



No more packing

Future operational procedures

WHERE DID 2015 GO? It's 2016, Easter has hopped on by, and everyone is busy preparing for this year's flying season. How do I know? I'm being inundated with parachutes to pack. It seems like I just returned from December's ICAS (International Council of Air shows) convention in Las Vegas.

As I looked around at all the activity at the convention, I had to think back on my own career in the air-show industry and what it has meant to me. I saw before me many new and rising stars, and I also saw the images and faces of those who had "gone west" into the setting sun.

This time of year
I've always had to prepare
and deal with the
expected rush of pilots
getting ready for
the upcoming season.

In some form or another I've been involved with parachutes and the air-show industry for more than 50 years. I have almost 600 faithful customers, many of whom are also my friends. Even while thinking back on the 80-plus saves I've had, I realize now is the right time for me to switch gears and start smelling the roses.

This time of year I've always had to prepare and deal with the expected rush of pilots getting ready for the upcoming season. Once the sun comes out

for more than two days straight, many of you start to panic. I hear the cry, "My airplane needs dusting off, I need dusting off, and my parachute needs servicing." To put it mildly, it's a busy time for me. But as of May 1, I will no longer be packing pilots' emergency parachutes. Between my 25-year Air Force career and my civilian customers, I've packed well more than 35,000 parachutes. My hands are telling me *loud and clear* that they need a rest.

In my opinion it takes a special person to pack and service a pilot emergency parachute, and after looking for almost two years for someone who could take over the packing portion of my business, I've found him. His name is Robert Marshall, and he lives in southern California. By the time this column is published, most of my customers will have received an e-mail with all the details.

I'm not disappearing. I will continue to manufacture my five-point AcroBelt and SMAK PAK Survival Kits for your parachutes. Most importantly, my 30-plus-year relationship/dealership with the Softie line of pilot emergency parachutes, manufactured by Para-Phernalia, will remain as solid as before.

I also want to assure my faithful readers that I will continue to write this column as long as the folks at *Sport Aerobatics* will let me. Here's a plea for your help. I'm always looking for fresh ideas and questions to answer, so please continue to e-mail them to me. You can also call me with your questions and suggestions if you like.

One of the things I've enjoyed the most is traveling around the country and world, giving bailout seminars for pilots. It has given me the opportunity to meet many of you in person and to answer specific questions related to your parachute or aircraft. The title of my PowerPoint seminar is "Emergency Bailout Procedures for Pilots and Survival Equipment." The handout material for my presentation can be found on the home page of my

website, www.SilverParachutes.com. This past year I've also been asked to give a different kind of presentation. It's on my air-show career, which spans more than 40 years. Many of you already knew I was a professional sky diver, wing walker, and air-show announcer. Now I can also bring your group a presentation that includes a lot of video footage of my career. I'll let you decide, but I've been told the presentation is humorous and a lot of fun.

I still fall out of an occasional aircraft. After all, I've been doing that for more than 54 years and will continue to make occasional pilgrimages to the drop zone. However, I truly enjoy staying in the aircraft and have more than 1,900 hours. Now what can I do next?

I suppose before I sign off I should give you some pearls of wisdom.

One issue that keeps recurring is that I receive parachutes so far out of adjustment that you could fall out of them if you had to bail out. Remember, don't leave home (I mean your aircraft) without it. Falling out of your parachute harness is another sign of a very bad day. Please have your parachute checked by your rigger for proper fit. He or she needs to know your height and weight. Suggest that the

webbing be hand-tacked in place once it's adjusted properly to prevent slippage as you go about taking it on and off before and after each flight. If you don't visit your rigger in person, maybe sending a picture of you with your parachute on will help him or her properly adjust it.

Another issue I often see in my shop is the rip cord protector flap being bent from people getting in or out of their aircraft. Please do not force yourself into or out of your cockpit. If you are hanging up on something like your seat back or the turtle-deck, alter the way you enter or exit your aircraft. Don't be the proverbial bull in the china shop. This could dislodge your rip cord pins and accidentally open your parachute container, requiring a repack. Even more interesting and exciting—imagine what could happen if it inflates in strong winds. That's why it's so important to check the security of your rip cord pins *every time* you put your parachute on.

Enough for now. I need to start thinking about packing my shorts and sunscreen and deciding on a beer or mai tai. Remember, I'll still be doing most of what I did before, but *no more packing and no 9-5 sign on my door*. I welcome your comments and questions. Fly safely.

IAC

INTERACTIVE | EDUCATIONAL | MOBILE

EAA Webinars

What would you like to learn?

EAA offers a series of **free** live webinars moderated and presented by aviation experts on a variety of topics.

Register today!
EAA.org/webinars



EAA Webinars are supported by 

 



AEROBATICS
Basic through Unlimited
Competition & Sport
Safety & Proficiency
Basic & Advanced Spins

MAINTENANCE FACILITIES
We specialize in
Fabric
Tailwheel
Aerobatic Aircraft Repair

**Pitts S-2B
Super Decathlon
Citabria**

Owned and operated by Debbie Rihn-Harvey