

Chapter 1 - February 1994 - The sharks that Jesus brought me

My former father-in-law used to tell me I was born *Com o rabo virado para a lua*, which translates loosely to 'with my ass facing the moon'. He is correct. The first time I watched 'Jaws' I decided I wanted to be Hooper when I grew up and was at peace with the fact that I'd have to relocate my tushy to Australia, South Africa, Florida, California, or somewhere remote, for Portugal was never known to be a shark Meca. Little did I know that I'd finish my degree on the 9th of January 1995 and two sandtiger sharks were literally delivered to my lap, in Lisbon (!), *precisely one month after...*

Excerpts:

It was early September 1994 and, for the first time ever, I felt a bit lost. I had just returned from my second stretch of fieldwork at the Sharklab and multiple challenges lay ahead of me.

(...)

I finished that thinking I was a scientific and entrepreneurial genius, not realizing I had just made one of stupidest mistakes of my life. One I didn't even pay for myself. Poor Leonor did.

Chapter 2 - September 1994 - Enter the Dragon

While working at the Zoo, I had the opportunity to become a junior researcher at the Portuguese Marine Research Institute. My boss's nickname was 'The Dragon' and I later found out that people didn't actually call her that, but she insisted on telling folks that was her nickname...

Excerpts:

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

The monthly salary was decent, 199.000 escudos, (which translated then to approximately 1.300 US dollars), and the work was precisely what I had written up in the proposal: to crunch the numbers from their bottom water research surveys, do charts, write reports, analyze vertebrae to determine age and growth from some of the catshark species they landed, etc. It was a marine biologist's dream come true. It was my dream come true.

(...)

Jake, a friend of the family and indeed my host and employer during my three summers in Chicago, once tore a new one to his phone-company because he had accidentally broken his phone landline while aerating his lawn on a Saturday morning. I can still hear him abusing the voice on the other end of his cell-phone while telling that voice he was going to switch companies if they didn't come fix his landline immediately. On a Saturday. Imagine listening to this in 1987 when you're a 17 year old young man from Cartaxo, a small town in Portugal where we had grown used to waiting for months before the government's owned electrical, or water, or phone companies came to fix whatever needed fixing. And indeed Jake's phone company came – on a Saturday – and fixed his broken cable. At that moment Jake was my hero and America was the coolest place on Earth.

Chapter 3 - February 1995 - The grasshopper learns how to clean shark poop

It didn't take long for Mark to realize I was completely and utterly ignorant of all shark husbandry matters, so he took it upon his kind soul to educate me. And it's a good thing he was such an amazing mentor, because one of the sharks quickly developed an infection that required a course of antibiotics to be administered intra-muscularly (which is a clinical way of saying that a regular syringe and needle had to be taken in the water and stuck into the animal's back). My father decided to accompany me on one of these underwater excursions and nearly collapsed as I swam holding a 2 m long sandtiger's dorsal fin and injected the fluid

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

directly into the shark's back. The *nearly collapsing* moment came when the shark displayed some annoyance at the procedure and turned back on my legs.

Excerpts:

The process by which sharks make baby sharks involves the male chasing down the female, then biting hard on one of her pectoral fins, then curling his tail around hers, pinning her down on the bottom (or midwater) and finally inserting one of his two woo-hoos (that's right, male sharks have two) in the female's woo-hoo. Admit it, you either giggled or got horny. Don't be ashamed. It's only human.

(...)

So there I was, placing myself a few feet from the glass wall, waiting for the shark to come around again. And come he did, but this time knowing what the tall figure was up to, and therefore swam much stronger – and faster – as soon as he saw me. "Shit!" I remember thinking as I tried to keep up with this two meter (6,5 feet) long brute thing – while not smacking my head against the horizontal beams that stretched across the tank's glass walls and held them together. These iron beams, by the way, were exactly the same height as my teeth, which means running after the shark – with the needle sticking from its back – came with the added bonus of having to dodge these teeth smacking devices, thus preventing my wonderful smile from becoming a bad keyboard impression.

