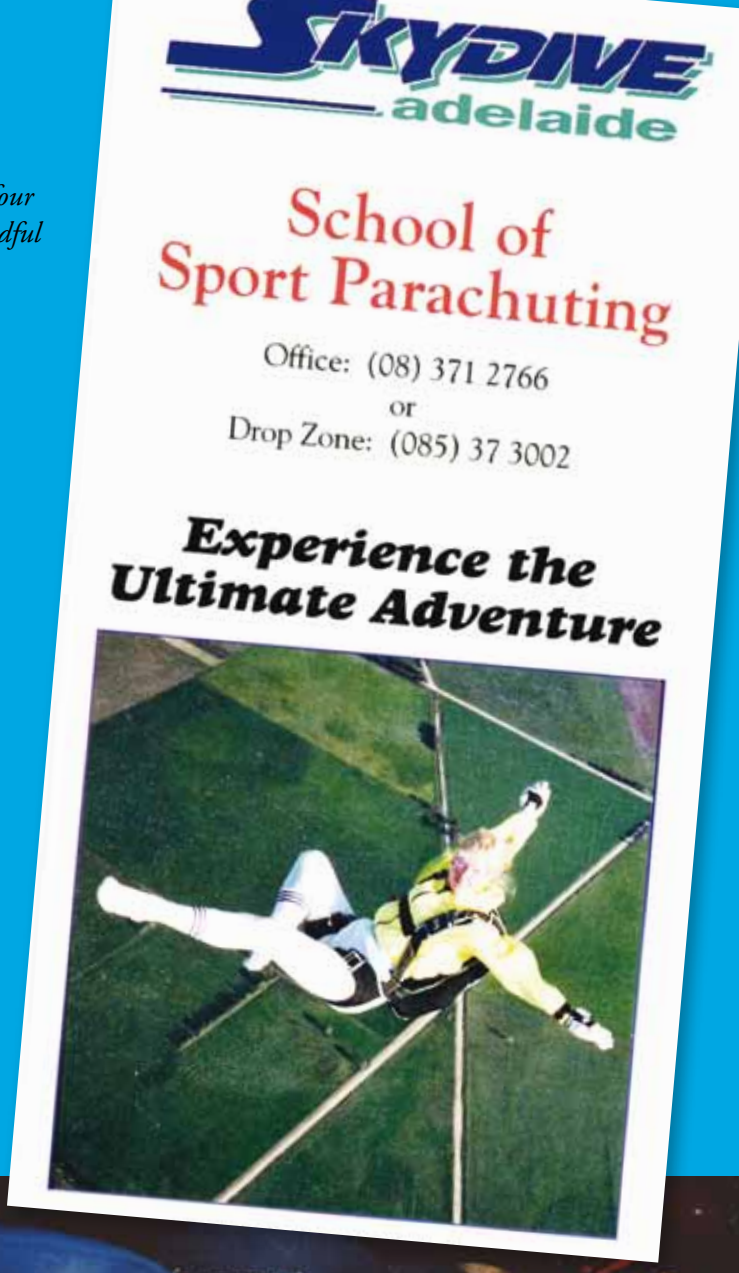
Tony McAvoy and passenger.

THE 1990s

ABOVE *The Strathalbyn Skyvan boogie of 1998. On top are Laurie and Tony McAvoy. The others include Paul Berryman, Graeme Ricketts, Brian Woods, Daniel Preston, Kevin Taylor, Jane Richardson, Marie McAvoy, Dave Williams, Darren Fosket, Issy Wheeler, Garth Camac, Karen Fuller, Coey, Dee, Poo Smith, Vernon Wells, Luke Oliver, Matt Palmer , Alison Wells, Rob McMillan, Rose Fosket and some unknowns. This was a huge event in Strathalbyn's history – and this crew were the leftovers at the end of a massive week.*

RIGHT *Mr Bill jump for Laurie McAvoy and Graham Barrington in 1990.*

LEFT *Static line anyone? Vic Balfour gathers up a handful of history.*



ABOVE *Digger Taylor (centre) in party mode.*

LEFT *Graeme Ricketts: a passion for photography.*

SA SKYDIVING

MIFFLAND WINS A PLACE IN JUMPER'S HEARTS

What started as a weekend sideline, training a few students for beer money or the occasional free jump, developed into a lifelong career for SA Skydiving chief instructor Greg Smith. And the modest business he launched in 1990 has grown into the State's largest parachute operation, with its own extensive facilities at Langhorne Creek.

Greg, who started jumping at Claude Gillard's Labertouche Sport Parachute Centre in Victoria in 1977, has been at the forefront of all the major advances in SA parachute training. But his own training was on the old T10 32 ft diameter round mains – the big cheapo – with fore and aft gear.

BELOW *Pete Anderson, Dean Mustard and Paul Truman at Murray Bridge in 2000.*

Greg did about 90 jumps on round canopies, including on the high performance Paracommander, before getting an early dispensation to jump his first ram air, a five-cell Strato Star. In those days you usually had to have 100 jumps before you could jump a square parachute.

