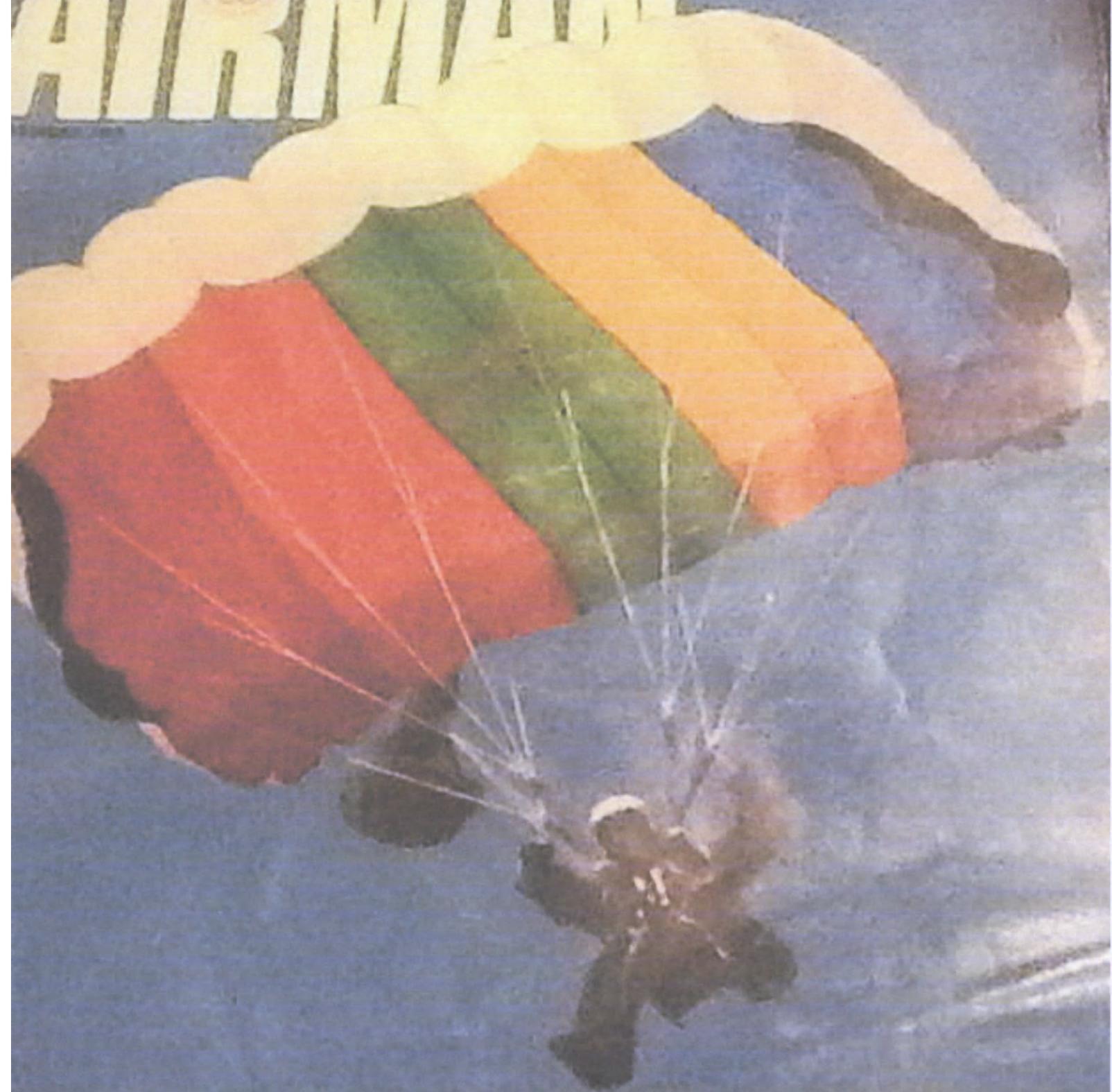
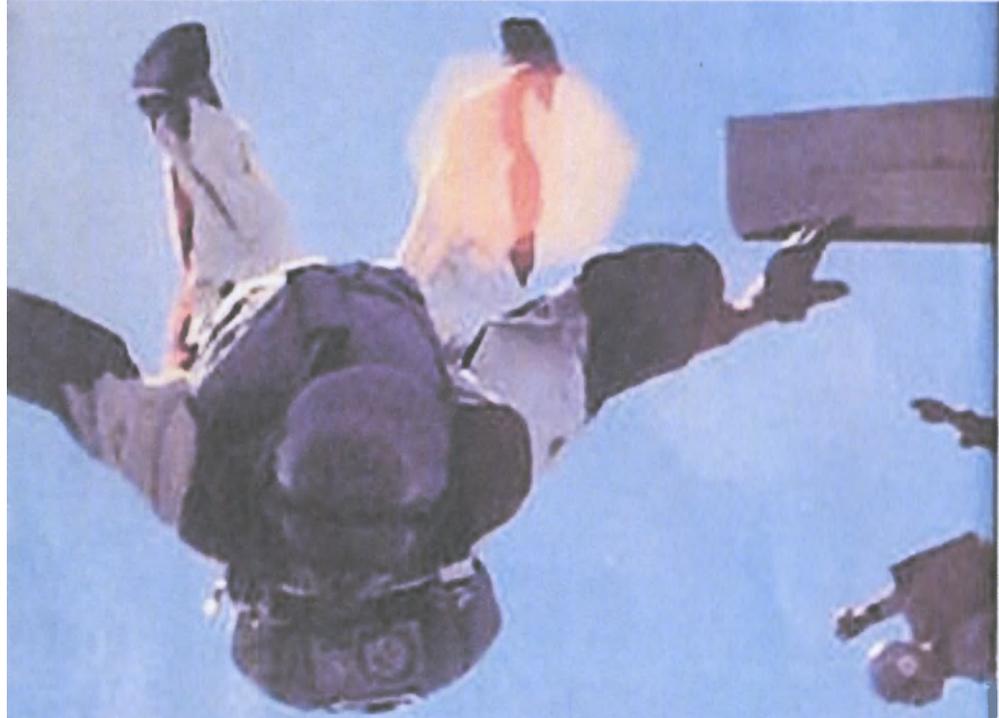


