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Byline: Glenda Luymes



Rusty Wilson gives thumbs-up to his latest jump out of an airplane.

More than 50 years have passed since 79-year-old Rusty Wilson last leapt from an airplane.

That was over Korea with the 101st Airborne. Yesterday, the First Nations war vet said he felt "a familiar thrill" as he made a tandem skydiving jump 3,000 metres above Abbotsford.

"It was out of this world," he said after the jump. "I forgot what living was all about. I forgot what it was like to be airborne. This brought back memories for me."

Wilson's jump lasted seven minutes. After a 40-second freefall, his chute opened and he sailed slowly toward earth.

"The view was fabulous. I could see the [Fraser] river and all the mountains. I had some bad falls in the past, but this was a dream fall."

Wilson received the skydiving session from his son for his 79th birthday. After getting the green light from his doctor, he decided to dedicate his jump to fellow veterans.

Before the jump at Skydive Vancouver's Abbotsford drop zone yesterday, Wilson said he felt "calm."

"I'm doing it . . . to give my whole family the feeling of the thrill of flying," he said.

Wilson, the older brother of First Nations politician Bill Wilson, was joined by his daughter Lisa Cook and his grandchildren, Dylan Cook, Danya Druckrey, Rusty Druckrey, Rosanna Razor, Sarah Cook and her boyfriend Parminder Lalari.

The group was excited to share Wilson's big day.

"This was a goal of ours -- to share this with our father and grandfather," said Lisa Cook.

After the the jump, Cook said she was proud of her dad. "It was amazing. I have no words for it."

Despite his advanced age, Wilson is not the oldest person to complete a jump at Skydive Vancouver. The oldest jumper was 85 years old.

"We get quite a few people coming out for their 60th birthday and special events," said sales manager Clint Carroll. "If you're in good health, it's a possibility at any age."

First-time jumpers are required to go tandem with an experienced skydiver who pulls the parachute's cord.

"Every sport has risks, but it's actually more risky driving your car to get here than it is to jump," Carroll said.

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