"I nearly bought a set of fore and aft gear to take the Strato Star," says Greg. "All the top skydivers were saying get a piggyback system, whereas my chief instructor said 'Do you want to have a reserve parachute on your back and pull a reserve handle and hope it comes out or do you want a reserve that's sitting on your chest where you can see it, you can grab it and you can throw it.' I said 'Gee that's what I want' of course. Luckily the younger boys got to me and I ended up buying a Top Secret container."

Greg arrived in Adelaide in 1981 and initially started jumping at Skysport, after being unable to contact the club on his arrival – the phone kept ringing out. However, he switched camps soon after. "After jumping finished one day I stopped in at the Lower Light Hotel for a beer and met David Raggat, Kevin Taylor and Gavin Norsworthy, ended up drinking with them and then started jumping with the club."

The association with the SASPC, Lower Light and his fellow drinkers was to last another 16 years – as a club instructor and later doing AFF training and then tandems with his Blue Skies operation running under the umbrella of the club.

In 1990 SA Skydiving was born, with Greg paying a per student licence fee to SASPC.

SA Skydiving principal Greg Smith and son Jed during the 2010 State Meet at Langhorne Creek.

The Blue Skies operations, which included Kevin Taylor and Gavin Norsworthy, merged into this.

In the mid 1990s he began to get the flying itch and set himself the goal of buying an aircraft. The SASPC was not wildly enthusiastic. "Their reaction was 'look, we can't stop you buying an aeroplane but we have the Pilatus Porter here and we have VH-DON.' Fair enough, but I gave into my craving and bought a Cessna 206 VH-KFI." Greg didn't get his licence until the following year but did a lot of weekend trips away and, as he started pursuing flying hours, relations became strained. "I was at loggerheads with the club committee because I was going away a lot and the writing was on the wall. So I left

Peter Waller, Paul Truman, and Pete Anderson at SA Skydiving, Murray Bridge in 2000.

ABOVE *Greg Smith at Murray Bridge in 2000 with SA Skydiving regulars.*

with Peter Anderson and Andrew Hardy."

In mid 1996 the three moved SA Skydiving to the Pallamana airfield near Murray Bridge. It was a busy location, with more than 20 hangars and already home to an established Aero Club and an ultralight flying school.

It didn't take long for the unrepressed personalities of skydivers to start causing problems.

"There were a lot of aviators down there but skydivers and other aviators have never mixed," says Greg. "I was always carrying the white flag and apologising. Too many cars would come in on the road, producing too much dust: skydivers just being larrikins. We just didn't mix. Then in 1997 I arrived back from the Katherine rel week to find they had dug up the runway and were resurfacing it without telling us. We had tandems organised for about 10 am and we didn't have a runway!"

Desperate to keep things moving, Greg discovered that there had been an old airstrip on a farm about 5 km up the road. He and his crew were there like a shot at 8.30 in the morning to check it out. The owner Rollo Hines jumped at the opportunity to host the group.

"Rollo said 'there hasn't been a plane here for 20 years. The runway's pretty bad but I can get the tractor out.' And he got the tractor and he dragged a bit of railway line up and down it and by midday we landed the plane there," says Greg. "It was a rough old runway and we just operated out of a hire trailer and packed on a tarpaulin on the ground."

Surprisingly the rough and ready facilities didn't deter the tandem punters in those early days. "Arrivals would pull in and be welcomed by rudimentary facilities and the aircraft parked next to a trailer with 44 gallon drums on the back. And then a car had pulled up," says Greg. "And Pete said: 'They're going to do a U-turn' but I said 'no they're not. We've got

their deposit.' People loved it. It gave them a story."

An old disused dairy shed was cleared of ancient machinery and became SA Skydiving's clubhouse and home for the next 10 years. Rollo Hines was an ideal landlord for most of that time until the relationship soured. "He was good. He was an absolute mechanical genius and a total aviation enthusiast with something like 4,000 hours flying," says Greg. "There was nothing he couldn't do to the aeroplane. One day we had the alternator go on the 206 and within an hour and 40 minutes we were back in the air. Rollo pulled an old alternator out of one of his harvesters and said 'that is exactly what you have in the aeroplane.' And it was exactly the same alternator. He said 'they've just put an aircraft number on it' and we put this alternator out of the harvester into the 206 and we're away."

However, by 2006 Rollo had grown tired of the arrangement. Skydivers being skydivers, the parties were big, there were a lot of low level beat ups across the drop zone. "He got tired of it all and wouldn't renew the lease," Greg says. "That's skydivers. We always shit in our own nest."

So by June 30, 2007 Greg and SA Skydiving had to be off the property. They didn't miss a beat, however, and a week after the deadline they were operating from the new site at Langhorne Creek.

When they left Lower Light, Greg, Pete Anderson and Andrew Hardy had always hoped to buy their own land for a DZ but couldn't find anything suitable.

