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SELLING

THE FRONT LINES OF BUSINESS

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Helmets on.
This sales
training course
takes place
70 feet up—
without a net.

(page 44)

MAY 1995



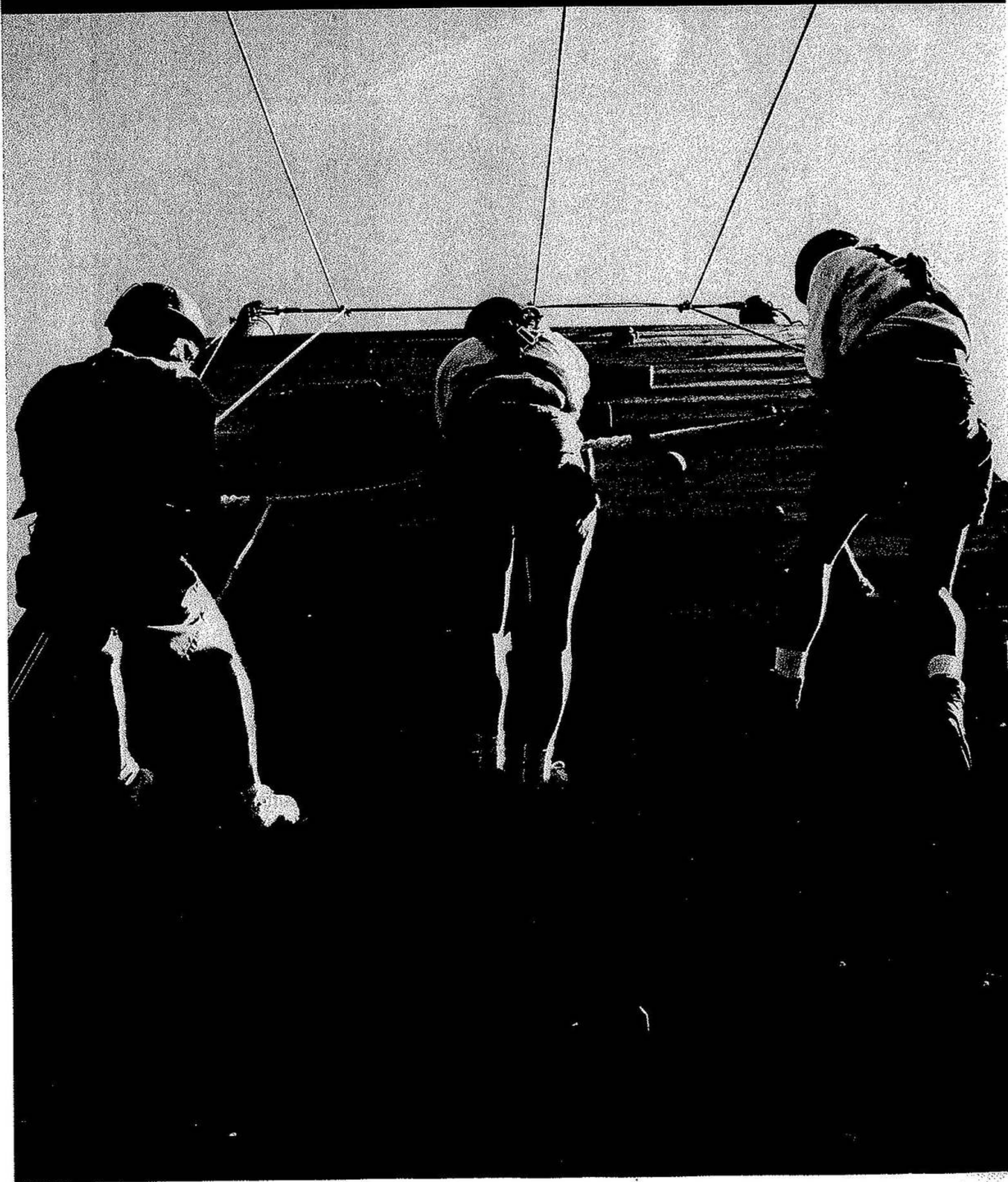
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MAY 1995

THE BECOS EXPERIENCE • TOO OLD TO SELL?

SELLING

UP AGAINST IT



**They will face the Monster,
the Wall, the Zip—and sheer terror.**

**We join 11 salespeople put to
the test at the Pecos River Learning
Center in Chaska, Minn.**



SEVENTY FEET UP IN THE AIR, her legs dangling stiffly in the wind, Gail von Rueden of Norwest Banks is perched on a narrow wooden platform, staring out at the unknown. With only the cables of a zip line and the emptiness of air and sky before her, she ponders firsthand the prospect of leaping into space, then racing at breakneck speed down the cables. She blinks, swallows, closes her eyes, looks again, tries to check her fears. She knows she cannot. From a distance she resembles nothing so much as a small child, her body tiny, her limbs thin, her head immense, swollen as it is by a protective helmet.

For eight grueling hours now, von Rueden, a commercial banking representative who sells in new and often hostile territories far from the home office, has subjected herself to increasingly heightened forms of controlled terror. She has fallen backward off a ladder; walked with a partner, hand-in-hand, along the wires of an ever-widening V-shape; climbed a 48-foot vertical "Wall;" and walked across two 15-foot tightropes stretched 60 feet above a grassy hill. Now it has all come down to this: the Zip. To push or not to push. To fly or not to fly. Alone, she thinks,

BY JOHN ANDERSON

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK CARDILICCHIO

NEW HEIGHTS: IN ONE DAY, THESE SALESPEOPLE WILL TEST THEIR WILL, THEIR NERVES, AND THEIR ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER. HERE THEY RAPPEL OFF THE 48-FOOT PECOS "WALL" AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THEIR MISSION.

CONQUERING THE MONSTER (LEFT TO RIGHT): LYNN SCHREDER, AT&T; PECOS TRAINEE BOB CARPENTER; LORI PURVES, AT&T; AND ALAN BISHOP, MONSANTO.

"I would never do this." But von Rueden is not alone.

"Go, Gail!"

"You can do it, Gail!"

"Come on, Gail! We're here for you!"

The voices are not taunting. They are, instead, full of encouragement, and the notes that are struck are genuine. And felt. Both on the ground and high, high up in the air.

The words are those of her teammates, a group of 11 salespeople, come, like von Rueden, to see what outdoor adventure has to say to them, to find out if stretching it here can help them sell back home.

This, in a nutshell, is the premise behind the Pecos River Learning Center's partnering program, Creating Customers for Life, a state-of-the-art course that combines sales training with outdoor (and indoor) adventure. One of several dozen imitators spawned by the success of Outward Bound—an outdoor-adventure training program originally designed for British soldiers in WWII—Pecos has in little more than a decade established its own very lucrative niche. With 1994 sales of \$17 million, the company is the leading adventure trainer to corporate America. The figures bear out the claim. Since its beginning in 1983, Pecos has served its blend of training and adventure to some 500 companies and close to 100,000 individuals, most of them salespeople.

Pecos's message—both to corporate executives and to their salespeople—is simple, according to executive vice president Hersch Wilson. "Our clients know that they're up against massive change," Wilson explains. "They know that today's sales climate is stressful. They know it emphasizes risk-taking. We're here to help their salespeople learn to take those risks—and live to talk about it."

Talk about risks ...

