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ELEVATOR WORLD is proud to present its second issue devoted to people. Our industry is rich with history, innovation, invention and, yes, even drama — and people are behind it all. Here, we profile 30 industry players, people hailing from big U.S. skyscraper cities like NYC and Chicago, as well as all over the world — Canada, Germany, India, Saudi Arabia and Sweden, to name a few. These individuals include CEOs, executive directors, entrepreneurs, construction foremen and consultants. Several outstanding women are on the list.

Many followed a parent into the industry, while others' paths were more serendipitous, such as the young man who suffered a sports injury in his teens, shifting his professional life from football toward a career in vertical transportation (VT). Many have engineering backgrounds. They hold numerous certifications and are involved in associations at both the local and national levels. In some way or another, many of these people have had a hand in transforming the skylines of world

cities like London (Canary Wharf) and NYC (Hudson Yards and the World Trade Center complex). Others played instrumental roles in bringing the industry into the digital age, improving safety for both passengers and workers, preserving history and giving the industry a much stronger voice and presence in the public eye.

Many of our honorees are teachers (both in the classroom and in their day-to-day professional lives) and mentors. Some have served as expert witnesses on legal cases involving VT.

Recognized here are leaders and instrumental players at major international companies, associations and independent firms — some that they grew from one-man operations into international concerns. We realize this round of honorees barely scratches the surface of the countless number of brilliant, dedicated characters that populate our industry, but thank their nominators for shining a light on them, nonetheless. 🌐

**Andreas Fleischmann**



**Charlie Slater**

**Robert Krieger**

**Karen Penafiel**

**Peter Taylor**

**Eric Peterson**



**Terri Flint**

**Lee Rigby**



**Suresh Kalathur**

**Mario Jones**

**Len Halsey**

**Ed Ahrens**



**Dominick Glenn**

**Robert Cuzzi**

**Yusuf Atik**

**Charles Herrera**

**Dick Gregory**

**Paul M. Belliveau**

**Steve Wurth**

**Cornelius Walls**



## Ed Ahrens

Title: Construction Foreman, Otis

Years in Industry: 38

Based: NYC

When ELEVATOR WORLD caught up with Otis Construction Foreman Ed Ahrens, he was busy taking care of temporary certificates of occupancy for 35 Hudson Yards, the tallest condominium project in the NYC megadevelopment. Throughout his long career, which began 38 years ago at Westinghouse (now Schindler) before he moved on to Otis two years later, Ahrens has worked on the vertical-transportation systems of many NYC landmarks: 3 and 4 Times Square in Midtown and Goldman Sachs towers in Lower Manhattan and Jersey City, to name a few. On average, the skyscrapers are served by 50 or so elevators. Ahrens, says his nominator Matt Jackson, “has worked on some of the preeminent buildings in NYC for years, and it would be an understatement to try and put a value on Ed’s contribution to the NYC skyline!”

A native of the NYC area, Ahrens followed his father, also an Otis employee, into the business. The younger Ahrens always had an aptitude for mechanics and the elevator trade was the perfect fit, he says. In his day-to-day work, he supervises up to 70 employees on any particular job. He counts among his mentors Bill Cassidy, an Otis project manager who recently retired. Among the most challenging jobs of Ahrens’ career was at 4 Times Square around 2000, when a construction hoist collapsed a week after the elevator machines arrived. “We ended up getting construction up and going again in about eight weeks,” Ahrens remembers.

When he’s not at work, Ahrens can sometimes be found with his family at their house upstate in the Catskills. After he retires, that is likely where one will find him most of the time. “I just bought a motorcycle so I plan on riding around in the mountains, among a lot of other things,” Ahrens says.



## Zaydoon Al-Khzouz

Title: Chief Operations Officer, Khaled Juffali Elevator & Escalator Co.

Years in Industry: 24

Based: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Being the competitive sort, with an affinity for technology and technical matters, Zaydoon Al-Khzouz finds himself in a good place: chief operations officer (COO) of Khaled Juffali Elevator & Escalator Co., the exclusive Saudi Arabian agent and distributor of KLEEMANN Lifts. In this role, he uses his technical expertise and his business acumen to get ahead in an industry that has no shortage of smart, driven people.

“It is so dynamic,” he says, “facing the fierce technical competition in the industry with implementation of new technologies to reach the best performance. . . and still managing the costs to be profitable.”

Al-Khzouz was born in Amman, the Jordanian capital, and lived for a time in the city of Madaba. Upon receiving his engineering degree in 1995, he went to work as a planning engineer for thyssenkrupp. He moved to Jeddah in 2010, where he lives with his family. It was here he joined Khaled Juffali and, in 2017, was named COO.

He says his engineering education inspired him to join the elevator industry, and he stayed because of “the continuous learning, the developments, the challenges and achievements over the years.” And, though he’s moved on, he has warm feelings for his first employer in the business, thyssenkrupp, which he calls:

*“ . . . a great learning/work environment; I consider that my first 10 years working as the best period for me in this industry, [because they] shaped my future. I worked with so many remarkable industry colleagues, and so many of them are leaders in their companies in the Middle East, Europe and the Far East.”*



### **Yusuf Atik**

Title: Founder and Board Executive, MERIH Asansör  
Years in Industry: 50  
Based: Ankara, Turkey

Yusuf Atik, born in Ankara, Turkey, was sent to live with an uncle in 1968 at age 11. Immediately, he would see his dream of a formal education dashed, as he was sent to work in a printing house. A year later, as a 12-year-old, he would take a job in the elevator industry, and, “Since then, I have never left the business,” he said. “I think I am lucky to be in this sector.” Today, he, his daughter and his son run MERİH Asansör, the family company he founded in 1977 in Ankara.