Now, faced with Rollo Hines' deadline, something had to be found. "My partner Katie Fluin found the Langhorne Creek property in *The Advertiser*. It was 120 ha and when we drove down there it was in the middle of nowhere – which we saw as an

SA SKYDIVING'S
MURRAY BRIDGE
DROP ZONE IN 2000.

GREG SMITH WITH CONTRACTORS PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO HIS NEW **SWOOP POND** AT LANGHORNE CREEK.

BELOW *Greg Smith at the wheel.*

Members of Team Off Track at the opening of Langhorne Creek's swoop pond.

advantage. It was a desolate paddock which was just littered with stones. The water was 4 km away, the power was 1.4 km away, the phone was 5 km – so it was a logistical nightmare."

Needs must! With nowhere to jump after the end of June, SA Skydiving simply had to find a home. They had found the land at the start of 2007 but didn't buy it straight off – they just looked. "As the weeks were ticking by we thought: we operated out of a trailer at Rollo's when we first got there – we can do it again."

Following sound advice from skydiving colleagues interstate who had 'been there and done that', Greg kept the whole project under wraps until he had his development application approved. "We didn't put a parachute near it at all until we had all the approvals from the State and local governments. And we haven't looked back – I wish we'd bought a block of land 10 years earlier."

ABOVE *Happy campers at Murray Bridge.*

INNOVATION
HOMEGROWN SAFETY SYSTEM LEADS THE WORLD

A major international advance in student training safety was developed in South Australia in 1993. Greg Smith, then operating his SA Skydiving business at Lower Light, became concerned about the risks with students making the move from the SOS (single operating system) for cutaways to the double action used by experienced jumpers.

He approached the Australian Parachute Federation seeking approval to train students on twin action (separate handles for cutaway and reserve deployment) and was firmly rejected – the only approved method was SOS.

RIGHT *Greg Smith models the original DOS prototype in 2011. Some of the rigging has been scavenged since it was first built.*

Undeterred, Greg tossed an idea around with Melbourne-based rigger Ralph Nicholls: why not design a rig with two SOS handles – one located where the cutaway handle is and another where the reserve handle is?

"If we designed a rig like that we would be sticking within the rules, and offering the student a system that does not have to convert their emergency procedures when they have very little experience and if they make the mistake of pulling the handles in the wrong order they will be fine with both the handles being SOS, " Greg says. "We had that concept accepted by the APF as experimental so that we could test jump it – not approved, just the go ahead for test jumps.

"Ralph converted a Pigmee (the old Parachutes Australia piggyback rig), installing two SOS handles and we copied the three-ring release system used on the Relative Workshop tandem rigs, with dual operating drogue release handle. We did the test jumps required to get it certified then we took it back to the APF – they said we could train students on it as an experimental project.

"The rig looked absolutely horrible. It was a Pigmee and they weren't the prettiest rig to start with. But we had proved the idea and decided that we were onto something. Now we could train students on a twin action system and if they made a mistake and pulled the wrong handle first, it didn't matter. And then we didn't have to convert them when they got on to their own rig."

Greg, with Parachutes Australia's Paul Smith, persisted and designed a new rig,

Greg Smith on a test jump with the DOS system, an auxillary reserve chest-mounted.

which was a Telesis and a Talon put together – a Telesis front and a Talon back, a much better look.

"Parachutes Australia and Paul Smith (Poo) built that rig and then Paul and I test jumped them with Geoff Cooling doing the video," says Greg.

All the test jumps were made with the test jumper, carrying a tertiary reserve, cutting away from a bi-plane. This allowed Geoff Cooling, the top man in the CRW formation, to video the cutaway and capture evidence that both risers were being released simultaneously.

But on the last planned test jump Geoff came close to losing his life.

"We would put a stack together," says Greg, "And Jeff would come down the lines and then he would have the camera on either Paul or me. After we cutaway Geoff would be left with a 'ghost plane' – a biplane but

Geoff Cooling is left holding the baby during DOS test jumping.

CUTAWAY, LEAVING THE CAMERAMAN FLYING A GHOST PLANE.

ABOVE *The DOS development team at Lower Light in the early 1990s: (from left) Geoff Cooling, Wayne Van Dongen (kneeling), Greg Smith, Ralph Nicholls and Paul Smith.*

with nobody under the bottom canopy. From there he would drop his feet out of the risers, drop the second canopy and fly his own parachute in and we would go and pick up the 'ghost'.

"On the last jump the air was getting a little bumpy. We did the cutaway and Geoff had the ghost plane. As he went to jettison it he got one foot unhooked but the other foot caught in the riser. The canopy slewed out to the right and went into a down plane. Fortunately, at that stage of testing we were getting a little paranoid and were opening up higher, doing the jumps from about 7,000 feet. I opened up with my reserve at about 5,500 feet and then Geoff went past me with the two parachutes in a down plane.

"It was spiralling and I could see one canopy was tangled around his foot. Geoff used his other foot to push his shoe off and then managed to push the riser off over his foot. The canopy separated and he ended up under his main parachute. It wasn't low but it was scary enough – 1,500 or 2,000 feet."

