



A PIONEER'S STORY

Sometimes, life is a gamble. Having worked in the international casino industry for many years I needed a change of pace and was looking for a suitable location to settle down.

My introduction to Southern Africa was working at Sun City when it first opened, when, with cash in my pocket and adventure in my heart, I visited and fell in love with the wilds of Etosha, Okavanga, Mala Mala, Savuti, Victoria Falls and a host of other places that epitomise the romance of Africa. I enjoyed the climate, discovered the wide-open spaces and got hooked on tiger fishing. I had experiences that I was unable to replicate in the following years when I returned to Europe – and I missed it all.

Eventually, I ended up in Asia pursuing career opportunities and further adventures. My job had somehow consumed my life as I busied myself opening casinos in the countries surrounding Thailand and living in casino hotels in the wilds of the Philippines, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia until I found myself in the overcrowded casino boomtown of Macau. Thirty years on, my life's adventure was becoming less enjoyable and the time had come to find my dream home, kick back and start doing the things I enjoyed once again. I had the means to settle anywhere I liked... but where on earth would I go?

As chance would have it, I heard about a fanciful development called Royal Jozini Big 6 in far away Swaziland. For me the Royal Jozini concept appeared to offer it all. Tiger fishing, game viewing, fabulously unspoiled surroundings and wide-open space. Most of all, I was attracted to the promise of living in comfort while I pursued the activities that I had always enjoyed most.

After much deliberation I took a deep breath and decided to buy a mountain plot, while being acutely aware of the difficulties that I would face during the remote building process. I was certain that this endeavor would require levels of integrity and commitment from the entire Royal Jozini team that,



in my business experience, were exceptionally hard to find.

Having jumped in, I traveled over to Southern Africa to meet Ewald Plekker (www.royaljozinilodges.co.za), the architect, and his assistant Darell Worthington. My requirement was to have the building finished, furnished and decorated so that I would only need to buy a bottle of milk and pick up the keys when I took occupation. They swallowed hard and said that they could do just about that. As a rule, people who work in the gambling business don't gamble and here I was taking the biggest gamble of my life. Had I lived in South Africa I would have been available to monitor progress and discuss problems as they arose but I lived on the other side of the world. Everything depended on this team and how conscientiously they all worked on my behalf. I intended to retire on the estate and spend the rest of my active life fishing the lake and watching the animals in the reserve, so I knew that I had a potential disaster on my hands.

Lance Ridl won the tender to build my lodge and started work on it shortly after I had returned to Asia. I should have had no concerns about the quality of work as Lance attends to every detail and, together with Ewald, produced a beautiful house. I truly consider it a work of art and both Lance and Ewald should be as proud of achieving it as I am to live in it.

Another thing that I had to deal with was immigration since I planned to reside in Swaziland, and I needed help with a myriad of issues. Darell Worthington organised everything from insurance to immigration and also recommended Sharon Milstead (milstead@iafrica.com) who expertly handled the furnishings and interior decorating. Communicating only via email, Sharon interpreted my tastes and produced a wonderfully stylish home.

Once again, my pioneering spirit has led me to a new life in a breathtaking location. The difference from my past adventures, is that I now own a beautiful mountain lodge with inspiring views of the lake where tiger fish are waiting to be captured. My neighbours are giraffe, zebra, nyala, wildebeest, waterbuck, impala and a host of African bush residents. I have left the Asian pollution far behind, and the crowds and traffic jams are, at least for me, a thing of the past.

Royal Jozini will always be a place of beauty and tranquility to be enjoyed without the usual hardships associated with the wilds of this continent. I am delighted to be the first permanent resident to settle on the estate and look forward to watching it grow and observing the release of the Big 5 as it happens.

Sometimes life is a gamble and usually if something sounds too good to be true it generally is. Royal Jozini Big 6 has proven to be the exception.

