Stuntman, Eluding Guards, Walks a Tightrope Between Trade Center Towers

By GRACE LICHTENSTEIN

Combining the cunning of a second-story man with the nerve of an Evel Knievel, a French high-wire artist sneaked past guards at the World Trade center, ran a cable between the tops of its twin towers and tightrope-walked across it yesterday morning.

spectators Hundreds of created a traffic jam shortly after 7:15 A.M. in the streets 1,350 feet below as they watched the black-clad figure outlined against the gray morning sky tiptoeing back and forth across the meticulously rigged 131-foot cable,

Finally, after perhaps 45 minutes of knee bends and other stunts, Philippe Petit, balancing pole in hand, turned himself over to waiting policemen.

"If I see three oranges, I have to juggle. And if I see two towers, I have to walk," the professional stuntman explained afterward in heavily accented English, punctuating his sentences with a Gallic

Mr. Petit was arrested by policemen of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and booked for disorderly conduct and criminal trespass.

But his performing days in

But his performing days in New York apparently are not over. Late yesterday afternoon,

charges in exchange for a free aerial performance in a city park "for the children of the city." No date or place has been announced yet.

The day was an extraordinary climax to three months of scheming by Mr. Petit, a native of Nemours, France, who will be 25 years old next Tuesday, and three accomplices.

In talking with reporters, the tightrope walker repeatedly insisted that his feat was done not for money or publicity, but simply because the 110-story towers were there.

"When I see two towers, I just want to put my wire across, bon!" he said, adding that he had rulled off similar

that he had pulled off similar stunts between the towers of the Sydney Harbor Bridge in Australia in 1973 and the spires of Notre Dame in Paris in 1971. However, two men who said

they were friends of Mr. Petit's did make the rounds of news offices shortly after the event offering to sell exclusive photos taken from the tower

200 Planning Trips

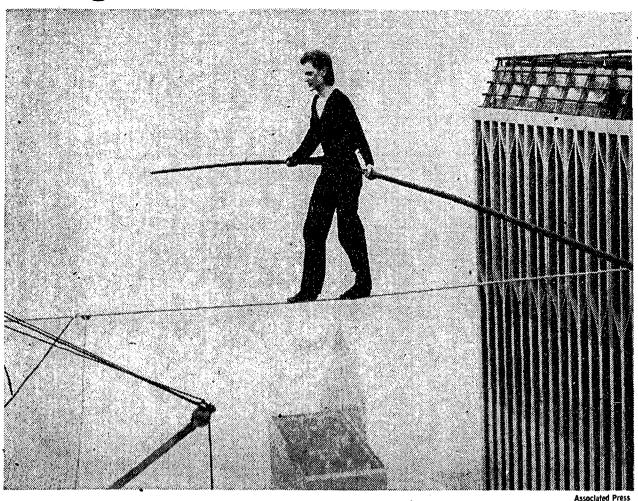
Mr. Petit, a street artist who lives off contributions from spectators at his frequent pantomimi and acrobatic acts, said he had made more than 200 trips to the Trade Center buildings over the last three months to plot the feat.
Three days ago, he and four

others, masquerading as construction workers wearing hard hats, began taking their cable, rope, guy lines and other equipment to the uppermost floors of the still-unfinished North Tower.

According to one friend, they loaded their material unimpeded on a freight elevator, stored it just shy of the roof and moved unchallenged through the buildings. Two accomplices then stationed themselves on the roof of the South Tower.

Late Tuesday night, according to Mr. Petit, they set up shop on the north tower roof. With a five foot crossbow, they shot an arrow carrying a hemp cord across to the southtower. They passed heavier lines until they were able to lay a galvanized steel cable across the

gap.
Once the main cable was



Philippe Petit walking across a cable between towers of World Trade Center. On leaving wire, he was arrested.

The New York Times/Neal Boenzi Mr. Petit was examined at hospital and later freed

over. Late yesterday afternoon, the slight, blond man, wearing black ballet shoes, was released from custody at the direction of Richard H. Kuh, the Manhattan District Attorney.

Free Performance Due

Mr. Kuh, with the consultation of Parks Commissioner Edwin Weisl Jr., made a deal with Mr. Petit to drop the charges in exchange for a free aerial performance in a city

At a news conference in the cable to the roof to she was fant astic," Mr. Petit said. In each of the cable was a stiff and walk and walk and walk and walk while construction workers, construction workers, construction workers, construction workers, construction of parks Commissioner and well both go down."

At a news conference in the cable to the roof to she wind man, wearing firm the cable to the roof to so beautiful."

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