

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“When It Comes to Snakes, Size Doesn’t Matter”

About twenty years ago, I saw a really scary movie. The movie was about snakes. I don’t remember the plot, which I’m sure wasn’t worth remembering, but I do remember one vivid scene.

A bathrobed man walked onto his pool deck early one morning. He dropped his robe, hopped onto the diving board and sprang into an Esther Williams-esque dive before looking at the pool. That was his first *and* last mistake. As the camera followed him into the air, his eyes looked down for the first time and terror shot across his face. The camera panned down to the pool – it was covered with about ten thousand poisonous snakes. After a brief attempt to fight gravity the man plunged screaming into the pool and met his wet and slimy demise.

That, dear reader, is my idea of perfect, complete and everlasting Hell. No fire and brimstone. For me, Hell is just snakes. I’m terrified of them. They’re the ultimate heebie jeebies for me. In fact, I’m getting goose bumps right now.

When it comes to animal fears, there appear to be two camps. There are the snakephobics and the spiderphobics (Disclaimer: I am no longer a mental health professional and these are not clinical terms – I just like the way they sound). Most people aren’t both and neither really understands the other. For instance, if I tell a spiderphobic about my fear of snakes, he or she inevitably says, “Oh, snakes don’t bother me.” Yet a small harmless spider will send them running.

In the same manner, I don’t understand the fear of spiders. I’ve never encountered a spider that wasn’t smaller and weaker than my foot. In fact, if I was trapped in my basement and a relatively large spider was guarding my only exit, I would still be able to lay some sole on that arachnid with the only resistance being the crunch of its shell. Spiders don’t bother me.

Snakes on the other hand are much more problematic. For instance, there’s the anaconda that can grow to 20-30 feet long. You can’t step on a 30-foot snake and live to tell about it. But when it comes to these fears, size doesn’t matter.

Last week, I removed the lid from the pool skimmer. There on the lip of the skimmer were three snakes. I was so surprised; I dropped the lid and fell backwards onto the

pool deck. I sprang back to my feet in case there were more of them that I didn't see. There weren't.

Now, since I am physically and psychologically unable to touch a snake, I got a coat hanger to try and hook them out of the skimmer. On my first attempt, I inadvertently knocked two of them back into the water. The third was now in striking position and looked mad. I tried to hide my fear but I knew he didn't buy it. I took a small plastic rake and tried to push the mad snake out of the skimmer so he wouldn't fall into the water with the other two. Then, after multiple attempts with the coat hanger while keeping a constant eye Mr. Angry Snake, I finally hooked the others out of the water. Now, all three were curled up on the concrete as if they wanted to take me on. Standing as far away as I could, I pushed them off the deck and they slithered into a hole.

I had a full body shiver and ran back inside for a Valium. And just to make sure other snakes had not penetrated the security of my home and were waiting for me under the couch, I walked on pieces of furniture to get to the medicine cabinet.

People have asked me if the stories in my column are true. I am proud to say that they are. I may embellish a fact or two for entertainment value but for the most part they're the truth. So in keeping with my ethical obligation to honesty, I will confess to you that the three snakes in my skimmer had a combined tongue-to-tail length of about 19 inches. But for snakephobics, size doesn't matter.

Since the initial sighting, I've seen five more snakes in my yard. I haven't been outside for eight days. My wife says the concrete retaining wall and the shotgun are a bit of an overreaction. The way I see it, where there are little snakes, there are big ones.

Until I'm sure these disgusting slitherers are gone, I can guarantee I won't be diving into my pool without looking.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.