

## **CHECK THE CEILING**

**By James Collins**

**If you spend the first 25 years of your life as a ‘street kid’ living on the streets of the Bronx, you pick up a lot of wisdom and experience which can save your life. I make it a point to educate all my children and grandchildren with this knowledge.**

**One is a piece of philosophy to remember. If you got into a street fight with a mugger or a person you do not know, your life could be at risk. A little bit of Bronx, wisdom, preached to all the kids in the neighborhood, taught them how to respond.**

**“It is far better to be judged by twelve, rather than carried by six”**

**Another is sound advice to anyone in a strange environment. It may save your life. If you go into an unknown bar, restaurant, or nightclub, the first thing you should do is check the ceiling. Look for bullet holes. If there are bullet holes turn around and leave. Any time there is a shooting or an altercation, they never repair the bullets holes in the ceiling. They replace the shot out glass and damaged woodwork but they ignore repairing the ceiling. The more bullet holes, the more likely you will not get out of there alive.**

**A couple years ago, I got a call from Arizona from my nephew and godchild Patrick McKeon. He started the conversation,**

**“Pop Pop, I called you to tell you, you just saved my life “**

**“Patrick, what you talking about? I am up here New Hampshire. You are there in in Arizona. How could I save your life?”**

**“Pop Pop I’m a member of a jazz band playing the guitar. We play to raise money to cover our expenses while in graduate school. We applied for a gig at a roadhouse out in the middle of nowhere outside of Phoenix and the four of us went out there to talk to the owner. He showed us the place, which had chicken wire between the audience and the band to stop flying bottles. That was the first red flag. Then I checked the ceiling, following your advice, and counted more than 40 bullet holes. We respectfully turned down the gig and left immediately. I had told the other members of the band about your warning a year ago, so they knew where I was coming from.**

**Two weekends later, a different band accepted a gig at that location. Someone shot one of the band members to death on the stage. I called to thank you for saving my life.”**

**THE END**