

# Facing Down (a different) Fear... a South African Chippendale in Reno

*The Naked Truth at Harrah's 2019 as related by Joe da Silva*

*I have been in the hunting industry for over 30 years and I have been in many different dangerous situations in my life, and just got on with it. But in all those times, and those of many other PHs who have also experienced similar situations of fear, normally you have been taught and trained how to handle them. And always you have something in your hand, like a firearm, to protect you. But when you have nothing to hold onto and no one to turn to, then this is "FEAR", and you know you are in the biggest trouble of your life.*



After a long flight from Cape Town into Reno in January 2019 for the SCI show, I arrived at my hotel at 7.30 p.m. This was my first time staying at the Harrah's hotel in Reno. Normally I stay at Legacy, Circus or Atlantis but I had change of mind in staying somewhere different this time.

After booking in, I dropped into the little convenience store across the way to buy my supplies for my room - orange juice, bananas, and my bottle of Crown Royal. I do it every year, and I also go in search for the nearest Starbucks for my morning start before the show begins. After settling into my room, going through my emails, I poured myself a glass of Royal with ice, spent an hour working on emails, showered and got into bed. I didn't switch on the TV as I don't enjoy watching it in the US - 98% adverts and 2% movie. I prefer to read. The last thing I saw just before falling asleep at 9.15 was the bright red electronic clock

About 12.30 a.m. I woke up to do my usual early morning whiz in the toilet. Getting up, I felt like I had almost lost my mind (not from alcohol, just lack of sleep).

As I opened the door, it did not register that I never opened the toilet door as it is always open in my room - my brain was in slo-mo - and what I was opening was the front door of my room. I walked down a little way away from the door and heard it close behind me. That's when my brain started to light up. I immediately went for the door handle and heard "click", and I was locked outside my room. My mind was in wake mode now and the realization hit me like a lightning bolt. This person was totally naked as I don't sleep with any clothing.

I will always remember many years ago a friend of mine Ron Crous shot a charging lion in Botswana with Johan Caltiz. One of Johan's clients had wounded the lion and Ron shot it from a kneeling position, shooting it in mid-air between the eyes with his .458 Win. Mag. open sight rifle. He gave me the video, and when I saw him at Reno some years later, he said, "You will know you got balls as a PH when you face a charging lion... Ron, I am afraid you are wrong. I'd rather be facing the lion charge than standing naked at 12.55 a.m. on the 11th floor of my hotel.

What went through my mind at that moment as millions of neurons were sparking all over my brain? While standing naked in front of the door of my room I soon realize that I need to figure out help, hoping nobody would come or leave rooms near where I was standing. I spotted a fire escape sign about five doors down to the left side of my room and immediately ran towards it and opened the door into the fire escape. Just remember I still needed to go the toilet for a whiz - the urge to go and still to concentrate was not easy at all.

I walked down from the 11th floor to find something that I could possibly use to open my room door. On the 9th floor I saw a bunch of hard carbon cards on a wire ring which the Fire Inspection Officer adds on when he finalizes his checking that the fire hoses are in order. It was a bunch of cards from years back, and I struggled to remove the wire loose so that I could take a card off the wire. Eventually I did get it loose and took two cards to my door. (Many years ago I was fascinated by a person called MacGyver and I used to watch his weekly programs which were great for mindless thoughts and quite entertaining at the time, and I guess the Swiss army knife factory could not keep up with the demand - good marketing.) Unfortunately I did not find any Swiss army knife like MacGyver had, but I took his idea to use the card like a credit card to try to slide open the latch of my door, like MacGyver did in his movies. What I did not realize, I was outdating myself by 35 years - MacGyver could do it in those days, but now all doors on hotel rooms have a metal safety device to stop anybody from entering by using a credit card, so plan "A" did not work.

I ran back down the fire escape to put the cards back so that the next inspection of the fire chief would not be lost and he would not be worried about his cards missing. My urge of wanting to relieve myself increased, so a



thought came into my mind – should I just whiz down the fire escape stairways? But I could not let myself to do such a terrible thing. As I slowly walked further down the staircase to the 8th floor I saw two empty Corona bottles on the stairway. I immediately grabbed one bottle and starting urinating into it, but one did not do the trick and I filled the other one...What a relief. One less thing less to worry about now. I left the two bottles in a corner well-hidden, hoping no one would see them and think he got himself two full Corona beers.

Walking my way down slowly I came to the 5th floor and I heard someone talking. It sounded very foreign but I could not clearly understand what language it was as it echoed up the stairway. As I went further down I saw a very young man sitting on the steel staircase and talking into his cell phone and enjoying a beer. He did not notice me at all.