However, it was now a proven innovation and the new DOS, dubbed 'direct operating system' by the team, was in business and Greg had the first rigs built for SA Skydiving's own use. At that stage they were the only ones in the world doing it. Some operators in the US were training twin action but they were true twin action rigs. The APF wouldn't allow it in Australia at that stage.

SA Skydiving's students were now benefiting from an immense safety improvement. One incident which had been a major motivation for Greg's DOS development involved Ted McWatters, who went on to be SASPC president.

"Ted was one of the reasons that made me a true believer in DOS," says Greg. "He had about 100 jumps at the time and was doing a four-way. The group got carried away and ended up going down to about 1,200 feet before they realised they were very low."

In those days the student rigs, on which Ted had learned, had the main ripcord on the chest where the cutaway handle now is. Ted, who was by now on a double action rig with throwaway pilot chute, turned away from the four-way and pulled his cutaway handle.

"He just instinctively went back to what he had been used to," says Greg. "He got himself into a stressful situation and he pulled his cutaway handle, obviously intending to have dumped his main. He was below 1,000 ft by then and deployed his reserve. All was good in the end but it just showed us the need for this type of training right from the start."

1990s

BARRO'S BUSY BIRTHDAY PROVES A POINT

Fifty jumps in a single day – it was a fitting way for Graham Barrington to celebrate his 50th birthday in October 1990. The 1961 original decided to make a point, easily clocking up the half century at Skysport's Strathalbyn DZ.

"A lot of people say 'I'd love to do skydiving but I'm too old.' So I thought I'll prove you're not too bloody old – 50 was easy," says Graham.

With seven rigs and seven packers on the go, Graham comfortably completed the task, even slowing down and taking a mid-morning break at one stage to ensure a photographer and reporter from *The Advertiser* wouldn't miss the action when they finally turned up. "We started at 6.30 am and it was case of straight up and straight down. They'd meet me as I landed, take my rig off and put another one on. By this time the aircraft would taxi up and I'd jump in and off we'd go again," Graham says. "Col Parsons flew every sortie. There was another pilot on standby but he never got a chance!"

Graham was the only one on every load – except the last when he was joined by his wife Louise and son Matt along with Scott Prideaux and *The Advertiser* photographer. "We started with me exiting at 2,500 ft but it got so bloody boring that it went down a bit as we progressed," says Graham. "We probably ended up doing a lot at two-grand. All the canopies were X-228s (the old 7-cell) and there no mals or hassles in the whole 50 jumps."

And was he knackered at the end of it? "Well maybe a bit, later in the day. Just a bit bored really. You think it's fun but it's just another jump."

BELOW *Heading off for Graham Barrington's 50th jump of the day: Scott Prideaux (camera) Graham's son Matt, Graham, Louise Barrington, The Advertiser photographer and pilot Col Parsons.*

ABOVE *Louise and Graham lay it on for The Advertiser photographer.*

THE 1990s

Interesting exit from the Porter: (top to bottom) Peter Waller, Paul Maloney, John Langston, Steve Renshaw and Scott Tyan.

ABOVE *Getting comfy for a night in the gorilla pit – the old packing shed converted into sleeping quarters.*

LEFT *CRW at Lower Light in July 1993 – the photo made the cover of Rambling On. (From the top) Steve Jones, Brian Moller, Frank McGann and Tony Smith with the flag.*

THE 1990s

LEFT *Erika Wiszniewski in SA's first mother-daughter skydive in the 1990s with tandem master Greg Smith.*

ABOVE *Scott Prideaux.*

LEFT *Early Australian 8-way CRW team, Xtermin8 over Lower Light in 1996. (Top to bottom) Paul Cohen, Andrew Whitten, Tony Smith and Brett Higgin*

ABOVE *Paul Maloney, Peter Waller, Carl Michels and Greg Smith: creepering at Lower Light. Jack Parsons in the background.*

ABOVE *Skydive central: 95 Albert Street, Goodwood in 1999.*

KEITH BRIGGS, SASPC'S INDEFATIGABLE TREASURER IN THE 1990s AND A PART OWNER OF THE PILATUS PORTER.

THE 1990s

ABOVE *Photographer Scott Prideaux gets into the picture for his 600th jump. Holding the mirror are Louise Davis, celebrating 700 jumps, and Dean Conry,100. Struggling for exposure in the background are Dave Parsons and Col Parsons.*

RIGHT *Flying Colours, the girl's 4-way team, over Lower Light in 1992.*

ABOVE *The Great Gatsby, Lower Light, 1995.*

LEFT *The spud gun, Lower Light 1994.*

BELOW *Creepering at Lower Light, 1994.*

RELATIVE WORK

LIVING THE HI LIFE JUST CAME NATURALLY

Hi 5, the high achieving SA relative work team of the 1990s, had a great debut year.

They won the State championships in their first outing and then placed third in the Nationals in 1990, following a couple of training camps at Lower Light and one at Corowa.

