The Future Is Upon Us!

by Ricia Sturgeon-Hendrick

Twenty-five years ago, my father had a vision. He called it “seeing into the future with 2020 Vision.” He invited many of the great visionaries in our industry to predict what the vertical-transportation industry might look like in the year 2020. That year came upon us suddenly. In the article 2020 Vision: Hindsight and Foresight, our historian and correspondent, Dr. Lee Gray, does an admirable job of sorting out what really happened in those 25 years. Many predictions made have begun to emerge: multiple cars in a single shaft, linear drives and fire evacuation by elevator; and some have fallen by the wayside. In an industry that handles the lives of so many passengers, it is not surprising that change is slower than in some other industries. However, change and innovation are accelerating; so, for the next two years, let’s begin to imagine 2030. What will change, and what will we keep?

Beginning with this issue, our format has changed. The type is a little sharper and the layouts more exotic to reflect some newcomers to our production team. As we acquire new audiences in Europe, the U.K. and Middle East to add to those in India, Turkey, North America and South America, we are looking to modernize and coordinate across editions. Let us know what you think.

We lead with the Project of the Year Awards. There were many amazing entries this year. Judging is never easy, but these are the best of the best:

♦ Elevators, New Construction: Vessel, NYC: The team overcomes challenges to create “one of the world’s most complicated elevators,” a centerpiece of Hudson Yards.

♦ Elevators, Modernization: Empire State Building, NYC: Otis is chosen again for a showcase elevator (and more) in the iconic skyscraper.

♦ Escalators, New Construction: Jewel Changi Airport, Singapore: Strict requirements from the architect impose challenges for equipment that helps move 82 million people a year.

♦ Escalators, Modernization: San Diego Convention Center: Escalators upgraded at the famous home of San Diego Comic-Con pose unique challenge for KONE.

♦ Inclined Elevators: Riosol Island of Stars Hotel, Mogán, Spain: Unique mountainside resort inspires an equally unique lift project.

♦ Platform Lifts and Stairway Chairlifts: Yacht Obsession, Mystic, Connecticut: Innovative engineering leads to wheelchair access solution for the “lobster yacht” Obsession.

♦ Special-Purpose Lifts: Mega Elevator, Tel Aviv, Israel: An automotive factory’s large loads call for a jumbo elevator.

♦ Elevators, Upgrades and Repairs, Chelm, Poland: The Guide Assessment device quickly identifies rails in need of replacement.

Angela C. Baldwin reports on Interlift 2019, the 14th and largest ever. With enthusiasm and confidence, 577 exhibitors filled Messe Augsburg’s 46,500 m² with colorful and interactive booths. According to European Lift Association President Roberto Zappa, at its heart, Interlift “is a place where business and culture are exchanged.”

You must read our interview with Marja-Liisa Siikonen, At the Very Top. She is one of Finland’s most notable female inventors (retired from KONE) with more than 200 patents to her name. Speaking of notable females, Dot Mynahan, executive director of field operations Otis Americas, reported for us on the Tradeswomen Build Nations Conference in Minneapolis. Of the 2,700 tradeswomen in attendance, 75 were elevator constructors!

Our focus topic this month is Maintenance and Safety, the same as our recent International Elevator & Escalator Symposium (IEES) in Las Vegas. The three articles on the topic are from the December 2019 event in Las Vegas:

♦ Looking to the Future by Dr. Naohiko Suzuki, Shin-ichi Kuroda and Kenji Serizawa is an extremely important article that proposes remote maintenance services. Though controversial in the U.S, Mitsubishi Electric has integrated it into 150,000 units in Japan.

♦ Steps for Reducing Accidents by Manuel Díez describes maintenance and inspection around the world and concludes that inspection must be independent to ensure safety.

♦ Reducing Risk by Louis Bialy describes the various stages of failure in equipment and how maintenance at every stage helps elevators be reliable for longer.

This year’s IEES looks to the future, as well. It will be in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on December 7-8. Its topic is “The Future of Vertical Transportation in 2030.” I know there are some visionaries out there — we are waiting to hear from you.