

Cumberland man celebrates 90 years from 10,000 feet up

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SMITHFIELD, R.I. — What better way to celebrate turning 90 than jumping from an airplane 10,000 feet up?

“President Bush did it, so I said to my children, ‘Why don’t I do the same thing?’” 90-year-old Gilchrist Garvey, of Cumberland, said Saturday, recalling George H.W. Bush’s birthday skydive in 2014.

Garvey’s family, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren, came from as far as South Carolina to witness his jump from a Cessna 182, accompanied on his parachute glide back down to the earth by Chris Dunbar, of Boston Skydive Center at the North Central State Airport. The two were harnessed in tandem to the same chute.

“It was an experience, let me tell you,” Garvey said after his feet returned to the ground. “I wanted to do it at 90, and that’s what I did.”

It was a far different descent from those he did as a paratrooper for the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne from 1946 to 1948. Those jumps were from 900 to 1,000 feet with heavy gear on, he said.

“A jump for the Army is completely different. We did whatever they said we were going to do,” said Garvey, a retired vice president at Tech Industry in Woonsocket.

And in true Rhode Island fashion, he took his jump with David Marion, 57, of Woonsocket, whose father, George, used to work for

Garvey. Marion also jumped in tandem with a different instructor from the skydive center.

“The whole thing was different than I expected,” said Garvey, whose family described him as a strong-willed, generous man. His son Stephen, grandson Craig and others wore T-shirts to honor his Army regiment.

Good job, they cheered as he touched down. His daughter, Lisa Garvey Brainerd, of South Carolina, greeted him with a kiss.

“It was fun,” Garvey said. “Oh, yeah.”