It was an auspicious start for team members Jon McWilliam (Jonny Mac), Peter Waller (Wally), Kevin Taylor (Digger), Gavin Norsworthy (Chook) and Steve Hickson (Hicky), who flew camera.

The following year, after two or three training camps at Lower Light and another at Corowa, they again won the State meet and came first in the 1991 Nationals. The gold medal for Hi 5 came on the back of a 10 points per jump average, making them only the second Australian team ever to do 100 formations in 10 jumps in a competition.

BELOW *Hi 5 over Adelaide.*

Their winning form continued in 1992, with another State meet victory and second place in the Nationals. Hi 5 locked in their place on the last round of competition, scoring 16 in time, which was a new Australian record.

Happy to share their obvious skills with local jumpers, Hi 5 was among the top ranking skydiving teams which acted as tutors at the 1992 Grand Prix seminar at Lower Light.

The world stage beckoned the following year and Hi 5 headed for the United States to represent Australia at the 1993 World meet in Eloy, Arizona. The group trained at Perris Valley in California for four weeks before travelling to Eloy for the meet. "I'm not 100 percent sure but I think we came about 15th out of 34 countries competing," recalls Peter Waller.

Not a bad note to finish on! The team broke up after the World meet and, while it might have lasted only a few years, Kevin Taylor ranks being involved with teams like Hi 5 as the most rewarding aspect of his time in skydiving.

"While in Hi 5 I was fortunate enough to be involved with a group of people, now great friends, who had similar goals, passion and a desire to learn," says Kevin. "Training methods have changed: the use of expert coaches and wind tunnels have people progressing at vastly different levels – but the fundamentals remain. Hi 5 was an excellent journey, culminating in representing Australia – one of the most memorable periods of my skydiving career."

Peter Waller shares the sentiment. "They were awesome times jumping at Lower Light in the late 80s early 90s. Lots of great people and definitely a boom time for the club," he says.

ABOVE *Dale Butterworth (right) shares his experience and skills with Chris Kalins in a BAM! event.*

BAM! INSTIGATOR AND PRIME MOVER, **TESS CAMERON**.

2000s – BAM!
PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO FUN JUMPING

A spirited effort to put the fun back into fun jumping under the SASPC banner was launched by relative newcomer Tessa Cameron in 2010. Her concept was simple – and enthusiastically embraced by a fresh generation of jumpers. BAM! Fun days!

Each month an SASPC event would be held with club-sponsored slots for coaching and camera, as well as jump ticket deals hammered out by her incessant nagging of DZ operators. With many new skydivers probably wondering what the point of the SASPC was in the age of wall-to-wall commercial skydiving, her infectious energy caught on and a glimmer of the old club spirit re-emerged.

The first official SASPC funded Fun Day was at Mark Gazley's Goolwa DZ with a turnout of 20 fun jumpers – from B-rel novices to E licence holders. The focus of that first BAM! Fun day! was relative work coaching and a number of accomplished and generous coaches stepped forward, including Tom Murphy, Matt Palmer, Marcus Priem and Mark Gazley.

Later events included freefly training, wingsuiting, a novelty accuracy contest and involvement with a visit of the XL turbine to Lower Light, with experienced jumpers like Dale Butterworth, Jason Ellul, Paul Newberry, Pete Anderson, Greg Smith and many others contributing their skydiving wisdom to the learning pool.

It remains a work in progress.

DALE ELLIOT
PARAPLEGIC SKYDIVER MAKES HISTORY

Australia's first and only paraplegic freefall skydiver took to the air over Lower Light in 2008. Dale Elliot's history-making leap made him only the second person in the world to skydive solo as a paraplegic.

Dale had learned to fly aged 16 back in 1992 and 10 years later was a full time commercial pilot and a licensed aircraft engineer. He made 37 jumps as an able-bodied skydiver during 2000-2002 while he was a Cessna 206 pilot at Strathalbyn and Goolwa DZs.

But a motorbike accident shattered his spine and destroyed his spinal cord. Left a paraplegic, Dale resolved that it didn't have to mean the end of fun in the air.

"How do you cope with that? How do you get back to where you were?" says Dale.

"It's not about getting back to where you were, it's about going further!"

Adelaide Tandem Skydivers' instructors Al Gray and Jason Ellul helped Dale make history in October 2008, training him and putting him out of the visiting XL-turbine twice while it was at Lower Light.

Dale's home DZ is now Langhorne Creek, where he finds it easier to get in and out of the 206 rather than Lower Light's 182.

"It's been an interesting exercise working out how to get stable and stay stable in freefall." Langhorne Creek instructor Curtis Morton has played a central role in Dale's skydiving development, helping him master a number of stability and other issues.

"While my legs are of no benefit in the sky, I have to ensure they aren't a liability."

Dale made himself a pair of carbon fibre leg braces to keep his legs at 90 degrees in freefall and set up a system of straps which allow him to lift his legs up under canopy so that he can safely land "tandem style" – on his bum.

