



Rules

Search Forums for

Forums: Skydiving: Skydiving History & Trivia: 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983



« < 1 2 > » [View All](#)

Thread Options

rapter (D 11825)	25 years ago today, January 15, 1983	Can't Post
Jan 14, 2008, 9:30 PM Post #1 of 33 (7404 views) Copy Shortcut	On this day Joe Svec was killed while filming "The Right Stuff" at California-City. He was an early El Capitan jumper, Hollywood stuntman, and War hero, Served In Vietnam with the Special Forces and earned 7 Purple Hearts.	

pchapman (D 1014)	Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]	Can't Post
Jan 14, 2008, 10:05 PM Post #2 of 33 (7361 views) Copy Shortcut	How did it happen? It was before my time but I got the impression he was a big name jumper, maybe a USPA director or something, so it was a big deal when he went in?	

wmw999 (D 6296)	Re: [pchapman] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]	Can't Post
Jan 15, 2008, 4:46 AM Post #3 of 33 (7331 views) Copy Shortcut	For me he was a local; he'd started in Houston. Yes, he was either a conference or national director (I think national). Had a cartoon that ran regularly in Parachutist. I didn't know how many purple hearts he'd earned, though. That's a lot.	
	As far as how it happened, I'm sure others know more than I do, but my understanding was that it was on an ejection jump, he had trouble with the seat.	
	Wendy W.	
	(This post was edited by wmw999 on Jan 15, 2008, 4:47 AM)	

howardwhite (C 3896)	Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]	Can't Post
Jan 15, 2008, 4:48 AM Post #4 of 33 (7328 views) Copy Shortcut	Not to mention USPA Board member, talented artist/cartoonist, funny man and really nice guy. I'll try to find and post a couple of typical Svec cartoons in his memory.	

SkydiveJack (D 6486)	Re: [wmw999] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]	Can't Post
Jan 15, 2008, 6:32 AM Post #5 of 33 (7296 views) Copy Shortcut	<p>In reply to:</p> <p>As far as how it happened, I'm sure others know more than I do, but my understanding was that it was on an ejection jump, he had trouble with the seat.</p>	

Log In:

Username:

Password:

Remember me:

[Register](#)

[Lost Password?](#)

BOOST YOUR CELL SIGNAL AT HOME

weBoost Home 4G cellular signal booster

Shop now

amazon

Wendy W.

It wasn't a real ejection seat. I saw Joe and his crew in Spaceland when they first started filming. He was doing a scene for the movie 'The Right Stuff'. It was a scene where Chuck Yeager had to eject from an F-104 during a high altitude test flight. During the actual ejection Yeager's helmet somehow hit the bottom of the seat, broke the face shield and got rocket propellant residue on his face, burning him.

Joe had a silver jumpsuit made to look like a space suit and a space helmet that actually connected to a metal ring around the top of the suit, just like an early Mercury astronaut. He had a black fiberglass "ejection seat" that he would exit with, holding two handles on each side and releasing it for the next part of the shot. The seat had an AAD and a small parachute.

The thing that apparently got Joe was the small smoke canister attached to the helmet. It was there to simulate smoke trailing in freefall from Yeager's burning helmet after smashing into the rocket motor on the actual ejection seat. I saw Joe landing once with the smoke still burning and he was coughing and choking under canopy. He could hardly see to land and his film crew had trouble getting the helmet off his head.

Well after a few days filming in Spaceland they relocated out west to (I think) Utah. They needed more cloud cover for the background of the shot, or something like that. The next day or so Joe just went in with a no pull. I think the conclusion was that during freefall the smoke got into the helmet and incapacitated him. He wasn't jumping an AAD.

B.J. Worth ended up doing the jumps for the movie. In the credits at the end they say something like 'In Memory of Joe Svec'. The whole thing was a real shame. He was a great guy.



wmw999 (D 6296)

Jan 15, 2008, 7:28 AM
Post #6 of 33 (7269 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [SkydiveJack] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983

Can't Post

[\[In reply to\]](#)

Yeah, I know you were at Spaceland; giving an AFF ICC. I was in it 😊.

I didn't remember the details, but I do remember Linda coming to the edge of the porch on the trailer to tell us.

Joe was the kind of inherent "cool" that many want to be. He didn't try for it, and he didn't posture. He just was.

