



SAFETY

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SAFETY is an International Bulletin published and distributed World-wide by the International Parachuting Committee (C.I.P.) of the F.A.I. Given below are the names and addresses of the two editors — please send any safety information or photographs to either:

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WE CAN ALL BENEFIT FROM THIS BULLETIN—PLEASE SUPPORT IT



This aircraft wing was damaged when the aircraft was taxied into another on a slippery grass surface. It is printed to emphasise that many accidents are caused by carelessness and can therefore be avoided. The pilot was tired and showed poor judgement. I know—I was that pilot—Charles Shea-Simonds.

THINK !

Face it — parachuting can be dangerous, so we try to reduce risks to the minimum.

Or do we?

This article is aimed at the senior sky divers, our so called "Sky Gods" who possibly due to inhaling rarified atmosphere for prolonged periods seem to believe that they are indeed immortal.

If not, I cannot understand the soft helmet craze. Do senior jumpers believe that they have harder heads than the novices, or is it that they have less to protect?

Helmets are worn to protect the head against injury caused by bad landings, connector links, bad exits, mid air collisions and aeroplane crash landings.

These events are unpredictable and can happen at any level of experience.

Here in South Africa we recently bore witness to an air crash tragically killing five senior parachutists plus the pilot, and seriously injuring a sixth who at the time of writing is still on the critical list.

The survivor was a Student who had his hard helmet on. The others were experienced jumpers who were members of the soft helmet brigade.

Soft helmets serve no other purposes than to keep ones hair in place. Ban them!

So once we have all got rid of our soft helmets and are seated in the plane, what else can we do to control our destiny?

The answer to that one is **THINK!**

You must realise the most critical time of any jump is the time between when the aircraft lifts off till it reaches 1,000 ft. If anything goes wrong in that time decisions have to be made **super fast** and seconds are precious. So first of all, buy some time — take off with your helmet strapped on, and see that everyone else does too.

As I write this article I know what I will do if the engine cuts or even threatens to cut on the way up. If we are below 400 ft I will stay up — my helmet will be on from take off and I will prepare to crash and sit as still as possible to make the pilot's job easier.

Above 400 ft I will get out so damn fast and open my reserve you wouldn't believe. If there is a student and he is hooked up, out he goes. I have been reliably informed of an incident in England where a Student was dispatched on a static line at 400 ft and landed safely. If he's not hooked up, I'll dump his reserve for him, and out he'll go.

The pilot will be happier too with a lighter plane. In fact I believe it is the pilot's duty above 400 ft to shout — "Engine cut — **everybody out!**" or similar to get the guys moving. Indecision wastes time — fumbling with one's helmet or gear wastes time — time you haven't got.

So decide now, sitting on the ground what you will do and sitting in the aircraft don't relax until there is a decent gap between you and the ground. Once you are above 2 grand by all means take off your helmet if you want to but till then, **think**.

Still on the way up, if it's the first jump of the day, run through your cut away procedures. Use your hands and your mind — you will be amazed how often you will fumble something. When the crunch comes, your mind will be conditioned and you won't waste time wondering what's happening — you will have prepared yourself. And please, let's be clear — if you have a malfunctioned high performance canopy — get rid of it and open that nice round reserve — all that bullshit about hand deploying a reserve is just that.

When you plan a jump know who you are jumping with — don't get involved with a big load unless you know the capabilities of each jumper on it. If you don't, do a small load first and make an assessment — it could just save you getting railroaded or eating a canopy.

Altimeters — Eyeballing is fine, but in sequential relative, who has got time to look down? Relying on a member of your team who is as engrossed as you are is **dumb**. Wear an alti, use it, and above all don't mock its use to junior jumpers. Last year in Maseru when I didn't check my alti and relied on our alti men and found myself sitting sheepishly in my harness for the first time at 800 ft. It's just plain stupid.

Every now and then we all go down a bit low. It happens, particularly with sequential relative and it's bad. Those of us who realise it's bad, try to avoid it. But there are those amongst us, who smoke it down regularly and think they are big deals.

They are not. They are cutting down their safety margins and placing unnecessary pressures on themselves should something go wrong. With the reliable modern gear, this is unlikely, but the reliability of the gear makes their users complacent and the last thing they are thinking about come dump time is a malfunction.

