

## Flying Dreams

To Fly Has Been a Dream

On a bright sunny day with the sky as clear as crystal glass, you peer out into the open sky to the land down below. The door opens in front of you the wind rushes into the aircraft. You step out falling freely away as if you were a bird soaring on the winds of time. You peer back to the aircraft for a brief second to see it speeding away. You feel weightless as the wind roars around you. Looking down you suddenly realize that you are falling towards the earth. Someone once said that the sky is the limit, but in skydiving the ground is the limit.

Skydiving

is not just a free fall and a parachute ride, but an extreme thrill of events in a short amount of time.

Skydiving begins on the ground. The equipment that you use is the most important part of a successful dive. The most important piece is the parachute itself. It must be packed so that there are no knots in the lines and so that the parachute will open properly. The reserve parachute is the second most important piece of equipment. It must be packed by a Federal Aviation Administration rigger every 120 days or after the reserve parachute has been deployed. The third piece is your altimeter that is set and calibrated to altitude at ground level. Several optional pieces of equipment are a helmet, gloves and a skydiving suit. Some jumpers like to perform a pre-jump on the ground. It's most commonly called a dirt dive. They walk through the skydive on the ground while talking about what they will do on the jump and then what they will do if the jump doesn't go as planned.

The Jump Master is a highly skilled skydiver. The Jump Master has over 500 skydives and licensed by the United States Parachute Association. The Jump Master is in charge of the jumper on the aircraft at all times. He notifies the jumper of the drop zone approaching by giving a one minute warning, a 30 second warning, prepare to jump, and jump signal. The Jump Master also is in charge of checking that you have put your equipment on properly. He checks to see that you have not crossed your leg straps and that your chest strap is fastened securely. Next he checks to see that your ripcord is properly in place, also checks to see that your reserve parachute card is not over the required re-pack date. After receiving the

Jump Master inspection it is time for you to board the aircraft. The trip to jump altitude can be reached by airplanes, helicopters, and hot air balloons. After flying to a maximum altitude of 15,000 feet above ground level or a minimum of 3,500 feet above ground level the jumper can exit the aircraft at anytime the Jump Master signals to jump.

You have been given the signal to jump. You may be jumping alone or as a group. For as many times that I have skydived. I prefer to jump alone, "It's like being on top of the world." As you exit the aircraft falling toward the earth, you're able to spin, twist, flip, turn, roll, surf, and perform an aerobatic display without the force of gravity restricting you. Glancing at your altimeter either on your wrist or chest strap to see what altitude you're at. Your altimeter tells you when to deploy your parachute. The minimum altitude to deploy is 2,000 feet above ground level. Most jumpers begin to deploy their parachute at 2,500 feet above ground level.

Finally you have reached the parachute ride. You have pulled your ripcord and have a full parachute deployed. If the main parachute had not deployed. You would have had to deploy your reserve parachute. Before pulling the reserve parachute ripcord you have to release the main parachute by pulling the cut away pillow. When the reserve parachute deployed the main parachute would release from the container and fall freely away from you. The jumper reaches up and releases the brake toggles which controls the parachute. The brake toggles were set when packing the parachute, so that the opening of the parachute would not be so rough. Now that you have a fully deployed parachute many stunts can be performed. You can stack one parachute on top another, spinning and spiraling down with colored smoke spraying from smoke cans. At about a 1,000 feet you begin your final approach to the drop zone. Most drop zones have a target about 20 feet in diameter of sand or small gravel rock to aim for. Around 10 feet above the ground you apply the brakes that flare the parachute causing you to land. Landing properly is like stepping off a ladder, nice and soft.

Skydiving is not for everyone. For every time you go up and land on the ground safely you have cheated death one more time. Skydiving is a sport of many thrills that last only a few seconds. It is more complex than just a free fall and a parachute ride.