

**Q:** So why are you called TC?

**A:** I'm Trevor Collins – Trouble Coming!

**Q:** When did you start jumping?

**A:** I started jumping in June 1975, at Manbulloo, near Katherine, NT. I used to take photos. I was doing a lot of photography including weddings and other things, and going to the pubs to take photos. I ran into these blokes in the pub one time that jumped out of aeroplanes and I asked if I could go up in the plane and take a photo of them as they jumped out. They said "sure but you will have to learn how to wear the parachute and you will actually have to jump with us". I said "not a chance because I'm really, really scared of heights" (and I still am!). I said that would be OK but I'll just fly a plane up beside them and take the photos as they jumped. They just laughed a lot.

**Q:** What were you doing for work then?

**A:** I was working for Department of Works in Katherine. We were building lots of roads and buildings around Katherine at that time. We used to go to the pub, well quite a lot actually, so I ran into Max King and other skydivers a fair bit. They eventually convinced me to just come and have a bit of a look and pretend how to do it. He made me jump off from halfway up his stairs a few times for a landing roll and he taught me how to do a delta as a stable exit and count to 6,000. That was how you jumped in those days. You didn't do an arch, you did a delta.

**Q:** You didn't do a static line?

**A:** Yes, but we did a delta off a static line.

**Q:** That must have been hard openings then?

**A:** It didn't matter; it was on a Cheapo (C9). We were really happy when it opened.

**Q:** Aah, so it was Max's fault that you did your first jump!

**A:** Yes, and others too. Plus you looked really cool with the girls if you jumped out of a plane. So I did a couple of practice sessions with Max and he said "we'll give you a yell next time we are jumping". I said "great" and I was really glad that he went away and I didn't think much about it. I was playing golf one morning when they come and found me at the golf club at lunchtime. I said "look I've had a beer" and they said "that's OK, we're jumping so come on out." I said "ahh, OK." So I had a rum and then I went and did my first two jumps at Manbulloo out of a Cessna 182 – Romeo, Foxtrot, Oscar!" Max put me out, he was the most experienced with 40 jumps. Brian Murphy was there.

**Q:** So did they have a student rig for you?

**A:** Any rig was a rig. There was no such thing as a difference between student rigs and other rigs – they were all B4s.

**Q:** So the ground was pretty hard for landings at Manbulloo?

**A:** The whole of the NT is hard.

**Q:** Did you land on the drop zone?

**Q:** What was Manbulloo like in those days?

**A:** It was just basically an old World War II airstrip and they had a shed there that used to be the butcher shop in Katherine, a World War II Nissan Hut and that was pretty well it. There were no services or anything like that in 1975.

**Q:** And a dirt strip?

**A:** No, it was a full on 5,000 foot World War II bitumen strip.

**Q:** Did you get your photos?

**A:** No, it all sort of got lost in it all. I took lots of photos of other people but didn't get many of me in the early days. I started jumping and I liked it. I was still terrified of heights but I did like it.

After a while, Brian Murphy and I went out to a place called Timber Creek, about eight to ten weeks after my first jump.

**Q:** How many jumps would you have had then?

**A:** Five. So we were allowed to do demos then! I did my last two static lines and my first freefall into Timber Creek races as demos – into the centre of the track. Murph was my instructor, but I don't think he was an instructor really – we didn't know about the APF in those days. I said to Murph in the plane, "So what do I do?" He said, "Just don't land on the horses or the people – they both get upset! Go!" So I went and I was really fast pulling the ripcord on the first freefall!

**Q:** So how long did you jump at Manbulloo?

**A:** Until about 1978.

**Q:** So there wasn't a student training table in those days?

**A:** Sort of, we didn't know about the APF for nearly two years after I started jumping. A fellow called Dave Optiz from Darwin came down to Katherine and he said, "What's your licence number, mate?" I said, "What's a licence? I got a car licence!" He said, "No, no, you have to have an APF licence." I said, "Well, I don't have one" and he said I can't jump. I told him where to go! We continued to have a good time and he got a bit funny but it all got a bit more organised after that.