Up on the platform, von Rueden fidgets, pushes forward, inches back, pushes forward again. Her hands strain at the leather harnesses that tie her to the zip line. There's the trace of a smile on her tightly compressed face. Suddenly she lets out a scream as her body plunges into nothingness.

The cables sing as von Rueden flies down the incline and toward a telephone pole that marks the other end of the zip

line. Halfway to the pole, gravity and a sagging line slow her progress. The zip has lost its zap, and three-quarters of the way to the pole, the adventure comes to an end. Von Rueden's body slows into a gently rocking, swinging motion. She kicks her legs wildly. Waves her arms. Shouts. "Yeah, yeah, yeah! I can't *believe* I did this!"

Her teammates feel otherwise.

"We knew you could, Gail!"

"We *knew* you could!"

Von Rueden's face, pale and finely textured, glows behind thick tortoiseshell glasses. No jock, she has nevertheless conquered all during this one day of vigorous outdoor activities. From that first backward fall into the waiting arms of her fellow salespeople to this ultimate test, she has pushed herself to the limits, overcoming some of her deepest fears.

And why? Still swaying in the air, waiting to be unharnessed, she looks around at the faces beneath her and begins a litany of thanks. "I was *so* scared, but I thought about you, Edie. And I thought, if you could, I could. Then I heard Bruce cheering me on. And I thought about Rita wanting to go even though she was seven months pregnant. And then I heard Alan yell, 'Don't stop now!' And, oh, God, I don't know, I just let go." Normally cerebral and articulate, von Rueden can barely contain herself. She practically babbles. "Now I can't believe how much fun it was. It was thrilling."

If von Rueden is in ecstasy, her companions aren't far behind on the curve. "The reason," says their guide, outdoor



"You go as far as you can go—and no farther. But there's no reason why your team can't go the whole distance. That's the essence of partnering."