Atik started his career working field jobs but “always wanted to be a manufacturer.” After realizing there were no domestic makers of relays and inverters, he launched MERİH and started producing relays, soon adding inverters and contactors. As he worked to grow his company, he came across an advertisement in an industry publication for an elevator exhibition in Germany. He attended the show, and says, “It was the first big step toward my success.” It was there he discovered manufacturing equipment, such as computer-numerical-control milling machines, laser cutters and other equipment he’d never seen. “I asked myself, ‘Why not apply them in Turkey?’” Once he did, “there was nothing we could not do.”

MERİH started making automatic doors and, later, cabins and complete elevator solutions. The company launched the MARS elevator brand in 2016 and, today, works out of a 30,000-m<sup>2</sup> factory that produces 130,000 doors and 5,000 cabins a year.

For all his success, Atik, who also serves as president of the Turkish Federation of Elevator Industrialists, says the best part of his job “is to be able to touch people’s lives. We produce commodities that make people’s lives easier.” His company has also established a vocational high school to train future generations.



### **Paul M. Belliveau**

Title: President and CEO, Oracle Elevator  
Years in Industry: 30  
Based: Tampa, Florida

Paul M. Belliveau started his career in the elevator industry in Worcester, Massachusetts, as a fresh college graduate working for Otis. His early career provided him with several leadership positions in the elevator industry, including regional president for thyssenkrupp Elevator. He was lured away from vertical transportation to become CEO of several European-owned industrial manufacturing companies but in 2013 was recruited back to the elevator business as the CEO of Oracle Elevator. He welcomed the opportunity to return to his roots and bring with him the knowledge and perspective gained in other industries. He also brought the vision of creating a nationwide independent elevator company.

Throughout his career, Belliveau has appreciated that business is all about people, with the most critical component being the technician. His nominator, Craig Jones, said Belliveau instilled the core principle of Oracle: that its people are the pillars that support the business. Under Belliveau’s leadership, the merit-shop company has made several investments in its people, such as increasing the quality of the company insurance program and completely rebranding. Oracle has had organic growth, made acquisitions and expansions, and Belliveau says he is proud to lead these professionals in their goal to become the alternative to the multinational elevator companies.

Oracle serves 35 markets in 14 states and across all major brands of equipment. Since its founding in 2004, Oracle has completed 27 acquisitions of independent elevator companies and is planning a state-of-the-art training facility. Under Belliveau, acquisitions remain an important factor in Oracle’s aggressive national expansion strategy.



### **Mark Boelhouwer**

Title: President & CEO, Vantage Group

Years in Industry: 32

Based: Bronx, New York

In his role at the helm of the Vantage Group of companies, which includes some of the world's largest manufacturers of elevator equipment like machines, safety brakes and roller guides, Mark Boelhouwer has a full plate. Still, according to his nominator John Curzon, he finds time to improve the lives of colleagues through initiating programs such as language classes, tuition reimbursement and social responsibility efforts. "What may not be realized is that Mark is a people person," Curzon says. "He is sharp, but has humor and compassion among his personal traits."

With both an MBA and a law degree from the University of Connecticut, Boelhouwer served as an acquisitions lawyer for Otis for more than three years, starting in 1987. He went on to create Oracle Elevator Co., serving as vice president and general counsel. Oracle has grown into a nationwide, independent specialist in vertical-transportation maintenance.

Boelhouwer was previously CEO of GAL Manufacturing Corp., transitioning to head of Vantage when six business units, including GAL, were brought together under the same umbrella. He now plays an instrumental role in growing and guiding Vantage. The company recently opened several new U.S. service centers, bringing the total to eight. At the time, Boelhouwer told EW, "We will be able to bring an unparalleled selection of products and services to our customers, coupled with a dedicated, regional business experience."



### **Mike Botzet**

Title: President, Marine Innovations

Years in Industry: 35

Based: Frazee, Minnesota

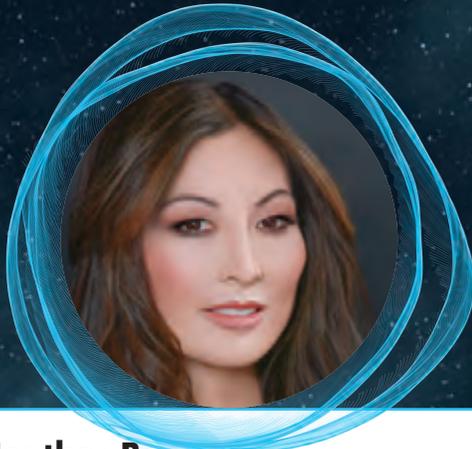
Michael "Mike" Botzet has been instrumental in the advancement of the inclined elevator since developing the company's first tram system, the Bank Hoist. His mechanical knowhow has improved the safety, reliability and ease-of-use of inclined elevators, and he has been called as an expert witness for inclined elevator failures. He is involved in sales, management, product development, engineering, installation, service and dealer development at his company, Marine Innovations in Frazee, Minnesota.

Nominator Eric Hausten said of Botzet:

*"Since he and his wife Lori started Marine Innovations in 1991, he has constantly advanced the design and manufacturing of inclined elevators. He led other manufacturers in bringing inclined elevators to meet elevator codes. He also developed and patented a braking mechanism for them.*

*"Botzet is involved in many projects from beginning to end, working with the client on the concept, internally with engineering and manufacturing, and directing and participating in installation. He goes to clients' locations to work with them on all the fine details and lead the installation. For example, he enthusiastically led an installation in Guatemala utilizing all local contractors and laborers. He tirelessly travels the country to meet interested parties and see how an inclined elevator can better their lives.*

*"Botzet genuinely cares for our customers. He'll show the best way to provide access on their property. This may mean standing firm to make a safe system that suits their needs or letting them know how to save costs and still provide a quality system. He believes in helping people enjoy their property and wants to help them achieve access to their beachfront or parking area."*



### **Heather Bowen**

Title: Director of Digital Innovation, Schindler  
Years in Industry: 21  
Based: Morristown, New Jersey, and Ebikon, Switzerland

Heather Bowen, Schindler's director of digital innovation, has worked for the organization her entire career. Her first years focused on supporting information-technology systems, infrastructure and security. She also led the development of Schindler's early eBusiness and digital strategy, supporting sales, construction, service management and retention, including the launch of the industry's earliest web-based applications and tools for customers. She was instrumental in the development and launch of Schindler Ahead, an internet-of-things (IoT) and artificial-intelligence platform now installed on thousands of units worldwide. In her current role, Bowen helps develop digital products and services to drive top-line growth and revenue.

