



How Angel Peterson Got His Name by Gary Paulsen

Subjects: Paulsen, Gary—Childhood and youth—Juvenile literature; Authors, American—20th century—Biography—Juvenile literature

Awards: Best Books for Young Adults

Book Lists: Gifted, Middle School, North America, Reluctant Readers

Props: Soft Pilot helmet, goggles

JNF

Has anyone heard of Gary Paulsen? What is his most famous book? *Hatchet*—a story about a boy who finds himself lost and alone in a strange location and he must find a way to survive. The fact is most of Gary Paulsen's books are survival stories. Why does he write so many books about survival? Well, to answer that question, Gary Paulsen has written several autobiographies. One such autobiography is this book. It is a collection of stories about Gary and his friends when they were 13 years old. In the beginning of the book Gary asks the reader if they have heard the phrase, "It can't miss—what can go wrong?" You've heard this phrase, yes? When someone says this, what usually happens next? Everything falls apart, right? This phrase was something Gary and his friends used often. They had an ability to put common sense and fear aside because whatever they were doing seemed like a good idea. On the up side, this ability to try anything allowed Gary and his friends to become—the first extreme sports athletes. That's right. Skateboarding, BMX bikes, base jumping, hang gliding. It all began with Gary and his friends. Don't believe me? Let me tell you two of the stories in this book and I think you will see that there is at least a little truth to that statement.

Let's begin with the true story of the first bungee jumper, Gary's cousin Harris. The story begins when Harris found some very large and still springy tractor tire inner tubes. He wondered what would happen if he tied one end to himself and the other to the top of the barn roof and then jumped out the hayloft door. He figured it would be awesome. It couldn't miss—what could go wrong? Well, the first part of the jump went well, although he did hit the ground, he wasn't hurt. It was the trip back up that got him in trouble. Hanging from the overhang of the barn was a wasp nest. Harris bounced right up and smashed into it. The wasps were mad. Harris continued to bounce up and down out of control, the wasps

followed and stung him. Although hampered by hysterical laughter, Gary eventually managed to untie the tubes and Harris landed on the ground in a buzzing, screaming heap. Thus, he became the first bungee jumper.

The next true story is about Carl Peterson. He is on the cover. Can you see that he is on skis and being pulled by a car? The reason for this is because he had heard that a world record had been set for traveling downhill on skis at 74 miles per hour. He was not impressed and became convinced that he could break that record until, problem #1—he lived in Minnesota where there is snow, but no hills and no mountains. He was not deterred. Solution—he asked a friend to pull him behind his car. He was set until, problem #2—the roads had been cleared and there was no snow. Solution—ski in the ditch next to the road. He would indicate all was well with a thumbs up, thumbs down meant stop. Peterson borrowed some equipment to keep warm and safe, got some skis and goggles. (*Put on hat and goggles*) Everything was fine at first, but then they came to a cross road where the ditch ended, Peterson, shot up into the air. When he landed, his glove got stuck in the rope so that the thumb was stuck in the up position. Next, Peterson was pulled under a huge mound of snow like a gopher. Gary and his friends in the car were concerned, but they kept going because, when Peterson popped out a few feet later, his thumb was still up. You are not going to want to miss the end of this amazing and true story of how Carl Peterson became known as Angel.

Read this collection of crazy, funny and true stories of boys who survived their 13th year to become the first extreme sports athletes.



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