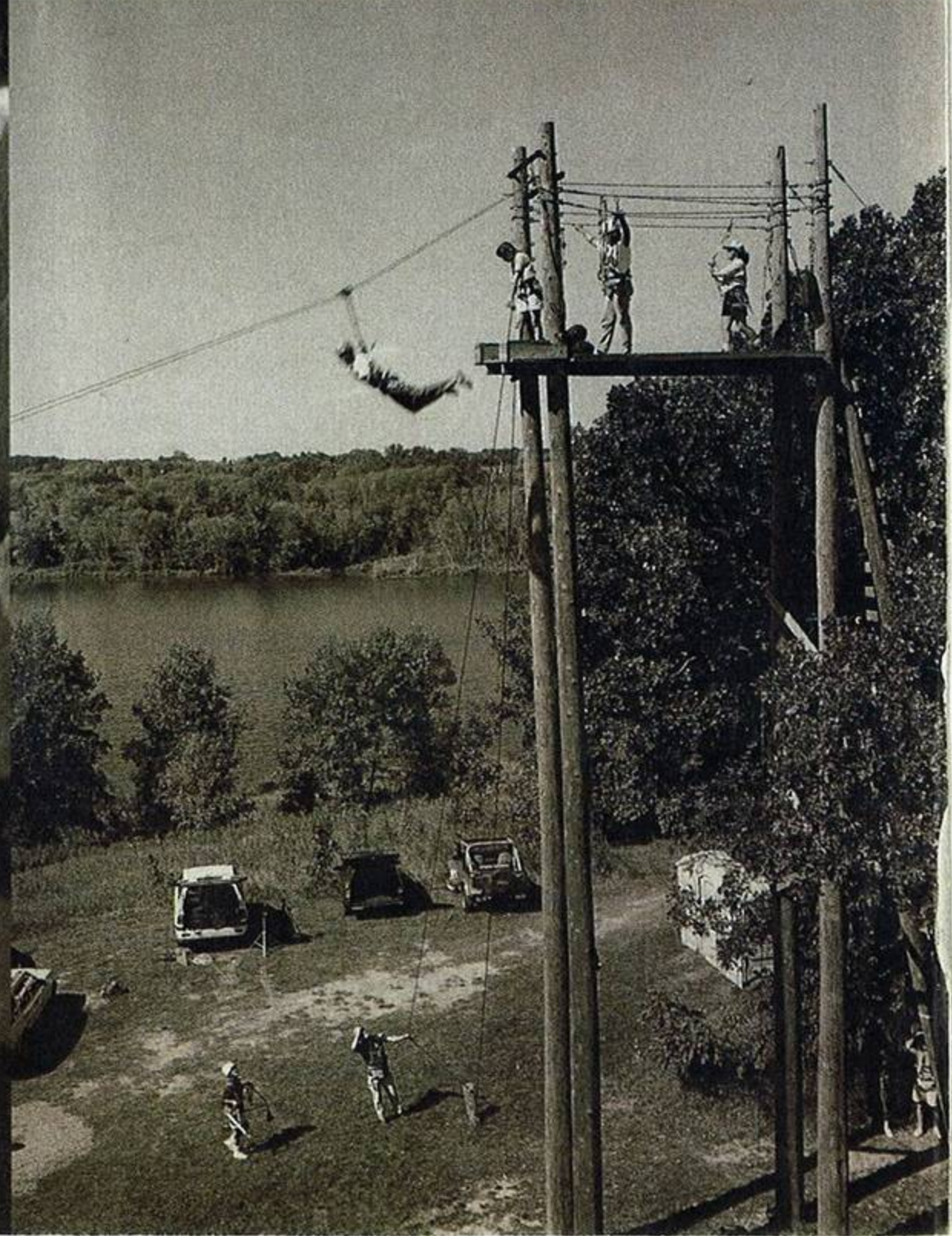
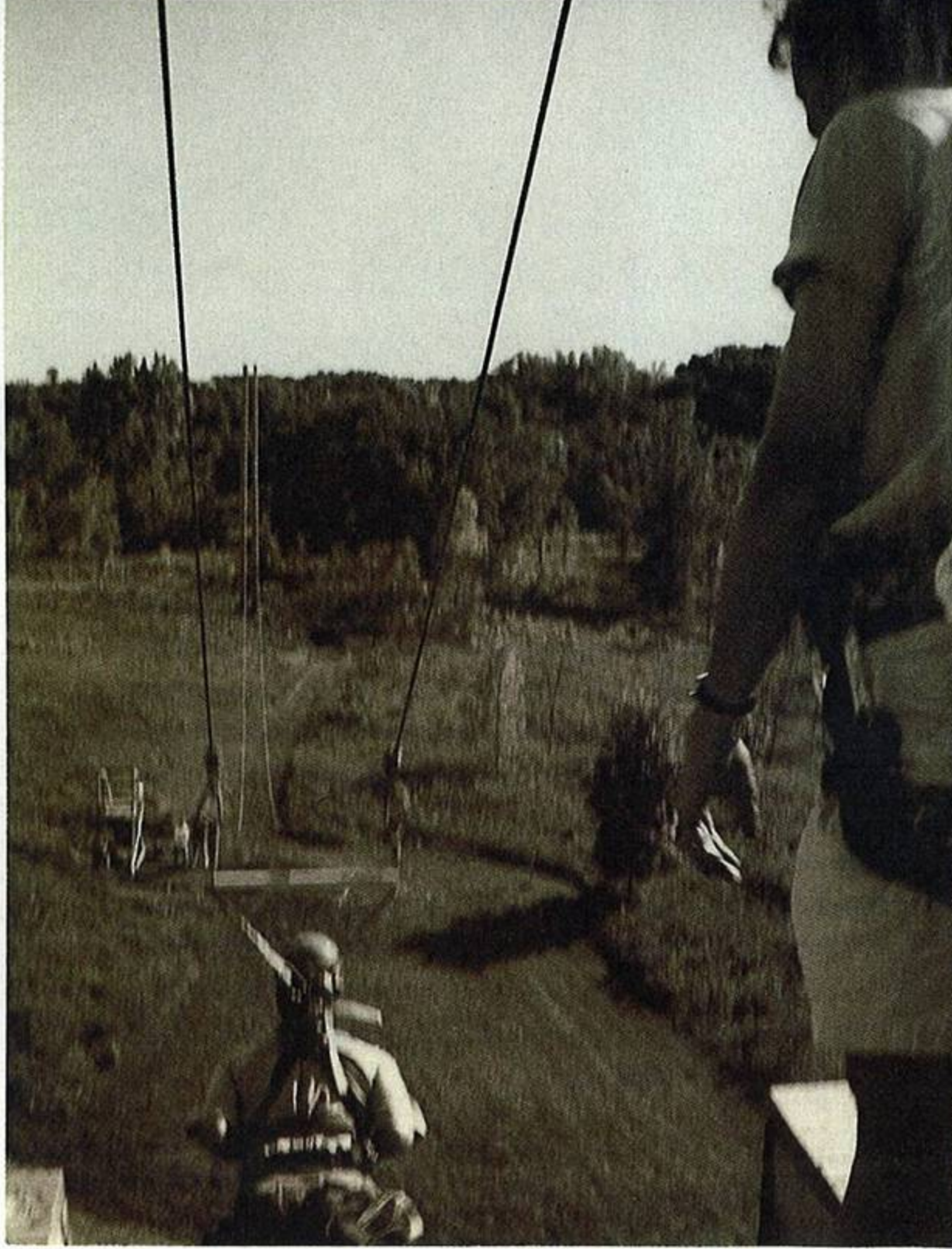
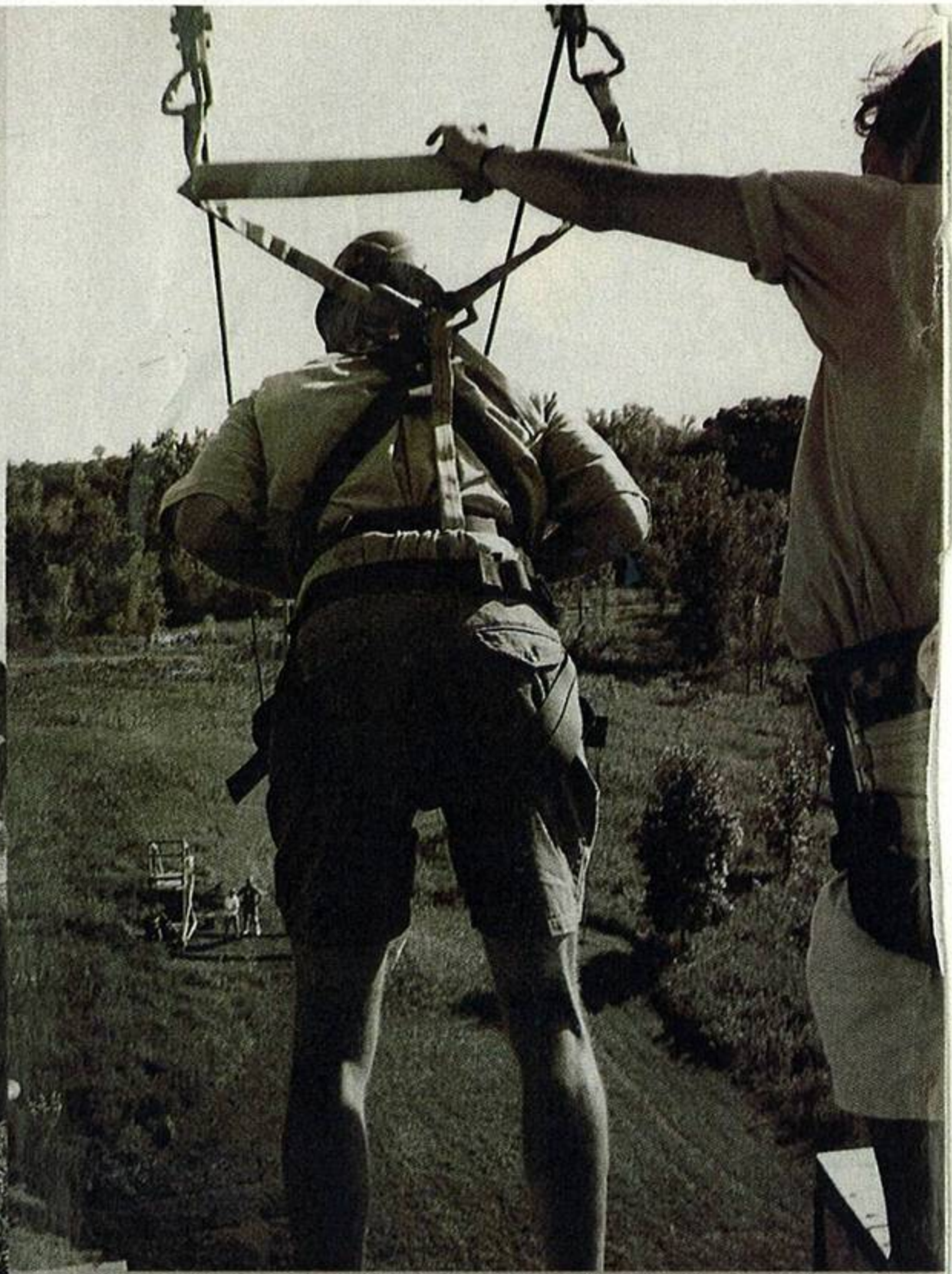
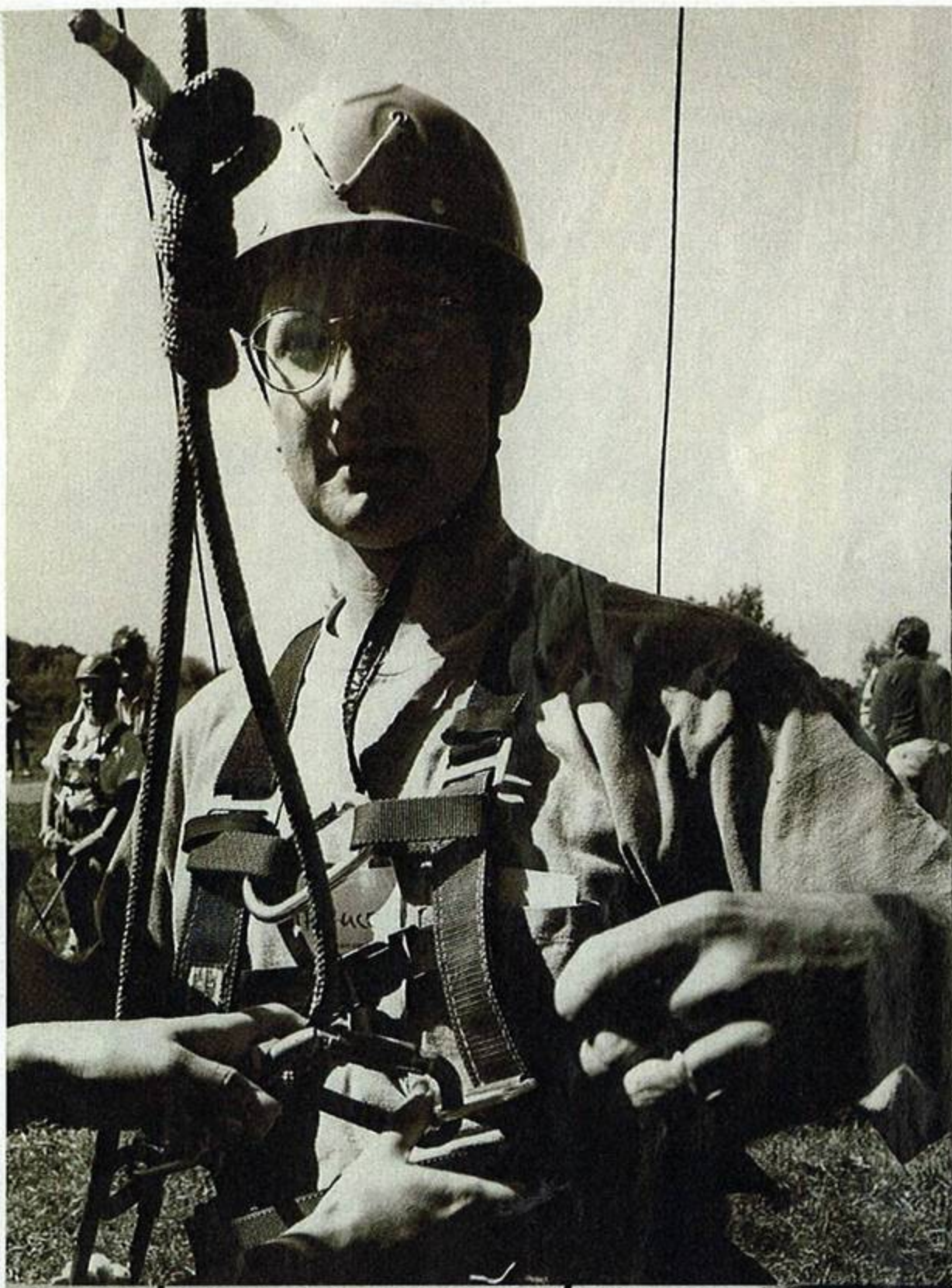
trainer John Foster, "is that when one succeeds, they all succeed. Everyone's a winner here today—even if they didn't walk the Monster, climb the Wall, or do the Zip. They were all part of the team. The guy in the glasses who belayed Gail, he didn't even *try* to do the Zip. But he was there for Gail when she needed him. He was her backup. He was an essential part of the team."

