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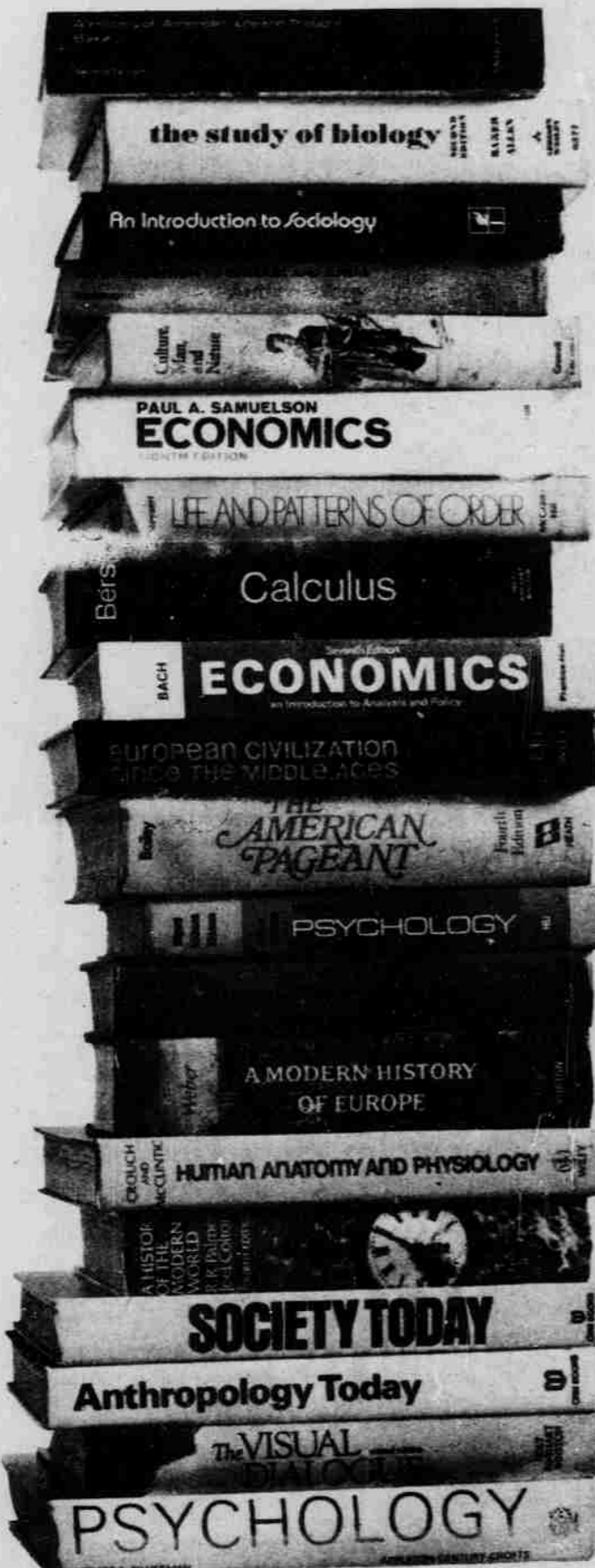
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That sinking feeling you get... from a height of 3200 feet

by Harriet Sugar
Feature Writer

"Whether you go or not is your own decision. Everything can go wrong. If you are up in the air and notice something has gone wrong, what are you going to do? When all else fails, pull the reserve."
It's kind of hard to remember everything your instructor has told you when you're falling from 3200 feet in the sky.

In fact, it's kind of hard to even think. So testify Kathy Hodges and Phyllis Thorne, two junior coeds from Morehead City who made their first parachute jump last Saturday.

Kathy and Phyllis read about a class in sport parachuting in an announcement in the DTH. Boasting a bit of bravery, they decided to try out the sport.
After approximately 6 hours (3 days) of lectures and practice, they were supposedly educated and confident enough to make the first jump.

So Saturday at the Roanoke Rapids drop zone, the two girls along with three other first-time jumpers, their instructor F. J. Hale, and a pilot climbed into the small Cessna plane with the leopard skin ceiling. Decked out in jump-suit, helmet, and warm gloves, each carried one parachute on her back and one reserve chute on her stomach. "We felt like we were spacemen," explained Phyllis.

The two girls were the first ones in the plane (which of course meant that they would be the last ones out). Their

uncomfortable kneeling position during the thirty minutes they were in the plane allowed for cramped knees and numb feet.

"When you make your exit, first put your feet out the door. They'll start dangling because the wind is going about 80 mph, but don't let that bother you. When I say get out, grab the bar on the side of the aircraft and put your feet firmly on the step. When I say go, push off the bar fairly vigorously, kick up with your feet, and then stretch back into the basic free fall (arched) position. The most important thing is to keep your head back." F.J. had done all the teaching he could. The rest was up to the students.