Bowen's perseverance in a historically male-dominated industry is fueled by her love of science and has informed her tenure at Schindler as an advocate for diversity on her teams. "I've had several tremendous mentors who focused on the work and capabilities, rather than my gender," she said. "That has inspired me to actively advocate and support women in the field and encourage an environment where everyone feels welcome."

Nominator Todd Kohlhepp said of Bowen:

*"She has both witnessed and led a major digital revolution that has not only helped shape the strategic vision of a nearly 150-year-old company, but also changed the face of urban mobility. Bowen's team-focused, customer-first mentality is a proven asset for Schindler's leadership in the complex market of IoT products. The launch of Schindler Ahead and products like ActionBoard, which connects equipment, customers and passengers with Schindler's technical operations center and technicians for improved reliability, safety and cost savings, is a tangible example of Bowen and the team's forward-thinking approach to digital solutions."*



### **Patrick Carrajat**

Title: Senior Consultant & Founding Partner, LIR Group, Inc.  
Years in Industry: 56  
Based: NYC

If it has to do with industry history or safety, Patrick Carrajat can likely tell you all about it. Good friends with many industry icons — some of whom have passed on — Carrajat has an elevator career dating back to 1963 when he worked as vice president at CBA, Inc. elevator consultants of Hackensack, New Jersey. He went on to Flynn-Hill Elevator Corp., Century Elevator Maintenance Corp. and Certified Elevator & Escalator Products Co., Inc., all of Long Island City (LIC). Since 1995, he has been a senior consultant at LIR Group of LIC, which provides expert legal witness services.

Perhaps most notably, however, is Carrajat's passion for preserving industry history, an activity inspired by a booklet authored by Elevator World, Inc. founder William C. Sturgeon, "In Search of the Past."

Carrajat's nominator, Michael Sipala, president of LIC-headquartered Master Elevator Components, Inc., for which Carrajat is a regional CEO, said:

*"Patrick has been among the most innovative people in our industry and has dedicated much of his time and money to preserving its history and artifacts. He founded and funded the Elevator Museum (now maintained by the International Union of Elevator Constructors in the Boston area) and donated his collection of 4,000 items. His accomplishments are too many to list, but he was the youngest person ever elected to the board of the National Association of Elevator Contractors. He was 29, and already recognized by his peers for his intelligence and commitment to the industry."*



### **Robert Cuzzi**

Title: President Principal of Van Deusen & Associates, Inc.

Years in Industry: 33

Based: NYC

After earning a B.E. in mechanical engineering, Robert Cuzzi became operations manager for an elevator company that specialized in modernizations and maintenance, but two years later, in 1998, he joined consulting firm Van Deusen & Associates (VDA) as operations manager, supervising the day-to-day work of the field engineering staff, providing various types of vertical-transportation consulting services, and preparing proposals and pricing for multiple services.

In December 2010, Cuzzi and his three partners (M. Wade Smith, Hakan Tanyeri and Thomas Stack) were announced as the four new primary owners of VDA. Today, the company has more than 150 employees and more than 20 branch offices across the U.S.

In 2018, Cuzzi was named president/principal of VDA, overseeing the company's operations while managing the NYC office, which provides services related to the witness testing of almost 8,000 elevators, the survey of existing equipment/quality control evaluations and the services related to the modernization of existing equipment. He has served as project executive on more than 100 projects worldwide, including 1 World Trade Center, Madison Square Garden, Carnegie Hall, Plaza Hotel and Gap Inc.

He is a licensed QEI and is licensed by the NYC Department of Buildings Elevator Agency. He has been technical chairman of the Elevator Conference of New York, volunteered with the National Association of Elevator Contractors and International Association of Elevator Consultants, and has been a frequent guest speaker at elevator and construction industry conferences and seminars.

His nominator, John McGarr, said Cuzzi "is a constant source of knowledge," adding, "Cuzzi is passionate about his company and its employees, the industry, about the services we provide and especially our clients and achieving their goals."



### **Andreas Fleischmann**

Title: CEO, DigiPara AG

Years in Industry: 30

Based: Frechen, Germany

Andreas Fleischmann has pursued simplifying and accelerating the process of elevator and escalator configuration through building information modeling (BIM) for the past 30 years as founder and CEO of DigiPara AG. The Frechen, Germany-based company has evolved into a major partner to global companies such as Otis, Schindler and thyssenkrupp, a trend that began two years after Fleischmann attended his first Interlift in 1997. Founded as Digital Partner in 1989, the company's first software program was Vario Control Center, which automatically produced specified designs from AutoCAD drawings for small and medium-sized elevator enterprises. The name changed to DigiPara GmbH in 1993 and went public in 2017 as DigiPara AG. Fleischmann writes about and lectures on BIM in the elevator industry at conferences around the world.

Nominator Sandra Eisenbarth says Fleischmann's ability to optimize elevator and escalator planning for customers helps them save money and become faster and more efficient. He plays a key role in bringing architects, engineers, elevator manufacturers and others together on projects, which streamlines the process. There is very little turnover at DigiPara, which Eisenbarth says is a testament to Fleischmann's management style. "Andreas is both a competent leader and an emotionally intelligent and friendly person," she says, continuing:

*"He has set very decisive milestones in the industry, while always remaining down to earth. His innovative ideas in developing our products have been inspiring elevator manufacturers and architects around the world for nearly 30 years."*



### **Terri Flint**

Title: Elevator Program Manager, University of Michigan

Years in Industry: 24

Based: Ann Arbor, Michigan

A 1993 graduate from Michigan State University, Terri Flint began her career in the elevator industry in 1995 as a probationary helper for Millar Elevator. After three years in the field, she joined the office staff as an inside salesperson. She quickly became responsible for maintenance, repair and modernization sales, later advancing to branch superintendent for Millar. In 1999, she joined the University of Michigan.

