

The wildest experience of my life

[Experience](#)



So my last weekend before being deployed has finally arrived. I wanted to do something exciting, extreme - something I never would have imagined doing before - something that would take a lot of heart to do. Maybe even could be called a little crazy as others told me. Skydiving was something I had never done and certainly had never thought of doing until now. After doing some research online, I found a place only an hour away from home in Lumberton, Mississippi. In a way I was hoping there wouldn't be a place local so that could have been my excuse not to do it.

Once I started thinking about actually jumping out of a plane, I started to get nervous and have mixed feelings. Then I realized it can't be any scarier than what I may encounter overseas; maybe it could even help me deal with some things while there. So after much debating and thought along with unsuccessfully trying to convince a few friends to join me, I booked my trip to jump. My trip was booked for Sunday, two days away! I still had a slight hope that one of my friends might change his mind, which didn't happen.

I already had mixed feeling about my " jump," and I must admit the more I thought about actually doing it, the more nervous I became. I began feeling jittery, and for the first time I was more nervous about skydiving than I was about being deployed. And still for some reason I wanted to do this, almost felt like I had to. The morning of my jump arrived, and I was instructed to arrive one hour prior to my scheduled time. This means I had to be there at 10 a. m. , and that didn't leave me with much time to chicken out. The morning of, I began to do my usual morning routine, which consists of jogging and a simple shake for breakfast.

I managed to go jogging, but once I returned home I couldn't even start to drink my shake. So with all the excitement I decided to call my girlfriend at the time. In some way I was hoping to get a little motivation and encouragement out of her. When she picked up the phone the first thing she said was, " You ready to jump? " Then she laughed at me when I told her I was nervous, which in a way made me feel a little better. Shortly after our phone conversation began I noticed the time and realized I had to start getting ready. I knew if I didn't get showered, dressed, and get out of the house; I would never make it on time.

It crossed my mind that running late would be a better reason not to jump than chickening out and just not doing it. Shortly after that crossed my mind, I decided that was not an option. I was going to do this jump no matter what. So I began my hour and fifteen minute drive. During the ride my hands and feet started sweating while I was constantly trying to concentrate on other things, but always found myself thinking about jumping out of the plane. Then I started to think about all the bad things that could go wrong. Before I realized it I was reading the sign " Gold Coast Skydivers. I was here, no turning back now.

So I pulled in looking for a space to park. I became amazed and couldn't believe how many people were here. The place was so crowded I had to park in the grass. I finally found a spot and put my truck in park, turned off the ignition, and as I stepped out I could see people who had already jumped. Seeing people landing with open parachutes somewhat gave me a certain calmness to my feelings. When I walked into the office there were people in there laughing and discussing how much fun they had during their jump.

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No one seemed at all nervous or shaken up as I was expecting. After I filled out all the paper work and signed all the release forms, I was told to wait for my instructor, so he could go over all the information I needed to know. Not long after I was brought into a garage like area with several other first time jumpers they started to go over everything we needed to know. They were constantly reminding us we were jumping at 14, 500 feet and would be free falling for approximately 10 seconds before they pulled a smaller parachute, which would slow us down to 120 mph on the free fall.

Then we would continue falling for another 60 seconds before the main parachute was pulled. All of the first timers were constantly reminded to make sure we listened to our instructor who would be jumping with us. I would be jumping tandem, which is a requirement for first time jumpers. A tandem jump is when you are attached to the front of someone, our instructor in this case. They will be the ones responsible for pulling the parachute. To me, this meant I would be able to sit back and enjoy the ride without worry.

Before I knew it I was being dressed in a blue jumpsuit and stepping into my harness. I was then introduced to my instructor, handed a pair of goggles and told to head towards the plane. I was walking downhill looking towards the plane and for the first time actually becoming excited about what I was about to experience. My tandem instructor boarded the plane first, and I went right behind him. The plane was narrow with two long benches allowing us to line up with our instructors. When I got seated I started to look at the others who were boarding the plane.

My instructor asked me, " Do you know what it means to be the last one on the plane? " My reply was simple and a fast " No! " He then laughed and responded, " You'll be the first one out! " I found that amusing because I did know that I was the first one on, which means I would be the last one out. Once we got seated my instructor started strapping me in and started going over what I needed to do during the jump. He told me to keep my legs tucked under him, keep my head to the left, and keep my hands on my harness until I was told otherwise.

He then told me that after about ten seconds he would tap me twice on my shoulder. This meant I could release my hands from the harness. He proceeded to tell me when and how he would start doing spins and others stunts. I was told to give a thumbs up if I wanted more or to close my fist if I wanted to stop. It seemed like no time had passed by, and we were in air on our way. My instructor had a band on his wrist that showed him how many feet we were at. Before I realized it we were at 13, 000 feet and everyone was told to put on their goggles and get ready.

This is when I began asking myself what in the hell did I get myself into? Soon as I could blink my eyes the first jumper was out the plane, then the next, and the next! Now I was being scooted forward down the aisle. Once I arrived at the end of the bench I was instructed to crawl to the edge of the door. This means I was looking out of an open door into the blue skies. I had no time to think as we leaned forward, backwards, and then out we went. As soon as it started I wasn't nervous anymore! I was enjoying the feeling of free falling through the sky with nothing but the air underneath me.

Before long I felt the two taps that I had been waiting for, and I released my arms from the harness. Now we were spinning freely in the air and I loved every second of it. I never closed my fist. From what I can remember I believe I kept both thumbs up the entire time. Before I knew it the parachute had been pulled, and I was being jerked upward. This is when I heard my instructor say, " We got ourselves a parachute! " I was then told to position my harness lower on my thighs, so I could be in a sitting position. This turned out to be more comfortable to me.

As we were gliding downward towards the landing zone, I began looking around and realized that this was one of the most peaceful experiences of my life. My instructor made it feel natural as he effortlessly guided us right towards the landing circle with ease. As we were getting close I could see the others who had already landed and were watching me as we started our descent. Next thing I heard was " feet up" and we were landing gently on the ground. For some reason I expected the landing to be more difficult and rough, but it wasn't. I was now safe and on the ground being unhooked from my instructor.

At this time I could say that I had jumped out of a plane and enjoyed every second of it. Back in the office I changed out my suit and talked to the other first time jumpers for a little while. I then took the opportunity to take pictures with my instructor and get the information I needed to learn how to skydive on my own. I then said my goodbyes and headed home. I was proud of myself for what had just got accomplished and the fear I had overcome. This was truly a mind blowing, breath taking, stomach turning, and nerve

racking experience. As soon as it was over a part of me was ready to jump again.