

It was a warm and sunny day back in September 2007.

I was in the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, doing data entry for the original winner of the Oops Award. During a break from data entry, I left my computer on the third floor of the Museum Annex and traveled down into the dusty basement of the building.

Here I needed to sort through some frozen Short-eared Owl specimens that I was going to dissect for an Ornithology class project. They were kept in a large walk-in freezer that houses thousands of dead specimens collected for the museum. Everything from wolves, to eagles, to small songbirds were kept in this freezer; this freezer of death, you might say.

Since I had just begun working at the museum I had only been in the freezer once or twice before and was not really comfortable working in it. I tentatively found a few boxes labeled owls and took them out to sort through. Once I had completed my desired task, I began to move the owls back into the freezer. Because of the lack of organization in the large ice-box it was very difficult to move around in, and I found myself having to squeeze between boxes of frozen carcasses to replace the owls to their original spots. With only a large garbage bag of owls left, I slowly maneuvered into the freezer holding onto the handle on the inside of the door for balance, being careful not to shut the door behind me.

All of a sudden, something caught my foot and I slipped. Instinctively I pulled on the door handle to help keep my balance. The only sound I heard was a loud “CLICK” as the thick freezer door closed behind me. Panic briefly flitted in my stomach. I put the owls down and tried to push on the inside handle on the door to release the latch. It did not budge! It was frozen solid.....

I was trapped in the freezer. I was wearing shorts and a bunny hug and I was standing in a freezer that was kept at minus 22 degrees Celsius!!!

Panic now embraced my stomach. I began to frantically pound on the door. But I soon realized that no one was in the basement to hear me. I also remembered that construction had been happening in the building for the month prior, so everyone would tune out the monotonous drum of a hammer, or in my case the sound of pounding fists on a freezer door. How would I be found???

There was a small vent hole beside the door that was only covered by a bit of card board. Since the banging wouldn't bring any help I had to yell. So I began -
“HELP, HELP, I'M LOCKED IN THE FREEZER!!! CAN ANYONE HEAR ME??
HELP!!! I'M LOCKED IN THE FREEZER!!!!

This continued for 10 or 15 minutes, time goes by quickly when you're locked in a freezer. Thoughts of becoming the RSM's first human specimen, a fine human specimen for that matter, began to swirl in my head. I began to contemplate how I should prepare my body if I was not found in time. Should I put my neck between the jaws of the grey wolf laying on the floor, or perhaps have a bald eagle's talons gripped around my head, like I had died after grappling with the great bird.

As I contemplated my fate, finally I heard voices from behind the freezer door! Finally my cries for help were answered. They had come to rescue me!! I was free from the icy clutches of the freezer.

My legs were weak as I climbed the stairs back up to the third floor and stopped at Dr. Sutter's office. I stood momentarily in front of him, paused and said "You know, I was just trapped in the walk-in freezer".

I believe I saw a smirk cross his face for a second before he asked, "Are you okay?"