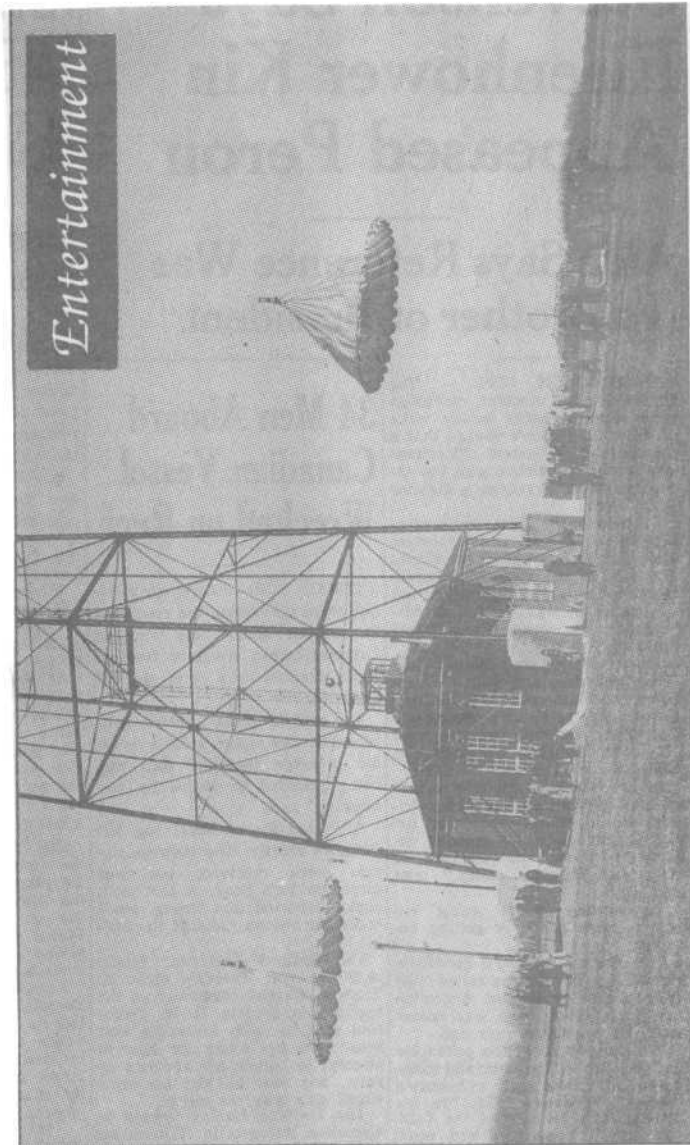


Alexander, Jim

Antel Agnew, Remembrance
Sept. 26, 1994



Entertainment

Soldiers learning to jump at a training facility during the Second World War.

it died of a broken heart — it wasn't going to jump anymore," laughs Alexander. "We tried telling them the chicken enjoyed it, but they wouldn't believe us."

Another stunt involved landing in the Niagara River. A rescue boat then plucked the men from the water but not before the emcee fretted aloud about the possibility of the chutists plunging over the falls.

Alexander says the danger in all these jumps was greatly exaggerated in most people's minds, with or without the aid of the emcee.

However, there were a few tricky moves.

One year Alexander agreed to parachute into the Canadian National Exhibition Stadium for a mini-Olympics held by the Toronto police. Because of the small landing area and the fact parachutes were far less manoeuvrable in the 1950s than they are today, the stunt was "a little dicey."

"I can always remember flying over the roof of the stadium and feeling I could reach out and touch it."

Much of the precision fell to the pilot who told Alexander when to jump and consequently, "had to be bang on."

Fortunately the stunt went OK.

His final jump came in 1952 or '53 in Trenton during some kind of celebration organized by the municipality, possibly its centennial celebration.

He was jumping with several other men, including a novice. The aircraft was circling over the Bay of Quinte and slowly climbing as the men leapt from it in intervals. When the novice approached the doorway of the plane his thumb tucked into



Coming back to earth during training.

his rip-cord (which was not the proper procedure) and stumbled at the last second. The chute opened in the plane as the man tumbled out of it. The top of the chute caught on a handle inside the aircraft while the man was dragged behind the plane. There was a moment of near panic as the other men feared the novice might pull his emergency chute, creating a drag that could have torn him in to pieces. They motioned for him to stay calm, which he did, and finally the jump master cut the top of the chute with an axe. It didn't destroy the chute but released the man and he landed safely in the bay.

Ironically, the crowd on the ground thought it was all part of the show and the local newspapers made reference to an interesting stunt.

However, it was a factor in Alexander's decision to pack in his parachuting days for more leisurely pursuits.