

Urban Legend Inquest

*My father was a cheese grater
My mother was a stair
I'm a no-nonsense escalator
Less I couldn't care...*
--Edwin Denby

I try to get my parents the best lawyer in New Jersey, but when I call his office the secretary tells me, "I'm sorry, honey. Don't say another word. I know the accident you're talking about, but we're representing the casino."

Deposition #1: I was just about to step on the escalator when people started falling like dominoes, well not dominoes exactly since that implies order...

Deposition #2: I don't even like casinos. I took the senior bus trip to Cape May, but we had a one-day excursion to Atlantic City. I thought, "What the heck..." It was my 80th birthday, I was feeling lucky...

I, _____, the undersigned, on behalf of myself, my heirs and next of kin, personal representative, agents, insurers, successors and assigns (all hereinafter "Releasers") hereby FOREVER RELEASE, DISCHARGE AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE...

Deposition #3: Anyone who could still walk was taken to see the doctor on the casino premises. He stitched us up, he bandaged our cuts. We weren't thinking when we signed the waiver. My glasses had fallen off in the accident so I couldn't even read the small print. My leg was infected by the time I got home, but I was on my own...

I acknowledge that I have had sufficient opportunity to review the provisions of this document and understand its purpose, meaning, and intent...
(Patient's Signature) _____ (Date) _____

Deposition #4: When I fell, my earring got caught. My lobe split open, a

parting curtain...

Deposition #5: When I finally pulled out my hand, it looked as though my fingers had been bitten off by a shark...

I stole the New Jersey phone book from the hotel. I call the lawyers who practice casino law. I find someone who is optimistic about my parents' case.

Deposition #7: My skirt was caught. When the men pulled me up, it was shredded, almost gone. All that was left was the waistband and a few jagged strips of cloth...

Individuals who are injured by an escalator that fails to function properly may seek compensation for the injuries they sustained. Escalators in all buildings are required to be kept in safe working order in accordance with local, state and federal building codes. If you were caught by an escalator, or suffered other escalator injuries, you may have a valid claim for an escalator accident lawsuit. (Weitz & Luxenberg, PC)

Deposition #8: I don't know how it happened, but I was flung from the top. My hair (a short perm) was caught in the moving steps—bump bump bump—against my back. Someone pulled the bodies off of me one by one, and I could finally breathe. Then a man lifted me, too, as though I was as light as a dust mote. He sat me against the wall. Someone else dropped my purse into my lap. My husband found me and curled around me like a cashew so I could lean into him...

The accident didn't make the newspaper, any TV shows. The surveillance tape from the camera at the top of the escalator disappeared.

Deposition #9: I was sandwiched between people for a while, but when I got up I started looking for my wife. I saw her sitting on the floor. I tried to walk towards her, her bloody face, but then I got dizzy and started to crawl. My wife's eyes were as blank as tokens. I remember the yellow chips, polka dots

on the carpet. They must have belonged to the other people on the escalator. Coupons for complimentary lunches. A few passers-by picked up the free money, quarters streaked with blood darkening their days...

In 1978, New Jersey became the second state to legalize gambling in an attempt to revitalize the rundown resort area. Casinos were expected to be a way for Atlantic City to become a popular tourist destination.

Deposition #10: Workers shielded those most hurt from the stares of tourists out for a drink and a game of slots. Then the ambulance workers came with their stretchers...

Legal casino gambling is expected to be the salvation of the moribund resort and possibly the source of a bonanza for the Mob. (*Time*, May 16, 1977)

Deposition #11: My foot got caught in the gap between the steps and the side. I could see the blood coming through my Espadrille...

The number of elevators exceeds escalators by a factor of 20, yet there are almost the same number of accidents for both machines. This means that you are almost 20 times more likely to have an accident on an escalator compared to an elevator. (www.verticalanalysis.com)

Deposition #12: It felt like I was being sucked through a straw...

New Jersey law requires that slot machines, "one-armed bandits," are required to be programmed for a minimum payout of 83%.

Deposition #13: I have teeth marks on my side, the exact pattern of the escalator...

But the casino won't pay out since they are going bankrupt, changing their name. The escalator company says the casino is at fault since they didn't properly maintain it...The slot machines keep whirring. Bars, dollar signs, the number 7.

Deposition #14: I was lucky. When I felt the escalator buckle, I had just gotten on so I jumped off, backwards. But I saw what the escalator did to my handbag. It devoured the strap, then chewed right through the zipper. My wallet, my lipstick, my glasses, my tissue pack tumbled out. I kept thinking that the escalator would jam or turn itself off, but no, the steps just kept going.

The slot machine is carefully designed to be aesthetically pleasing...It features lit buttons and what we found to be a somewhat soothing, hypnotizing sound as the reels are spinning. Moreover, the sound that is played when coins are bet is the same as the sound played when coins are won in a payout, which probably helps make a more positive association. (Michael Shanks)

Deposition #15: It was too beautiful a day to spend in a casino, so I told my friend Sally to go on in and I headed towards the boardwalk to get an ice cream cone.

My parents' case never goes to trial. When they get their settlement, they throw away their bloody clothes and shred a prospectus for a preconstruction seaside condo. My sister takes the pictures of my mother, her injuries, out of the safe and burns them in the fireplace.