

BUNGEE JUMPER

It is the rite of manhood and fertility meant to beckon a bountiful yam harvest. Every spring on the South Pacific's Pentecost Island, men and boys in loincloths, their ankles bound with supple liana vines, dive then dangle, from a rickety six-story tower. Inspired by this insanity, the Oxford University Dangerous Sports Club, class of '79, staged an April Fools' bungee stunt from a bridge in England. Monkey see, monkey dare. So in the summer of 1986, New Zealander AJ Hackett and a fellow Kiwi took the plunge on the 60-foot plunge. "One jump," says Hackett "and we were addicted." Six months later while on a French trek with the New Zealand speed-skiing team, Hackett eyed the Eiffel Tower and ... voila! His infamous 300-foot leap gamely re-enacted here, with the aid of a handy-cane, was captured (on film), as was Hackett, (by the gendarmes). Luckily, the man who today runs bungee centers, in seven countries, and who has seen his folly become as commonplace at county fairs as Ferris wheels, was spared arrest that day. (So, too, in 1988 when a tourist tipped of guards at the Statue of Liberty as Hackett tried to bungee jump from her torch.)

Photographed in Paris, France, on April 3, 2001