

SKYDIVE FOR MOTEC LIFE-UK

By Gary Merrington, Industrial Design Consultant

www.merrington-design.co.uk

It was a cold and blustery day at Attleborough Airfield on Saturday 25th October 2008, Gary and his family arrived at 12.30 and went straight over to reception. I signed in and then went and got kitted out into my jump suite, my Tandem instructor briefed me on the jump and how to exit safely from the aircraft at 10,000ft. The skydive takes approx. 45 seconds over the first 5000ft then the chute opens and the canopy is deployed and we then drift back down to earth!

My intention for doing this Skydive was to experience the free fall again after I did one before in July. I felt that one was good but it is so scary that I felt I couldn't breath or open my eyes during the free-fall. I decided that one-day I would do another Skydive to really enjoy the experience of free fall. At the beginning of October I was at the Motec Life - UK Dinner/dance with my Wife and three Daughters. My Wife Elizabeth does a great job working as a Medical Secretary at our local hospital and she works for a consultant who is an Orthopaedic Surgeon, his name is Mr. Paul Ofori-Atta, Liz had told me about the work he does for his Charity and I started to think if I ever did another Skydive it should be for charity. So there I was. I watched and listened to the presentation about the work Motec Life -UK does in Hospitals in Ghana and I asked by intuition 'shall I do another jump now and for this Charity? 'Yes' was the answer! So I told Paul about my idea and he said that sounded fantastic. Later that evening I made my commitment public when Paul kindly passed me the microphone (there was no going back now!). I started to raise sponsorship money right away and have managed to get a total of £420 in pledges from many very supportive and generous people, a BIG THANK YOU, I love you all.

Right! Where were we? Oh yes! As the aircraft taxied over to us I felt really calm, we climbed in and then sat on the floor in-line. There were two other guys doing a tandem jump. There were six of us all together. The aircraft hit maximum thrust and released the brakes and we were off down the runway, I could just see Liz and my Daughters waving so I waved back. We took off and steadily climbed, at about 3,000ft my instructor reminded me of the jump exit procedures. We all got to enjoy a wonderful view; you could see the whole of East Anglia and the Sea on both sides of the land. At 10,000ft the Red light came on, that means goggles down and get ready to go! Then the shutter door opens and wind rushes in, wow we're above the clouds. Then the green light comes on and it's time to GO! The first Tandem pair shuffle over to the door, legs out, head back, whoosh they're gone, then the next pair, and now it's my turn...I'm ready as I'll ever be, 'Ok let's go' I shout, feet and legs out over the edge, wow it's bright out here, head back, hold onto your shoulders and Scream AAaaaahhhhhhhhhh, wow! I'm flying!!! It felt amazing. My instructor tapped me on the shoulder to say I could put my arms out and so I did. What an amazing view! I can see for miles. This is great and this time I can breath really easily up here. No problem. I feel like my hat is going to blow off, but at 120mph what do you expect, we carry on free falling, and I'm looking around taking in the view. It's breath-taking stuff! At 5,000ft altitude my instructor opens the chute and with a bit of a jolt we go from horizontal flying position to upright standing with the chute canopy above, you feel really safe, you look down at you feet and see for miles, everything's in miniature.

Then we do a few twists and turns, these make me feel a bit sick, kind of like motion sickness, we practice for landing by lifting our legs right up out of the way of the ground using the handles on the side of my jump suit. Not long now my instructor informs me, 3,000ft, 2,000, 1,000, the air field is behind us at the moment, we turn and start coming in, I can see everyone on the ground looking up and waving, I wave back feeling a bit dizzy. I lift my legs right up with one last tug, hook my ankles together and am down, softly and easily. The ground crew come and disconnect us from the chute! Bend your knees, clink - clunk, right you're done, landed, says ground crew. I turn and shake hands with my instructor Adrian and thank him for a job well done, and then there's my family all coming running over to greet me, Yeah! I going running over to them and give them a big hug! You did it they said, you're mad but we love you!

See photos below



Getting ready to go, chocs away!



About to walk over to the aircraft



Great little plane, no seats! Just a big open shutter to jump out of at 10,000ft!



Me and the tandem instructor with parachute at about 1000ft coming into land



The ground crew and welcoming party, Amy, Lucy and Emily my 3 Daughters



Feet firmly back on the ground, raised £415 for charity www.moteclife.co.uk