Now the elevator program manager at the university, Flint manages the elevator shop. She has also served here as asset supervisor and senior contract manager. She has been involved with Elevator U since 1999 and served as the inaugural president when it became an official association in 2006. Flint continues to stay involved by serving as the association's conference planning chair and as a member of the educational committee. Additionally, in 2014, Flint was appointed to the State of Michigan Elevator Safety Board by the governor. She holds a State of Michigan Class A Elevator Contractors License, State of Michigan Class A Elevator Journeypersons License and is QEI-1 certified.

Nominator Tom Sybert said of Flint:

*"I have a great deal of respect for Terri, not only as a working mom raising two boys, but also in her ability to always seem to find the little extra time she has to help Elevator U stay on track and keep true to its mission. She's always been an advocate for our industry and those in it, and her elevator roots are deep within her family. She, by far, is on my top 10 list of people in the elevator industry whose friendship I cherish and who, one day, I'd like to be like when I grow up."*



### **Dominick Glenn**

Title: Co-Owner and Field Operations Manager, G-Tech Elevator Associates LLC

Years in Industry: 37

Based: Linden, New Jersey

Dominick Glenn is an entrepreneur and second-generation elevator man, who, with his son, Brock, founded G-Tech Elevator Associates in 2010 in Linden, New Jersey. It has grown into what Glenn describes as the "go-to elevator company in the greater New York and New Jersey region." G-Tech started as a repair company but expanded to offer installation, inspection, modernization, maintenance and repair provided by 50 mechanics.

Had it not been for an injury when he was young, however, Glenn would have likely pursued a career that was quite different. He was recruited in his sophomore year to play football for Milford Academy in Milford, Connecticut. In his senior year at Milford, he became injured, preventing him from accepting a football scholarship. After one year of treatment, Glenn entered the elevator constructor's union and obtained all required certificates and courses to become an elevator constructor.

Beginning his career as an apprentice with his father, Glenn continues to prioritize training. With strong teaching abilities, he has mentored and taught numerous apprentices on their way to becoming outstanding mechanics and foremen.

In 2018, G-Tech was honored with an Inc. 5000 award from Inc. magazine, achieving the 2,306th spot on the list of fastest-growing U.S. companies. Part of that growth is thanks to a joint venture with South Korea-based HM Elevator Inc. that created a complete elevator package to be sold and installed by G-Tech. Glenn's company also prides itself on helping develop some of the first machine-room-less elevator packages in the area. As an independent contractor, G-Tech purchases nonproprietary parts, so it can provide elevator systems that best suit a customer's needs and budget. The company has worked with architects, contractors and building owners throughout the tri-state area.



## Dick Gregory

Title: Consultant, Vertex Corp.

Years in Industry: 64

Based: Chicago

Richard "Dick" Gregory began his career in January 1955 at his father's company, Elevator Engineering, when he turned 16 and could legally work in the field with a union permit. Later, he cofounded Gregory Elevator with his parents in September 1964 and became its president in January 1966 until it was sold to Westinghouse in April 1981. Westinghouse purchased Adams Elevator Equipment Co. a year later, so Gregory began working for Adams, eventually becoming a vice president.

Gregory has also consulted with his company Vertex Corp. since September 1964. This has been his full-time job since leaving Adams in January 1997. He has also been a National Elevator Industry Educational Program teacher for 30 years.

Gregory received the NAEC President's Award in 2006, having been selected by Ed Chemielewski, president at the time. He received the William C. Sturgeon Distinguished Service Award in 2010, in which he appealed for support of the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation in his acceptance speech.

Known to help all who call him, Gregory "has been a respected elevator industry icon for at least 20 years, after a start over a half century ago in Chicagoland," nominator John W. Koshak said, continuing:

*"He has launched the careers of many industry professionals; this alone would be cause to be on this list. His teaching and mentoring of many included myself. It is difficult to believe my status would have been attained without the contributions by Dick; his time and experience and strong urging to go in the direction my career path took was the key to my success. There would be no more appropriate nominee and selection than him in being a part of The People Issue."*



## Walter Guderian

Title: Chairman of the Board, Delta Elevator Co. Ltd.

Years in Industry: 62

Based: Kitchener, Canada

Walter Guderian and his family emigrated from Germany to Canada when he was a teenager. Here, he quickly found work as an elevator mechanic at Otis, where he worked 10 years while learning about the Ontario elevator industry. Guderian started Delta Elevator Co. Ltd. in May 1967 as a one-man maintenance business he ran from his home. After moving to ever-larger facilities in Kitchener, the company has grown into a full-service organization with five branch offices and more than 220 employees, including field staff, engineers and production workers.

Guderian served as president for more 37 years and guided Delta through many challenges: growing the customer base, hiring and developing employees and investing in infrastructure. He gained the maintenance contracts for two local universities in Waterloo that became the foundation of long-term relationships the company continues to this day. Though he retired in 2004, he still serves as chairman of the board and helps guide company strategy.

In the late 1980s, Guderian decided to develop his own elevator and control systems, so he hired mechanical and electrical engineering staff members to develop Delta's first elevating devices. This helped the company to become one of the few domestic suppliers of fully integrated elevator systems with the release of the DMPC in 1999.

Guderian was a founding member of the Canadian Elevator Contractors Association (CECA) in 1975. He served on the CECA Board of Directors as Central Region chair and has been the organization's vice president and president. He is now an honorary member of CECA and still attends its meetings and conferences.

Nominator Elizabeth Peters said of Guderian, "From the beginning, Walter established the values the company still works with today: integrity, service and quality."



