

**Path of Excellence
NOMINATION FORM**

Part One – Nominee Information

A. I would like to nominate the following group, team or company for the International Skydiving Museum & Hall of Fame Path of Excellence award.

TEAM RAEFORD (Style and Accuracy 1973-1978)

PART TWO – NARRATIVE

TEAM RAEFORD is the name chosen to identify those intrepid souls who dedicated themselves to the skydiving disciplines of Style and Accuracy at Raeford Drop Zone, North Carolina, during the period from 1973 through 1978.

During that era, TEAM RAEFORD succeeded in placing more individuals on the US Parachute Team than any group or club in the country. Many national and international competitors came to train at Raeford with high hopes ... many stayed, taking up residence in Gene Paul Thacker's "Bunkhouse", adding to the flavor and diversity of the Drop Zone, and many left ... unrequited, but all earned the right to call themselves TEAM RAEFORD.

The men and women of TEAM RAEFORD persevered through good times and bad, clear weather and poor, as jump pilots, hotel desk clerks and night auditors, week end air show performers, midnight shift prison guards, waiters, waitresses, bartenders, Unemployment Commission Officers, parachute riggers, burger flippers. All methods and means that were necessary to be able to play the game. The point was to skydive ...the goal was perfection in an imperfect environment.

TEAM RAEFORD's accomplishments during this era can be simply described as (a) domination of the Carolina Council and Inter-Council Sport Parachuting competition circuits, (b) filling the lion's share of places on the podiums of every annual US Nationals 1973-1978, and, ultimately, (c) three out of every four slots on the Men's and Women's US Parachute Teams competing in the bi-annual World Championships during that same time, as they fine-tuned and continually innovated their chosen discipline. Training every day at Raeford DZ in lock-step partnership with their comrades of the US Army Parachute Team, "The Golden Knights", who, along with their brothers and sisters of the air from Canada, Germany, and the UK consider themselves RAEFORD RED.

TEAM RAEFORD continues to advance the Sport through its alumni's contributions of service, philanthropy, and promotion. A sampling of the efforts include:

- International Skydiving Museum & Hall of Fame: Two TEAM RAEFORD team members currently serve as Trustees;
- Chairwomen, PIONEERS OF SPORT PARACHUTING REUNION and fundraiser organizing committee;
- Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony 2014: Donated \$13,000 to Skydiving Museum & Hall of Fame from TEAM RAEFORD;
- As a group donated over \$100,000 to the Skydiving Museum & Hall of Fame;
- Donations to the USPA US Men's and Women's Style & Accuracy Team currently exceed \$25,000;
- US Style & Accuracy Parachute Team Head of Delegation, World Championships, Bulgaria, 2018
- Team Leader US Style & Accuracy Team World Championships: Illinois, 2016; Bulgaria, 2018;
- Team Coach US Style & Accuracy Team World Championships: Illinois, 2016; Bulgaria, 2018

Included in TEAM RAEFORD's "virtual" trophy case rest 13 World Championship Gold, 17 Silver, and 6 Bronze medals. Every National Champion in Style, all but two in Accuracy, and every US National Overall Style and Accuracy Champion from 1973-1978 hailed from Raeford.

TEAM RAEFORD's most famous Alumna, Cheryl Stearns, who won World Champion honors as a member of TEAM RAEFORD, become the most decorated female Style and Accuracy Champion ever after she finished her career on the US Army Golden Knights. Cheryl cut her competitive teeth flying and jumping at Raeford DZ from 1975 through 1978.

TEAM RAEFORD is a concept. It is an idea ... an ideal that has survived these past 40+ years and is alive today. It was all-encompassing, all-welcoming, all-inclusive. If you wanted to be a Champion, you made the pilgrimage to Raeford to see, feel, taste, and learn how to become one. (How did you "get" be a part of TEAM RAEFORD ... ? You put your name on the manifest and packed fast.)

Many people came to Raeford in those days. Many went home with medals and honors and many more did not; but, the quality of the effort and the sportsmanship and pride garnered there endures to this day among all who are proud to call themselves TEAM RAEFORD. It was all about winning ...yes ... but more importantly, it was totally about love of the air, love of competition, total dedication to a single passion ... and everyone came away with a loyalty to one's teammates that remains as fresh and intense today as it was that long, long time ago ... in the days of our youth. The commitment to perfection of Style and Accuracy came through trial and error, failure, triumph, incredible highs and terrible lows ... but you soon learned you could always go faster, cleaner ... there is no perfect Style set.

All emotion aside, the proof is in the record books and for that brief period of time (during the "Golden Age of Style and Accuracy"), TEAM RAEFORD made its indelible mark on and in the history book of skydiving.

Blue Skies !

**TEAM RAEFORD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEDAL COUNT
1974 TO 1978**

		GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1974		0	0	0	0
1976	MEN TEAM ACCURACY	5			5
	WOMEN TEAM ACCURACY	5			5
	WOMEN OVERALL COUNTRY	5			5
	BRAKE ACCURACY		1		1
	MEN OVERALL COUNTRY		5		5
	STEARNS ACCURACY				0
	MARIA ACCURACY	1			1
	MARIA OVERALL			1	1
		<hr/> 16	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 23
1978	WOMEN TEAM ACCURACY	5			5
	STEARNS OVERALL	1			1
	STEARNS STYLE	1			1
	STEARNS ACCURACY		1		1
	WOMEN OVERALL COUNTRY		5		5
		<hr/> 7	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 0	<hr/> 13
GRAND TOTAL		<hr/> <hr/> 23	<hr/> <hr/> 12	<hr/> <hr/> 1	<hr/> <hr/> 36

1974

MEN

**COLLINGWOOD
BRAKE**

WOMEN

**MILLER
COLLINGWOOD
SCHMIDT
HEARST**

1976

MEN

**COLLINGWOOD
BRAKE
ENGELSTAD
HATCH
HAYHURST
DAVIS**

WOMEN

**STEARNS
SCHMIDT
HICKS
JOERNS
LEDBETTER
WRENN**

1978

MEN

COLLIINGWOOD

WOMEN

COLLINGWOOD

CHRISTEN
VON DERAU
HATCH
REYNOLDS
LIMOND

LEDBETTER/JOHNSON
HICKS/JORDAN
SCHMIDT
STEARNS
PATRICK