

A sign in  
Jalbert's office  
explains his philosophy:  
"Minds are like  
parachutes—they only  
function when open."



*Encouraged by a friend, Jalbert began his career as a solo aviator. He "took to flying like a duck takes to water."*

to the test. "Theory is always debatable," he says emphatically, "so it's performance that counts. I don't develop an idea and hope someone else will put it into production. If I think of it, I make it—and it flies!" And how gracefully his inventions lift off into the air, delighting the recreational kite flyer as well as meeting the expectations of scientists and technologists who put his discoveries to good use.

From his smaller kites, manufactured by Gayla Industries for children around the world, to ram-air parachutes that have revolutionized the sport of sky-diving, to aerial lifting devices that have extended radar communication for ships at sea, Jalbert's discoveries have renewed our perception of wind as a reservoir of power that is abundant, cost-effective, and non-polluting.

Jalbert now enjoys more leisure time with his children Dorothy and Paul, two grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and his wife Emma, whom he calls "Billie." After 45 years of marriage, he credits her as being the major factor in his success. "It has been a thrill to do something meaningful in life, to know people are happy and safe with my inventions," he says in his typically upbeat tone.

Outgoing, friendly, and eager to explain the nature of his work, Jalbert still shies away from labels like "inventor" or "creative genius" and prefers to think of himself as "an intermediary between the power of wind and the questing spirit of the kite flyer." Yet recognition of his contribution to science dates back over decades and comes from many sources.

On the wall of his laboratory are some of his recent honors: an official citation from Governor Edward DiPrete of Rhode Island inducting Jalbert into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame (1988); the Aerodynamic Decelerator and Balloon Technology Award (1986) recognizing his success in a specialized science and his lifetime of innovation in parachutes, balloons and kites; and a Gold Medal from the International Parachuting Committee (1985) citing his invention as a "legendary aviation pioneer" of the first ram-air stiffened air foil for use in safer and more functional parachute canopies.

Among his important papers are other awards, so many in fact that two cardboard boxes under his worktable are used for storage. Even a 1981 edition of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*