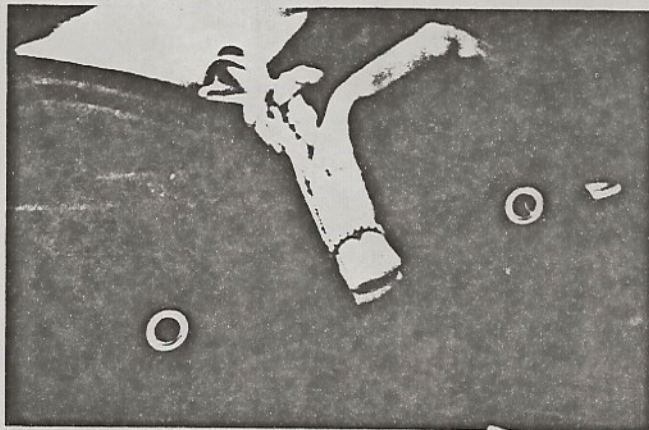
And as we know failure to think wastes time and lives.

One last point — once you have waved off and checked — when you dump, watch the pilot chute off your back. If you watch it you are buying time if it snags or hesitates you know where you are instead of losing sky fast with a fluttering pilot chute and decreasing margin of safety.

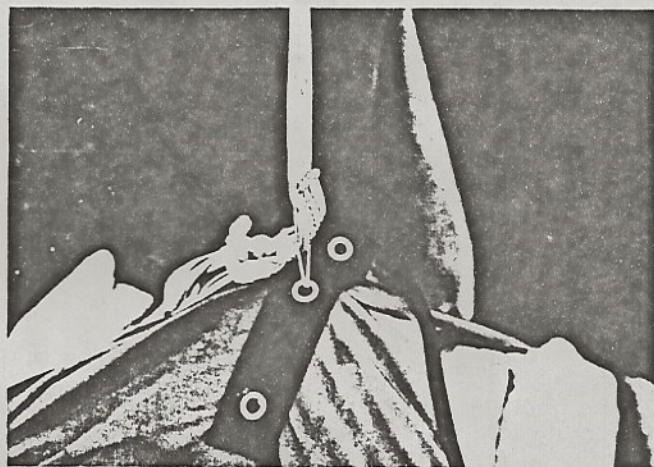
We have all done dumb things and some of us have been lucky to survive them — the important thing is to learn from these mistakes and not to repeat them.

Safe jumping!

CLIFFORD WILKEN, D88
Area Safety Officer (Border Region)
Republic of South Africa



These two photographs illustrate a deployment sequence that ended in a total malfunction because the nylon loop snagged around the stitching on the bridal cord.



MORE ON HELMETS by JIM HOOPER

The last time I saw him alive was as he went past the formation in a head-down, high-speed spiral. Two others were in hot pursuit, trying desperately to catch him after seeing the collision. At 1200 feet they thought they saw him wave, at which point they both flared and pulled. But he was still unconscious or too stunned to do anything. And so one of the finest relative workers and organisers in the world — with over 2000 jumps — died after colliding head-on with another jumper who suddenly appeared in his flight path.

He was wearing a French leather helmet.

There were those who rationalized it by saying that a hard helmet would have made no difference; that he would have been knocked unconscious regardless. Oddly enough, it was only those who advocate soft or no helmets who were so positive about it.

And while I certainly cannot be positive that a hard helmet would have saved his life, I know that it would have given him a far better chance than he had.

It is amazing how much disproportional controversy has arisen over the question of wearing — or not wearing — helmets. The proponents of helmets maintain that they are a basic and common-sense item of protection. Those on the other side of the issue — when questioned — tend to gulp, give vent to wide-eyed exhalations and spout anti-helmet banalities. I've always found it absolutely amazing how loudly some jumpers defend the wearing of minimal head protection. And the arguments they use are even more amazing.

FOR EXAMPLE:

1. **Helmets are dangerous (!) inasmuch as they restrict peripheral vision.**

Nonsense. There are numerous brands that, if properly used, are completely out of sight. I've been wearing the Bell 500TX for some 14 years and have never been able to see the slightest part of it.

2. **Helmets are uncomfortable.**

Possibly, if it is the incorrect size, or of that cheap variety one has no business wearing anyway. Minor discomfort notwithstanding, it seems a small price to pay for one's personal safety. I'm sure it would be far more comfortable without a harness as well. Once.

3. **No one has the "right" to require helmets.**

Wrong. A drop zone operator has every right to do so if he cares about you and your well being.