Wendy W.

howardwhite (C 3896)

Jan 15, 2008, 8:55 AM
Post #7 of 33 (7233 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [howardwhite] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983

Can't Post

[\[In reply to\]](#)

Here are a couple of .jpg images of a [Parachutist](#) story (Aug. '80) by Joe about "The El Cap Pro-Am Invitational."

A little fuzzy because of compression required to post them; hope they're still readable.

Typical Svec humor.

HW

Attachments: [Svec1.jpg](#) (139 KB)

[Svec2.jpg](#) (179 KB)

ficus (D 29186)

Jan 15, 2008, 9:28 AM
Post #8 of 33 (7216 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [howardwhite] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983

Can't Post

[\[In reply to\]](#)

In reply to:

Here are a couple of .jpg images of a [Parachutist](#) story (Aug. '80) by Joe about "The El Cap Pro-Am Invitational."

"The bear seemed to understand, but needless to say we don't."

This was in Parachutist? I guess the times have changed indeed.

billabx (D 9546)

Jan 15, 2008, 10:28 AM
 Post #9 of 33 (7201 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

I didn't know Joe very well, but while I was living in Louisiana working in the oil business, I would occasionally have the chance to go to Spaceland for a boogie. I remember going to one not too long before Joe died where he and Ron Mills were organizing loads. I wasn't particularly well-known at Spaceland (or anywhere else for that matter), but had jumped with Ron at a few events in Florida. It was about the most fun I ever had at an event. After the first load with them I would see Joe walking around with a piece of paper between loads I would nod my head, and the next thing I knew I was on a great skydive. (This photo is one of those skydives. I still keep it on the wall above my desk.) I'm glad I met him, and those that knew him well were very lucky.

Bill

(This post was [edited](#) by billabx on Jan 15, 2008, 10:29 AM)

Attachments:  Photograph001.jpg (224 KB)

fastphil (D 5801)

Jan 15, 2008, 10:46 AM
 Post #10 of 33 (7190 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [wmw999] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

I, too, was at Spaceland jumping in that AFF ICC. We had been making our qualifying jumps during the week, sharing the DZ with the Right Stuff crew. A weatherfront had come through and cleared the skies so the film crew headed west to find cloudy skies. I remember too, Linda coming out with the news, stunning everyone.

Joe was an excellent organizer, hackey player, jumper and all around good guy. A look at his legs gave indication of how bad he was shot up in Viet Nam. Of all my jump buddies, Joe was the most bullet proof, the last you'd guess would bounce. RIP Joe...

 **quade** (D 22635)

Moderator
 Jan 15, 2008, 3:43 PM
 Post #11 of 33 (7127 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Thank you for posting this.

fastphil (D 5801)

Jan 15, 2008, 5:27 PM
 Post #12 of 33 (7100 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Attachments:  Joe.jpg (143 KB)

rapter (D 11825)

Jan 15, 2008, 7:20 PM
 Post #13 of 33 (7072 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [wmw999] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

In reply to:

Had a cartoon that ran regularly in Parachutist..

I loved the cartoon of the jumper talking to his dog, asking can't all girls be like the dog, I have it somewhere, been looking all day for it.

Its a NF-104 that Yager was flying when the seat smacked him in the face, the oxygen caught fire,

"Ejecting in his full pressure suit (the first time an ejection was attempted with such a suit), Yeager and the seat parted company and he began his fall. Somehow when the chute deployed the seat became entangled in the parachute lines. When the chute popped, the seat smashed through Yeager's helmet visor. There was still residual fire (solid rocket propellant) in the seat rocket motors and that set fire to the pure oxygen still flowing in Yeager's helmet. Yeager's face was in the middle of a goddamn inferno. Choking to death on the smoke and stench from his own burning flesh, Yeager somehow managed to push up what was left of his visor and that shut off the oxygen supply. "

The story goes that Yeager walked up to a farmer who was plowing and scared the crap out of the farmer because of the sight of his burned face.

http://www.check-six.com/...-104A_crash_site.htm

Here's the scene where Joe Svec was killed in the Right Stuff, For a second you can see Cal-Citys C-206 where he jumped from
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRSbYXutRE>

(This post was edited by rapter on Jan 15, 2008, 8:15 PM)

zoobrothertom (D 9397)

Jan 15, 2008, 7:24 PM

Post #14 of 33 (7070 views)

[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)]

Can't Post

I remember that one, too. Don't have a copy though. You don't know he's talking to his dog until the last frame. 😊

howardwhite (C 3896)

Jan 16, 2008, 7:46 AM

Post #15 of 33 (6996 views)

[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [zoobrothertom] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)]

Can't Post

Here's the dog cartoon, along with another (which seems equally pertinent today.) And Carl Boenish's picture of Joe's "test jump" from El Cap July 1, 1980, before an audience of Fish and Wildlife people, resulting in the "legalization" of jumps starting a month later.