**Q:** So what did he do?

**A:** He got the APF involved and we all had to get licences and we had to do the required jumps. By that time I had started to be really involved with jumping. I had done lots of demos and other jumps and had about 200 jumps. I had a 'D' licence by about late 1977. That was quite a lot of jumps in those days. I jumped most weekends. We did a lot of demos which were really good fun. No one ever told us there were rules about demo jumps.

**Q:** So they were just like normal jumps to you?

**A:** Yes, we jumped all over the Territory – Mataranka, Beswick, Timber Creek, the shows, rodeos, mate's places – all sorts of fun.

**Q:** What happened after Manbulloo?

**A:** We used to go up to Batchelor quite a lot while I was still at Katherine, Darwin was quite a big club at Batchelor. There was a tin lean-to up at the cross strip – no power or water etc.



# Trevor Collins

## Interview

By Christine Collins

# Trevor Collins Interviews



Duckworths Navajo doing Crew

**Q:** What sort of jumping were they doing in Batchelor at the time?

**A:** They had a Cherokee 6 and it was a terrible plane to jump from for me because it was hard to get out of the door. When we used to bring up our 182, everyone thought that was pretty good. We had bloody good times actually – we had lots of parties. One time, the guys flew down from Darwin and we were in the air doing a sortie at Manbulloo. We heard their call sign coming in and we met up at 10 or 12,000ft and we did a formation load – them from Darwin and us from Manbulloo - did about a 8-way! It was just like saying “Giddyay” in freefall to everyone that we hadn’t seen for weeks!

**Q:** What’s the story about the first Rel Week?

**A:** Dave McEvoy came up to Katherine with Ron Law for the first Rel Week in May 1977. While he was there a bunch of us did Static Line ratings. It went on from there after that.

**Q:** It wasn’t like Rel Weeks now?

**A:** No, it was a small group of us – there’s a photo of it.

**Q:** So how long did you stay in Katherine?

**A:** From 1974 to 1978. Then I left and travelled around Australia for a bit. I did jumps pretty well everywhere. I spent some time with Claude in the ‘APF office’, which was in the Royal Vic Aero Club in Melbourne. It was not much bigger than a bedroom. I can remember that Claude came back very proudly from an FAI meeting with an inch of paperwork. I helped him stamp out all the 4-way sequences and we photocopied them madly and sent them out to the drop zones so they could practice them. I started work in Rockhampton. I already had my Senior Instructor rating when McEvoy had been up to Katherine and I ended up doing my Instructor ‘A’ rating and setting up a drop zone at Emu Park, just out of Rockhampton. That was about 1979.

**Q:** Wasn’t that near a rifle range?

**A:** Yes, it used to be funny on a Sunday morning when the sea breeze was in. When we were putting the students out, we weren’t allowed to put them out over the town. So we’d have to fly out over the water (life jackets didn’t really exist for us then) and put them out and then they’d have to fly over the town and we were on Cheapos still...

**Q:** With B4s?

**A:** No, I had McEvoy’s rigs from the movie ‘Jump’ so they were pretty cool. Fore and aft still, but pretty cool at the time. The students actually had to land on the strip because if they went past the strip, there was a rifle range. On a Sunday morning there was a bloke whose job it was to spot for any jumpers who came over the horizon and stop the shooting on the rifle range, so they didn’t shoot us!

**Q:** How long did you operate at Emu Park?

**A:** We were there for a couple of years.

**Q:** You say we – were you operating with someone else?

**A:** No, it was mainly me but there were a lot of good guys around – Peter Hoy who used to come down from Blackwater, Ian MacGregor who used to come down and annoy me because he was a much smarter and more experienced instructor than I was, but we had a great time. Eventually I came back to Darwin in late 1980.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** Geoff Cowie asked me. Things weren’t real good at Batchelor and he wanted to set up a drop zone somewhere.