I finally decided I needed to approach him. As I got nearer to him he glanced up and saw me one floor above him. He looked at me strangely and put his hand up, telling to me to stop. I froze, but he just continued talking on his phone and drinking his beer as if I did not exist. Maybe he was talking to his girlfriend, far more important than some crazy old man walking naked to him. I guess I was not part of the Chippendale group. I stood there waiting for his attention but he just ignored me and continued to speak on the phone.

I realized he was Spanish as I could hear a few words. I decided I needed to get some



reaction from him and I walked down closer and he finally stood up, telling me to stop in Spanish. I asked if he could speak English and he said no. Then I had to work quickly on my Spanish as I do speak Portuguese. I tried to explain that I needed help from security - this took some doing as you can well imagine. With much persuasion I finally got him to go look for a security person of the hotel. After about 15 minutes I was standing there still waiting for him to come back to me, which felt like a lifetime. I was hoping he was going to return.

Finally he arrived back and said he had spoken to the security. How he got the message to security as he could not speak a word of English was another thought that went into my brain, and whether this security guy understood him and if he would come. After almost 20 minutes waiting I started to converse with him. He said he was from Salvador so I named him Mr Salvador, hoping he was going to be my savior. He said he had just finished working as a dishwasher at the kitchen of a restaurant in the hotel.

After some time I asked him to go and look for the security guy again. He hesitated, but I said I would pay him for his help. I don't know what went through this guy's mind when he and I were talking - he probably thought I was crazy. He asked if I was on drugs or drinking, and lastly enquired whether a woman had kicked me out of my room. I suppose these things happen in Reno hotels.

Finally a 6.5-foot tall security person came and I explained and said there was not anything sinister, that he could check at reception on my room number and my name to confirm. He was very understanding and said he'd help. "Just follow me," he said. What a relief. I asked if "Mr Salvador" could come with us, as I'd like to give him a donation for helping me. "No problem," said security, so Mr Salvador took

**AD**

an old black T-shirt out of his bag and gave it to me to wrap around my body. Unfortunately it was so small it just covered my private parts. From the 3rd floor we followed my security guard up the fire stairway. As we got to the 5th floor, he said we could now use the service lift to take us to the 11th floor, and pressed for it to arrive. It would not open. He then contacted his other friend via his two-way radio. "What's wrong with the service lift not opening on the 5th floor?" "It's damaged," was the reply. Wonderful. "We have a challenge now," said security.

"What challenge?" I asked.

"For us to get into the 6th to catch another service," he explained, "you have to get out the fire stairway and get into the passage of the hotel rooms and run to the other fire escape stairway and then catch the another service lift to the 11th floor."

"Are you joking? Is there no other way?" He wasn't.

"OK, I have no option."

"But you have to cross the whole passage to get into the other side," he added. Holy Moses I can't believe this is happening to me.