The experiences that von Rueden and the others have shared today, explains Foster, "are about pushing you to know your limits, not pushing you past those limits." The Pecos experience is also about partnering. For example, Foster notes, there's the vital act of belaying—holding the safety line that is attached to a climber. "The guy who belayed Gail was her partner," says Foster. "The guys on the ground who encour-

aged her were her partners. They each had a job, and together they made it happen."

When they return to the everyday reality of selling, Foster continues, "these folks are going to carry with them what they learned here. And there is no better kind of self-knowledge than that which teaches you your limits while showing you how, as a team, you can go far beyond those limits. *You* go as far as *you* can go—and not one step farther. But there's no reason why your team can't go the whole distance. That's the essence of partnering, both out here and back home in sales."

A gentle, earnest man, razor-thin and strong, Foster has had experience in sales as well as in action-adventure training. The two disciplines, he says, "are really just like one. And that's what *this* is all about."



TAKING THE PLUNGE: BRUCE CHRISTIANSEN OF CENTRAL FLORIDA PRESS (OPPOSITE, UPPER LEFT) PREPARES FOR THE ZIP. SAFELY CLIPPED TO THE ZIP LINES, HE TAKES A LEAP OF FAITH, JUMPS OFF THE PLATFORM, AND PLUNGES 70 FEET DOWN THE CABLES TO HIS TEAMMATES WAITING BELOW. AS HE IS FLYING, A PECOS INSTRUCTOR (RIGHT) CHEERS HIM ON FROM ABOVE.

What it's *not* all about is the Pecos River. Although the company's origins do, in fact, lie along the Pecos River at founder Larry Wilson's celebrated former ranch near Santa Fe, Pecos now has a new owner, and its nearly two dozen active "learning centers" are scattered throughout the U.S. and Canada (see sidebars). Typical of these is the Oak Ridge Conference Center in Chaska, Minn., a set of low-strung, utilitarian beige-brick buildings. The outdoor setting more or less lives up to Pecos's billing: "serene," "isolated," "quiet," as one company executive described it. There's a lake—where swimming isn't allowed—behind the complex, and an expanse of acreage in front. Tall trees and rolling hills surround the lake. It's here that the outdoor training takes place.

For six long days, participants not only learn to manage—if not exactly control—their fear of heights, they are also taught how to apply those lessons to the art of sales. Along the way, they're given an intense catch-up course in "reading financials," like corporate reports, and taught the hows, whys, and why-nots of partnering, both internal and external. "It's a lot to swallow in six days," admits veteran Pecos trainer Jim Moore, the chief pathfinder for this week's activities. "But, hey, it's good medicine. Fruit juicy-flavored for sales." A typical Moore-ism, the line is spoken—and accepted—with grins all around at Sunday night's opening session.

here with two of her key people, senior sales training manager Judy Degady and salesperson Rita Berger. Like most of those here today, they've come to test the program, to help decide if their company should put hundreds of salespeople through it later.

The same is true of Lynn Schreder and Lori Purves of AT&T, both of whom are sales managers in the company's small-business accounts division in Bloomington, Minn. "You can think of us as guinea pigs," says Schreder. "The company does. I can just imagine someone there saying, 'If we've got to lose somebody up there on the high wire, it had better be Lynn.'" Then she laughs, while Purves rolls her eyes in mock horror.

Steve Bennett, Alan Bishop, Doug Little, and Steve Murray make for an arresting quartet. To the man, they are big, beefy, and burly. They're also highly informal, to say the least, and jolly and shrewd at the same time. Their business? "We sell to tree, nut, and vine growers through distributors," says Bishop. Then he adds in a pseudo-whisper, "We're Monsanto agricultural chemical salespeople."



For six long days, Pecos participants not only learn to manage their fears, they are also taught how to apply those lessons to the art of sales.

It's a varied lot of salespeople who have come here, not to the wilds of New Mexico but to the suburbs of Minneapolis, to imbibe the Pecos experience. Most are relatively young—in their 30s—but there's leavening in the form of Edie Davis, a sales training director at the American Chicle Group of Warner-Lambert. Davis is of a comfortable middle age, 42, with a teenaged son and an aging father at home. She's also comfortable with herself. "I'm just going to do what I feel like doing," she announces at the opening night's session. "And if that's watching someone else climb ladders, that's fine." Davis doesn't mince words, though as her companions soon learn, there's strength and gentleness beneath her directness. She's

"Crop protection—that's what we're supposed to call the business now," Bennett pipes up. "But nobody does," Murray and Little immediately interject. "It's more environmentally friendly-sounding," adds Bishop. Immediately, all four are in stitches. Based in California's Central Valley—Little has since relocated to Michigan—the men know each other so well that their talk often seems a sort of shorthand.

