

Slippery Slope

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Well, it's less than six months until Christmas. That means in about five months Christmas movies will be airing on TV every night. I love the classics: 'A Wonderful Life,' 'Miracle on 34th Street,' 'The Christmas Story,' 'Christmas Vacation,' and 'Elf.' But, of course, the greatest Christmas movie of all time has to be 'Die Hard.'

The film focuses on NYPD officer John McClane, played by Bruce Willis, who travels to Los Angeles to spend the holidays with his wife, Holly. McClane attends her office Christmas party located in the nearly completed Nakatomi Plaza skyscraper. While there, thieves take over the building and lock it down to hold off the police while they steal \$640 million of bearer bonds.

Trapped inside the tower, McClane, using only his wits, single-handedly takes down the terrorists. Nakatomi Plaza is almost as important a character in the movie as McClane. The cop explores the parking garage, the penthouse office, elevator shafts, ventilation ducts, the roof, and he even reenters the building by swinging off the roof using a firehose and smashing through a window.

That's why Nakatomi Plaza was the first thing I thought of when I heard about the recent renovation of the U.S. Bank Tower in L.A. In 2013, OUE America, a Singapore-based real estate firm, bought the 72-story tower for \$367 million. The company then began a \$50 million renovation project that included an open-air observation deck on the 69th floor, a bar, and a restaurant – 71Above – that features a 360-degree, 20-mile radius, panoramic view of the city.

What made me think of McClane's firehose leap, however, was Skyslide.

The renovation also included an enclosed slide made of 1¼-inch thick glass that spans 45 feet from the 70th floor to the 69th, ending in the observation deck. A Sikorsky helicopter, that usually fights wildfires, carried the five-ton square tube to the top of the building. It was installed on the outside of the skyscraper about 1,000 feet off the ground. Admission to the observation deck costs \$25, while tickets for riding Skyslide cost an additional \$8.

Earlier this year, Lucy Rumantir, head of U.S. operations for OUE Skyspace LLC, the current owner of the building, released a statement saying, "The Skyslide boasts a safe, thrilling experience unlike any other in the world."

Gayle Yashar would have to disagree. Like McClane's famous barefoot run through broken glass in Nakatomi Plaza, Yashar feels U.S. Bank Tower's Skyslide is rough on the feet.

The 57-year-old Yashar, and her husband, Morty, of Woodmere, New York, were visiting L.A. and toured U.S. Bank Tower. Feeling adventurous, Gayle rode on Skyslide, but broke her ankle when she reached the bottom. She claims that the design of the slide doesn't allow the rider to slow down adequately before reaching the end, and a series of mats stacked in the landing zone creates a gap that traps riders' feet.

As a result of the injury, Yashar sued OUE Skyspace and a concession company, alleging they were negligent in the design of the slide. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages. OUE has not yet responded to the suit.

I would think that the transparent, outdoor slide that is 1,000 feet above the ground is extremely fast, as I would have to assume it is lined with lots of pee.

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