### **Lars Gustafsson**

Title: Development Manager, SafeLine Group

Years in Industry: 24

Based: Tyresö, Sweden

Lars “Lasse” Gustafsson is founder and development manager of SafeLine Group, a lift safety-accessory manufacturer based in Tyresö, Sweden. His company’s products are produced and designed locally in the factory close to his home outside Stockholm. As manager of SafeLine’s R&D department, Gustafsson has an ear for listening to the demands of the market and developing open-source products, driving the market toward becoming more open and competitive as other companies follow its lead.

SafeLine began as a one-man-business in 1995 as Hisselektronik, driven by Gustafsson’s ambition to change the lift safety industry. The first products, floor indicators and control systems, were made in his basement and focused on the lift installer with the motto “for lift people, by lift people.” The business quickly grew out of the basement, with the name being changed to SafeLine in 2008 with Hisselektronik becoming a subsidiary. Gustafsson still plays a big part in the development of SafeLine’s products and its continued successes. It has grown to have an installed base of more than 250,000 lift telephones all over Europe and is one of the largest independent manufacturers specializing in lift safety products on the continent.

Nominator Tarja Rosén said of Gustafsson:

*“It has always been his determination that products should not just fulfill necessary safety standards, but also always be of high quality, and easy to install and configure. Although starting out with nothing but good ideas and a lift mindset, Lars has managed to set an industrial standard with SafeLine’s products, completely changing the lift safety landscape in Sweden and Europe.”*



### **Len Halsey**

Title: Project Executive, Canary Wharf Contractors, Ltd.

Years in Industry: 56

Based: Canary Wharf, East London

You can see a lot of changes over a span of decades, and with nearly 56 years in vertical transportation (VT), Len Halsey can bear witness to where the industry has been and where it is today. Among his career highlights? “Seeing the technical changes from electromechanical to electronic systems and the introduction of microprocessor technology, a change that has had a huge impact on our industry,” he says.

Born in Highgate, London, Halsey attended local schools and Hackney Technical College. He joined Otis in London as an apprentice in 1963, staying with the OEM for 34 years. He left the industry but came back within a year, joining Canary Wharf, where he is now serving his 22nd year with the company. As project executive, he is responsible for VT design across all the district’s developments.

Like so many others, family connections led Halsey to the VT industry: his father and an uncle both worked for Otis in London, which gave Halsey “an introduction to the world of lifts from an early age.” It also helped that he enjoyed engineering work, and that his job afforded opportunities to travel.

Today, Halsey gets satisfaction from working with “teams of highly professional architects, engineers and designers on some of the U.K.’s most prestigious buildings.” Among those buildings are One Canada Square, one of the U.K.’s — and Europe’s — tallest buildings.

He has served as chair of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers Lifts Group and contributed to the Symposium on Lift and Escalator Technologies. And, though he plans to retire this summer, he is “keen to contribute to industry training here in the U.K. and, hopefully, to be able to inspire others into a rewarding career in lifts and escalators.”



## **Charles "Charlie" Herrera**

Title: Director and Chief Operating Officer, EMR Elevator, Inc.

Years in Industry: 21

Based: Arlington, Texas

From helper to manager, Charles "Charlie" Herrera has been in the industry since 1997. Since June 2017, he has been director of Technical and Training Operations and COO at EMR Elevator, Inc., headquartered in Arlington, Texas. In this role, his objective is "to motivate and push people to their potential, and create leaders and a team environment for my peers and employer." Prior to initially coming on at EMR as a Houston-based Southeast region manager in 2012, Herrera served as a manager at Austin Elevator Consultants in Austin, Texas, for nearly six years. Between his EMR manager and current roles, he was a national service manager at McDonough Elevators in Houston for approximately one year.

Today, Herrera works alongside his wife, Jackie, who is EMR regional sales & marketing director, training people to tackle projects such as ones at convention centers in cities throughout Texas and at the University of Texas at Austin (ELEVATOR WORLD, July 2018). His nominator, EMR Modernization Superintendent Chris Pearce, said:

*"Charlie is in a class all his own. Having grown up in the industry with a wealth of experience, he helps lead one of the nation's largest independent elevator companies. He has a diverse skill set that he leverages to succeed. Most of all, people love him! I continue to be extremely impressed with his vast knowledge of the industry and technology."*



## **Jim Himes**

Title: Regional Operations Director, thyssenkrupp

Years in Industry: 26

Based: Fort Lauderdale, Florida

From colleague thyssenkrupp Regional Modernization Project Manager Alys Roark's standpoint, Jim Himes is an elevator professional with a "can do" attitude. Himes has been with thyssenkrupp for 15 years, holding roles including service/repair manager, modernization manager, vice president of modernization for the Southeast region and Regional Operations director of Modernization, all in Florida. He has held his current role for two-and-a-half years.

Prior to his career with thyssenkrupp, Himes spent almost three years with Otis, starting as a mechanic in Cincinnati and progressing to branch manager in Dayton, Ohio.

"While this industry is challenging, I've always prided myself in searching for the best solution for each application. Nothing is ever the same in modernization. I also have a passion for developing people," Himes said. "Everyone knows I have a saying: you can't teach drive, and you can't fix stupid. You either have drive (whether natural or acquired), or you don't. I recognize the drive in people and have developed many who have gone on to lead successful careers."

Roark states:

*"Jim has a strong passion for developing and growing people, from the field staff to the office. He is never too busy and will always take the time to explain how things work to anyone and everyone."*

*"He never accepts 'we can't do that' as an answer. With an engineering background, he has found ways we 'can' on countless projects on which we had been told, 'We can't.' His determination in finding the best solutions for customers is always at the forefront of his mind. His drive, dedication and passion for the company and the people who encounter him is contagious."*



### **Mario Jones**

Title: Manager, Life Cycle Management and Product Reliability, KONE Operations Center

Years in Industry: 43

Based: Moline, Illinois

For every challenge, there's usually a solution; it's all a matter of finding the right one. Dealing with problems might not be everyone's cup of tea, but working to find answers to customers' questions is the best part of Mario Jones' job. You might say it's what gets him out of bed every morning.