**Q:** That’s a pretty big move, isn’t it? You’ve got work in Rockhampton and had set up your own drop zone and were training a lot of students. So why did you do it?

**A:** Oh well, I loved the Territory anyway. The job at Rockhampton was coming to an end so I came back up and we bought the bible society Cessna 182 which was a bit of a laugh.

We changed its religion! We looked around a lot and we set up a drop zone at the Bark Hut, Annaburroo, which is on the Arnhem Highway, halfway to Jabiru. We jumped there for a couple of years.

**Q:** Did you have a shed or something there?

**A:** Yes, a garden shed! We used to work under the trees but we had some pretty good times there too. We did one of the first canopy diamond formations in Australia in the very early ‘80s. On this day, we did the canopy diamond and I was on the top. In those days, there was no such thing as CRW canopies. I had a Parafoil, Geoff had a 228 or something like that, Phil had a Cruisair I think. When I went to turn the formation back to the drop zone, we had a wrap. Phil and I ended up really wrapped and he was hanging underneath me. I was telling him to get off and he said he really didn’t want to go because he felt it was a bit low. So then we had to work out how to land it. We went downwind for a bit and I had to turn it around. I couldn’t reach the steering toggles because Phil’s canopy was wrapped around my body, head and everything. I eventually used the front risers to turn us into wind along the runway and we smacked in pretty hard. It was funny because we were in the spear grass and we crawled towards each other and gave each other a hug – thank Christ we were alive! Nothing happened for a few minutes. I think the rest of the drop zone thought we had gone in. Then all these heads started to appear through the spear grass and when they realized that we were alive, they were all relieved. We opened the bar.

Some of the early stuff we did at Annaburroo involved putting students out on PCs and then we actually bought some of the very first Pigmies as well and we were putting students out on those with Sierras as mains. Dave Smith sent me up a Comet and we jumped the canopy until they rang us up and said can you please send it back? But while we had it, we were jumping at a place called Dum-in-Mirrie on Grose Island, west of Darwin. We used to jump there a lot. It’s a pretty small island when you’ve got a round parachute! The strip was about 3,000 feet long and the island was only about 50 foot longer than the strip! Geoff and I put the Comet into a Pigmye and we were jumping that on a static line out of a Partnavia.

**Q:** For students or for you?

**A:** For ourselves.

**Q:** Why?

**A:** Well, we just sort of did our own stuff. We did lots of jumps just testing it and it worked fine. There were a couple of line twists but no big deal. Initially Geoff and I would put each other out on it and I think a couple of other people jumped it. Eventually we trained up a fellow called Bob Miller who used to fly us a lot. He used to fly the Beaver all the time. He was our first student on a square because we figured that if we put a pilot out on a square, he’d know what to do.

**Q:** So that could have been the first student square jump in Australia?

**A:** Yes, I’ve talked to a lot of people and it’s in the ‘History of Sport Parachuting’ - we did the first square jumps pretty well. There were other people experimenting at the same time but we actually applied to DCA (Department of Civil Aviation) which



Geoff & TC at Annaburroo - first pigmees



The First Rel Week, 1977

We had a whole variety of aeroplanes – we had everything from the DC3, Twin Otters, Nomad, Shorts, Skyvan and one year when the Shorts blew up, we even had 402s. In the early days, we had a Chieftain that Tony Duckworth used to fly.

The first load of the morning then used to be a 11 or 12 stack canopy formation that we would actually land. Paul Osborne and myself used to be at the top because we very quickly worked out that if shit was going to happen, it was better to be at the top than at the bottom. Hugh Gregory

used to be always at or near the bottom.

is now CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) and formally asked for it to be approved. Funnily enough, it was Dave's brother, John McEvoy, who got the application in South Australia and he sent it to a bloke in Melbourne called Gillard. I got this really nasty letter back saying to stop immediately because people were going to die if we kept trying to put them out on static lines with square parachutes.