4. **Having to wear a helmet is an infringement on the wearer's "freedom".**

This argument — even more so than the others — I find absolutely intolerable. If you die because of inadequate head protection, then you are infringing on the DZ operator's freedom as well as the freedom of every jumper in your country. You don't have to examine and agonize over that broken and bleeding thing that only moments before was a living, breathing whole person you don't have to worry or be affected by possibility of stricter government controls, or the damage done to the fraternity you claimed to love, yet so casually and thoughtlessly left.

Every experienced jumper, in my opinion, has a responsibility to the sport to set a safe example for those who are less experienced. And it is simply a matter of attitude. I hope — and generally believe — that we and our sport have matured over the years. Out of self-preservation, if nothing else. It's not "cool" to pull low, nor to jump shoddy equipment, nor to flaunt commonsense matters of safety.

The vast majority of parachuting injuries and fatalities are due to basic errors in judgement. If you should die because of inadequate head protection, then your error has been no less terminal than if you had never pulled.

INCIDENT IN SWITZERLAND

1. **Date:** Thursday, April 12, 1979.
2. **Time:** 1800 H local time.
3. **Place:** aerodrome of Locarno, Switzerland.
4. **Height:** 3000 ft.
5. **Weather:** sunny.
6. **Parachutist:** Male, 22~years old, 3 years in sport, 92 jumps.
7. **Equipment:** Mini-System; main: Stratq-Cloud with streamer band; reserve: 26 ft steerable.
8. **Cause of death:** Impact.
9. **Description:** Jumper exited at 3000ft three times on that day to get introduction in ram-air parachutes. The

first jump was absolutely normal. By the second one student cutaway main after experienced problems with the slider. He pulled reserve at sufficient height. Student exited aircraft Piltaus Turbo-Porter for the third time at 3000ft. After freefalltime of four seconds he pulled rip-cord of main which was fully inflating. When jumper was about at 1800ft instructor observed continuous stall turns and saw that jumper was trying to unlock one brake. At about 600ft jumper cutaway main very slowly whilst losing height, and pulled reserve which could not inflate prior to impact.

10. **Conclusion:** Jumper failed not only to pull reserve at sufficient height but also to stabilize main canopy which was fully inflated.

At the school where this incident happened the exit height was now fixed at 4000ft in order to give student getting introduction in ram-air chutes more time to work. Furthermore the regulations or cutaways have been tightened up.

Deceased had received proper instruction in the use of ram air canopy.

INCIDENT IN POLAND

June 14, 1978, Krosno, Poland.

Jumper: Wieslaw Szelc, 31. Started parachuting sport in 1964. Parachuting instructor rating, first class, since 1970. The fatal jumps was his 2913th, and 137th with this type of parachute.

Parachute: main: Strato-Cloud SC-10; reserve: Sz-73.

Accuracy jump from 1000m: Aircraft: An-2.

After a normal exit and a 5-sec delay, the jumper tried to open the parachute; the suspension lines of the main canopy deployed from retaining bands but the canopy did not open and did not inflate. After a 5-7 sec pause, the jumper opened the reserve, the suspension lines of which entangled with the lines of the main canopy. During the whole descent the jumper tried to untangle the lines, without effect, and suffered death on impact on the ground.

The reason (as discovered by the investigation commission) of non-deployment of the main canopy was that *the rectangular corner of the deployment bag (near grommet) got in the rubber loop of the bag, preventing the bag from opening.*

Jumper's error was that he did not cutaway the main canopy prior to opening the reserve.

Steps were undertaken immediately to remedy the technical reason of accident. According to the bulletin issued by the Polish authorities, the shape of the deployment bag has been modified by rounding the corners (R = 30mm) in all SC-10 deployment bags used in Poland.

At the World Parachuting Championships at Zagreb, the Polish representatives (the Team Manager, Coach and Int. Judge) informed the parachute's manufacturer (Para-Flite) on the accident and modifications made.

Incident Report from Bill Ottley

On Friday afternoon May 5th I came as close to being killed as anyone can and live. And I believe this is one of those rare instances where the "victim" of a fatality report is available for an interview, and I hope you and your Committee will find this of interest. I submit it in this narrative form, because it seems easier for me to tell the story this way.

I was at Galena, Maryland practicing with the members of my 4-man Team, on a bright sunny day. My health was good and I had no problems, hangovers, or other impediments to jumping.