"He is widely known among the technicians in just about every company as the go-to person when having a problem they can't solve," said Jerry Davis, a colleague who nominated Jones for this feature.

Jones was born and raised in Panama City, Panama, but came to the U.S. to attend college, earning two associates' degrees in electrical engineering technology from Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston and a BS in electrical engineering technology from Clemson University. It was back home, however, that he got his start in the vertical-transportation industry, doing parts inventory at Otis Panama. It was only natural, because the business was in his blood from an early age: he followed his father's footsteps into the elevator industry.

It's been a career of special memories for Jones. One was a particular job, a six-car gearless group with swing cars installed in San Jose, Costa Rica. Another was a particular person, William J. Hamilton, retired from Otis, who Jones looks up to as a mentor.

"Mario has worked around the world for not only KONE, but other companies as well, and has designed equipment that exists in elevator control rooms just about everywhere," said Davis.

When he's not at work, Jones can often be found involved with his other passions: street rods and woodworking.



### **Suresh Kalathur**

Title: General Manager-West Operations, Mitsubishi Elevator India Pvt. Ltd.

Years in Industry: 12

Based: Mumbai, India

Suresh Kalathur didn't start out working in the elevator industry, but once he landed there he realized it was "the best decision I have made in my career," he says. After earning a bachelor's degree in engineering (electronics and communication) and an MBA, he took on roles in a variety of fields: engineering, office automation, concept selling and computers.

Then, one day, he got a call from a consultant about an opening at Otis Elevator India Ltd., and his career was born. He started as a senior manager of the Hyderabad branch and discovered how much he loved it. When the opportunity arose at Mitsubishi, he happily took it, and it turned out to be another good decision. He said:

*"I enjoy whatever I do, and the best part is I get to wear many hats, and I always want to challenge myself. I can be a people manager, customer manager and a business manager at the same time. And the good part is, balancing everything is what I love the most."*

Economic circumstances in India have made some of that balancing necessary. Volatile conditions brought on by demonetization, the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016 and the Goods and Services Tax can create difficulties for business, but, says Kalathur, "Our performance is consistent due to the support from my team."

His nominator, Fahim Tirandaz, noted that under Kalathur's leadership, Mitsubishi installed India's fastest elevator, which operates at 6 mps, and has landed other prestigious projects. He is, Tirandaz says, "A great leader having excellent management skills."

Though he's found a home in the elevator industry, Kalathur is thankful for the range of professional experiences he's had. "Having worked in a diversity of industries made me think differently," he says.



## Robert Krieger

Title: Elevator Inspector, National Elevator Inspection Services, Bureau Veritas

Years in Industry: 30

Based: Camarillo, California

Robert Krieger was working in the biomedical engineering field, maintaining lifesaving devices such as clinical laboratory analyzers, surgical equipment, neonatal incubators, cardiac monitors, ventilators and more, when an elevator mechanic suggested that he consider entering the vertical-transportation industry. The mechanic had brought circuit boards to Krieger for repair and told him many of his skills would transfer to the elevator trade. "Having done my due diligence on the subject, I made the jump," says Krieger, who, in 1988, joined Amtech Elevator as a helper.

Today, he is an elevator inspector with National Elevator Inspection Services, Bureau Veritas, assigned primarily to the West Coast region. He also works as one of two American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) course facilitators presenting "Introduction to Elevators" and "Inspections of elevators using A17.2."

His nominator, Angela Malone, said that since Krieger joined the industry, "He has distinguished himself, becoming a subject-matter expert and mentoring countless other inspectors."

Krieger says his place in the industry is enjoyable, noting:

*"Solving problems and challenges is the most satisfying aspect of this trade. Teaching classes and having students stay after class to visit, as well as call me up to thank me, is also rewarding."*

Among his certifications, Krieger is a journeyman elevator mechanic with the International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 18; a NAESA International elevator safety code specialist and QEI; a National Association of Elevator Contractors CET-S (certified elevator technician supervisor) and an ASME instructor.



## Karen Penafiel

Title: Executive Director, NEII

Years in Industry: 3

Based: Centreville, Virginia

Serving as executive director of the National Elevator Industry Inc. (NEII) since July 2016, Karen Penafiel has established NEII as a leading trade organization in the building and vertical-transportation industries. Penafiel guides the long-term strategic plan, ensuring NEII remains relevant and responsive to industry needs.

Under Penafiel's leadership, NEII has grown and evolved to become a prominent leader in codes and safety. Recently, Penafiel was instrumental in planning and initiating a rebrand of NEII, including a redesigned website and new logo. Its new public image places NEII at the forefront of industry conversation, representing a future-focused culture and reenvisioned goals.

NEII works with jurisdictions across the U.S. to create, implement and update codes, and Penafiel's leadership has taken this role to a new level. Penafiel and the advocacy team collaborated with other industry stakeholders to spearhead several government-affairs projects, advocating for safety and elevated state standards in training, education and proficiency of elevator mechanics. One result is the Louisiana's recently signed milestone elevator mechanic licensing legislation.

Prior to joining NEII, Penafiel worked at the Building Owners and Managers Association International, most recently as the vice president of Advocacy, Codes and Standards. Her expertise in legislative issues proved extremely valuable when joining NEII in 2016.