- Q:** I guess there is always going to be resistance to change. So what happened then?
- A:** Yes, there was resistance then. We just took it politely and put the letter in the bin.
- Q:** So does that mean you kept doing it?
- A:** Perhaps. What are the Statutes of Limitations?
- Q:** So did you end up giving the Comet back and that was the end of that?
- A:** No, we had 228s by then and from then on we started to use them for experienced people. There was an interim step though. We had another thing called an Argussey that Joe Chitty and those guys built. It's a big old roundie, like a T10. Claude thought they were the duck's nuts but they were slow. They did the job and landed softly so they looked after people. We jumped them for a while at Batchelor. Then we started to use squares. We used the orange coloured batons for left and right and when to flare.
- Q:** And that was successful?
- A:** Yes, TCOs for roundies would walk around the outside of the pit anyway and all we had to add was when to flare.
- Q:** Were there more injuries when you started using squares?
- A:** No, after the Sierras, it was a blessing.
- Q:** People were thumping in on Sierras?
- A:** Yes, I remember one bloke who was lying on the cross strip at Batchelor and I was saying "Get up! Run round your canopy!" He replied, "I can't, both my ankles are broken!"
- Q:** What about your personal jumping? Have you done a lot of instructing over the years?
- A:** Unfortunately we had a fatality at Annaburroo and that made things go a bit quiet for a while and then the Darwin Parachute Club guys asked us if we would go back because they weren't really doing much at all because we had taken a lot of the jumpers. I started there as Chief Instructor, about '83. I was CI there until early 2000s. I was also CI for Katherine during some of the time as well.

Yes, most of my enjoyment in skydiving has been with instructing and organising. I just love seeing people get up there and succeed. It's great watching people progress. I think it's the best thing to see someone come out of the egg and evolve and end up getting their wings and flying. It's great!

One of the other big things in my skydiving career has been Rel Weeks. Once Rel Week started, there were guys like Lee Hunt, Chook Chandler, Evan Slocum and Greg Wright in Katherine who have been instrumental – they worked really hard to build Rel Week up from the late 70s. I'm sure they had no idea that it would be like it is today.

Rel Week didn't move from Katherine to Batchelor until '92 or '93. So there was about 15 years of Rel Weeks at Manbulloo.

**Q:** Is Paul another one who has done a lot of Rel Weeks over the years?

**A:** Yes, there's not many that Paul has missed. He and I have also done stuff offshore in Indonesia. We did the Bali Boogie in 1988 and Lombok in 1990. I think they did something like 32,000 jumps in 12 days in Bali from stretch C130s, Casas and AC160.

**Q:** You were load mastering?

**A:** Yes as well as spotting and doing tandems with Graham Hill from Sydney Skydivers. Lombok was also good. Paul worked with us at Lombok as well.

**Q:** He's like an ex-gratia Territorian isn't he?

**A:** He is – he's one of us.

**Q:** So it was really you, McEvoy and Osborne who went to the early Rel Weeks and are still going to Rel Weeks now?

**A:** Chook Chandler and a few others went to about 15-20 Rel Weeks before they recently stopped and then there are people like Tom Maher who started later and have been to a lot since the mid-80s.

**Q:** In one of the early Rel Week photos, there was Paul Flipo. It was really good to see him at Rel Week this year, wasn't it?

**A:** Yes, Paul would have been at the second or third one, I think. He and Paddy McHugh and Phil Hindley – they were there in a lot of the early Rel Weeks. People have come and gone but I've hung around a bit like a bad smell! I love it. It's great being able to help make that happen. It's about getting a good crew of people around you to help pull it together and make it happen. This year at Rel Week, I was just a helper – this has been the best bunch of people I have ever worked with in my life.

**Q:** So you've done a few thousand jumps now, what would you consider the highlight of your personal jumping career aside from instructing?

