

Disabled skydiver spreads message of perseverance

by Karen Adler

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As [Dana Bowman](#) slid into the small parking lot at 801 Brooklyn Ave., his parachute billowing behind him, Mike Bruno rushed up, Polaroid camera in hand, to congratulate him.

"This guy is good," said Bruno, a retired Air Force major, after watching [Bowman](#) jump 3,500 feet from a helicopter Thursday afternoon.

[Bowman](#), a longtime skydiver, lost both his legs in a midair collision in 1994 that also killed his friend Jose Aguillon, of San Antonio.

Bruno, 79, has worn a brace on his leg since it was crushed in car accident 25 years ago. [Bowman](#) is an inspiration, he said.

"It's very important that people realize that just because you lose a limb or two, you don't quit," he said.

[Bowman](#), 40, jumped out of the helicopter Thursday to help celebrate the opening of Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics' new office on Brooklyn near downtown. He's one of thousands of patients treated by Hanger clinics, and he speaks all over the country spreading his motto: "It's not the disability, it's the ability."

[Bowman](#) practices what he preaches.

Seven days after losing his legs, he flew to San Antonio to attend 23-year-old Aguillon's funeral. Five months later, he sneaked out of the hospital to go skydiving. And nine months after the accident, he re-enlisted in the Army, making him the first double amputee to remain on active duty in the U.S. military.

"It was a tragedy," he said, "but I don't blame anyone."

He's now retired from the Army and lives outside Fort Worth with his wife and five children. He runs the [Dana Bowman Limb Bank Foundation](#), which collects prosthetics to donate to low-income individuals.

[Bowman](#) said he jumps about 100 times a year, not because he's obsessed with skydiving, but because it's a good tool to hook the interest of the students and other people he speaks to.

"You add the skydiving, the helicopter and being a double amputee - it's amazing," he said. "But this is normal for me."

He's been interviewed for numerous television shows and is to be featured on a Nike "Just do it" commercial set to air soon.

[Bowman](#) also is the ultimate spokesman for Hanger, said Del Lipo, a licensed prosthetist and orthotist at the Brooklyn office.

"His story's just remarkable - his perseverance and determination," Del Lipo said.

Illustrations/Photos:

Caption: PHOTOS BY JERRY LARA/STAFF; Former Army parachutist [Dana Bowman](#) skydives to celebrate the opening of Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics' new office on Brooklyn Avenue near downtown. [Bowman's](#) jump was Thursday. [Dana Bowman](#) waves after a successful jump at Hanger Prosthetics & Orthotics. [Bowman](#) lost both his legs in a collision in 1994 that killed a friend from San Antonio.