Gail von Rueden and Bruce Christiansen have come by themselves. So, of course, they're paired, and the pairing works. Both are serious sorts, quietly intelligent. For a banker, von Rueden has a finely honed sense of quiet humor, while Christiansen is a quintessential Jimmy Stewart character, the hand-

some young salesman who is full of solid, old-fashioned virtues.

Christiansen, a printing company account representative for Central Florida Press in Tampa, is typical of the lot. At 36, he's already a veteran salesperson, having been in sales since his sophomore year in college. Moreover, he likes what he does. "I did a lot of cold calling early on, and I found out that I was good at it," he says. Having mastered that skill, Christiansen is hoping now to learn the Pecos way of partnering—even if it means climbing the 60-foot Monster.

"Partnering is the buzzword of the '90s," Christiansen explains, "and any extra edge that I can get to help me increase my sales—I'll do what it takes to get it."

Also here to "do what it takes" are two new Pecos River employees, Tracy Eliason and Bob Carpenter. Eliason's in sales, but at Pecos, everyone is expected to be intimately familiar with the outdoor experiences. "Intimately," adds trainer Moore, "means up there on the high wires."

"Oh, what you mean is that he's here to take your job," says Doug Little, eyeing Carpenter. "Yeah," says Alan Bishop, "and what you also mean is that you're going to get rid of him right off the bat." The Monsanto quartet cracks up.

Grinning, Moore goes, "Riiiiight." Then he gets down to the meat of the matter. "But *you're* here because sales today is in a state of permanent whitewater, and you can't get out of the boat. And here's the kicker: There ain't no choice. Your management doesn't know what's coming round the next corner, so you've got to paddle like hell. And you better be prepared for it. Which is where we come in."

Now imagine, says Moore, a competitor that in the next three to five years will put your company out of business. "Imagine a competitor that knows the finances of your company. A competitor that will be viewed by *your* clients as a business adviser rather than a transactional opponent." Then he pauses. "Scary, huh?" Heads nod as one. "Then you bet-

Pecos Then: A Man, a Ranch, and a Dream by the River

IN 1982 VISIONARY SALES trainer Larry Wilson sold his Wilson Learning Corp. to John Wiley & Sons for \$15 million and moved to a working ranch covering some 2,000 acres along the Pecos River near Santa Fe.

"Canoeing, camping, mountain climbing, horseback riding, and skiing. There wasn't much that you couldn't do down there," recalls the 65-year-old Wilson. "And I intended to do it all." Soon, however, Wilson grew restless.

Always the entrepreneur, Wilson began mulling over the idea of turning his retirement estate into a luxury dude ranch cum learning center for business executives. He had heard about outdoor adventure programs aimed at teenagers. As Wilson recalls, "I thought, 'If it works so well with kids, why won't it work with adults?'"

In 1983 Wilson opened the ranch for business—restyled by then as the Pecos River Conference Center. Wilson's pitch to his old buddies in sales training, says son Hersch, was that "the game is changing. Corporate America is faced with a radically transformed business climate. You and your salespeople are going to have to adapt to a more risk-filled environment. Pecos will show you how to do that."

The initial clientele, says Hersch Wil-

son, "consisted almost entirely of individuals—a hundred or so executives and training directors that Larry had known from the Wilson Learning Corp. days." Prices ranged from free to a few hundred dollars a person.

That first year, remembers Hersch Wilson, "nobody got rich on Pecos." But then, nobody expected to, he adds. "Larry was just planting seeds, renewing those valuable contacts."

Recalling their experiences in those early days at the ranch, even hardened sales executives become sentimental. A few, such as Samuel Liggero, director of training for Polaroid in Cambridge, Mass., made the trek to the ranch a half-dozen or more times.

"There's nothing like climbing up that cliff at the ranch and looking down on the valley below," says Liggero, referring to the ultimate Pecos wall.

But the ranch was not all walls and ropes. It was also a safe haven, an oasis from the turmoil of work. Says Donna Davis, director of training for MicroAge Computer Centers in Tempe, Ariz., "It was Mecca. Peaceful. Quiet." The facilities, she adds emphatically, "were A-plus, plus, plus, and the food was beyond comparison."

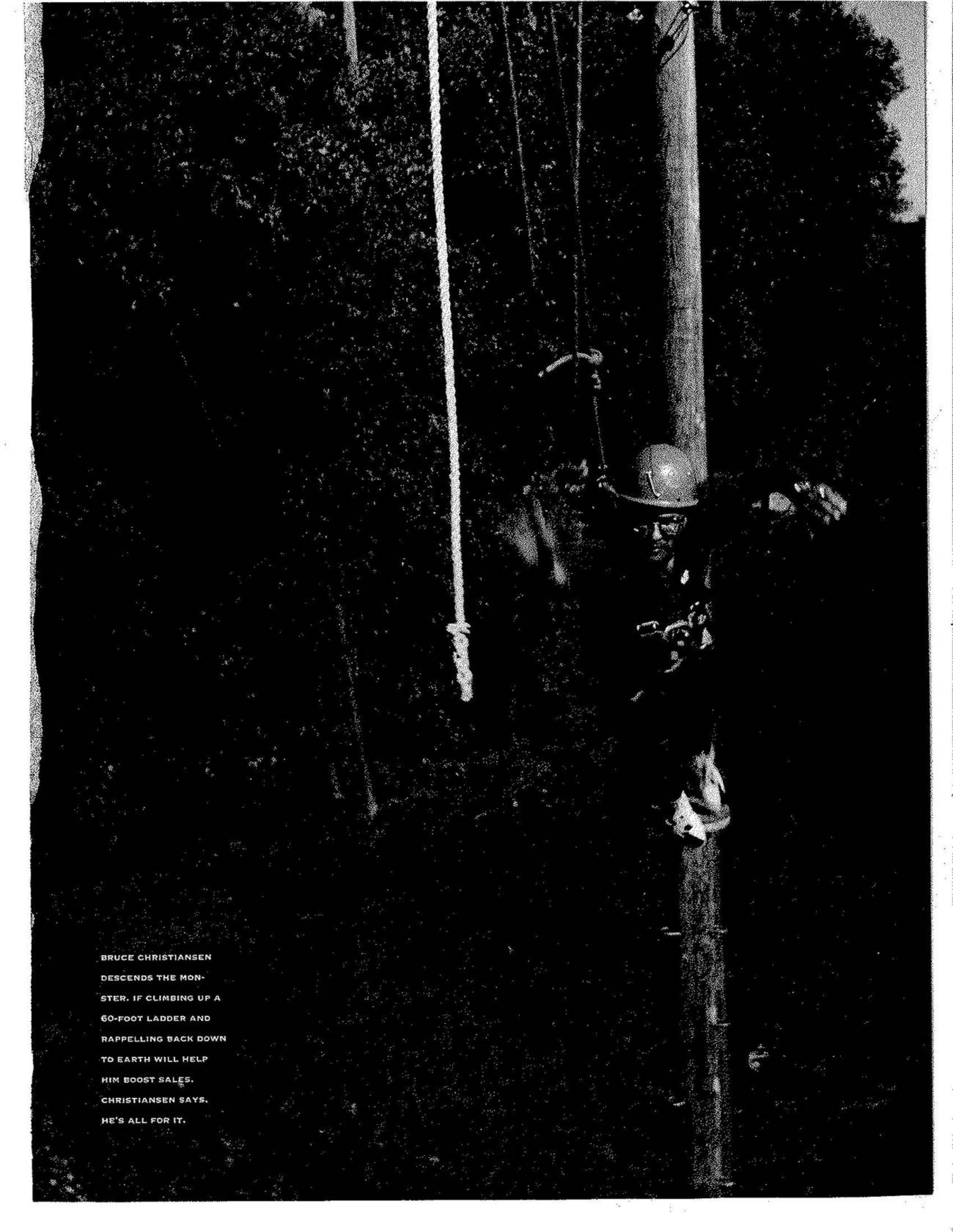
"Going to the ranch was like magic," recalls George Kilroy, vice president for

business development at PHH Vehicle Management Services in Baltimore.

