

TWENTY YEARS AGO
Howard Johnson's, Wilmington, Delaware.
MAN FIRST STEPS ON THE MOON

We were living in Maryland (Suburban Washington DC) and were visiting a good friend of ours from college who lived near the shore in New Jersey. That Sunday, July 20, 1969, we were all glued to the TV. At 4:18 PM EDT, we had heard those words "Houston, Tranquility Base here, the Eagle has landed" and then awaited man's first step on the Moon. The moonwalk encountered delay after delay, and we had a 4 hour drive back to Maryland ahead of us, so finally Priss and I decided that we had to leave, but that we would listen attentively to the radio and find a TV when the walk became apparant.

As we approached the twin bridges at the Delaware - New Jersey line, it was clear that the walk would be about 20 minutes away, so approaching Wilmington we decided "no sweat, all we have to do was find a bar and watch it". Wrong! Onward to downtown where surely we would find something. After 5 or 6 minutes, to our dismay we found out that Wilmington had "Blue Laws" and bars were not open on Sundays. It was now about "T minus 15 minutes and counting. Desparation struck. We decided to head out to the freeway and see what we could find.

There in the distance was sign for a Howard Johnson's Motel. "Great, every motel has a TV in the lobby". I went in; Priss remained in the car. There was a TV in the room behind the reception, but the clerk said that it would be against regulations for others to go behind the desk. "T minus 12 and counting". About this time an attractive lady about my age (at that time) came into the lobby with the same idea and heard the conversation. After another minute, I looked at her and asked her if she wanted to rent a motel room with me (we had both somehow ascertained that the respective spouses were outside in the cars). We agreed, and I negotiated a discount rate as we would not "mess up" the room and this lady and I would only rent the room "by the hour". We quickly went out to the cars, and I told Priss that I had rented a motel room with the lady she saw me walk out with. We converged on the room. T minus 6 minutes and counting.

About 2 minutes later we heard a knock on the door and the person said that he was interested in seeing the moonwalk and that the clerk said that we were up in this room. This happened several times in the next couple minutes, and soon there were 15 of us in the motel room, including several children. These people came from many places including New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia.

10:56 PM EDT: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

We all stayed a while, then each eventually departed for various diverse points on the Eastern Seaboard. Everyone had thrown in a few dollars on the table to reimburse the lady and me for our memorable fling that night in the motel room.

John Chauvin