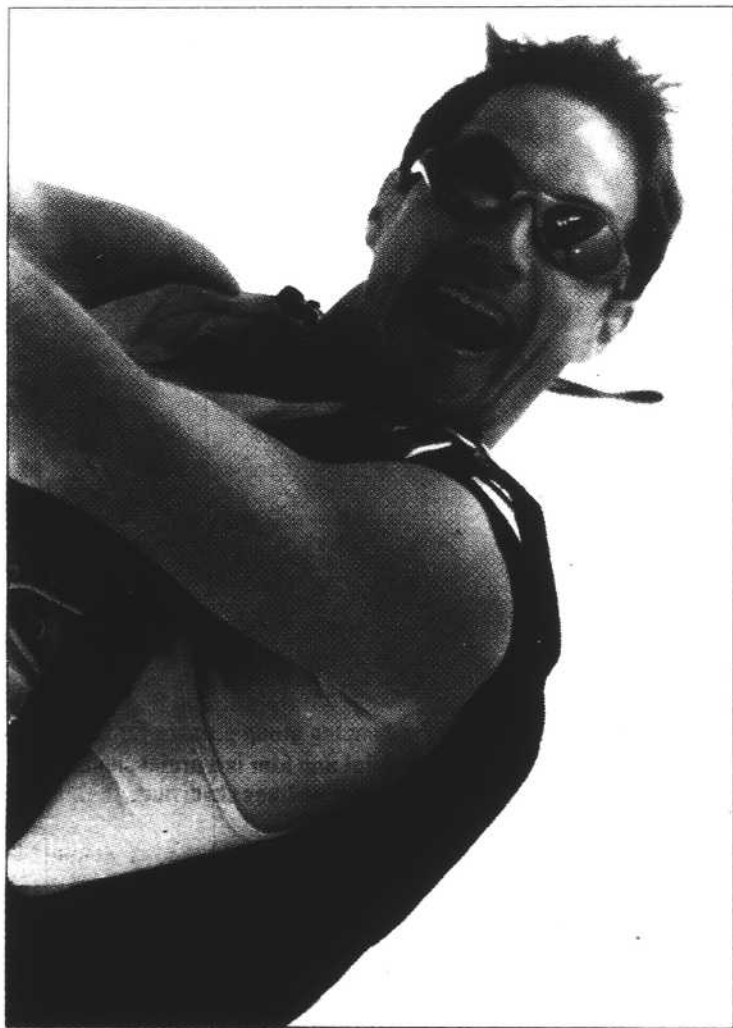


The Sky's the Lim



Parachute club works on improving sport's unsafe image

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Crammed into a five-person Cessna plane, four sky divers and a pilot slowly leave the runway and ascend to 8000 feet — a common altitude for a parachute jump.

As the plane begins climbing, the jumpers, each with 30- to 60-pound parachute packs on their backs, begin to get anxious.

They orally rehearse where each person will stand and who will jump first. The mission of this jump is a solo free fall.

The pilot announces the plane will be in the drop zone in one minute. Last minute preparations are made, and then the hatch door opens.

There is no turning back.

Out they go, falling at nearly 120 mph, or 160 feet per second.

"It's equivalent to going down the highway at 100 mph and then standing up in the back of a truck," said

Lonnie Anderson of Lincoln, who has made more than 370 jumps. "It's really loud. It's just something you've never experienced before."

After 30 seconds of free fall, the divers have fallen to 5,000 to 5,500 feet. This is when the parachutes open and divers float safely to the ground.

Each weekend, 40 to 50 sky diving enthusiasts go through similar situations at either the Weeping Water or Crete Municipal Airports — the respective drop zones for the Lincoln Sport Parachute Club and Crete Skydiving Center, Inc.

Improved safety, an adrenaline rush and camaraderie were just some of the reasons Lincoln residents gave for wanting to free fall, tandem jump or formation fly out of an airplane.

Coming Together

While sky diving appears to be a

sport for only crazy people, it's actually for people of all ages and walks of life, said Tracy Janousek, the master rigger for the Lincoln Sport Parachute Club.

Parachuting and sky diving are Janousek's life. The 34-year-old owns and operates Lincoln Parachute and Balloon Loft. His father, Marion "Shorty" Janousek, was the founder of the Lincoln Sport Parachute Club in 1959.

Tracy seems to have followed in his father's jumping shoes.

But it wasn't always that way.

When Janousek was younger, even he thought his sky diving parents were nuts. But 1,146 jumps later, Janousek no longer feels that way.

"I used to think they were crazy until I left the plane for my first jump," Janousek said. "Now I understand. It's a blast. It's extremely excit-