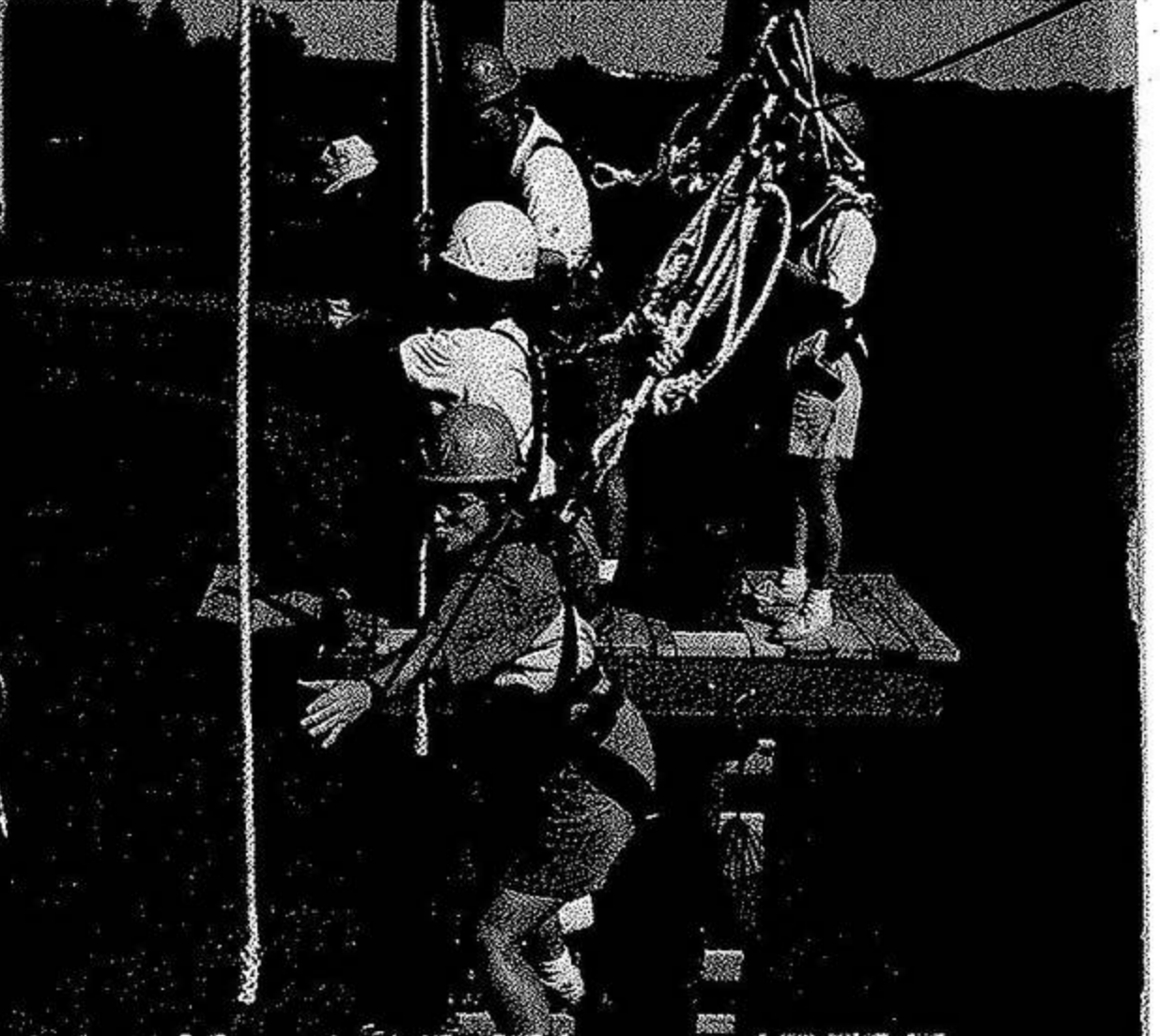
By 1990 the Pecos River experience had become de rigueur for the sales forces at some of the biggest names in Corporate America, including Motorola, AT&T, Kodak, GM, and Baxter Healthcare. Biggest of all was DuPont, which in 1988 contracted to send the whole of its 22,000 employees in the textile fibers division through the program: executives, workers, salespeople, and all. The tab: an estimated \$8.5 million. The hitch: "They said, 'You've got to deliver where we are,'" says Hersch Wilson. "And we said, 'Okay. You've got it.'"

Thus was born the string of regional training centers, a concept that today is a hallmark of the Pecos experience. More than 20 regional centers, including some in Canada, have contracted with Pecos to provide food, housing, and the appropriate outdoor spaces in which to set up ropes and high-wire courses.

Although the original ranch was shut down last year (see "Pecos Today," page 54), its purpose had been served. Even as it closed, many of the same executives who had been touched by the magic of the original Pecos experience were busily contracting to bring the same—or rather the new, mass-market version—to their sales forces. ■



BRUCE CHRISTIANSEN
DESCENDS THE MON-
STER. IF CLIMBING UP A
60-FOOT LADDER AND
RAPPELLING BACK DOWN
TO EARTH WILL HELP
HIM BOOST SALES.
CHRISTIANSEN SAYS,
HE'S ALL FOR IT.



ter become that company before someone else does."

A preacher preaching to the converted, Moore drives his lesson home with his description of life at the top of the Monster, the 60-foot high-wire act that, he says, will be "a very real part of everyone's world tomorrow."

"Oh, it's high up there," he adds. "Real high. And I'll tell you a secret: I *hate* heights. My hands get clammy. I remember the time I got caught up on the Monster in the middle of a windstorm, and I was hanging on to that sucker for dear life."

"But you know why I'm going back up there tomorrow? Well, it sure as heck ain't because I like the Monster. I don't like him one bit. I go because that Monster's with me every day, and he's with you. Every time you go cold calling, every time you make a pitch or try to seal the deal, that Monster's there, singing, 'I can't. I can't. I can't.' But you can, and a lot of you are going to be surprised tomorrow at how far you go." Moore stops and chuckles: "Sky's the limit, guys." Grinning, he slaps his hands together and gives a thumbs-up.

Rita Berger, seven months pregnant, looks down at her swollen belly and strokes it softly.

Day," as Monsanto's Bennett calls it, begins at sunrise with a hearty breakfast, heavy in cholesterol and fat. The Monsanto boys eat with gusto. "Damn, that's good," says Little. "Gourmet's delight," agrees Murray. "Best food I've eaten in ages," offers Bennett. "Makes a man feel like climbing a mountain," adds Bishop. An hour later the entire gang finds itself facing not a mountain but the Monster. "Gaw-dooow," says Bennett. "Tall, ain't it," agrees Murray.

