

Bungee jumper recalls thrills

From a platform 140 feet in the air, the Nebraska State Fair Park looks like a moving playground, complete with miniature cars, people and toys.

When jumping off the platform, the State Fair Park looks like a wild blur.

Secretary of State Allen Beermann and members of the local media saw the blur and felt the excitement Friday while bungee jumping at the Nebraska State Fair Celebrity Day.

Beermann, the first secretary of state in the U.S. to bungee jump, said the experience was a rush, but questioned his own sanity for participating in the jump.

"This is not the act of a rational person," he said.

Beermann's less-than-graceful leap inspired me to go through with a jump of my own.

The invitation came to me last week. With much reservation and hesitation, I accepted the offer.

I had never bungee jumped or seen it done, so I didn't think much about it — until I saw the height of the crane.

The crane looked mammoth as it towered over the tiny air mattress. The employee from Bungee Masters who rides up with customers said the crane was lined up perfectly with the mattress — he thought.

After being strapped by the waist and chest, I was ready to take the plunge. After reaching the crane's top, I knew there was no backing out. After all, how else would I get back to the ground but jump?

"Three... two... one... Bungee...," the man said.

And I jumped. As I plummeted through the air, I wondered what had possessed me to do it. Was it the fame gained by jumping during Celebrity Day?

Hardly. There was no huge fan club there to watch me fall. And there were no people seeking autographs.

I was convinced it was complete stupidity, and I was probably going to die. And then, out of nowhere, came salvation. The bungee cord



Kiley Timperley/DN

Jeff Zeleny, Daily Nebraskan staffer, bungee jumps during the celebrity jumping contest Friday at the Nebraska State Fair. Various media personalities participated in the event.

took hold and propelled me back into the air.

And the real fun began. The six bounces that followed were filled with sheer excitement, much to my surprise.

Springing through the air yields the best possible view of the State Fair. I could see the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Exposition Building, Agricultural Hall and the 4-H building from a birds' perspective.

After I reached the ground, the experience was not traumatic like I once thought. My last will and tes-

tament I wrote before my jump turned out to be unnecessary.

If you are looking for a thrill, the opportunity to jump continues through Sunday at State Fair Park. A chest-harnessed jump costs \$45. For only \$10 more, you can leap with the cord strapped to your ankle.

The proper attire is a must when performing the jump.

Beermann offered this advice after his jump: "You wonder if you should have worn a diaper."

—Jeff Zeleny

Garth's guitarist digs touring, life with star

By Jill O'Brien
Senior Reporter

When guitarist James Garver, a native of Concordia, Kan., moved to Nashville, Tenn., to write songs, he had no idea he would end up collaborating with Garth Brooks.

Garver, the first band member Brooks hired on the road to fame, celebrates his 36th birthday today, the same day Brooks headlines the sold-out 7:30 p.m. show at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

During a phone interview from his home in California, Garver talked about the night he met Brooks.

"I was at a 'Writer's Night' at the Bluebird Cafe and Garth got up and I think he did about three songs," Garver said.

"About the middle of the second song, I poked my buddy in the ribs and said, 'Man, this guy is good.' I was blown away, especially by his songwriting ability."

After the show, Garver was introduced to Brooks and they started talking about song lyrics and basketball, he said.

"Garth worked in a boot store in town and wasn't signed with any label, yet," he said.

"I went out that following Saturday and bought a pair of boots from him and we talked an hour and a half. He was telling me he was putting a band together."

At first, Garver declined Brooks' invitation to join his group.

"I was already in another band, but a couple weeks later I called Garth back and told him I was ready for a change," he said.

"He came over to the house and auditioned me vocally and instrumentally. Pretty much from there he told me I was hired," he said.

Garver introduced Brooks to Steve McClure, a steel guitarist he played with in the band Boogie Grass Fever.

McClure, also a transplanted Kansan, brought in drummer Mike Palmer, and the rest is record history.

"Our first date with Garth was in Florida, 1989, Memorial Weekend," he said.

"At that time, he told us, 'I don't know how much we're going to be working, guys,' and we were out maybe three or four weeks and dates started picking up and we were non-stop," Garver said.

"We didn't get our first break until '92. We had no idea of the impact

Garth Brooks had become to the media and television."

While Brooks informed the band members about the numerous concert sell-outs and the rising record sales, most of the time the news went in one ear and out the other, Garver said.

"When you're on the road, you don't have time to pay attention to this stuff, so, it was kind of a shock to all of us," he said.

Brooks, however, wasn't so shocked by the success, he said.

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Garth sold out three shows in Texas Stadium, which is unbelievable. It seats 70,000 people.

—Garver
guitarist

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"He knew," Garver said. "Garth Brooks is a man — I've never met anyone like him — that can take care of everything that goes on in his whole world. He takes care of almost every business detail, everything that happens on the road, everything that happens in the band."

The organization Brooks put together is like a ball team with excellent teamwork, Garver said.

Normally, 50 to 85 crew members are required to help produce a large stadium show. Brooks works with only 15. His total entourage is 35 people.

That teamwork will be put to the test in about three weeks, when Brooks and the band do a live video shoot in Dallas, Garver said.

"Garth sold out three shows in Texas Stadium, which is unbelievable," he said. "It seats 70,000 people."

Although Garver never sold out a stadium on his own, he used to pack a few nightclubs when he toured with Boogie Grass Fever, he said.

Formed in 1982, the band concentrated mainly on Top-40 country tunes and traveled the nightclub circuit in Oklahoma, Wyoming, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska, he said.

"We used to play in Lincoln a lot... five or six clubs around town... I played with Garth there about two

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Comic book heroes join flood relief effort

By Anne Steyer
Senior Reporter

Midwest flood victims will be thanking some superheroes later this month when relief comes their way via a comic book.

Ultraverse Comics joins the American Red Cross with the release of "Flood Relief."

Shawn White, direct sales coordinator for Malibu Comics, Ultraverse's publishing company, said the comic will be available to the public through a mail-order campaign. Advertisements for the comic book will include a coupon and a mailing address, White said.

The comic will cost \$5, he said, and all proceeds go to flood relief through the Red Cross.

John Riley, head of Malibu marketing and sales, said the story is set in the Midwest, where there has been no rain for a year and people's crops are dying.

A little girl named LeeAnn discovers and unwittingly activates "agricultural wetwear," a device designed by Ultratech to manipulate nature.

The device gives LeeAnn power. After hearing her father pray for rain, she too wishes for rain and a little water droplet comes alive. The more it rains, the more it grows.

Despite the little girl's goodness, the droplet grows hungrier and hungrier for power and becomes a nasty villain named Flood. It thrives on water — the more water, the more powerful

it becomes.

The land that was once dry becomes flooded.

The comic features characters from Malibu's new Ultraverse universe, including Prime, Zip-Zap, Hardcase and Prototype.

Prototype, another creation of the Ultratech Company, visits the flood scene in order to retrieve the device that created Flood. His interests are corporate, but the other characters get involved in order to help Flood's victims.

Riley said the comic will feature a great battle with Flood, but it won't be violent in nature.

"The final face-off with Flood is pretty interesting," he said, "as these characters try to figure out how to stop it."

White said the comic would not feature any specific landmarks affected by this summer's floods, such as specific cities or towns.

"We're doing it because of the flood, because we wanted to help flood victims, but we didn't want to misrepresent places we've never been," he said.

Riley said one of Malibu's chief editors brought the idea up in an executive meeting, proposing initially to do something to help comic shops affected by the flood.

"That was really the genesis of the whole project," Riley said.

The next step was contacting Des Moines City Hall, to find out the best relief contact, he



James Mehling/DN

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