Dale was the first PAFF (paraplegic accelerated freefall) student to be awarded an 'A' licence in Australia and only the second in the world.

And he has his sights set on being the first paraplegic in the world to skydive in a wingsuit.

DALE ELLIOT CELEBRATES OPPOSITE AND IN THE AIR WITH KEVIN TAYLOR AND VERNON WELLS.

INNOVATION

LOVE THEM OR LOATHE THEM, TANDEMS CHANGED EVERYTHING

Nothing changed the face of South Australian skydiving more than the phenomenon of tandems. Undreamed of for the first 25 years of local parachuting, tandem skydiving has since given thousands of South Australians a taste of the sport and injected big money into jumping.

This massive dose of commercialisation had its upsides and its downs, however. Old style parachuting clubs are virtually dead the world over – including in South Australia.

RIGHT *Adam Pemble at Lower Light, 2010.*

Throughout the 1960s and 70s it was hard to find many people who had experienced freefall, let alone become regular jumpers. Now it seems every second person you meet is likely to have done a tandem or has one planned.

Australian Parachute Federation figures for 2001 to 2010 show a total of 24,679 membership returns lodged from South Australia. Of these at least 23,700 were tandems, including 120 tandem assisted freefalls. Another 400 pink cards returned to the APF by local organisations were blank, indicating they were probably tandems as well. Of the total, 498 were AFF (accelerated freefall) students.

But the origins of tandems were far more humble and it took a few hardy jumpers to get it all off the ground. SA's first tandem was in January, 1986. Visiting Victorian jumper John Chapman, who had his own tandem rig and freelanced around the country, visited Adelaide to show off his new skills. He went into an Australia Day demo on Glenelg beach with Laura Davies as his passenger, marking the State's first tandem.

Chapman was back in Adelaide in March 1986 for the Festival City accuracy competition and brought his tandem rig. Jeremy Browne, who was jumping with Skysport at Strathalbyn at the time, and organising the accuracy meet, went out to Lower Light and did a tandem with John, only the second in the State.

"Jumping as a passenger was a bit nervy to be honest, but I was at the stage where I wanted to be involved with something which

ABOVE *Mike Goodwin with one of the early tandem passengers at Skysport Parachute Centre, Strathalbyn in the 1980s.*

I believed would bring a lot of people into the sport," says Jeremy. "I arranged for John to come back a couple of months later and five of us at Skysport were trained by him at Strathalbyn over a single weekend in June."

Jeremy, Graham Barrington, Steve Boldog, Mike Goodwin and Colin Parsons lined up for the course, the first in South Australia.

Graham, one of the 1961 originals, had returned to skydiving in 1980 after a very long break from skydiving and enthusiastically embraced the new tandem technology. He attended a national instructors' conference at Mount Isa in 1986, at which Bill Booth from the US was demonstrating tandems. With 10 instructors on the busy course, Graham was unable to complete his tandem training. That came later, when John Chapman visited Strathalbyn.

"Col Parsons didn't finish the course," Graham recalls. "He found out he had to do a jump as a passenger and that was the end if it. Well, you don't have an altimeter or a ripcord or anything. You're just a passenger – and it's a scary as all shit I can tell you. You're not in control.

"You had to do two jumps with a dummy load on the front," he says. "John Chapman actually had a big stuffed toy bear he used for this. I didn't know him at first and I was flying up to Alice Springs on the way to Mount Isa for the course and there was this guy in the back and he's got this big stuffed bear. Can you imagine taking that on an airline today? You wouldn't even get close. It was loaded up with weight and he's got it sitting in the passenger seat next to him on the DC9 up to Alice."

Jeremy Browne also vividly remembers his jump with the bear. "I got out and straight into the biggest rain cloud you've ever seen. I opened up and the bear had an ear which was flapping on my face. I remember saying

ABOVE *South Australia's first tandem master training, at Strathalbyn in June 1986. John Chapman, Tony Lenger, Mike Goodwin, Kym Williams and Graham Barrington.*

RIGHT *John Chapman getting ready to take Jeremy Browne on SA's second tandem jump in March 1986.*

ABOVE *Ted McWatters over Lower Light in the 1990s.*

'If you don't f.....g stop that Teddy, I'm going to unhook you.' "

After they completed their bear jumps, they endured the mandatory ride as a passenger and earned their ratings. They were joined soon after by Scott Prideaux who also took Skysport's early tandem passengers along for the ride.

Later, back problems caused Steve Boldog to give tandems a miss.

Jeremy Browne says the group was so keen to do tandems that, not having a rig of their own, they would often hire one from John Chapman for the weekend. "He would send it over from Melbourne. Soon after I bought one myself. We were charging $220 to 10,000 feet – relatively speaking it was quite expensive."

Meanwhile, Greg Smith, Kevin Taylor and Gavin Norsworthy clubbed together to buy a tandem rig and set up their own commercial operation at Lower Light in September 1986, after training under David Parsons.