"Don't worry," says trainer John Foster. "We're going to start with something a little less tall." That something is an 8-foot ladder perched alongside the back of the Wall. The goal, Foster explains, is to climb the ladder, "cross your arms, and as stiff as you can make yourself," fall backward into the

WHAT A DAY (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): PECOS TRAINER BOB CARPENTER DOES THE ZIP; THE LIFE LINE; THE TEAM TAKES ON THE MONSTER; ALL HANDS BRACE FOR THE BACKWARD FREE-FALL; MONSANTO'S ALAN BISHOP PREPARES FOR THE ZIP; BRUCE CHRISTIANSEN SECURES ONE OF HIS TEAMMATES. ANOTHER PECOS TRAINEE (RIGHT) STEELS HERSELF FOR THE ZIP.



the 6 feet 3 inch, 200 pound-plus Murray. When he comes crashing down, it's all his teammates can do to catch him. Yet they do. "Which is the lesson here," says Foster. "They don't, and Steve busts up his face or his knee or worse."

Business starts to get serious when the group is confronted with the Wall. A wooden structure with pegs and ledges fashioned into it, the Wall is meant to simulate the side of a mountain. The object of this exercise is for teams of three to get to the top and deliver the goods. "The goods" consists of a small cup full of water, which is to be emptied into a jar. The teams "contract" to deliver so much water, without spilling it, in so much time. Shackled to one another, they *have* to function as a team—especially since one member makes the ascent blindfolded. Suffice it to say that water is spilled, contracts voided, and new and novel arrangements thought up. By the time the exercise is over, team members have begun to get the hang of it. The blindfolded man or woman carries the water and is in the middle. The most aggressive member climbs the section of the Wall nearest the jar; the least aggressive pulls up the rear. But pull it up they must, for no one gets anywhere unless all

"Every time you go cold calling, every time you make a pitch or try to seal the deal, that Monster's there, singing, 'I can't. I can't.' But you can."

waiting arms of teammates. Lynn Schreder takes the first turn, does as she's instructed, and comes up smiling. "Felt like falling into a feather bed," she says.

No problem here, nor is there much of one at the next exercise, low wires slung in a V-shape. The object here is for partners to stand on the wires, facing each other and holding hands, while moving out along the V. As the wires get increasingly further apart, the partners inevitably lose their grip or fall off the wires. But the contortions are something to behold, especially when one of the contortionists happens to be

get at least near the top. Again, the message is the necessity of teamwork. Though "there's room for the daring eagle," explains Jim Moore, "it's as team leader—not as team loner."

Whether eagle or robin, team members know that John Foster isn't kidding them when he begs their pardon and says, "Sorry about that, guys. I know that seemed like fun. But you ain't seen nothing yet." He's right, too. The backward free-fall, the V, and even the Wall pale before the Monster. Here, there is not one hurdle but many: first a 60-foot climb up a wooden ladder to a small perch, then a walk across 15 feet of

Pecos Today: Larry Wilson's Dude Ranch Goes Big-Time

IN SEPTEMBER 1994, AN ERA ENDED. Larry Wilson, tired of funding company expansion on his own, sold Pecos to the Ryan Group, a subsidiary of Chicago's Aon Corp., the insurance and financial-services giant, for an undisclosed price. While Wilson's sons and top managers will stay on, family ownership of Pecos is a thing of the past. (Indeed, some say that family tensions were a factor in Wilson's decision to sell.) The Santa Fe ranch was sold and is now a school for Native American children.

It's a bittersweet development for the generation of sales managers for whom the Pecos experience is forever linked with the entrepreneurial Wilson and his fabled ranch. "Pecos really was Larry Wilson," says one sales director. "It was his vision. The people who worked there were his friends. Now it's a big corporation. It worries me."

At first glance, the corporate suits at Aon might seem odd matches for the rugged individualists at Pecos. But they're not. Aon's Ryan subsidiary has, for three decades, been the biggest player in automotive sales training—a highly profitable, if small, niche.

As president Karl Singer explains, "We supply the automotive industry not

only with dealer financing, training, and insurance but also with sales management. We've been in training and recruiting for almost 30 years. So we've been involved in change-creating environments for a long time."

When Singer heard in the spring of 1993 that Pecos might be looking for a financial partner, he leapt at the chance. "We saw a great future with assisting Pecos explode its business. By the year 2000, you'll see that happen, too. This is a business that's going to go 'boom!'"

In fact, Aon's ownership seems to confirm that the Pecos experience is far from just a fleeting adventure-training trend. "What we're seeing now is the really long-term viability of the program," says Philip R. Styrlund, director of strategic accounts for U.S. West Communications in Minneapolis.

"People always thought it was the ranch—'Oh, it's so beautiful, it's so isolated, the food's so good.' [But] it's not the setting. It's the interaction with the people and the process. It's the process that Larry Wilson created that provides the safe environment where we know it's okay to explore, even as we take what would seem like great risks. And it's that controlled risk-taking

that's so self-revelatory."

Donna Davis of MicroAge Computer Centers agrees. "I loved the ranch, but the ranch ultimately isn't what Pecos is about," she says. "What Pecos really is, is a wake-up call to get salespeople out of their comfort zone. It challenges them to get out of the ruts they may be in, the self-imposed constraints. It forces them to take on accountability, and teaches them they have real choices to make."

With Aon's immense capital behind it, the Ryan Group established another conference-center relationship in Vail, Colo., and opened for business there in the fall of 1994. But what's really exciting, says Singer, is Pecos's partnering program.

"This is not New Age stuff," he says. "We feel that there's no shortcut to creating change. No crystals or stargazing. Which is why we liked Pecos so much from the beginning."

Instead, says Singer, "Partnering is about changing the climate between the client and what some people call the vendor. We think that change of climate is the wave of the future. It lets both sides bring their best to the table. It's a win-win game, and down the line, I think it's going to make Pecos a significant profit contributor." ■

high-wire to another small perch, then another high walk, this time across a 15-foot wooden beam to yet another perch, followed by a rappel down. "Of course, you're not alone," says Moore. "There will be four of you, and when you get to the wooden beams, you'll notice that there are four of them—in the shape of a V. Good luck."