Chapter 4 - June 1995 - The corner of the Bermuda triangle

While keeping the sandtiger sharks at the Zoo I had to run to Bimini to finish the field work for my master's, taking advantage of the fact I was travelling to Montreal (Canada), to attend that year's American Elasmobranch Society meeting. Little did I know that this particular trip to Bimini, as short as it was, would be riddled with adventure...

Excerpts:

We hadn't fought a war together, we tracked lemon sharks in the blazing heat instead, but we were a band of brothers just the same. Suddenly, something went wrong...

Chapter 5 - July 1995 - My first shark transport

In late July the two sandtiger sharks were finally moved to Barcelona, not a moment too soon because temperatures were getting far too warm in Lisbon and the absence of a chilling unit was preventing oxygen to dissolve adequately in the sharks' water.

Excerpts:

It was now time to move Isabel, the female sandtiger shark. The process was identical and everything was running by the book until Isabel woke up from her drug induced trance and decided she didn't like being inside a green cloth stretcher held by howling men. Isabel started thrashing uncontrollably and her teeth caught on to the fabric of the stretcher as she tore it to pieces. Now guess who was holding the head end of the stretcher and got his shorts ripped apart while the nice media man captured it all with his camera! I'll give you a hint: when I got home later that day, Ms. Guilhermina, the janitor at my parents' building, greeted me cheerfully with an "Oh my God, João, I saw you on the news at lunch! That shark nearly cut your manliness away, didn't it??" And indeed, another inch to the side and the João Correia breeding program would have died even before it had begun.

(...)

Doctor Paisana, the head veterinarian doctor, was called to settle the feud and, apologizing to the vets he had been leading for decades, told them he would feel more comfortable if I gave the shark the injection. I believe my copulating male organ flinched, if slightly, at the look of the vets when they handed me the pole.

Chapter 6 - August 1995 - But I wasn't on the boat

After the transport of the Zoo's sharks, I was free to go back to Bimini and get the rest of the data I required to build the lagoon's hydrodynamic model and thus conclude my master's. Those last weeks in the Bahamas were wonderful and having my baby brother there made it even more fun. So did having a big tiger shark eating away at our boat!

Excerpts:

Having my kid brother around was fun. He was then studying to be an Automotive Engineer, for his passion in life was cars, much like mine had been for sharks since both of us could remember. He also got the opportunity to try out the wonderful aspects that come with fieldwork and did some weed-whacking behind the lab, which is always endless tons of fun, especially in the Bahamas during August. Jean was a sweetie and organized a shark dive in his honor, which was actually the sixth that summer! Zé, which is short for 'José', left the water a tad earlier than the rest of us shark nutters and his eyes behind the diving mask said it all "You guys are fucking insane!"

Chapter 7 – May 1996 – Spreading one's wings tuna style

My wife and I did some shopping during our honeymoon in London and bought ourselves a few naughty items from 'Ann Summers'. I was reading the catalogue in bed that night (which is a thing us guys enjoy doing...) and noticed the 'Would you like to sell our products?' ad at the bottom of one page. 'Yes' was my answer and Leonor backed me up completely, which launched us on a wild ride that continues to provide endless hours of erotic fun to this day.

Excerpts:

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

She then proceeded to put on her new lingerie while I wrestled my male brain to focus on the conversation I was trying to have with The Agent and his assistant, but still peeking at the Eastern goddess as she slipped into something more comfortable just three feet away from me. The scent from her skin was intoxicating, the good kind of intoxicating, mind you. She then turned to us, looking down at her delightful crotch and said "Eehze good baht eehze tight on pussy. Goz up inside. I have a beeg pussy." I couldn't quite reply to that, so I smiled politely and turned back to the conversation after a quick sip of water.

