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Friday, June 5, 1998

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# HA choral teacher takes ‘major leap of faith’ parachuting

You might say Marty Lindvahl wanted to test her wings.

Lindvahl, choral director at Hoopeston Area high and middle schools, recently spent a Saturday learning what goes up must come down when she spent the day learning to skydive.

Lindvahl, along with shop teacher Shawn Swartzentruber and guidance counselor John Mockaitis, made their maiden jumps at Illiana Skydiving in Veedersburg, Ind., on May 30.

The plan was hatched about a month ago, when Mockaitis mentioned a group of Hoopeston Area employees should take the plunge. Lindvahl, who parasailed in the Hawaiian Islands about two years ago, decided to give it a try.

The adventure was originally planned as a family affair, with Lindvahl's husband, Mark, accompanying her, but after discussing it with their children, it turned into solo propositions.

“Our son Brian was like ‘go for it Mom, while you’re still able to,’” Lindvahl said. Daughter Kristin was more reticent. “She didn’t want to be orphaned if both her parents went,” she said.

The trio headed to Veedersburg on May 23, but classes were cancelled due to the weather. “I was disappointed because I had myself psyched for this,” Lindvahl said. “We were all deflated.”

The following Saturday, despite early clouds, the trio trekked back to the air strip, appropriately located near a cemetery on Bone Break Road, for their second try.

The group spent five hours learning about skydiving before making their jumps. “The first 15 minutes was about everything that can go right,” Lindvahl said. “The other four hours and 45 minutes was about everything

that can go wrong.”

After lunch, the three were suspended in parachute harnesses from “a big swing set basically,” to practice steering while descending. Instructor/owner, John McClatchey, shook and rattled students to simulate what they might experience on the way down.

Before the 3 p.m. take-off, students were given a 15-question quiz that almost grounded Lindvahl. “I missed like seven of them so I’m thinking ‘oh my goodness, should I be going up?’”


Lindvahl and the other students were “packed like sardines” in the single engine 1956 Cessna. “I started wondering if 1956 was a good year for planes,” she said, noting her fellow jumpers were no in better shape. “We all looked like deer caught in headlights.”

The plane ascended to approximately 3,200 feet. Students took their turns connecting to the static wire, an eight-foot fabric cord connecting each diver’s parachute to the plane.

Inside the plane, the students were reminded to avoid power lines, as well as houses and highways for their proximity to power lines. “I was having a major anxiety attack,” Lindvahl said, adding the landing strip where beginners jump is not located near electric lines.

After reaching the proper altitude, each student took his turn stepping onto the plane’s strut, positioning themselves, then jumping. “Once you’re out on the wing, it’s a do-or-die thing,” Lindvahl said.

Stepping onto the strut was the most difficult part for Lindvahl. “You go out on a step on a plane going 80 miles an hour and you pray,” she said. “You sort of have to go into a zone where you’re not yourself. You’re me-



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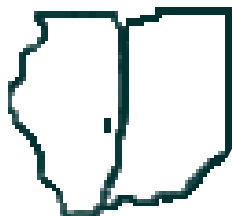
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chanical at that point; you don't even think about it."

The first eight seconds after Lindvahl arched and jumped were spent in free fall before the static line pulled her parachute open.

Unlike skydiving of several years ago, divers now use canopy chutes which provide a smoother ride than circular ones, she said. The difference was noted when Lindvahl landed. "I thought I had my feet straight down, but I was in a sitting position. I landed on my butt."

Earlier training in using the emergency parachute and altimeter were not needed as Lindvahl's main chute opened and she began the gentle descent toward land. "Once the chute opens, it's cake," she said. "The float-

ing down is just awesome."

The instructor talked each student down, telling them to use toggles to steer themselves to earth. "It's just like driving a car at that point," she said.

The glide down was peaceful, but that changed when Lindvahl landed. "When I got down on the ground I was talking a mile a minute and jumping up and down because I was so excited," she said.

The adventure provided safe excitement from the routine of life. "When you're my age, (43) life is about details, doing the laundry, going to work, taking care of your kids. This throws a little loop in your path."

Risking life and limb was relatively inexpensive. The class and initial jump costs \$130, while subsequent jumps will be \$30 each.

Lindvahl may repeat the experience but "I don't know when and I'm not going to put any pressure on myself,"

she said.

"This was a major leap of faith – literally."

### Police News



**Hazel L. Haire**, 76, of 715 W. Elm, was ticketed for improper lane usage after an accident at 3:48 p.m. Wednesday at 226 E. Main.

Police said Haire, backed her 1979 Chevrolet from a parking space, went west on Main and hit a parked 1987 Chevrolet owned by James D. Ingram, 906 E. Young.

**Mern Clayburn** reported Thursday that someone broke the glass of a window at 317 S. Market.

**Brenda Pancake** reported Thursday that a window was broken at China King restaurant, 113 E. Main.

**No tickets or injuries** were reported in an accident at 2:14 p.m. Thursday at Pamida, Routes 1 and 9.

Police said Robert K. Rutledge, 300 Spelter lot 57, in a 1997 Ford, turned into a parked 1996 Dodge owned by Emily R. Burton, 414 E. Washington.

### Court Dispositions



**May 21: Pam Morgeson**, Rossville, disorderly conduct, pleaded not guilty; trial July 23.

**Abbie Morgeson**, two counts battery, pleaded not guilty; trial Aug. 20.

**Dora Morgan**, Wellington, two counts deceptive practice and restitution; failed to appear, summons issued.

**Lowell Null**, Hoopeston, general nuisance; continued to June 18.

**Jeff Staley**, Hoopeston, paid \$75 in full.

**Jeff Williams**, Donovan, illegal consumption; failed to appear, summons issued.

### In the Hospital



**Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital**  
June 3, 1998

**Admitted:** Donna Shore, Mae Chaney, Hoopeston .  
**Discharged:** none.

### Weather



Cloudy with morning showers likely today. High 64. Tonight, cloudy, rain. Low 50 Saturday and Sunday, partly sunny. Highs 68, lows 54.

For current weather conditions, call the **Hoopeston Weather Line** at (217) 283-6221.

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