Their Blue Skies tandem venture, running side by with Vic Balfour's Southern Skydivers, would become a major force in SA jumping.

"Vic was happy for us to do the tandems while he concentrated on static line and AFF training," recalls Greg Smith. "Blue Skies in those days was just a hobby, a bit of beer money."

Initially tandems had to be officially approached purely as student training exercise, a requirement of the APF, and CASA (the Civil Aviation Safety Authority) still deemed tandems to be 'experimental.' "But we just called it a straight out joy ride," says Greg.

Ironically another pioneer SA jumper from 1961, Trevor Burns, played a significant part in the 1986 introduction of tandems in Australia.

At the time Trevor was senior inspector - sport aviation with CASA and attended the Mount Isa conference as a keynote speaker.

ABOVE *Jeremy Browne ready for a tandem training jump in 1986 with the weighted toy bear. Instructor John Chapman (left) and Steve Boldog.*

"The APF was making representations to the Department to allow tandem operations," says Trevor. "Also attending was Bill Booth, the inventor of one of the two tandem systems developed in the US at that time. Bill's system went on to become the worldwide accepted system.

"Claude Gillard, the APF president, very cunningly arranged the accommodation so that Bill Booth and I shared a room for several days. At the conclusion of the conference there was a jump day on the local DZ and I became, to the best of my knowledge, the first tandem passenger in Australia, with Bill Booth as the tandem master.

"With around 2,000 jumps in my logbook it was a little daunting to put myself entirely in someone else's hands. Bill sensed this and showed me that I could reach the bunny tail, so at least if anything went wrong I could hopefully deploy the main."

Trevor recommended to CASA that tandem operations be approved. "There was considerable resistance within the Department but I managed to prevail and the rest is history," he says. "I know that after I left Mount Isa, Bill Booth conducted some tandem master training. I, of course Your Honour, have no knowledge as to whether any further tandem jumps were made, as they were still illegal at the time."

While Trevor was a seasoned jumper with a history in the sport reaching back as far as it could go, the same level of skydiving expertise wasn't always evident in the aviation bureaucracy. Jeremy Browne remembers the time when one of Trevor's CASA assistants from Canberra visited Strathalbyn to check on Skysport's early tandem operations. "He was there to vet us and he wanted to do a tandem but he didn't want it filmed," says Jeremy. "We went to 10,000 feet and we had a drogue by then which made it more comfortable. So out we hopped – and he was a little short, round fellow which is a perfect tandem passenger. Nice exit. Opened up.

ABOVE *Early publicity for the newly introduced tandem skydiving: Graham Barrington (left) and Jeremy Browne in a Messenger newspaper photo from 1987.*

LEFT *Mike Goodwin braces his passenger's neck in an early tandem jump at Strathalbyn in the 1980s.*

Mike Goodwin hooks up with Jerry Browne in the late 1980s.

ABOVE *Dean Barrowcliffe gets in on the action as his daughter Skye does a tandem with Vlasto Zamecnik at Lower Light.*

'Gidday? Hello? Hello?' He'd fainted and he stayed fainted all the way down and landed like a bag of potatoes. He just sort of came to after we landed and I said 'Did you enjoy that? And he said 'Yeah it was pretty good.' 'Do we pass?' And he said 'Yes I think so.' "

Neil Davis, a stalwart Lower Light jumper of the 1980s and 90s, and later a jump pilot, got into tandems early, earning rating number 14 after a course at Pakenham. At the time he was living in Canberra and he bought a tandem rig in partnership with another jumper.

"We looked at it as a way of marketing the sport to people who wouldn't do it any other way," says Neil. "Our initial budget was based on the expectation that we might do two dozen jumps a year. Even in the mid 1980s it was a $10,000 or $12,000 rig, so it was a very significant investment."

Neil's was one of the first drogue-equipped tandem rigs in the country. The early non-drogue equipment encouraged many tandem masters to stick to short delays and resulted in some very solid openings.

"I did all my training on a non-drogue rig at Pakenham," says Neil. "I went to full terminal with Bill Kenny attached on a couple of occasions – akin to having a couple of beer barrels strapped on. And then I had to fight with him for control on the way into the pit, as he was a bit of an accuracy freak. Full terminal without a drogue was fierce – 300 km an hour."

The first canopies were Pioneer High Lifters, originally developed as a cargo chute. "They were very heavily braked," says Neil. "Almost to the stall point and so they would open up perpetually stalling and then flying, stalling and flying ..."

Graham Barrington also has not-so-fond memories of the non-drogued High Lifters. "You went out and dumped it within seven seconds – otherwise you'd see worms crawling through your eyes."

Adam Pemble with another Adelaide Tandem Skydiving customer in 2010.

Exit techniques were also markedly different to the rear-facing dive out employed by modern tandem masters. Graham and his peers at first climbed out for a poised exit off the wheel, with the student hanging in front. "On the ground it's a pain but in the air it's not so bad with a bit of slipstream lifting them up," he says. "No wonder Woofa's back complained!"