Chapter 8 - February 1998 - The sharks from Two Oceans

The tiny screen and uncomfortable headsets had George Clooney screaming "Take the shot!!" while the passengers of a Lufthansa Boeing 747-Combi held on to their seats flying from Cape Town to Frankfurt. As George kept yelling and one South African passenger struggled with the moment's anxiety... a Portuguese marine biologist came rushing back from the cargo hold screaming "The shark is upside down!" This was but one of the multiple *intense* moments that filled those sunny days when Allan Marshall and I traveled to Cape Town, and Durban, to fly back to Lisbon a multitude of sharks, rays, assorted fish and invertebrates.

Excerpts:

"What if a co-worker is giving you a hard time?" they then asked. "I'll ask him/her to stop."

"What if it doesn't stop?" I could see where this was going so, after the going-over-the-boss question, I figured it would be wise to play it cool this time. "I would attempt to talk to him/her and understand why he/she was giving me a hard time." Mark and Jack's nods and faint smiles showed me I was going in the right direction. "But what if it doesn't stop?" "I'll talk and ask again. Nicely." "Ok, but it's still not stopping." "Then I'll kick his/her ass."

(...)

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

Because this is the way biologists sniff each other: We look for traces of a tie, sports-jacket or neat shoes. Any of these is a dead giveaway of a 'person with a degree in biology', which is very different from a 'Biologist'. (My good friend Mark Smith actually taught me this distinction and I have had the pleasure of pointing it out to multiple people on many instances – giving him proper credit, of course, as I am doing now).

(...)

This is something us folk that work with sharks sometimes have to admit: Sure enough they're not nearly as ferocious or perilous as the media portrays them to be but, every now and then, you find yourself in a situation where the words "Right the fuck NOW would be a pretty darn good time to get your ass out of the water, dude!" suddenly pop into your head...

(...)

So there was Allan, jumping around in his shorts, trying hard to dodge the pointy bits of three very rambunctious sharks.

Chapters 9 & 10 – March and April 1998 - The trip that would not end - Parts I & 2

This chapter tells of the sad trip where an evil Floridian collector decided he would no longer supply the services he had been commissioned to and I found myself, with two colleagues, putting together *everything* that needed putting together for a large aircraft charter back to Lisbon. We certainly did the best we could, which included maneuvering power-tools in the dark. However, the aircraft's crew was not too impressed with our carpentering skills and threw a bit of a twist into the proceedings.

Excerpts:

It was now possible to hold the circular saw, with its metal rotating teeth, and drop it down on a flat surface. I then started cutting through the middle of the lid because starting from the edge

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

is for wimps. The saw wiggled (quite) a bit whenever the grinding teeth touched the flat wooden board, but my two firm Portuguese arms held the saw in place and successfully cut four squared lines.

(...)

Obviously my brain had better intel than me and apparently was told that, amidst their burger and fries carrying duties, the beautiful young waitresses at Hooters often turn to their customers and say "Oh my sir, you look so incredibly handsome, I could just take you home and have wild sex with you all night!"

(...)

I couldn't help but comment "How many people in the whole wide world, do you think, are right now eating two Big Macs in the dark, in a residential neighborhood, waiting to load two trucks full of sharks?" "I guess only two." JF replied. We both laughed. Live animal transports can be grueling at times, but the uniqueness of it all makes them the highlight of an aquarist's duties.

(...)

JF, Allan and I, departed one more time to Florida. The plan was short and simple: Getting the animals and getting the fuck back. Mark would also join us in a few days to negotiate some final details with RS. Apparently he did not wish to surrender the animals without yet another payment, which was a huge fucking surprise...

Chapter 11 - May 1998 - Dragster mackerel

Few things are probably as sad as having animals dying because of foolishness and poor judgment. Such was the case during my very first solo live fish transport. I was supposed to move a few hundred mackerels from Olhão (southern Portugal) to Lisbon, but a few extremely poor decisions turned this very first transport into a living nightmare. One, I'm glad to say, that never happened again.

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

Excerpts:

Because you see, my dad, (and you gotta love dads for this), always had a notion that I would be President of the Confederate Systems of the Milky Way, so my sweeping up fish crap wasn't something that particularly impressed him.

