Editor’s Overview

The Hydraulic Renaissance

by Ricia Sturgeon-Hendrick

According to most people I talk to, hydraulic elevators never really went away, but they took a hit for a while. Due to the possibility of leaks, they were given a bad rap in the 1980s and 1990s when environmental awareness was increasing. In addition, the machine-room-less (MRL) elevator was just appearing in the U.S. and seemed to be the answer to the low-rise applications for which hydros were famous. Our focus this month is on the venerable Hydraulic Elevators and Components. It has cleaned up its act and is having a renaissance. Its defenders are legion:

♦ The Comeback of the Hydraulic Lift by Thomas Birnbaum is a study that shows hydraulic lifts have a lighter environmental footprint than traction for some uses. Their impact depends on several factors that are thoroughly investigated.

♦ The Ups and Downs of Fire-Resistant Hydraulic Fluids by Kevin Kovanda explains that when hydraulic fluid is used where fire resistance is necessary, it is important to choose polyalkylene glycols that are tested for other dangerous chemicals. The author describes the options.

♦ The Hydraulic Crossroads by Emery Thran gives a historic perspective, noting that the introduction of the MRL elevator to North America caused the low-rise market to turn away from hydros. But now, 20 years later, hydraulic elevators are alive and well due to advances in the industry. Thran makes a case for the record hydro sales some companies are now seeing.

♦ The Anderton Canal Lift, 1875-1908 by Dr. Lee Gray (our history correspondent) is about a pair of hydraulic elevators that moved barges between rivers.

♦ A Regal Ride by Farid Waleh is a feature article on a recent installation in one of Coach’s flagship stores in New York City. A symbol of luxury, the hydro is glass, wood and metal with black powder coating.

♦ A New Compact MRL Hydraulic Lift for Mid-Rise Buildings by Kjell Johansson and Magnus Landberg, an Elevcon paper, describes a new technology — the Hydraulic Infinite Linear Actuator — that can vastly expand the use (and rise) of hydraulics.

♦ Pumped Up is a great Company Spotlight on the 73-year history of Canton Elevator. Now a part of Nidec, the company is selling open-market, nonproprietary hydraulic elevators.

The above seems like a lot, but we have much more to offer this month. Dr. Albert So has written a Continuing Education article, Motor Drive and Control, that gives the reader an advance look at his new book, The Elevator: From Basics to Calculus, to be published this year. So takes a deep dive into all the drive systems, including hybrids and linear motors.

With less than a year to go before door-lock monitoring is mandatory in New York City, we asked local industry member and EW correspondent, Matt Jackson, to attend the New York Association of Realty Managers meeting, which included many participants from our industry. Read Crunch Time for the outcome.

Building on a Strong Foundation by Kaija Wilkinson outlines the transition taking place at the U.S.’s largest elevator association, the National Association of Elevator Contractors.

Our cover feature, Exclusive Access by Tim Irvin and Lee Freeland, is a new passenger elevator in the historic Old Forester Distillery on Louisville, Kentucky’s Whiskey Row. Here, tourists can use the showcase hydro to view the entirety of a working 44-ft.-tall still to get the full bourbon-making experience.

Another feature is So California by Edward Persico. Next to Salesforce Tower in San Francisco is 181 Fremont with thyssenkrupp elevators boasting the first Occupant Evacuation Operation system in the U.S. In case of fire, the elevators will be used for evacuation. Read about what makes this system different.

All this and more. Enjoy!