Jeremy Browne believes the advent of tandems was one of the reasons why big 10-place aircraft eventually withered in SA. "In the mid 1990s more and more of the jumps were becoming tandems and so at Strathalbyn at least, there wasn't the need for a big place aircraft. There was more financial justification for a small aircraft which could take tandem passengers up as and when they turned up at the DZ, rather than wait for a 10-place to be full – which was three tandems."

Greg Smith a jumper for 35 years, whose SA Skydiving is now one of the tandem powerhouses, has no doubt tandems have changed skydiving. "Some people say for the better, some for the worse but it has kept it alive while a lot of aviation enthusiast clubs have died," he says. "They're the only thing that keeps drop zones going, so that people can still come out and pay $40 and $5 DZ fees and do a jump. It pays the bills and also puts the word out on the street about skydiving."

TANDEM MASTERS OF THE 2000s

Mark Gazley

Curtis Morton

Greg Smith

TANDEM MASTER
DAVID PARSONS

Well-known SA jumper David Parsons was at the forefront of the two big advances in skydiving of the past 30 years – he was tandem master number 1 and the first Australian to become an AFF-rated instructor.

In 1984, while living and studying in Texas and jumping out of Twin Otters every weekend, David witnessed the revolution in skydiving – better planes, rapidly advancing gear technology and the emergence of both AFF and tandems. "The initial attitude to tandem was that it was going to revolutionise skydiving training as it was replicating the way flying training began – accompanied by a highly-experienced instructor who would guarantee perfect safety," says David. "After the first (double) deaths on tandem jumps the attitude became a bit more realistic."

David gained his USPA tandem master rating and once back in Australia he, Greg Chambers and John Chapman imported the first tandem rigs in the country and did the first legal tandems in Australia at Pakenham.

"At first tandem procedures and exits were very proscriptive, as you would expect for such new technology," says David. "Now and then there were incidents that puzzled us all: one of Mike Goodwin's tandem jumps at Strathalbyn produced a massive freefall spin for no real obvious reason.

"Main canopies were at the limits of their abilities, so they did not last very long, and despite the airfoils being of the newer 9-cell design they did not land very well. I think it was after the French or South African tandem canopies entered the market that tandem canopy performance really started to be acceptable."

David gave tandem jumps away in mid 1987, after a knee injury robbed him of adequate strength and control while climbing out on to the step of Cessnas.

THE 2000s

LEFT *The 2000 Rel Rampage at Murray Bridge.*

ABOVE *Pete Anderson at Murray Bridge in 2000.*

RIGHT *Peter Waller after his 10,000th jump.*

ABOVE *Big Pete Norman at Murray Bridge.*

ABOVE *Kelly Waller at Murray Bridge.*

ABOVE *AFF instructor course at Murray Bridge in 2006.*

THE 2000s

Exit by Over Indulgence.

ABOVE *Al Gray and son Justin leave Adelaide Tandem Skydiving's VH-DNZ in 2011.*

LEFT *Adam Pemble captures the action over Lower Light.*

THE 2000s

LEFT *Helen Hayes in the swoop and chug event at the SA State Meet in 2011.*

Jason Ellul's view of his own canopy.

Lower Light's Adam Pemble and Charl Rootman on exit during the 2011 State Meet at Langhorne Creek. Vlasto Zamecnik and Angelique Rootman are partly obscured. The team took first place in the open four-way.

THE 2000s

AL GRAY UNDER HIS LIGHTNING AFTER SOME CRW AT LOWER LIGHT IN 2009.

BELOW *Another load at Lower Light, 2009.*

ABOVE *Sandy Glenday and Jenny Neubauer celebrate a great jump in 2009.*

THE 2000s

LEFT *Dale Butterworth, 2009.*

Kelly Ellul over Lower Light.

ABOVE *Paul Newbery at breakoff.*

GEOFF COOLING SHOWS OFF HIS MUSICAL TALENTS AT LOWER LIGHT IN 2004.

THE 2000s

Six-way at Lower Light in 2010 – Helen Hayes, Darren McInerney, Vlasto Zamecnik, Laura Watson, Tessa Cameron and Dale Butterworth.

ABOVE *Jason Ellul headed for the pit, Lower Light.*

ABOVE *Ben Barclay's 300th at Lower Light. Charl Rootman, Cash Man, Sandy Glenday, Jenny Neubauer, Luke Oliver, Paul Newberry, Ben Barclay, Leanne Critchley, Adam Pemble, Helen Hayes, Al Gray, Justin Gray, Dale Butterworth, Laura Watson, Angelique Rootman and Vlasto Zamecnik.*

ABOVE *Two-way vertical stack wingsuit jump over Langhorne Creek in 2011 – Travis Naughton and Darren McInerney.*

FALLING FOR A SPORT

50 YEARS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SKYDIVING

November 19, 1961
The birth of a brand new sport.
This commemorative history marks skydiving's milestone 50th Anniversary.
The people and the events which have shaped sport parachuting in SA.