



## DDIY...Don't Do It Yourself

**Q: WHAT DOES THE** phrase “Pay Me Now or Pay Me Later” have to do with your parachute?

**A: I'VE USED THIS** term before in my columns and articles, but it's worth repeating. Often when I see the results of a backyard parachute rigger doing his own modifications to his parachute, it can get interesting, to say the least.

Recently, a really nice-looking parachute came to me for servicing. It came with the purchase of an aircraft. Apparently the previous owner decided that he could install a sheepskin pad he had without asking a rigger for advice. Look carefully at **photo 1** and you may not see anything wrong with the installation. Now look closely at **photo 2** and you'll notice the two holes through the webbing and the pad attached with plastic ties. Herein lies the problem. The two holes looked like they were drilled through with something that was heated, like a nail. I must say he did a rather good job of it, but in the process he destroyed the structural integrity of the harness. If you're a gambler, I estimate the odds are about 50/50 of you surviving an emergency bailout. The holes were drilled through a portion of the harness that is critical in keeping you from falling out of the harness during deployment. They keep the backpack securely against your back. If one or both sides rips apart during deployment, you could easily fall out of the harness adding to an already bad day see **photo 3 & 4**.

As a result of this home rigging, I removed the airworthy parachute inside and had to condemn the harness/container as not airworthy. To send it back to the factory for the replacement of the harness/container would not have been cost effective. I was fortunate and had a harness/container to install the parachute into that was of a similar age. I could have put it into a new harness/container, but the age of the parachute was around 10 years old. It would have worked, but in 10 years I would have to replace the canopy inside and in another 10 years the harness/

container. By now you should know that every manufacturer of pilot emergency parachutes wants its equipment out of service in 20 years maximum. If possible, it's best if you can keep the manufacture dates of all components as close together as possible.

The moral of the story is that the next time you have a really brilliant idea to save money and do your own rigging, don't do it! It could end up costing you much more than money. It could literally have quite an impact on your life. **IAC**