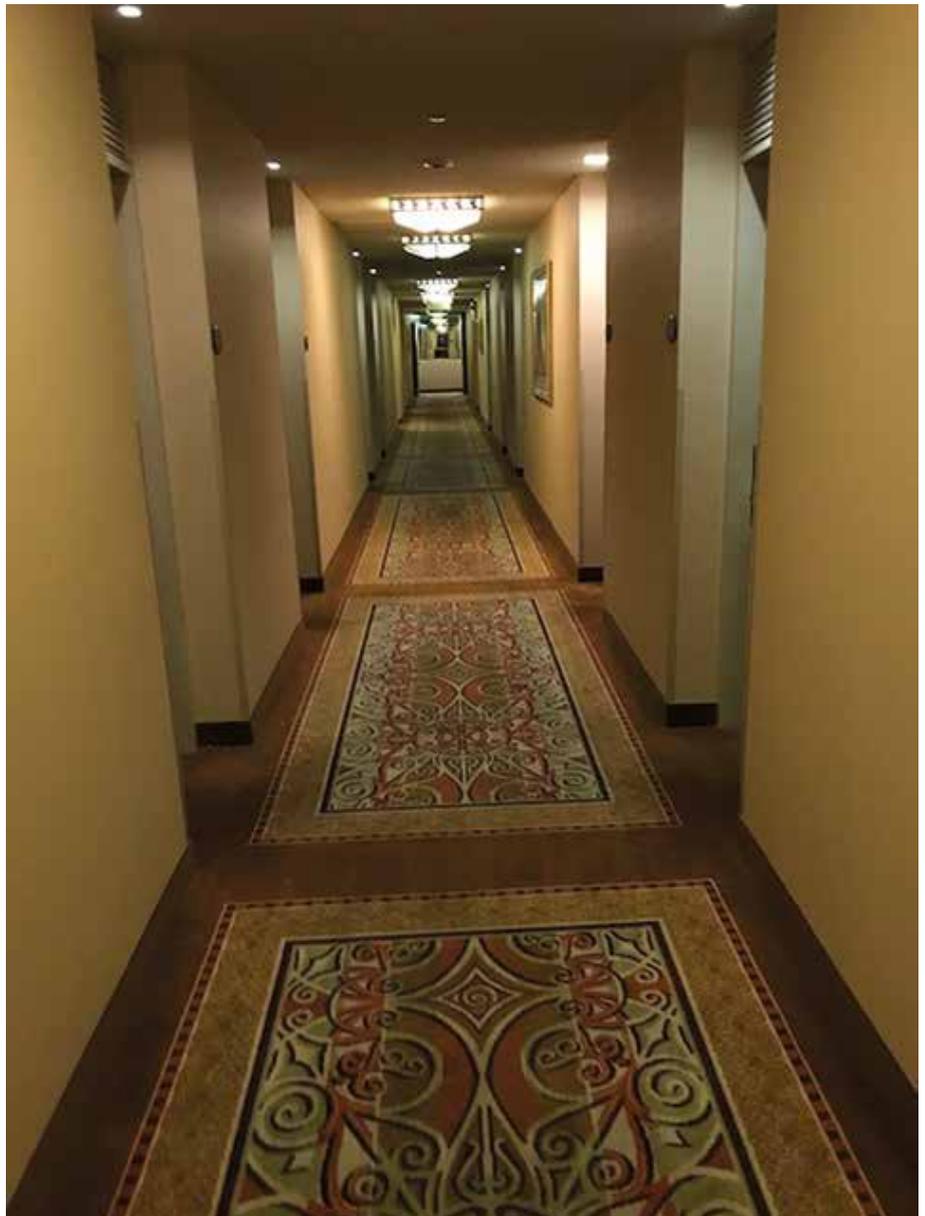
"Ok," I said to him, "but you must walk to the end of the passage to see if anybody is going to come out of their rooms, and me and Mr Salvador will run together and meet you at the end of passage." So we popped our heads out of the fire escape door and he gave us a signal to run to him.

Well, Usain Bolt would have never caught up to me. We managed to get into the service lift up to the 11th floor. Once we arrived there was another obstacle to conquer, another passage to run through to get to my room. I did another Usain Bolt run to my door - what a relief it was. The security guy took his master key to open the room...

Guess what? It did not work and there I was standing, still naked, in front of my door, back to square one...

Security had to radio his other friend to come and open the door as he had the wrong key. While waiting there he went out to the other side of the passage and managed to collect a used towel from the service room. Not naked anymore. Finally his friend came and opened the door. Before we entered the room he asked me to describe anything in the room to prove it was mine. I told him on my bedside table you will find a notepad written with word "Suitcase", and my mobile phone is 7s iPhone with a black cover. He checked and said good to go. They got a nice tip from me to thank them for all their wonderful help.

The red light clock said 3.45 a.m. as I got into bed again. As I was lying down I wondered if it all really happened or was this just a dream.



I phoned my wife as I could not sleep at all as the whole saga was running through my mind all over again and I needed just to talk to someone. She was quite surprised that I was phoning her at that time.

"Shouldn't you be sleeping?"

"Yes," I said, "but I just wanted to let you know there is a new member of Chippendale in Reno, and he is here in Harrah's Hotel in room 1146."

And every night for the duration of the show, I assure you that I put a chair in front of the front door to make sure I did not go through that door to the bathroom.

*Joe was born and based in Cape Town, and is the owner of Cape Town Hunting Safaris and Tours. He has had over 36 years in the hunting industry, and has been an International Firearms*

*instructor for over 25 years, as well as owning his own gunshop for 30 years. Joe is a qualified and registered tour guide and auctioneer, and conducts hunts into Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa. He is also a qualified knife maker in his spare time.* 📌

I had read John Sharp's book, "Facing Down Fear" which I got while I was in Dallas. I knew his brother very well, Bernie, who used to spend many hours in my gun shop. John you wrote a great book and not many PHs will ever go through what you went through. I have been in some of those damning situations as well, as I have spent a great time in hunting in Zimbabwe. The book title could not have been more prophetic about what happened.