

## **Jump School at Fort Benning**

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Any of you guys go to jump school at Ft. Benning?

I was perfectly happy with the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley when a fellow with a crazed look in his eyes came around asking for volunteers for the airborne. Against my better judgment, I let a friend named Sims talk me into doing something you absolutely never do in the Army - volunteer!

A few weeks later I found myself, minus Sims who had failed the PT test, at scenic Fort Benning, the "Paris" of the south. It was August, and the temperature was around 150 degrees with humidity to match. My group was met by a person I shall call SFC Blood and Guts King, undoubtedly the meanest man to ever live. Next to him, Atelier the Hun acted like a kindergarten student.

One of the first things we learned was that when you jump, several things can happen, and only one of them is good. You can have a "Barber's Pole." This is when your lines tangle up behind your head and you have to cut away your main chute and pull your reserve. Then there's the "Horseshoe" when, somehow, your chute gets wrapped around you. You pull your reserve immediately, without cutting away your main chute. A "Mae West" or "Blown Periphery" is when your canopy turns partially inside out by passing through some of your lines, and a "Jumper-In-Tow" is when your static line doesn't disconnect and you are being dragged along in the wild blue yonder. The dreaded "Streamer" is when your chute is whistling in the wind above you, and Mother Earth is coming up fast. You cut away, and pull your reserve if you have time. And of course, there's the "Full Canopy" when assuming you don't break your arm or leg, everything goes as planned.

After SFC King had summed these actions up, I fully expected to be dead within hours, and cursed Sims under my breath. After a break for the delicious food served in mess halls back then, they marched us to a classroom where we were told other trifles about parachuting. Minor items such as high wind at drop zones, landing in water and trees, hitting high voltage power lines and buildings, and that, in addition to all this, we would be expected to fight the enemy if we landed in one piece. It was about this time I knew my mother had raised a fool.

The ground week was over. Tower week was over, and there was only one thing left to do: march into the aircraft and accept Jesus Christ as my savior.

We crowded onto the plane and raced down the runway and become airborne. When we reached the DZ, I found myself watching a green light while running to the door with the jumpmaster yelling, "Go! Go! Go! Go!"

Suddenly, there was a strange quiet. I tried to look up, but couldn't "Barber's Pole" I thought, and cursed Sims out loud. I was ready to cut away when all of the sudden, there it was - the full canopy of a T-10 parachute. God, what a beautiful sight. I was floating easily about the Georgia countryside. I felt like a big snowflake as I drifted to earth and touched down in a near-perfect PLF.

Once we were on the ground, there was a lot of back-slapping and handshaking. The trucks picked us up, and on the way back we were all thinking the same thing: nothing to it, a piece of cake. Hell, we were airborne all the way.