Chapter 12 - December 1998 - The 12 hour French soak

Recipe for an unusual broth: take 4 dopey nurse sharks, 2 huge sandtiger sharks, 7 sandbar sharks (one of which with a serious attitude malfunction), a Portuguese and an Australian marine biologist, a few French aquarists, and throw them all in the water for twelve hours. At the end you might get several possible scenarios, one of which being the Portuguese and Australian hopelessly tangled inside a net with a struggling large female sandbar shark, trying to bite her way out of the mess she was put in. You might also get a Portuguese holding that shark's nose for dear life, thinking to himself "Why didn't I become a doctor, like mom and dad said?..."

Excerpts:

A nice young French man drove us through the highway leading to Lille, and then Calais, departure and arrival point of the Chunnel. "If things go bad, we can always take a quick trip to London and chill out until the dust settles" Mark and I joked. London is a fantastic city and we both grabbed every opportunity we could to spend a few days there with our wonderful wives.

(...)

Now, this guy didn't do that. "Hmmm... Weird..." I thought. This mammoth shark was slowly and gently swimming away as the anesthetic got transferred from the syringe into its dorsal muscle. Actually... "Holy smokes!" I thought... "This thing is going down!" Red alert! This shark was not doing well and was not liking the anesthetic.

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

(…)

She did not like that and by this time was twirling, squirming and thrashing uncontrollably. I held on to her nose like there was no tomorrow. If I flexed my body, allowing her to move back and forth, but held her nose, I knew I'd be ok, I thought to myself. And sure enough, this evil vixen was biting and lunging her jaws at everything in her way, but I was fine and safe, as long as I didn't let go of her nose! Eventually, I had to let go of the net with my second hand, and use both to hold the shark's nose and actively push her back inside the net, which was now a big lump of confusing nylon, mad shark, João and Mark. I bit my regulator as hard as I could. Being underwater, wrestling a sandbar shark and having the regulator knocked out of my mouth, was not a pleasant thought. Especially because, at this time, I could feel the valve of my scuba tank, and the first stage of the regulator, hopelessly entangled in the net. Mark came to the rescue, and found himself all tangled as well.

Chapter 13 - 1999 - Space 1999

My first solo aircraft transport was a joy ride to Portland, Oregon, that involved an enjoyable lunch at the Hotel where *The Shining* was filmed, and a barefoot car ride back to town, as playing in the snow in sneakers is not a very good idea. However, being pampered by KLM's pretty flight attendants certainly made up for that slight inconvenience. After all, how often do airline passengers strap-on an oxygen cylinder and venture down the cargo hold to check on bird cages, while ordering a gin & tonic along the way? The transport of the Inca terns from the Portland Zoo to Lisbon was a delightful ride that included a stopover in an Amsterdam coffee shop for... of course, a coffee. But 1999 was a busy year and included a trip to the USA (to watch 'Star Wars – The Phantom Menace', of course), a trip to Norway (to get some codfish) and the most amazing trip of all: The Transport of Evil!

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

Over-achiever me went Old Testament and put together my own version of Noah's ark. Three months of planning, a one quarter of a million dollar budget, and a whole cargo Boeing 747 filled with blacktip, bonnethead and blacknose sharks, southern stingrays, cownose rays, lobsters, snails, green moray eels, grunts, snappers, jacks, dolphinfish, a couple of mermaids and whatever animals Noah didn't have to carry, as the flood wasn't really affecting fish that much. This tale even includes a colorful pair of sidekicks, i.e. a Portuguese TV crew that traveled to Florida for a full week to cover the event. This TV crew, however, didn't show up at the staging facility until 30 minutes before departure, and slept during the whole flight back. Ah, the wonderful world of corporate news...

Excerpts:

*However, more about that in a few chapters, for right then it was time to land in Lisbon, (30th of June) and we had only five weeks ahead of us before I had to embark on yet another trip, this time bound to Marathon Key in Florida, where we were to pull our biggest stunt ever, one we nicknamed *The Transport of Evil*.*

(...)

Angus told us later that, as the forklift driver pulled back from the punctured tank, saltwater still dripping from his forks, he kept waving his hands screaming "It wasn't me!!"

Chapter 14 - December 2000 - The other Dutch airline

Everybody's heard of the Dutch airline KLM. Know, though, that there is another Dutch airline, Martinair, the slogan of which being none other than *The other Dutch airline*. Now those boys certainly know how to move oystercatchers, octopus, ratfish, tiger rockfish and anemones in style. Straight through the Northern Lights, no less. This chapter should include some violence directed at a supreme bureaucrat vet in Amsterdam, who cared more about mindless paperwork

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

than animal welfare. However common sense (and PhotoShop) came to the rescue and the vet was allowed to go home with his jaw intact.

Excerpts:

At 6:15 a.m., we were literally running towards the plane, stopped on the tarmac, taxiing lights on, engines running and waiting for us.

(...)

"Fuck it!..." I thought "...we'll make it work. We always fucking do."

(...)

At 8:00 p.m., Renee called and said the pilot did not want to carry the birds, to which I replied "Go ahead and slit his throat with a rusty knife now, please." However... The ground handling crew somehow squeezed the birds in the cargo hold, so the birds were flying back!

Chapter 15 - July 2001 - Lost in *traducción* with manta rays

2000 was the year Mark, Miguel and I, attended the American Elasmobranch Society meeting in La Paz, Baja California, and laid the foundation for an extremely pleasant partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which would lead us to Bahia de Los Angeles for the next three years. However, that year also featured a very 'Lost in translation' moment where a delightful conversation of five hours suddenly turned into a magical and quite unexpected moment. I didn't know the word 'polyamory' then, but I suppose I took my first steps into that brave new world that evening and therefore became an 'ethical slut'.

Excerpts:

And soon after, if you're really lucky, the light beaming out from your torch will be clouded by a gigantic diamond-shaped mass with two horns. When that happens you will understand why the

early seafarers called these creatures 'devil rays' and you will have a warmer wetsuit around the bum, to prove it.

Chapter 16 - June 2002 - Blue angels

Catching blue sharks on sports-fishing charters is no easy task, but every member of the team does its best. Especially the team coordinator, who ensured he stayed up late the night before and drank enough cocktails to make absolutely certain that he got phenomenally seasick during the trip, therefore making copious contributions towards the chumming effort. In this chapter I tell of the multiple blue shark excursions I ran for the Oceanário, most of them failing at the very end either to predation or lack of energy from the poor sharks. This chapter also tells the horrid story of 'finning', by which sharks are stripped of their fins and chucked to the ocean, still alive, while the fins are dried to make soup in Asia.

Excerpts:

"Should have stayed longer in the water..." was my immediate thought, and I vowed to not make the same mistake again in the future.

Chapter 17 - July 2002 - Openness and dead devils

The beginning of 2002 brought an 'open' phase to my wedding, which would lead us down a very interesting road... That same year, the summer brought yet another trip to Baja California, this time to study devil rays and explore the local fishing patterns. As much as we knew in advance that the fishing was pretty heavy, we simply weren't prepared for the carnage that unfolded before our eyes.

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

Excerpts:

Delicious, nourishing lunch always came after a nice cool replenishing shower, after which came the time for a siesta while the unforgiving southern Mexican sun irradiated all life forms to oblivion from noon until 3:00-4:00 p.m.. Later in the afternoon, as if we were a band of vampires lurking out from their crypts, we would lunge into the swimming pool, while sipping piña coladas and talking about research and the day's events. Like I said many times before, and we would frequently say then also: It's a hard job but someone's got to do it.

Chapter 18 - November 2002 - Portuguese mantas

Moving animals isn't all fun, games, and playing drums in live bars the night before. Sometimes people forget to pack a wet suit and have to strip down to their boxer shorts so they may go in the water to get a manta ray out of a fishing boat's cargo hold. And sometimes it's raining really hard as people walk around quasi-naked. And sometimes that rain causes people to slip and crack their ribs on a lever. And then people have to be cold, in the rain, stripped to their undies, and walk with cracked ribs as they carry a large manta ray from the boat to the van... ..Much to the amusement of the crowd that gathered around, who had great fun exchanging colorful comments such as "...Guess they don't teach folks to dress adequately for the job, in college..." This chapter narrates the multiple episodes where I got to play with manta rays, which includes collections, diving with a moribund animal at night – while young children spotted the scene, in awe, from the other side of the acrylic – and the daring operation whereby a 4 meter wide animal was reintroduced to its natural environment.

Excerpts:

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

When I said "Let's put water in the tank. We're taking the ray." they cheered enthusiastically as I backed the van into the holding station and stretched the hose across the ground into the transport tank, fervorously hoping I had made the right call, but strongly fearing I hadn't.

(...)

It was a classic 'million to one' shot. I stepped inside a boat with a virtually empty deck and managed to trip on the wet rim and land with my left ribs right on the metal lever that commanded one of the winches. If it wasn't protected by a plastic round cap, I wouldn't be typing these silly moments now. Still, the plastic golf ball sized protective cap might have saved my life, but didn't stop my ribs from being cracked, sending me to a dimension of every-time-I-breathed pain that was unbeknownst to me.

(...)

The pain was agonizing and got worse every time I took a breath or moved my left arm.

(...)

Because whale sharks, like manta rays, grow big. They grow very big. In fact they grow too big and then need to be released.

(...)

"All included, about one thousand kilos (2.200 pounds), maybe more." "You're screwed." was his reply.

Chapter 19 - July 2003 - Fetish blue sharks

While Alalunga, our online lingerie and adult toy business, grew faster and stronger, the local gentlemen's clubs started inviting us to organize colorful events involving young ladies in our seductive under-apparel. Simultaneously, I became very good friends with Portugal's Number One Fetish Guy, who organized the almighty 'The Gathering' fetish parties. To say that 2003

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

was a *wild* year is a gross mis-understatement. Still, one managed to squeeze in a few blue shark tag and release, and collection outings.

Excerpts:

Nearly exhausted, both Vítor and I took turns swimming the shark, actively moving forward while holding its pectoral fins and forcing water through its mouth into the gills, desperately hoping to feel that kick they give you as if saying "I can take it from here, buddy. Thanks for your help, but you're still an asshole for pulling me out of my home, you fucking son of a bitch..."

(...)

Indeed, once again, as I stood naked in the shower, someone came in to tell me the shark had met its end; This time not by the teeth of some huge predator, but it had simply died from capture stress and exhaustion. "Damn!" I thought "...I'm never showering again after these operations. This shit brings bad luck to the sharks."

Chapter 20 - May 2004 - Popsicle sunfish and a whole lot of kinkiness

"Mr. Correia, please proceed to the nearest British Airways information counter..." the P.A. system announced at Heathrow, as my aquarist friend and I waited to board our flight to Nassau, where we were going to deliver a live sunfish. Then the voice at the other end of the phone line asked "We forgot to mention that the cargo hold where the fish tank is going to travel is not temperature controlled and temperatures go down to negative 50 degrees. Is that a problem?" 2004 was also the year when quite a few wonderful young ladies decided to give me the honor of being my *slaves* and, yes, you read that right.

Excerpts:

By João Correia ©

www.sexsharksandrockandroll.com

The honest answer was "I don't know..." but the follow-up comment was that it was all too damn exciting to stop. In the back of my mind I knew it would all blow up in a fiery inferno with a lot of shit hitting a pretty damn big fan, and so did Leonor, but we simply didn't care.

(...)

We were sitting down in the waiting area, looking at the monitors to see which gate our flight was departing from, when a voice came on the p.a. system: "Mr. Correia, please go to a British Airways counter." Zé and I looked at each other and listened more closely as the voice repeated the same message a second time. "Shit." We both said in unison "This can't be good."

(...)

And I never did get frozen toothpaste inside my luggage after a long flight so... "Fuck it... We'll be fine..." I thought to myself.

* * * * *