Finally, here's the text of Bill Ottley's obit in the March, 1983, [Parachutist](#).

HW

On Friday, Jan. 14, Joe Svec, 35, secretary of the United States Parachute Association, was killed in a tragic skydiving accident during filming of a stunt sequence for "The Right Stuff," a film version of Tom Wolfe's best-selling novel about test pilots and astronauts.

Skydiving cameraman Rande Deluca of Big Sky Films was jumping with Svec at the time, and reported seeing no problems. Deluca quit filming at approximately 3500 feet and turned and tracked away to open a distance away from and above where Svec planned to open. Svec was seen by Doc Johnson, an experienced jumper, to turn face-to-earth (he had been facing upward, flying on his back during the filming sequence) and fall flat and stable until impact. Despite very careful analysis and medical tests, no explanation has been found for the accident.

The sequence being filmed depicts famed test pilot Chuck Yeager (first man to break the sound barrier) ejecting from an experimental aircraft. During the fatal jump, however, Svec was wearing no particularly cumbersome or otherwise "odd" gear (except perhaps his helmet) which might have inhibited his movements or reactions.

Svec had achieved meteoric success during his six years as a skydiver and USPA Board member. He began as a well-known figure in the Houston area, at the Spaceland Center and other Texas drop zones. He was elected as a write-in candidate for Conference Director in 1978 and published the very popular Southwest Swooper newsletter, which featured "Don DePloy" who had an opinion about almost every subject in the skydiving world, cleverly drawn and cleverly written. Svec became a National Director in 1980 (when Eric Pehrson succeeded him in the Conference Director slot) and was elected USPA's secretary that same year. RW meet director of the National Championships in 1980, Svec also competed on

various teams and served as Leader of the U.S. National Skydiving Team which won gold medals "across the board" at the World Meet in Zephyrhills in 1981. As his friends would tell you, Joe Svec was truly a "Renaissance man," with a tremendous collection of skills and achievements. Little known, for example, was his generosity: he funded other people's skydiving teams when they ran out of money in order to permit them to compete in the Nationals and in world competitions. He was a true war hero—he held some sort of record as Vietnam's luckiest combat veteran, having returned to combat repeatedly (with and without the Army's permission) after having acquired seven Purple Hearts that the government knew about and a total of more than 20 battle wounds. He served with the Special Forces in their most secret and difficult assignments, where he operated almost exclusively behind the enemy lines for months at a time.

When finally his wounds got to him, he was MED-EVAC'ed to Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu, where he stayed after his recovery and became a successful political cartoonist for the Honolulu Star Bulletin. His interest in politics and his wry humor combined to help him create a series of memorable cartoons and satirical articles, some of which appeared in the pages of PARACHUTIST.

Joe was principally involved in making El Capitan jumping legal (briefly, in 1980) and led 'the first Park Service-approved jump off the famed cliff. Perhaps one of his greatest disappointments was when a short time later actions by others caused Yosemite's policy to declare cliff jumping out of bounds. More recently Svec became a stunt jumper for the "Fall Guy" television show and this led directly to his commitment to "stand in" for one of the actors in the dangerous sequences to be filmed for the cinema version of Wolfe's best-seller.

Joe was buried by family and friends in a somber ceremony on a wind-swept afternoon on Tuesday, Jan. 18 in Houston, TX. USPA President Larry Bagley led a delegation of USPA officials who joined with hundreds of friends at the ceremony in the cemetery chapel. "This is one of the biggest services we've ever had," was the comment of one of the officials present.

Joe Svec had a lot of friends.
—William H. Ottley

Attachments:  Svec dog.jpg (164 KB)

 Svec gone.jpg (155 KB)

 Svec El Cap.jpg (126 KB)

fastphil (D 5801)

Jan 16, 2008, 12:25 PM
Post #16 of 33 (6936 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [howardwhite] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983
[In reply to]

Can't Post

I've thought of him many times over the years, Joe was controversial, the kind of guy you love to hate. Joe was an innovator and natural leader, capable of not only pushing himself to new heights, but of pushing the entire DZ, and eventually the entire sport, to new heights. I was not present when Joe died and I did not attend his funeral, and I have always left a small spot in my reality for Joe to show back up some day.

