

JAMES EVERED

JUMP

PIG

10,000TH JUMP

By Kelly Brennan

EVERYBODY LIKES TO DO SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR A MILESTONE JUMP, BUT JAMES EVERED'S OPTIONS WERE LIMITED, ON A WEEKEND OF VERY MIXED EMOTIONS. HE MANAGED TO SNEAK IN A SOLO JUMP IN BETWEEN TANDEM FOR HIS JUMP NUMBER 10,000.

The crew at Skydive Brisbane learned late in the week that they'd be closing their doors for good on the Sunday. Other drop zones were already suspending their businesses for the Coronavirus.

But, for this DZ, there were no plans to relocate or resume. "It was a sad and sometimes stressful situation for all of the team that I worked with, including me," said James.

However, they were blessed with four days of glorious weather and made the most of it.

James has been around for 27 years with many milestones along the way, give or take a few gap years to raise children and heal a dodgy shoulder.

ONCE UPON A TIME

James' first jump was a Static Line at Pakenham, Victoria, on Valentines' Day, February 14th, 1993. Colin Holt had been the course instructor and Ian 'Robbo' Robertson was his jumpmaster.

Twenty-two year old James was instantly addicted. Instead of going straight to the packing shed with their gear, as instructed, he and his brother went straight to the student blackboard and wrote their names up for another jump. His brother only did about five jumps, but it was the beginning of an incredible skydiving career for James, which has included "probably 30 or 40" countries and numerous records.

"There are so many memories, friends, demo's, boogies, photo shoots and countries and sights to celebrate," he said.





SPREADING HIS WINGS

James had about 450 jumps under his belt when he was made redundant from his gardening job, thanks to Kennett era changes at local councils.

After six months of job hunting, he got a better idea. *"Well, I've got all this money, I'm just sitting here looking for work. Why don't I go and explore and do some stuff?"* he thought.

"Freeflying was kicking off around that time," he said. *"There was nothing really happening in Australia. People were giving it a go but didn't know the background or the fundamentals."*

"Seeing some of this stuff, I was like 'Wow!'" He realised that he would need to learn from the Americans and Europeans. *"I wanted to expand the style of skydiving that I was doing."*

James had seen the posters for the Swedish Herc Boogie and that seemed like a great starting point. He bought a round-the-world ticket in 1997 and spent ten amazing months, amassing 600 jumps. *"I was hoping for a year but I was having too much fun and my money was starting to run out,"* he laughed.

His craziest jump was a 2-Way from two separate C-130 Hercules over northern Finland with Clive Meakins, aka 'Curly', around the time of Curly's 1,000th jump. They each followed out a group of 50 people who were attempting a 100-Way. The pair almost blew their exit timing after the Big-Way groups, but they managed to link up.

James did many more Herc jumps after that, especially at the Thai Sky Festivals and record attempts at a United Arab Emirates airshow in 2006.

That 1997 trip was a blur of boogies and travel, with fantastic memories of meeting people, including extended family, between skydiving events.

"A lot of the time I was still learning and progressing on that trip," said James. It was before wind tunnels changed the training landscape, so his best learning (and fun) came from being on a DZ and jumping as often as possible. *"I spent about three months living in the bunkhouse at Eloy and jumping every day, up to ten jumps a day!"*

He also sought out coaching from the top players, picking up on their techniques, writing everything down, and giving all the information to the APF for the first Freefly Guide.

RECORDS

James has been on multiple Australian Vertical records, missing only a few of them.

The 108-Way World Record in Chicago in 2009 was his pièce de résistance. *"It was quite a magical and surreal time,"* said James. *"We had six record attempts with the full number, and each record attempt had over 100 people linked out of 108!"*

He has logged about 4,200 freefly jumps over the decades. Plus there've been about 400 flat jumps, 1,200 doing camera, several skysurfing and wingsuiting jumps, and 4,000 tandems. Not at bad assortment!

He's been to so many different places that he struggles to recall them... Scandinavia, the Baltics, central Europe, Spain, Portugal, Germany, France, Switzerland, the USA, New Caledonia. *"The biggest being the Swedish Friflaj Festivals,"* he said. *"They were insane and leading edge of the times, always pushing freeflying further ahead."*

He has done about 80 coaching gigs, most of them outside Australia. One that came to mind was the first skydiving event in Vietnam, leaping from Mi-17 helicopters.

HIGHLIGHTS AT HOME

There have been many highlights on home soil as well, starting with any Cay jumps *"as they're just amazing"*. Funny Farm has also given him many happy memories.

So what's his take on the current freefly scene in Australia? *"I think there's some amazing flying going on but there's a big gap between starting off... and the people who are in there who live it and breathe it,"* he said. He cites Team Focus and The Addicted. *"There's always been a really high group of flyers around, with some amazing skills and I'm really proud that's been happening."*

LOOKING AHEAD

Things are looking up for James since the Covid lockdown lifted. He has joined the team at Caloundra under C.I. Cam Cooper, who also started out at Pakenham.

He wants to thank everyone he's jumped with over the decades. And, just like those early freefly days, he still wants to be an advocate for promoting great coaching techniques. *"I want to keep challenging myself through jumping and exploring all realms of skydiving,"* he says.



