

DareMe: Making the Jump



When the door of the Cessna 182 whipped open at 10,000 feet above ground, the cold rush of air snapped me into reality. Soon I'd be freefalling at close to 120 mph before a nylon parachute would deploy and save me from gravity's grasp. That inescapable truth was made even more clear when Sampson Jacobs, a fellow jumper and videographer (and Motif staffer), leapt out of the small aircraft. One moment, he was turning around to give the thumbs up and an adrenaline-infused hoot. In the next, he was lost to the clouds.

I started to breathe heavier.

Dean O'Flaherty, a masterful instructor and owner of Boston Skydive Center, adjusted my goggles so they'd fit comfortably on my face. He then scooted us toward the opening. I struggled to place my long legs on the small metal platform outfitted just under the right wing. I couldn't help but think they looked like Muppet appendages flapping in the 80 mph wind.

"When we leave the aircraft, arch your back, kick your feet back toward me - like a banana," he shouted to me as the wind rattled throughout the airplane's small cavity. "And remember to keep your chin up and smile for the pictures."

At this time, I was not thinking about being photogenic. I was thinking about how to pace my heart so it didn't explode mid-air. While working in the emergency department the night before, I googled "likelihood of cardiac arrest while skydiving." It was a moment of hypochondria, but I wanted to know the risks involved with the sport. According to my quick research, the danger of injury is very, very low. I reminded myself of these statistics as Dean tugged on the rigging that would keep us afloat during our aerial adventure. I knew I was in good hands as my jumping partner has logged over 23,000 jumps since he first started in his native UK at the age of 18.

One precise shove was all it took for us to be out in the open. As my cheeks filled with air, Dean reminded me to smile and take in the view. After 45 seconds of soaring through the atmosphere, the parachute ripped open. I felt a reassuring tug of my harness on my limbs and suddenly there was soundless peace. It was a beautifully clear day so we could see the tops of Boston, Providence and Newport. Dean handed the reigns over to glide us to the left and to the right. I was even instructed on how to slow our downward trajectory. The sunlight was glistening off water bodies

surrounding springtime greenery.

With the ground fast approaching, Dean instructed me to kick up my legs. We landed with ease. Safety in a grassy field, he unclipped my harness, and I heard the whoops from my fellow jumpers sitting near the company's small center. "It's absolutely amazing after you get over the sheer terror," joked Bruce Allen, one of my fellow jumpers (and Motif staffer). "I knew I had to do this. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience."