As a journalist, you walk a fine line deciding how much you, the reporter, should be involved in a story. However on this particular day, everything I learned during my broadcast career went out the window. Not only was I involved in a story; I became the story. On a breezy March morning, the alarm went off at 4:00 a.m. My first thought was, "Hey, those guys can do the story without me." A half hour later, I was putting on my jeans and a comfortable t-shirt wondering whether Starbucks was open at 5:00 a.m. With coffee in hand, my producer and I were off to Eloy, Arizona. We were going to shoot some of my adventure junkie friends jumping out of a hot air balloon.

Like my viewers, I was going to live vicariously through them, perched in a comfortable chair looking up at that azure morning sky. However, everything changed when the owner told us the balloon was grounded because of the wind. Thinking I could have slept in, I looked at my photographer and said, "Hey, we're in Eloy, the sky-dive capital of the world. Let's just do a regular story about skydiving."

He poked his head out behind his lens and with a gleam in his eye he said, "Are you going to do it?"

Without missing a beat, I replied, "Heck no."

He put down his camera pulled out a cigarette and said in his German accent, "Well, I guess 've don't have a story."

I began accosting strangers asking them about the dangers of skydiving in hopes that someone would say, "Don't do it!" My producer was the only one who thought I'd gone insane. All she said was, "Your mom is going to kill me."

As I boarded the plane, I started feeling queasy and light-headed. Prior to this moment, my fear was in check because I had a secret. I was not going to jump. I was planning to tell everyone that I changed my mind. Greg, my tandem instructor, sensed my panic, (lack of color in my skin, sweaty palms, racing pulse) so he stopped making jokes and told everyone to leave me alone. "Breath" he said, but all I wanted to do was cry. Suddenly, the door flew open and my daredevil friends fell out of the plane with the greatest of ease. That's when I knew it was time to tell Greg I wasn't jumping. Before I could get the words out of my mouth, I was straddling the edge of the plane. Instead of saying no, I was screaming, "Oh my god!"

The noise was deafening. I struggled to catch my breath. Instead of worrying about my chute not opening, I was thinking; "How embarrassing. I'm going to be the first person who dies up here from a heart attack. It will all be caught on tape. 'Former Valley news anchor dies in mid-air. The dramatic pictures tonight at ten.'"

Then my instructor pulls the ripcord and everything is still. The quiet and absolute stillness is such a dramatic contrast from the rushing wind that for a moment, I thought I was dreaming. I will admit, floating thousands of miles above the earth is a powerful sensation and like nothing I had ever experienced or can even try to explain. As we coasted back to earth, Greg told me to extend my legs and the next thing I knew I was back on solid ground. That was another moment where words could not explain how I felt. I doubled over and sobbed uncontrollably.

Would I do it again? Hmm...probably not. Am I glad I did it? Let's just say, this is one time I don't regret succumbing to peer pressure.

Robin Sewell
Arizona Highways Host