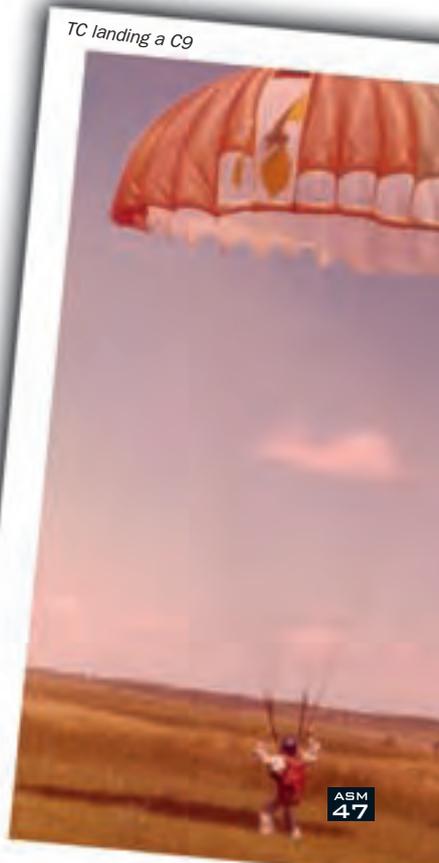
**A:** I haven't been a lot into competition. I've preferred the instructing, organising and also the display jumps.

**Q:** Yes, you've done I don't know how many Demos for the Darwin Show over the years?

**A:** Yes, it reminds me of Faye and Jim Cox. They did that in Queensland for 20+ years too – or more. They were sort of an inspiration for me.

**Q:** So what's the best demos you have done?

**A:** All of them! There's the demos and there's also the TV and documentary stuff. The TV jumps probably rate better than the



# Trevor Collins Interview



Grose Island

demos because of the challenge in choreographing them and working with the TV people who often don't understand what we can do for them. It's been great being able to work with the media to put those shows together and get the sport in the public eye in a positive way. Some of the early high profile work included the Daryl Somers 'Hey Hey It's Saturday' show; there was a TV commercial promoting the Territory with "You'll Never, Never Know, if You Never, Never Go".

**Q:** What led up to his doing a jump?

**A:** They asked us to do some jumps and some of the stunt work for them in tourism ads. Dave Witter, Pete Lonnon and I were doing stand-in jumps for Daryl. We landed one day and we were shooting the ground shots at the airport, pretending that he had jumped. Byron, our older son, who was only about 7 at the time, walked up to Daryl and said, "Hey Mr Hey Hey, how come you don't really jump?" Daryl looked at me and said, "that's it! I'm going to have to jump now!" So we set up a jump with the Melbourne Directors. They said, "well if he is going to do a jump, we may as well put it live to air." I said, "I don't think that has ever been done before." They said, "let's see if we can." So we all ended up putting the whole thing together. When it went live to studio in Melbourne on Saturday night, it was seamless. It was air-to-ground in Darwin and ground-to-studio in Melbourne. The jump cost about \$20k in those days.

We all had radios between us, so when Daryl was talking we could hear what he was saying. So if he said he was looking at Darwin City or Cullen Bay, Pete or Dave would both point their cameras in that direction to match his words. It was pretty cutting edge technology at the time. I've always enjoyed that sort of work. We've done a bunch of jobs since then. I have loved working with the local jumpers - Drew, Ash and Coey from Darwin - as well as bringing the guys up from Toogoolawah - Wayne, Macca and Archie and those guys - to come up and help me with the jobs. With those guys, it's all no nonsense and they do a great job. We've done 'Outback Jack', 'Outback Jack Dutch', 'The Amazing Race' and a few others.

Then there are all the local demos we've done - night jumps, the V8s with Dave Benson for example. I did Australian flag jumps in the mid 80s but my first big flag jump was a pennant shaped one at night for the first Arafura Games into Gardens Oval in 1991.

**Q:** What about now? Are you still doing demos like that?

**A:** Yes, it's only a few weeks ago that we organised the jump with Cathy Freeman on the beach. There have been lots of really good demos over the years like that.

