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## THE SKY'S **NOT** THE LIMIT!

Senior adventurers  
experience thrills  
from 13,000 feet



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# THE SKY'S NOT THE LIMIT!

## Senior daredevils experience thrills from 13,000 feet high

By Will Sanborn

You've probably heard tales of great exploits by seniors like John Glenn flying high on a Space Shuttle mission at age 77; Minoru Saito, 77, sailing nonstop around the world; William Ivy Baldwin, 82, tightrope walking 125 feet above a Colorado canyon and Nola Ochs graduating from college at age 95.

Great accomplishments all, but a local club's derring-do and roster of risky activities puts them firmly in the camp of those exceptional aging achievers.

Chances are you'd never recognize these thrill-seeking residents of The Palisades at Broadmoor Park if you passed them on the street. Recently, three of the members went skydiving. This was the real deal, where they received a little training, then took a leap of faith some 12,000 feet above sea level, tandem jumping with an instructor.

**"THEY THREW ME OUT OF THE PLANE LIKE A RAG DOLL! BUT IT WAS A WORLD OF FUN, AND I'D DO IT AGAIN FOR SURE."**

### JUMPING FOR JOY (AFTER THE JITTERS)

It all started when one of the residents, retired nurse Julie Templin, 77, mentioned that skydiving was on her bucket list. A few other residents caught wind of it and plans started percolating.

On the appointed day, when Fran Capritta, The Palisades' executive director, drove the group to Colorado Mountain Skydive in Penrose to board the small plane, her nerves nearly got the best of her.

"I actually wanted to vomit," Capritta recalled. "I was having little mini heart attacks the entire time!"

Doubt and dread notwithstanding, each of them jumped out of the plane.

"We're living now!" enthused bucket-list instigator Templin when she made contact with the earth after descending at 120-plus miles per hour. Though she'd hoped to pull off an aerial flip for a landing with pizzazz, she settled for a somersault on the ground.

Nonagenarian Don Downs, the comic of the

The view from the Adventurers' skydiving plane a few thousand feet above Penrose, Colorado.



Jeff Dunn, Sarah Riggs (Director of Health Services at The Palisades at Broadmoor Park), Don Downs and Julie Templin pose for a group photo shortly before jumping out of an airplane.

group, vividly recalls taking the plunge.

"They threw me out of the plane like a rag doll!" joked Downs, 91, a former Marine and retired dentist. "But it was a world of fun, and I'd do it again for sure!"

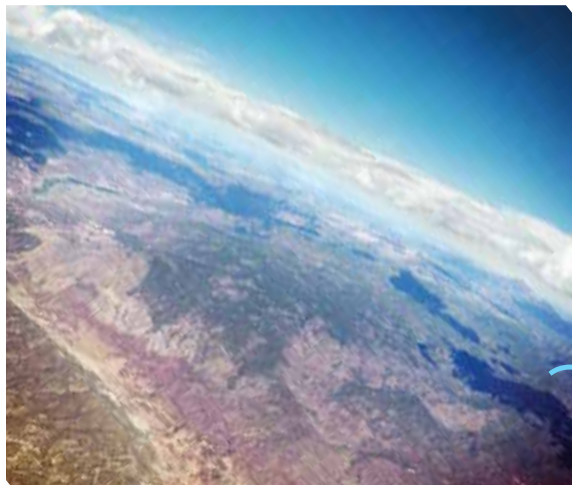
Another jumper, Jeff Dunne, 78, had second (and third, fourth and fifth!) thoughts as the nerves hit nearing takeoff time.

"Initially, I wasn't scared," said Dunne, "but when you're the first one in line getting ready to jump, you start thinking, 'Why in the world am I doing this?'"

Dunne, an investor, developer and property manager who lives with Parkinson's, said the landing was the hardest part of the skydiving experience. Getting his legs folded up before hitting the ground, as he was instructed to do, seemed all but impossible but he succeeded.

### AGE-DEFYING ADVENTURERS

Soaring among the clouds a couple miles above the ground or navigating rapids from a raft are the last activities you'd associate with The Palisades at Broadmoor Park, a senior community in southwest Colorado Springs. But behind





Julie Templin enthusiastically celebrates her return to earth from 13,000 feet up in the sky.

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its doors are grandparents with gumption, just itching to challenge themselves physically and mentally. They don’t know how to act their age—and that’s a good thing.

When Palisades residents were asked about activities they’d like to try, several intrepid spirits’ age-defying suggestions and zeal for outside-the-box experiences bubbled to the surface. This group of risk-takers formed the Adventurers Club.

Their initial challenge was rock climbing at a local indoor facility. That whet their appetite and before you could say, “Pull the ripcord!” the skydiving plan took shape a few months later.

Horseback riding was next. Currently, plans are in the works for whitewater rafting, hot air ballooning, adaptive skiing and ziplining across the Royal Gorge.

The club members share a common thirst for fulfilling their dreams, pushing themselves physically and conquering their fears. They take the edge off aging with exercise, socialization and fun by confronting the outdoor obstacle course that is the Rocky Mountain region.

Club member Dee Anderson, 88, a former teacher, is no stranger to embracing new challenges. She ran her first marathon at 59 and completed the Pikes Peak Marathon (up Barr Trail to the top of Pikes Peak and down) when she was 65. She even ran with the Olympic torch

Sarah Riggs and Don Downs say their goodbyes as they prepare to board for their departure from the confines of planet Earth.

Jeff Dunn flew like a bird for a few memorable moments on the Adventurer’s Club trip with jumpers from Colorado Mountain Skydive.

before the winter games in 2002.

Another club member, Stephen Smith, 71, had just finished running the 2013 Boston Marathon when it was bombed. He knows what it’s like to face fear head-on.

Capritta helped spearhead the club and has led it for the past two years. The Palisades seniors come up with the activities and she handles the logistics (including making sure all the necessary liability waivers have been signed!).

Capritta hopes to break down stereotypes of aging. With her enthusiasm leading the way, there’s not much her Adventurers won’t try.

“People have to have a purpose, whether they’re 9 or 90,” said Capritta. “My residents have learned that the ailments and challenges



that come with aging don’t have to be a barrier to what they want to do.”

### NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Capritta believes that just because you have lived a long time doesn’t mean there aren’t new experiences you can still have.

“Nothing should be off the table. We just need to get past our own biases on what people can do at whatever age,” said Capritta.

If anything, Downs encourages others to take the leap—literally or figuratively.

“Go for it while you can, because you’re not going to last forever!” he advised. “Be curious, because you just might learn something.”

If you happen to see a group of bikers doing wheelies as they cruise down South Academy, you’d better take another look. It just might be the Palisades Adventurers off on their next escapade!

*Author’s note: At 73, I’m no spring chicken and certainly qualify age-wise for Adventurers Club exploits. However, when I heard of their plans to zipline across the Royal Gorge—all 2,500 feet long of it, with a 136-foot vertical drop, at a top speed of 40 mph—I said a quick “No thanks” and headed out the door! ■*