

## Overcome your fear of heights with the help of a Flugtag and a flying monkey



by Ned Hickson

It's been 100 years since the Wright Brothers proved that manned flight was possible. This eventually led to the very first commercial flight and the discovery of something just as important in man's pursuit of the sky:

The air-sickness bag.

You may not think this was an important discovery, but trust me: Anyone who has sat next to me during a flight on anything other than a coin-operated spaceship will tell you the only thing more important than the

discovery of the air-sickness bag itself is discovering how to get rid of it once it's been used.

For me, problems generally begin once we've reached our cruising altitude. This is when—for reasons I don't quite understand—all pilots are trained to address their passengers by informing them exactly how high they are and how fast they're going. I don't want to know these things. If I did, I wouldn't be curled up in a fetal position with my thumbs in my ears and an air-sickness bag pinched between my knees.

I went to school. I learned about Sir Isaac Newton.

I know there is a fundamental law of physics that says: *Everything*

*that goes up must have at least one intoxicated pilot.*

That's the only thing running through my mind while the flight attendant is trying to explain that there are more air-sickness bags available, and to please stop vomiting into the seat pocket.

While there are plenty of books out there aimed at helping people overcome their phobias, I've always believed in facing things head-on. So when I got an invitation to attend the next Red Bull "Flugtag" in Santa Monica, Calif., I immediately said to myself, *Why am I being invited to a swingers convention?*

I quickly discovered that "flugtag" has nothing to do with any type of

disciplinary action between masked strangers, but is actually a German word meaning "flying day."

The more I read about the event, the more I realized that here was something that could help me conquer my fear of flying by joining a group of people who purposely fly their planes off of the Santa Monica Pier and into the ocean.

I should mention that these planes are completely human-powered and rarely fly more than 20 feet, mostly because, aerodynamically speaking, it's hard to get liftoff when your aircraft is shaped like a giant cheese wedge, basketball shoe, or flying monkey.

After giving it a lot of thought, I've decided to

try to attend this year's Flugtag in September.

I say try because, in order to make it there and back again before my deadline, I'd need to....

You guessed it! Take a plane. As you can see, this creates a bit of a conundrum. Then again, it may be just what I need

to force me out of my comfort zone — and everyone else out of theirs if I can't find an air-sickness bag.

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