

from the editor-guy

John Rosso is a Letter Carrier who works at Bakersfield's South Station. More importantly, he is the proud father of three daughters: Sara, Brandi and Anna. And—often—being a parent is an introduction to adventure...

John's oldest daughter, Sara, is twenty-three years old. When she graduated from high school, she wanted to go skydiving with six of her girlfriends. She never got around to it. But, the idea took hold in the mind of John's youngest daughter, Anna.

When Anna was fifteen, she told John that she wanted to skydive when she turned sixteen. John told her that he would join her if she wanted. John's dad, a retired U.S. Airforce Master Sergeant, asked them if they really wanted to jump out of a perfectly good plane. And then, twenty year old Brandi told them that she would like to go, too.

Anna's birthday is April 13 and that was the target date for the jump. The whole family began to do research on how they could accomplish this dream that Anna had. They found a company—SkyDive Taft—which offered what they wanted.

However, during that time, John's family was also dealing with many health related issues brought about by John's father's struggle with cancer. John's plan was to have his dad be there when they jumped out of that "perfectly good airplane" Despite the fact that his dad died on April 18, John knew that he and Brandi and Anna would still make that jump.

With other family members there to offer support, the three waited patiently in Taft on Sunday May 2, 2010. Following some introductions at 1:00 p.m., they were shown some basics.

After going through the short orientation they felt ready. They were told that tucking their knees would give them the ability to make somersaults in the air. Lying on a bench, they were shown how to hold their bodies to catch air, and how to properly arch their backs.



(l-r) Anna, Brandi, Sara and John Rosso clown around before the skydive debut.

But...they then had to wait and wait and wait. It wasn't until 5:30 that they would actually start to board the plane.

The hours of waiting weren't really boring. They watched videos being produced for first time jumpers who got to get

into the plane before they did. *That* was a lot of fun because they got to see how excited people were after they got to the ground. It made it all seem so real!

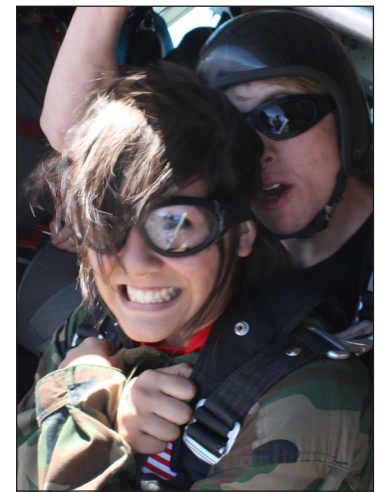
They also got to watch people pack the foils. There is an exact method which has to be used so that there won't be any fouled lines.

John explained that the gear they would use would not be the traditional round parachute. They would use a "foil" which allows for more precise steering control and makes for a lot more fun.

Finally! Fifteen people and a pilot started that slow climb up to 13,000 feet! Then, they would be looking to make a "tandem" jump with an experienced person. Anna would jump with someone named Alex; Brandi would literally be "linked" to a guy named Joey. And, John? Well, he was told that could refer to his jumping partner as "Voodoo"...

Some of the other people on the plane were also making their initial jump; however, one lady was making her one hundredth jump on that particular flight. Others on the plane had made hundreds of jumps, and it was easy to see how their enthusiasm could be contagious.

John says that they were told that they would jump at 13,000 feet and that they would deploy their foil at around 4,000 to 5,000 feet. He chuckles as he pointed out that they were told that they would be jumping out of the plane at the count of, "Three." Well, guess what? When the count reached "Two" they were each ceremoniously pushed out of the airplane. Anna was the first person to get airborne. She was followed by Brandi and John got the thrill of seeing his daughters jump out into the sky.



(l-r) Anna Rosso shows determination as she and Joey get ready...



This is what John saw as Brandi took her jump!

Then— he knew it was *his* turn! John remembers that he didn't feel too nervous. He had a little anxiety, but he mostly felt excitement at what he was about to do. The most butterflies that he experienced were right as he stood in the door looking out at the ground.

When John did jump, he didn't maintain his tuck position for very long. The girls did numerous somersaults but he didn't want to lose his orientation. He did everything else though and arched his back and was amazed at how it felt. He said that there were definitely two separate portions to the experience.



Looks like John and "Voodoo" are having a great time dropping through the air as John's gives a thumbs up sign to the photographer!

Before the foil deployed, they were "maneuvering" by using their arms and legs. It was noisy because they were dropping at about 100 feet per second. After the foil came out, it was extremely peaceful and there really was such a sensation of floating.

Because John was the last the jump, he was able to see where his girls were. "Voodoo" asked him if he wanted to get closer to them. John said, "Sure!" "Voodoo" maneuvered the foil over to them so John could have a better look at how they were doing.

"Voodoo" asked John if he wanted to steer. John told him that he wanted to. John feels that this was probably the highlight of the entire experience. He said that the foil is incredibly responsive and that it was so much fun to actually fly through the air.

He remembers seeing Brandi as she soared!

In looking back, John says that the absolutely worst part of the entire day was the fact that they had to wait for so long.



Brandi and Joey make it look like so much fun as they wave to the photographer!

They didn't want to have any food on their stomachs before they jumped. They hadn't eaten anything and got really, really hungry. They did have some crackers out of a vending machine. They did have a celebratory post-jump dinner at the first fast food place that they could find.



In this picture, you can see that the lines are deploying for the foil.



John, just inches away from making a soft landing after jumping from 13,000 feet.

If you get a chance to speak with John, you will see his face light up as he becomes animated in describing what it was like to take this kind of an adventure.

He's already talking about when he might be able to go up again. Other family members have shared with him that they plan to do it, too. The cost drops tremendously when a person becomes certified. And, to top that off, John says that they are excited about the possibility of skydiving in Santa Barbara or some other beautiful place!

John's daughter, Sara—who started this whole thing off in the first place—has no plans to join John or her siblings.

BASIL ZUNIGA
The Editor-guy

Final Caption: John and "Voodoo" did good!

