

Training Paratroopers

The base became the country's main para-training centre for army, navy and air force personnel. It was the first tri-service flying training unit in Canada,



Airborne para training, student exiting from starboard side of the Mock Tower at CJATC

Exiting the Mock Tower was part of the training required to be completed prior to being allowed to continue to the High Tower in Shilo, Man. Most would do 20 to 30 jumps from the Mock Tower, some would refuse on the first attempt, and some would refuse on the 15th jump, If you refused you were sent back to your unit and considered unacceptable to be a trained parachutist. The para training course demanded a strong psychological commitment as well as a high level of physical fitness.

The training of the candidates is hard and vigorous and demands a high physical standard; in fact, a good portion of the course is devoted to their physical conditioning. After first learning how to roll on landing from elevated stands the students jump from the mock tower. From this 32 ft. high device the students are carried by sloping cables to the ground some distance away. Following this, the potential paratroopers jump from the 150 ft. high tower at Camp Shilo which is a very realistic comparison to an actual

aircraft jump. Ultimately, the paratroopers jump fully equipped from C-119 aircraft maintained at CJATC for this purpose.

More than 13,000 paratroopers have been qualified by the airborne school since 1947. Including those made on advanced and instructors' courses, more than 100,000 jumps have been made at CJATC.

Some Para-Training Memories

Michael Czoboka

After Michael Czoboka returned from serving in the Korean War, he completed a parachute course at Rivers and Shilo. During his last year of my army service 1953-54, he was posted to the Airborne School at Rivers. One of his jobs involved examining the high failure rate of people taking parachute training, also called "the jump course". He gave a modified version of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality test to incoming parachute trainees to see if it could identify potential failures. After administering the test to a large number of parachute trainees, he discovered that one item was significant: "I am afraid of heights". People who failed the jump course were afraid of heights!

Gerry Logan

I had just turned 18 on the 7th of that month (1955) and I was scheduled to start my jump course on the following Tuesday morning. When you went on board any RCAF a/c they gave you a parachute harness to wear and a reserve parachute that you could strap on the front of the harness. If you had to jump you had a ring on the front of the chute that you pulled to open the chute.

We got to Rivers okay around midnight, and getting off the plane I accidentally picked up the parachute I had by the ring and of course the chute exploded all over the inside of the plane. (I still have the ring as a souvenir to this day).



Parachutist on descent, nearing the ground, CJATC Rivers

Photo Credits

**Photos from
The George Wilkinson Collection
Shared by his son Gordon Wilkinson**
www.hillmanweb.com/rivers/11.html

**I was born August 16, 1950, Rivers Manitoba
My dad trained there (Para) and I have some photos of his activity there.**

I am hoping to learn more of his post WWII military career.

I found new (old) photos belonging to my dad's term in Rivers.

I hope they will be of interest to people who find them informative.

**They have to be dated around the summer of 1949
(after dad married in Petawawa, ON in July 1949).**

~ Gordon Wilkinson -- son of Geo. L. Wilkinson SD86417

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Charlotte Mills Top contributor

I would sit staring out of our bedroom window and count "the jumpers parachutes" as they came out of the aircraft. It was nice having a clear line of sight to the airstrip.

Memories

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