**Q:** What's it been like seeing your kids jump?

**A:** Fantastic. As they all come through, both Chris and I have done a jump with them all. Byron and Tara were first to do their tandems. Warren actually saved up and paid for us to go to New Zealand and Chris and I jumped with him at Rotorua. Since then, we've done more jumps with all of them as well. We're really a skydiving family.

**Q:** When did you first get involved with the NT Parachute Council?

**A:** It's funny - I never thought that I would get too involved with that side of things but because of the politics that were happening at the time and when Geoff and I set up Parachuting Promotions in the early 80s, it became apparent that to have a voice, you had to be involved in the Council. So we became strongly involved in it. I did my first APF Board Meeting in the early 80s, when we were still at the Royal Vic Aero Club. It was interesting because I took to it. I saw it as a way that I could contribute to make things better for people and the sport.

**Q:** So you were a Board Member for several years. When did you start to have extra responsibilities?

**A:** We had a Management Committee that formed in the early to mid '90s and I was involved in that. APTAC was formed. Phil Hindley was instrumental in forming APTAC and it was a way to

raise money for teams. It was really successful, members paid for Life Membership as a donation to APTAC.

**Q:** You were on the Management Committee for quite a while?

**A:** Yes up to about 2008. I'm still one of the NT reps currently. Over the years, I've held various jobs as part of the Management Committee - HBOM (Honorary Board of Management) and I was Chairman of the Board for about seven years as well. It was a time when there was major change for the Federation. One of the biggest challenges was insurance. Dave Smith and the insurance brokers were able to broker some breakthrough insurance cover in early 2001.

There were some tumultuous times. The business of the sport was also changing dramatically. Clubs weren't clubs anymore. They were becoming major commercial organisations and the devolvement of tandems meant that any action that the APF was involved in might mean that an organisation could be affected income-wise, so we had to be very conscious of how we managed those issues.

**Q:** Would you consider they were the biggest issues you have been involved with?

**A:** Yes, they were big ones. It was about keeping the Federation on track.

**Q:** Buying the buildings must have been a big step for the Federation?

**A:** Yes, the APF bought the first building in Mentone, Victoria and then decided to move to Canberra to be closer to CAA, so we got the land and built the building at Deakin. That was a big step. It's been great being able to be part of it.

**Q:** So where to from here?

**A:** My real job is taking a lot of my time at the moment but I'd like to devote a lot more time to wingsuiting, particularly with Chris. I'd still like to be involved with the Federation and I'd still like to continue doing things like the TV shows as they come along.

**Q:** You'll be going for as long as you can hey?

**A:** Yes, if I'm standing, I'll jump! If I'm like Towers - if I'm sitting down, I'll probably still jump!

**Q:** So, what's your advice to new jumpers?

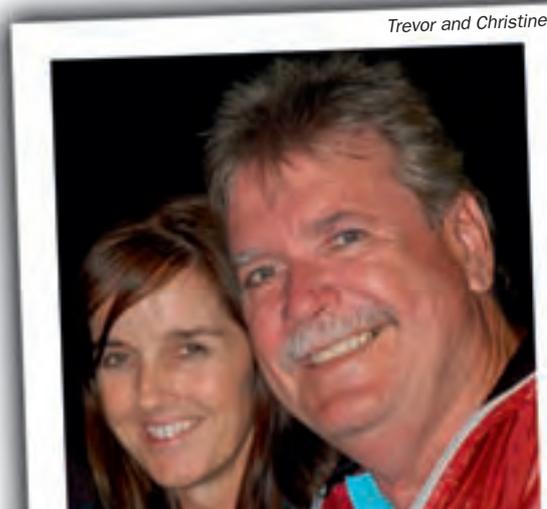
**A:** Don't break the rule!

**Q:** And your advice to old jumpers?

**A:** Don't break the rule either!

**Q:** And what's the rule?

**A:** Don't f#@k up!!



Trevor and Christine