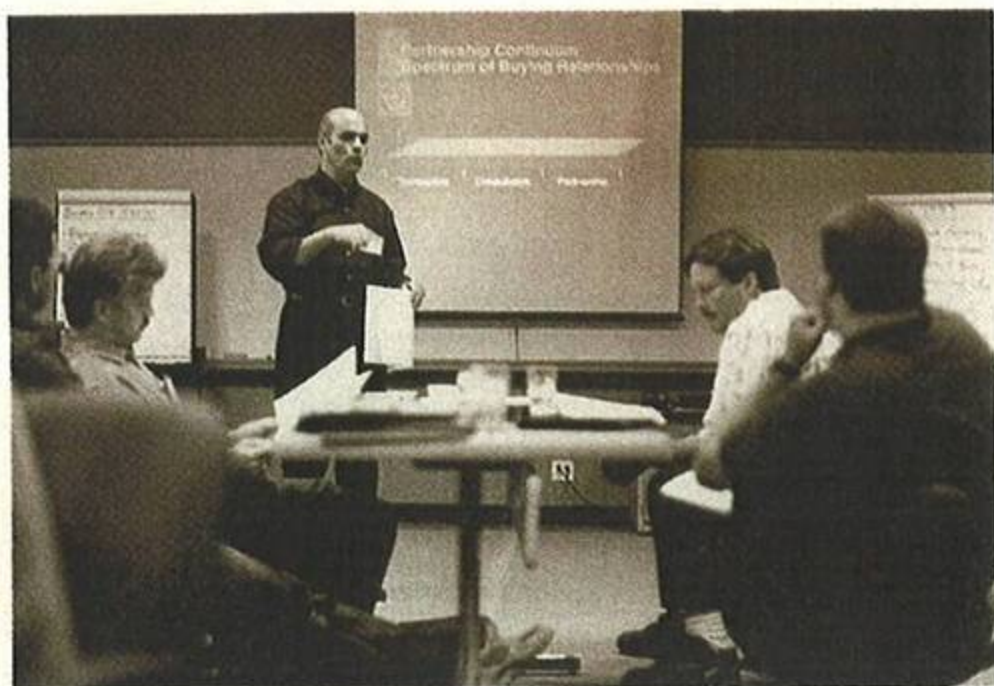
As Edie Davis ("I'm too old for this kind of stuff. Plus, I'd probably put somebody else in danger") and the pregnant

Rita Berger belay, Lynn Schreder and Alan Bishop ("A pair of pack mules," as one person sums them up. "There's nothing that scares those two") lead Bob Carpenter and Lori Purves up the ladder and into the clear blue Minnesota sky. Their ascent is rapid, the tightwire walk slow and agonizing, the V a semi-disaster. Belayed as they are and further protected by clips and wires, there is no real risk. No one, after all, is going to fall to earth. What's to fear?

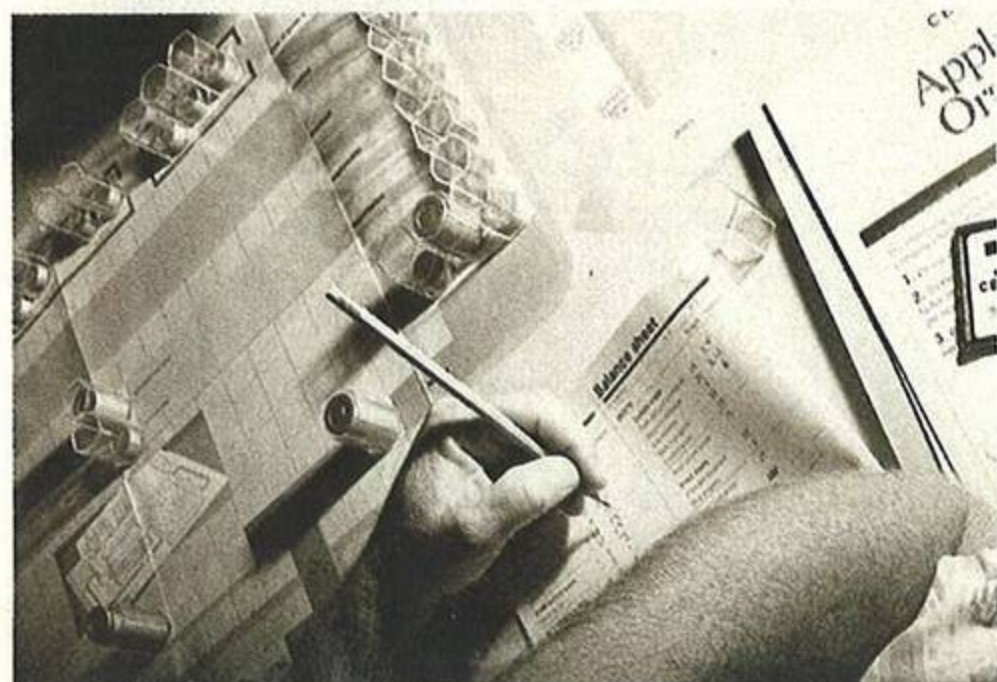
And then Lori Purves slips off the beam. Gasps all around on the ground. Phrases like, "Oh, my God," on all lips. Safe, Purves nevertheless dangles for what seems like minutes as Bishop slowly pulls her back up onto the beam. Unsteadily, she rights herself, stands, completes the walk. The four of them then rappel downward. From the ground there is loud clapping, cheers. Most of it is for Purves.

Purves is shaking as she pulls her gear off. She knows she has done it. She has overcome her fears—and survived. But it doesn't keep her from shaking. "After that," she says to no one in particular, "even the Zip looks pretty good."





STP #1: Personal Belief St
I can only learn and
STP #2: Selling On Purpos
result of helping oth
STP #3: Creating With Visi
result to look like?



PARTNERS IN PARTNERING
(OPPOSITE): BRUCE CHRIS-
TIANSEN AND GAIL VON RUE-
DEN. THE TRAINING AT PECOS
IS NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES.
AFTER ONE DAY OF OUTDOOR
ADVENTURE, CHRISTIANSEN
(LEFT) AND HIS TEAMMATES
MOVE INDOORS FOR DIFFER-
ENT KINDS OF LESSONS.

So Lori Purves survived the Monster, and Gail von Rueden the Zip. True to his word, Jim Moore and his fellow instructor Ron Lehmann, both of them middle-aged and, Lehmann at least, slightly out of shape, did the whole routine. The day done, by nightfall there isn't a fresh-looking face among the lot, old vets and neophytes alike.

At the next day's "debrief," a recharged Moore asks the obvious questions of his refreshed troops: "What are the implications for your business? How are you going to apply what you learned on the ropes and the wires to selling?"

Alan Bishop has his hand up first. "I learned how important the belayers were in my office. Someone on our support staff wrote a letter to one of my customers explaining the chemical analysis of one of our products, and it really helped me make the sale. Well, I owe that person a letter of thanks."

Doug Little puts it more succinctly: "I learned that you need the support of the whole chain to keep you up there."

"Right," says Moore. "There's no lessening of accountability, but once you've got that support, you're so much stronger than when you're alone."

Gail von Rueden sees it as a metaphor for her work as a banker. "My territory consists of several states, so I have to travel a lot. And it's scary being out there on your own. But I learned that I have a terrific team behind me, belaying me, coaching me, offering me support. So I can afford to take

some risks now and then. It's like when I was waiting to do the Zip. I froze. Now I'm a very rational person, and I knew, rationally, that I was going to be all right if I did the Zip. But I wasn't thinking rationally."

Steve Murray interjects: "You were like me on the Monster. I kept hearing those little voices up in my head."

"Exactly," says von Rueden. "But my coach was telling me, 'It's okay.' And she was explaining how the backup system worked. She was countering the bad vibes with really good, detailed knowledge."

"And that did it?" asks Moore.

"Uh, well," von Rueden stammers.

"Tell the truth, Gail," a chorus of voices says.

"No, it didn't. Judy was behind me, and I knew she was scared to death to do the Zip."

"I sure was," Judy Degady affirms. "I was shaking."

"So, well, uh," von Rueden manages. "I knew Judy wouldn't go if I didn't, and the truth is, I didn't want to fail Judy. I didn't want to fail my friend."

"Gail," Moore says gently. "You wouldn't have failed Judy. But what you did succeed in doing was finding your own limit. There *are* no losers at Pecos."

JOHN ANDERSON *believes in teamwork as much as the next guy, but he did not try the Wall, the Monster, or the Zip.*