Our focus this month is on Escalators – what my father considered to be “a whole different breed” from elevators. The latter is enclosed, allowing passengers to be safer than those riding in automobiles. Escalators, on the other hand, by nature, must operate in the open. We have made them quiet, attractive and inviting, their very welcoming nature presenting a safety issue. They are very deceptive giants — ubiquitous in urban life. If escalators were as noisy as a roaring subway train, passengers would approach them with greater caution. Escalator marketers labor with this incongruity.

The last few times we focused on escalators, we struggled to get three to four good articles. As the number of manufacturers and maintainers of this special equipment has grown, so has the flow of information to ELEVATOR WORLD.

We start with a feature, A Trip Through Time & Around the World, sent by thyssenkrupp to celebrate the 125th anniversary of escalators. This article takes you from Jesse Reno in 1892 to the shortest and tallest units, and on to the most unusual (an escalator in an aquarium on our cover) with some interesting statistics on our industry thrown in. Next is The Hidden Heart of Escalators by Stefano Bertoni and Rezarta Rakipi from Montanari Giulio & C. The authors discuss the features of the escalator traction machine. In their scenario, the brake and gearbox are separated for safety. From the certification specialist Koos van Lindenborg of Liftinstituut, we present More Than Meets the Eye. An Industry Dialogue discusses how his colleague Azaad Santoe draws up specifications for “heavy-duty” escalators, those in 24/7 constant use.

Benefits of VFDs and Line-Regenerative Units for Escalators by Tyler Pecha and Lindsey Guajardo from KEB America discusses the value of variable-frequency drives (VFDs) paired with line-regenerative units that both improve performance and save energy.

Our historian, Dr. Lee Gray, always jumps into the focus topics with great glee. This month, he focuses on The Hocquart Escalator in the Gare d’Orsay. This unusual escalator was designed by a transportation engineer, Charles Jullien, and replaced a staircase in a train station/hotel complex in 1907. Keeping It Clean by Matt Irvin is a success story about Efi Rosen, who had a high-pressure cleaning equipment business, but, in 1999, helped develop his own escalator-cleaning device that is now all over the world.

On the technical side, the focus on escalators continues with an Elevcon paper by five engineers from Toshiba, The Escalators with the Buffer Material as the Step Tip Part. Finding that accidents were not declining, the company invented a step with four-sided demarcation and buffer material at the tip to mitigate personal damage. Our Continuing Education article for this month is Maintaining and Adjusting Variable-Torque Brake Controls by Ken Smith. This article discusses the most common variable-torque brakes used in escalators and moving walks. The author takes you step by step through adjustments, inspection and maintenance procedures. This article is worth 1 contact hour (0.1 CEU). A nice companion piece is Alternative Testing for Escalators and Moving Walks by Davis Turner, who describes how to determine the code-required speed and retardation on this equipment.

One last word on escalators — we have a new book on the horizon from David Cooper with LECS (UK) Ltd. in the U.K. He is working on the Escalator Modernization Design Guide, due to be published by Elevator World, Inc. later this year.