AIRMAN



Jumpfest



Jumpfest!

Presented by TDG, BILL STEPHENSON, AAYB



Waltz out for five feet deep.
It's straight down from there—heels, a knee and a
butt. And nothing between you and the ground but
a piece of wood that can be either your salvation or
your doom.
People who get nosebleeds climbing a flight of
stairs start to look for that kind of excitement. You'd
think so.
Earlier this year, more than 400 jumpers, men and



Jumpfest!

photos by SSgt. BILL STEPHENSON, AAVS



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atch out for that first step.

It's straight down from there—nearly a mile and a half. And nothing between you and the good earth but a piece of cloth that can be either your salvation or your shroud.

People who get nosebleeds climbing a flight of stairs don't look for that kind of excitement, but a lot of others do.

Earlier this year, more than 400 jumpers, men and



women, converged on Hurlburt Field, Fla., for the 1976 World Invitational Military Jumpfest. There were 114 four-member teams from Air Force, Army, and Navy active, reserve, and guard units, as well as the Air Force Academy in the two-day competition.

Sponsored by Hurlburt's 1st Special Operations Wing and conducted under the watchful eye of the wing's combat control team, the jumpfest was first held in 1970

with 150 jumpers as a fund-raising event for the local prisoner-of-war and missing-in-action effort.

The objective of the annual event now is to promote better community relations by demonstrating the mission of the participating units, inspire inter- and intraservice cooperation by bringing military airborne units together to discuss and demonstrate new employment techniques and equipment, and display the abilities of Air Force

parachuting units.

Military jumpers competed in a four-man static line accuracy jump and a four-man accuracy and demonstration jump.

In the static line competition, each team jumps from 1,500 feet. The target is a six-inch disc in the center of a 60-foot circular pit.

"After landing, you have to hurry to beat the clock," said CMSgt Tony Gargano, technical advisor to the winning 3613th Combat Crew Training Squadron team based at



Homestead, Fla.

Once the jumper's body touches the ground, the stopwatch is started by the judges and it isn't stopped until any portion of the jumper's body touches the disc. Our team had a combined time of less than 30 seconds.

The free-fall competition is divided into two categories: accuracy and demonstration. In the accuracy category each team jumped from 4,000 feet with the

lowest team member opening no lower than 2,500 feet. A disc less than four inches in diameter was the objective. A Hurlburt combat control team took first place, landing a combined total of only 3.78 meters from the disc. Three jumpers tied for first place in individual honors by landing directly on the disc.

In the free-fall demonstration event, teams jumped from 7,500 feet with the lowest man opening no lower than 2,500 feet. Scoring

was based on execution, originality, and beauty of the jump. A combined Air Force/Navy team took this one.

SSgt Bill Stephenson, an Aerospace Audiovisual Service photographer, followed the Air Force Academy team down in a demonstration jump from one of the C-7A *Caribou* aircraft used by the competitors.

"I've been actively jumping for about 2½ years," said Stephenson. "I started with one of the military



sport club; while at Pope AFB N.C. and since then have made 230 jumps

The camera I used while shooting the Academy team is a motorized Nikon, custom-mounted by the AAVS shop to a Bell helmet. The camera is triggered by a micro-switch molded into a mouthpiece. All I had to do to take a shot was bite

"I attempted to show the Academy team building a star, which is formed by two jumpers—called the base man and the pin man—linking hands, followed by the entrance of other jumpers into the formation. What the jumper is actually doing is lying his body in relation to the others. An individual jumper attempting to enter the star will set up a glide when he is about 100 feet from the star. About 10 feet away, he flares his body and gently enters the formation. I stress the word 'gently' because the star



is very fragile and the least bit of imbalance will cause the formation to break up.

Parachutists are fragile, too, as evidenced by the occasional jumper-turned-reluctant-spectator grounded with a broken arm or leg.

But as soon as they mend, they'll be back in the air, taking that long step down to earth. ☺