Penafiel is moving the industry in the right direction, said her nominator, Katy Zielinski, who elaborated:

*"Her leadership comes at a time when women are at the helm of the elevator industry, running the five main elevator associations. Penafiel has, without a doubt, left a positive mark in her few years at NEII, leading the industry and transforming how it functions at a critical time of growth and innovation."*



### **Ricky Peters**

Title: National Modernization Efficiency Manager, Schindler

Years in Industry: 23

Based: Dallas, Texas

James “Ricky” Peters has been in the industry since April 1996, when he got his start as an elevator construction apprentice at Fujitec America. Shortly afterward, he went to Montgomery KONE as an elevator repair apprentice. By 2004, he had become an elevator repair mechanic at United Elevator Service, where he was made sales representative/account manager in 2006. Here, he managed a customer base of more than 250 accounts, surveyed equipment, prepared work estimates and reviewed and made bids. He moved to Otis a year later, where he was a service/modernization sales representative, then modernization superintendent for the Dallas/Fort Worth offices. Here, he managed more than 32 employees, and bid on and estimated small to multimillion-dollar contracts. He also managed and operated many of these projects.

Peters has been national modernization efficiency manager for Schindler, where he leads a team focusing on executing modernizations and ensuring operation absolutes into the organization, since 2016. He is also improving personal protective equipment overall. In 2010, he ventured on his own and started Longhorn Elevator Co., where he served as president/partner until it was sold in 2016. There, he established new business and customer relationships; estimated and bid on new installations, modernizations, repairs and service; surveyed for modernization and repairs; and managed the office, field and account operations. He was also in the National Elevator Industry Education Program from 1998 to 2004 and been trained in Otis professional sales and management.

Dale Tolar, both Peters’ nominator and grandfather, said of him, “He has excelled at each position he filled.”



### **Eric Peterson**

Title: President and CEO, GUNN Consultants Inc.

Years in Industry: 28

Based: Vancouver, Canada

Eric Peterson has earned recognition from colleagues, customers and larger entities for his commitment to developing better elevator and engineering consulting practices and improving safety and training. An engineer who earned his degree from Lakehead University in Ontario, Canada, Peterson has worked in the elevator industry for 28 years. He joined GUNN Consultants Inc., which has offices in Vancouver and Calgary, Canada, in 1998, becoming a managing partner six years later and growing the firm from a two-employee operation to one of the largest elevator consultancies in British Columbia in that short timeframe. At GUNN, Peterson developed programs for training, safety, technical-specification reliability and quality control.

He is well known at work for these initiatives, but has also been recognized on a larger scale. In November 2018, Peterson was presented the Lieutenant Governor Award for Excellence in Safety and Technical Training by the independent oversight organization Technical Safety BC (TSBC). That same year, he was nominated to serve as chair of TSBC’s Elevating Devices Technical Advisory Committee. In this role, he helps identify and advise on new and emerging issues related to safety, regulatory matters and service issues.

“Eric has set a higher standard for elevator consultants through his work in promoting education and training programs across the province,” his nominator Tamara Vishniakoff shared from TSBC’s award announcement. “His consistent commitment to improvement has resulted in delivering the best results to clients.” GUNN has handled more than 45,000 projects of varying scope and size for institutional and private customers across Canada and the U.S.



### **Lee Rigby**

Title: President, Elevator Safety & Technical Services

Years in Industry: 40-plus

Based: Tallahassee, Florida

Lee Rigby has worn a lot of hats over the course of his career in the elevator industry: installation mechanic, service technician, vice president for a large regional elevator firm, elevator company owner, head state inspector, private inspector, inspection firm owner, consultant, continuing-education provider and expert witness. The first one he wore, though, came with the uniform of the U.S. Navy: he was a technician, and, later, in charge of maintenance and repair, for all ordnance elevators aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Constellation* during two tours of combat duty off the coast of Vietnam.

After his honorable discharge from the Navy in 1973, he went to work as an elevator installer with Sentry Elevator, a division of Century Elevator of Naples, Florida. After holding various positions with several companies, he formed Rigby Elevator Service, Inc., a company that would eventually be purchased by Montgomery Elevator Co. He became a Florida state elevator inspection specialist in 1990. He soon transferred to the state capital, where he provided plan review and code support for state inspectors.

For 15 years, he served as president of Vertical Assessment Associates, a Tallahassee-based inspection and consulting firm, then spent several years as a senior inspector with ATIS Elevator Inspections. Today, he's president of Elevator Safety & Technical Services, which provides training for elevator code compliance.

Rigby holds a QEI certification from NAESA International and is a continuing-education provider for the Certified Elevator Technician (CET®) program and for the Florida Elevator Certificate of Competency. His knowledge of elevator code is summed up by his nominator, Danny Bobo: "When someone has a code question, the answer is, 'Have you asked Lee?'"



### **Charlie Slater**

Title: Director of Operations, ATIS Elevator Inspections, LLC

Years in Industry: 23

Based: New Port Richey, Florida

Frederick "Charlie" Slater started as a controller technician at Voyager Controls, Inc. in Tarpon Springs, Florida, in 1996. His next positions were also in that city: as an elevator mechanic for Sunrise Elevator Co., Inc., then president of A-1 Elevator Inspection, Inc. for four and 14 years, respectively.

Slater now serves as director of operations for ATIS Elevator Inspections, LLC, where he is responsible for overall company operations. His responsibilities include overseeing more than 115 elevator inspectors nationwide, including the recruitment, hiring and training of all new inspectors. He provides performance reviews to ensure compliance to QEI-1, as well as company policies and procedures. He also offers technical and code support for inspectors and trains them on safe and proper inspection practices. He also manages ATIS' regional supervisors and the office support staff, who schedule appointments for inspectors. Finally, he identifies and negotiates with new merger and acquisition targets and generates new sales for ATIS.

When not working at ATIS, Slater serves as an instructor for NAESA International, providing continuing education for elevator inspectors and technicians. He has done this since 2011, while also serving as an elected member of the NAESA Board of Directors. He serves on the ASME A17 Inspections Code Development and LU/LA and Private Residence Elevator Code Development committees. A NAESA-certified QEI supervisor, he possesses elevator inspector licenses in Alabama; Florida; Virginia; Wisconsin; and Washington, D.C.

Nominator Chip Smith said of Slater:

*"His goal is to make this industry and the use of elevators safer for all by promoting code-compliant elevator inspections and providing quality education to industry personnel."*



## David Szczublewski

Title: Senior Project Manager, Gunderlin Ltd.

