

Zippering into an active lifestyle

New Denmark senior among the first to zip-line across the Grand Falls gorge

By Mark Rickard

The (zip-line) glove is thrown down. Eighty-seven year old Dorothy Hansen of New Denmark is one of the first people to glide across the Grand Falls Gorge on the new Zip Zag zip line last week, completing another item on her personal list of things to celebrate her life.

Dorothy was joined on her latest adventure with her daughter Pam (Hansen) Dolph of Long Island, New York. The quiet senior proved an apt pupil for the Zip-Zag staff, climbing up on the stool and clasping her hands above the trolley attached to the cable stretching 660 feet over the gorge to the landing area on the east side of the St. John River. With a gentle push from Zip Zag staff member Evan Carpenter, she was off, gliding across the 229-foot deep gorge in about 30 seconds. But Hansen said the adventure will stay with her for a lifetime.

"I picked the zip line because I thought it would be fun, and it was fun," Hansen said. "I wasn't frightened because I knew I was going to enjoy it, and I wanted to see what I could see up there. It was the thrill of a lifetime."

Daughter Pam didn't seem so eager stepping into the harness and getting ready for her thrill ride across the gorge. But she admitted after her mom bravely took the zip line plunge, she couldn't chicken out.

"She guilted me into it. I thought it was going to be scarier. Because of the trees there you can't really see the total depth until you get halfway across and then you look down. Then you go 'Oh My God,'" Dolph said.

Hansen adheres to the motto that you get out of life just what you put into it. In 2009 the senior climbed to the top of Mount Carleton with Pam. The zip line challenge proved to Pam that her mother has a zest for life.

"I have so many followers of my mother in New York; I have so many well wishers who couldn't believe my mother was doing this. This is phenomenal that any 87-year-old will do this."

Next on Hansen's to-do list is climbing the 354 steps from the base to the crown of the stature of Liberty in New York. The iconic statue, which was a gift to the United States from France in 1886, soars 22 stories over the New York Harbor. An elevator takes visitors to the top of the pedestals, but more intrepid tourists must walk the staircase to the top.

Pam said her mother's next challenge at the Statue of Liberty might have an added twist. Visitors can now rent jet-skis to tour the harbor around the Statue of Liberty.

"I have never been on a jet-ski, but I have been on ordinary skis," Hansen said. As a youngster she used to go over the legendary New Denmark ski jump "for fun". Several years ago Dorothy led three other generations of the Hansen family in a skiing holiday in the Rocky Mountains.

She hopes to visit the Statue of Liberty next spring, but in the meantime she recommends Zip-Zag to all thrill seekers, regardless of their age.

"They all should try this. I know some people can't, but anyone that can, should do it. It is thrill that you have to experience," the feisty senior said.

Danny Trites of Zip Zag said the company is receiving lots of interest from riders of all ages, but Hansen's zest for adventure should inspire everyone.

"Live life to the fullest, absolutely. She definitely does," Trites said. "We have lots of people wanting to ride

Zip Zag. It's going to be an exciting year."

Zip Zag will host a celebrity zip line event on Oct. 2 as part of their kick-off activities. The company is already booking group events and plans to continue to offer rides across the gorge this autumn.



We survived!

Daughter Pam (Hansen) Dolph and Dorothy Hansen share a hug and smile after their zip line adventure across the Grand Falls gorge. Hansen, 87, was one of the first thrill seekers to zip-line across the 229-foot gorge. (Photo by Mark Rickard)



Ready to ride

Evan Carpenter helps Dorothy Hansen prepare for her zip line ride while Pam (Hansen) Dolph, her daughter, looks on at the Zip Zag ride in Grand Falls. The mother-daughter duo was among the first to zip across Grand Falls gorge last week. The attraction opens to the public Sept. 26. (Photo by Mark Rickard)



I did it!

The smile says it all on Dorothy Hansen's face after she rode the zip line across Grand Falls gorge last week. Rhonda Sand helps the 87-year old senior off the steel cable after her adventure. (Submitted photo)