The first three out (males, incidentally) made it fine. Then it came Kathy and Phyllis' turn. The door opened and the wind rushed in.

Kathy got out on the platform but just couldn't push herself off. Phyllis didn't make it that far.

The plane circles and once again it was Kathy and Phyllis' turn. This time they took advantage of it.

In a matter of seconds, Kathy was floating through the air. And in just a few more seconds, so was her roommate.

"Count to five and then look up and see if your chute has opened." F.J. had stressed this but nobody can be expected to remember everything when he is falling through the air.

Fortunately, both girls' chutes did open. "I felt like I was in a coma,"

recalled Phyllis.

The last one out of the plane was the instructor - he and Phyllis carried on a conversation in the air.

"It was great once the parachute opened," agreed the girls. "It was just like F.J. had said. You pull down on the left side and it turns left; you pull down on the right and it turns right."

After about a minute and a half through the fall and about 100 feet above the ground, everything began to look lifelike. Beneath the girls was a boy and a bullhorn guiding the girls as they landed. "Don't look at the ground," they had been warned. Earlier that morning they had even practiced the proper landing procedures. At least they were near the target - no power lines, no obstructive trees, even Mr. Patrick's garden they had been warned to avoid.

Kathy hit first. Then came Phyllis. "I looked down and just kinda hit the ground," she laughed. "I fell on my ass."

For Kathy, landing was a little rougher. "I was in the right position to land but I guess I just hit the ground before I expected it to be there." For Kathy, landing was a sprained ankle.

Will they do it again? Phyllis is a trifle scared at the moment. She might change her mind. In spite of her accident, Kathy seems a bit more optimistic, but she still isn't certain.

In any case, Kathy and Phyllis are both glad they had the opportunity to jump from an airplane. "Everybody should try it at least once."

'Separate Peace' minor

by Bruce Brooks
Film Critic

Because "A Separate Peace" is such a minor movie, it is only a minor disappointment. Except for the very fine cinematography and some good acting, the production seemed to lack the energy and attention that should be provided by any director who takes his film seriously. From scriptwriter to editor, nearly everyone apparently admitted that they were working on a dud, which work they continued only through boredom or obligation. The film tries vaguely to be, at different times, both an impassioned cry and a subtly tense silence but it comes off rather as a dull extended mumble.

Fred Segal spared no pains, and even came up with a few new ones, in imitating the candid leaden relevance of John Knowles' novel. This 11th-grade-classic tale of profoundly nasty friendship between two New England preppies in the '40s rests in everyone's past like an outgrown pair of Weejuns, fun to chuckle over affectionately but a point to try and fit into now. The moods, sobs and shrieks of the film's tale are much more immature than they are youthful, but the bitter profundity excludes the possibility of being charming and thus we are left with a film of shrill, proud puerility.

Funny (John Heyl), a straightforward Mother Nature's Son sort of jock, and his roommate Gene (Parker Stevenson), high-strung valedictorian Pretty Boy, have a strangely-marred but beautiful friendship in the splendid atmosphere of Devon Academy for boys (somewhere in New England), WW II is distant but mystically ponderous to the irresponsible teenagers (and, as a nifty symbol, quite ponderous to the audience).

The relationship between the two pals is well-handled in the film aside from splotches of florid meaning, though due more to the two fine actors and their supporters than to the blunt direction by Larry Peerce or asinine script.

The script was the most consistent offender in the overly-important assumption. Segal's dialogue strained toward the solemn silliness of Salinger while hanging fervently to the silly solemnity of Knowles. Finny and Gene thrust and parry with Franny and Zoey inanity, but without ever being released from the schema of tragedy that makes their very quippishness hollow and foolish.

The direction was primarily at fault in the construction of the film. The whole thing seems a jerky series of unmotivated events that are always filmed either a bit too long or not quite long enough.

It was fortunately difficult to miss the excellence of the cinematography. The constructions and angles were beautifully imagined and realized, and the lighting was an extraordinary factor of the images' quality. The simple beauty of the shots was refreshing and respectable in this time when so many good directors like Roman Polanski are gripped by the David Leanism complex of vista-is-beautiful photography. Rather than just showing us how big and luscious the earth is, the cinematographer was inventive and simple enough to show us some ingenuity of technique. Some well-conceived scenes of Finny and Gene at the beach were quite fine, and a painful sequence of a pseudo-trial in which Gene is 'convicted' of having viciously caused the accident that eventually claims Finny's life was much better-photographed than written or directed.



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