Years in Industry: 40

Based: Hialeah, Florida

No customer request is too big or too small for David Szczublewski, a second-generation elevator man. After studying business at the University of Toledo, Szczublewski went to work for Haughton's Toledo, Ohio, office, starting in the engineering department and moving on to project management. In this role, he coordinated activity among local offices and suppliers on projects involving elevator cabs, entrances and fixtures.

An opportunity at custom cab and entrance manufacturer Brice-Southern, Inc., brought Szczublewski to Hialeah, Florida. There, he instituted changes that brought the company into the computer age. "Standardization soon followed, which resulted in some of the quickest drawing and fabrication lead times in the industry at that time," Szczublewski says.

He has spent more than half of his career at Gunderlin, holding roles including systems administrator, engineering manager and account manager. As senior project manager, he strives to identify customers, then, he says, "provide them with the information needed to make a rational decision to buy Gunderlin products." He's worked on projects in significant skyscrapers from Miami to NYC. His nominator, Otis Project Executive Alan Lall, says:

*"His project management style is exemplary in the way he tracks and schedules projects. He has shown his ability to sift through mountains of data to help his customers stay on track. His relentless followup practices keep all members of the team well informed to make better decisions. His experience and communication skills make him a valuable asset during the early design stages to the design, engineering and installation teams."*



## Peter Taylor

Title: Service Manager, thyssenkrupp

Years in Industry: 30

Based: Syracuse, New York

Not every elevator company employee has field experience, and many don't have a college degree. Some people would gladly join the argument as to which is more important to ensure business success. Peter Taylor has both, and according to his nominator, Matthew Reichin, this is a big plus for the Syracuse branch office of thyssenkrupp. "We are so fortunate to have somebody like Peter Taylor," said Reichin, who added:

*"Pete's many years of management and field experience combined with his bachelor's degree enable him to expertly drive the operations side of our branch. Because of his time in the elevator business here in central New York, he fully understands the unique equipment and customers in the area and is a strong leader for our field force."*

Taylor says his father's career as a route mechanic is what drew him to the vertical-transportation industry, and during his summer breaks from college, he worked as a helper and an escalator installer at Otis. He earned a degree in management with an emphasis on labor relations from Canisius College in Buffalo, and at Otis, started in construction/modernization, then moved on to repair and ended with a route. "The biggest job that I am most proud of while working in the field was installing the escalators at the Carousel Mall in Syracuse for Otis. That was the largest job in Syracuse, and all the elevator companies had crews working that site."

In 2001, thyssenkrupp had an opening for a service manager. "I jumped at it and have never looked back," says Taylor, adding:

*"I have held many titles here, as service manager, construction/modernization superintendent and branch manager. thyssenkrupp has always treated me well, and I really enjoy working in this industry."*



### **Cornelius Walls**

Title: Vice President of Global Elevator Technology, Formula Systems

Years in Industry: 24

Based: Elk Grove Village, Illinois

A 24-year veteran of the elevator industry, Cornelius “Corn” Walls is a 17-year veteran of Formula Systems and has served as president of the Chicago Elevator Association, with which he has been involved for 18 years. He also serves on the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation (EESF) and National Association of Elevator Contractors boards. Before Formula Systems, he worked for Adams Elevator Equipment Co. in Niles, Illinois, beginning in September 1995 on the receiving docks and until leaving in 2001 as manager of customer support.

Nominator Mary Lewis said of him:

*“Anyone who knows the industry-popular Mr. Walls understands the varied product knowledge he built up over the many long years hanging with elevator folks! Everyone also has seen his generosity with coworkers, customers and industry safety organizations. Even though he is primarily responsible for technical elevator products, he has spent immeasurable energy and monetary support within the EESF in support of the riding public and children.*

*“Cornelius is the consummate ‘hale fellow well met’ to everyone and never has met a stranger. Behind the story of being a vice president of a global organization, he is a self-made, humble but driven man who has worked his way up. The support and care he offers to his customers is an example of service that can be hard to find today. And, when we talk about ‘hanging’ in the industry, there is no one more fun to do it with than Corn.*

*“Corn’s passions travel well beyond the elevator industry — we all know about his beloved Bears, Cubbies and his family! What many don’t know is that he is a spiritual man, deeply loyal and devoted, immensely kind and always a gentleman.*

*“Just ask him!”*



### **Steve Wurth**

Title: President, Wurtec, Inc.

Years in Industry: 40

Based: Toledo, Ohio

Steve Wurth began his career in January 1979 at Houghton Elevator Co. (shortly before it was purchased by Schindler) after earning a BS in Manufacturing Technology from Bowling Green State University. He worked in industrial engineering, then construction engineering and, finally, service engineering at Schindler. He left to found Wurtec in 1985, where he still serves as president.

Toledo, Ohio-headquartered Wurtec designs and manufactures components specifically for elevator industry professionals with the goal of making their jobs faster, safer and more efficient. Products include rail installation and alignment tools, such as the Wurtec False Car; hoisting equipment and supplies like its patented High-Speed Capstan; communication technology like its S3 Communicator series; and safety equipment, like its Biparting Door Blocks. Wurtec has grown, adding branch locations in Toronto; Vancouver; Las Vegas; Miami; Shanghai; and, most recently, New York.

Wurth cofounded Top Floor Elevator Store, a Canadian distributor for the passenger elevator industry that also opened a distribution center in Las Vegas in 2014. He is cofounder and vice president of Standard Wireway and Supply, a sheet-metal stamping company in Toledo that produces products for the passenger elevator industry. He also serves as president of P & A Metal Services, a steel supply company. Along the way, he has also gained 12 patents.

Wurth has been active in the National Association of Elevator Contractors, having been a member for 27 years. He has served as a board member and treasurer and continues to volunteer on its committees. He is also a supporter of the Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation and served as its fundraising campaign chairman in 2015. 🌐