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Sky diver plunges 2 miles, opens injured woman's chute

PHOENIX (AP) — A sky diver pursued and caught up with an unconscious woman and opened her parachute seconds before she would have hit the ground after a fall from 13,500 feet.

Diane Williams reportedly was about 3,500 feet and about 10 seconds from the ground when Gregory Robertson pulled out of a headlong dive, propped her into an upright position, yanked her ripcord and then released his own chute.

With her chute open, Williams hit the ground flat on her back, observers said.

She was in serious but stable condition

yesterday with several broken ribs, extensive internal injuries and a lung contusion, a Scottsdale Memorial Hospital spokesman said.

Robertson landed safely and resumed his own diving after Williams was placed aboard an air ambulance.

"It was another day of sky diving," he said. "This is what I like to do."

Williams, 31, of Slaton, Texas, and a veteran of about 50 jumps, had been knocked unconscious when she collided with a fellow diver, Guy Fitzwater, dur-

ing what was to have been a formation drop at a daylong sky divers rendezvous Saturday near Coolidge.

She, Fitzwater and four others were to have linked hands after jumping from a plane at about 13,500 feet.

Robertson, 25, of Phoenix, who says he has made about 1,500 jumps, was the jump master, in charge of seeing the sky divers safely off the plane.

As Williams and Fitzwater moved toward the rest of the group, they collided at 40 to 50 mph, Robertson said.

"She sort of hit his backpack and then skidded down and hit his leg and then just sort of rag-dolled off," unconscious and out of control about 9,000 feet above ground, he said.

Fitzwater suffered serious bruises but remained conscious, he said in an interview from his home in Van Nuys, Calif.

Robertson had been dropping horizontal to the Earth with arms and legs spread, about 40 feet above the formation and about 70 feet to one side.

He said he pinned his arms to his side, closed his legs and — with small move-

ments of his shoulders — aimed himself toward the spinning, tumbling woman.

He estimates he was plunging toward the desert at about 200 mph.

"I pulled up too soon the first time," Robertson said, but then he dropped next to Williams and released her chute.

Larry Hill, owner of the Skydive Arizona rendezvous site, said: "It's not so amazing to be able to catch someone.

"We do that in formations. What's amazing was that he saw this happen and was able to do something."