As we started to climb out for the jump onto the wheel of a Cessna 182, I felt my equipment catch on something, and had to tug sharply two or three times to free myself from my seat (the "Co-pilot" location, facing backwards). Once I was positioned properly on the step we exited, completed a couple of maneuvers, and broke to prepare for opening. At this point, approximately 2,500' above the ground, I looked down and realized that my belly band on my Wonderhog II had somehow broken free and that the belly band containing the chute and pilot chute handle was flapping behind and above me.

I reached around and behind me trying to grasp the handle. Each time I attempted to do this my head became lower, my body became vertical, my speed increased. I finally succeed in grabbing the yellow knob, and discovered that — because the belly band and parachute holding bag (whatever it's technically called) were not under tension, that the pilot chute could not be extracted from the bag.

Then, and only then did I go for my reserve. It was a brand new Safety Flyer, and opened cleanly and instantly, with minimal opening shock despite the fact that I'm sure I was traveling in excess of 150 miles an hour, head down.

After opening I had so little time that I was unable to release the brakes before crashing downwind in the providentially soft, plowed field. No injuries of any kind were sustained.

Immediately after the jump I reviewed my thoughts and actions:

1. During my foolhardy efforts to free my main canopy pilot chute, I repeatedly saw the yellow plowed field coming closer, but did not react to this visual stimulation. I cannot explain the reason.
2. At and before the moment when I finally pulled the reserve parachute handle, I at no time experienced any of the theatrical nonsense about "watching my life pass before me".
3. At no time did the thought cross my mind that "I'll save the \$25 repack charge if I can just figure out a way to make the main open". In fact, I had available to me an alternate rig, packed and ready to go; and did shortly afterwards go up again and continue jumping. But I have always believed that many people who didn't pull their reserves perhaps were trying to "save money" by fighting with their mains down to impact. I can categorically assure you and your Committee that this thought was **not** in my mind.
4. Foolish though it seems, I believe what was going through my head during those seconds was simply the thought, "this is a problem which I am capable of solving in a 'routine' manner".

I have no explanation to offer, nor has anyone else, as to why my Wonderhog II belly band came loose. Nor do I know what I hooked to in the airplane which delayed my exit. Nor do I know if what I was hooked to in the airplane was or was not in any way connected with the belly band incident. My normal procedure is to tighten my belly band thoroughly, then wrap the bitter end round and round so that it's snug and secure. There is **no doubt** in my mind that I did this prior to this jump.

After it happened, two of my teammates landed next to me, expressing their total horror at what they had witnessed from above: Ottley's body getting tinier and tinier and suddenly the canopy opening, seemingly at ground level.

Mike Schultz, former Captain of the U.S. Team and therefore an expert witness for sure, was on the ground watching and he estimated that I had "**less than two seconds**" to impact when I finally got it out. My canopy

ride was 10 seconds, or thereabouts. It was unquestionably the closest brush with death I've ever had in my life, in or out of a parachute. It was undeniably a case of brain lock that would have embarrassed the lowest recruit; in fact, only someone filled with the arrogance of experience would have waited so long — a raw recruit would surely have pulled sooner.

It was total brain lock, and it came on my 3,498th jump.

William H. Ottley
Executive Director

RESERVE IDEA

The British Parachute Association is currently evaluating the idea of placing a covered double ended spring between the stowed lines and the canopy in student reserve parachutes. The effect is to punch the canopy away from the pack tray with minimum effort from the student. Any input on this will be welcomed by the Editors. We will published a full report on this at a later date.

"A man who has made a mistake and does not know how to correct it, has made two mistakes already."

Let us all benefit from each other's experiences and mistakes through the medium of this International Safety Bulletin. Below is a suggested Incident Report Form — if you are involved in an incident, report the knowledge from which you think others might learn. Please complete this form and return it to either of the Editors of this Bulletin.

INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT REPORT FORM

1. Date of Incident:
2. Time of Day:
3. Place:
4. Height above sea level:
5. Weather Conditions:
6. Details of Parachutists involved and experience level:
7. Equipment worn (was it in any way a contributory factor?):
8. Description of Incident:
9. How do you think a similar incident can be prevented in the future?

Please send supplementary diagrams and photographs.

• INTERNATIONAL SPORT PARACHUTE EQUIPMENT DEALERS— PLEASE NOTE

We will accept one advertisement in each issue to help with printing and distribution costs. If you are interested please contact either of the Editors.