The "Gone With The Wind" cartoon that howardwhite posted was so entirely true to Spaceland at that time that I (and probably a few others (Wendy?)) can still put names on the characters. Some of the comments were nearly quotes and some of the real lifers thought it not so funny. Joe not only had his own view of the world, to a certain extent he made his own world, and allowed the rest of us to join him in it...

wmw999 (D 6296)

Jan 16, 2008, 1:21 PM
Post #17 of 33 (6918 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [fastphil] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]

Can't Post

Quote:

can still put names on the characters

Note to all: I am **not** the girl in the third frame down on the right! 🌍

Wendy W.

fastphil (D 5801)

Jan 16, 2008, 1:42 PM

Re: [wmw999] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [In reply to]

Can't Post

Post #18 of 33 (6908 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Sorry Wendy, I only meant that you might remember them, not that you were one of them (or at least, not that one). Forgive me, please...

wmw999 (D 6296) Re: [fastphil] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Jan 16, 2008, 2:03 PM
 Post #19 of 33 (6899 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

No worries -- if I'd thought you had meant that, it would have been "note to Phil" 😊

But I'll keep opinions to myself to protect both my hazy memory, and the potentially innocent, and the dead... I remember the cartoon when it was new, and yeah, there were some faces in there 😊

Wendy W.

PackingMat (D License) Re: [howardwhite] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**


Jan 25, 2008, 8:12 PM
 Post #20 of 33 (6726 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Gawd, I remember seeing those cartoons in old Canparas...

fastphil (D 5801) Re: [rapter] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Jan 14, 2009, 5:51 AM
 Post #21 of 33 (6362 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

Here's another pic of Joe. Looks like Kathy is mediating a discussion of opposing viewpoints...

Attachments:  [joe kat carl.JPG \(43.2 KB\)](#)

jaymundo (D 22179) Re: [fastphil] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Jan 18, 2009, 4:37 AM
 Post #22 of 33 (6187 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)




Yes, Joe had a very "otherworldly " aire about him, and was quite friendly to my wife and I. We had a wake/party in his honor in Lafayette for him that was completely out of hand, at Sonny Gros' house. So many came that we "extended" the gumbo by adding Bonz dog buisquits and stirring them in till they disolved. As usual there was a song composed for Joe. I watched the movie not long ago, and thought of him. He was a great guy.

wmw999 (D 6296) Re: [jaymundo] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Jan 18, 2009, 7:25 AM
 Post #23 of 33 (6156 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

I got some copies of some of Joe's cartoons from Ed Naylor not long ago, and thought this would be about the right time to post them.

Wendy W.

Attachments:  [Svec on Skydiving.JPG \(188 KB\)](#)
 [Svec Cartoon 1.JPG \(89.4 KB\)](#)
 [Svec Cartoon 2.JPG \(93.2 KB\)](#)

fastphil (D 5801) Re: [jaymundo] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In reply to](#)] **Can't Post**

Jan 19, 2009, 2:38 PM
 Post #24 of 33 (6048 views)
[Copy Shortcut](#)

You Louisiana guys always did know how to have fun.

Once the Spaceland management, knowing they were the only show in town with big aircraft, told us to stop our petty bitchin' about jump prices or go jump

elsewhere. By the next weekend Joe had lined up a new DZ, complete with cows, dirt runways, local law enforcement and best of all, a lodestar. We called the place "Cow Palace", and jumped there the next couple of weekends (see pic)

Attachments:  cow_palace.JPG (44.7 KB)

howardwhite (C 3896)

Jan 19, 2009, 4:28 PM

Post #25 of 33 (6031 views)


[Copy Shortcut](#)

Re: [fastphil] 25 years ago today, January 15, 1983 [[In](#) [reply to](#)]

Can't Post

I hate to see those old faded pictures.
Isn't this one prettier?

HW

Attachments:  cow_palace.jpg (68.4 KB)

« < 1 2 > » [View All](#)

Forums : [Skydiving](#) : [Skydiving History & Trivia](#)

[Thread Options](#)

Skydiving History & Trivia

Search this forum for All words

[\(options\)](#)

[Help](#) [About Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Privacy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Contact Us](#) [Write for Us](#)

© 2015 D4DR Media - All rights reserved

[facebook](#) [twitter](#)