

# To Be Anything in This Industry

by TAK Mathews, Indian Editor

Within a week of being “drafted” into the elevator and escalator industry, the late H.H. Varshenya (a veteran of the industry who lived and breathed elevators) handed me a book and categorically stated, “If you want to be anything in this industry, you better master Strakosch.” At that time, fresh out of business school, which itself was on top of four years of engineering school, I had very little inclination toward any more “mastering.” To me, the E&E industry, at that time, was just a job.

Fifteen years later, my employer at the time decided that I wasn't “anybody,” showed me the door and in a flash, I became a “nobody.” I wonder whether mastering Strakosch would have impacted my employer's decision. Jobless and with a family to feed, I contemplated putting my experience to use by providing elevator consultancy. A well wisher, Abhay Chordia, took the decision out of my hands by pushing a huge project on me. Overnight, I had to round up my years of practical experience and speak the language of an expert. The first reference that came to my mind was Strakosch. (The second was ELEVATOR WORLD.) I ordered my copy of *The Vertical Transportation Handbook* from EW's online bookstore and worked to master it. While it is not up to me to say whether I mastered Strakosch or have become anything in the industry, it has surely given me a good foundation beyond just consultant talk and has helped me polish my years of field experience.

The third edition of *The Vertical Transportation Handbook* (along with Dr. Gina Barney's *Elevator Traffic Handbook* and EW's magazines) soon became my constant companion and reference material for most of my discussions. Two years back, I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Barney at Interlift 2009. At that time, it struck me that I had to make an effort to meet the other two people who had helped consolidate the foundation of my (limited) knowledge.

With a little cajoling, I managed to get myself invited to Mobile, Alabama, the headquarters of Elevator World, Inc. It was a great opportunity to meet the folks who put together the issues of EW month after month. I was speechless as I went through the EW archives, starting from the first issue, not to forget the issue from the month and year of my birth; it was like being part of history. But the cherry on the cake was meeting William C. Sturgeon, the founder of EW. With clear instructions that I shouldn't

spend more than 15 minutes with him, a meeting was set up. He narrated many stories, including the story of EW, from the time it was set up in 1953 to the current day, and his emergency landing in Delhi in the 1950s. I was mesmerized by his memory and clarity of thought. Eventually, it was a good two hours before I managed to draw myself away from the incredible man. (His daughter and President of EW, Ricia Hendrick, wasn't too pleased.)

While bidding farewell, Sturgeon presented me with a signed copy of the first draft of his contribution to the July 2010 issue of EW and a shrimp carved out of bone.



ELEVATOR WORLD's editorial staff and your author



(l-r) Your author and William C. Sturgeon

I find it a befitting coincidence that the launch of EW, an important milestone in the history of the elevator industry, had to occur 100 years after it all started with the "All safe gentlemen" declaration. It is said that each achievement tends to drive ambition further. That evening, over dinner with another amazing industry veteran, my dear friend Robert S. Caporale and editor of EW, I declared my desire to meet George Strakosch. Caporale disclosed the fact that the fourth edition of *The Vertical Transportation Handbook* was likely to be launched at the International Association of Elevator Consultants (IAEC) Annual Forum. He promised that he would explore the possibility of having Strakosch launch the book at the event. Months later, when I received the agenda for the IAEC Forum, it was evident that Caporale had delivered on his promise. Incidentally, while in Caporale's office, I managed to pinch a copy of the second edition of the handbook before he quickly locked up his copy of the first edition.

The much-awaited moment happened. As Strakosch walked into the conference, I was relieved that I was not the only one behaving like a kid in an ice cream store. Veteran after veteran lined up to have his or her moment with him. Strakosch, in turn, patiently signed the copies of the fourth edition of the elevator industry's "Bible," while basking in the well-deserved limelight.


The co-editor of the book, Caporale, who also was the EW representative at the event, was faced with a problem – in addition to having to sign the copies, he had to handle the large demand for the book. It wasn't surprising that he soon ran out of stock. Getting an autographed copy of a book is a great deal; the demand also speaks of the prominence the book has within the industry. *The Vertical Transportation Handbook* has undoubtedly been a key and essential reference source for anybody in the vertical-transportation industry.



(l-r) George Strakosch, Robert Caporale and your author

From the first edition in 1967 to the second in 1982, to the third in 1998 to the current edition, this handbook remains a vital reference for anyone in the industry or who would like to be educated on nuances related to it. The current edition has input from Edward Donoghue, George Gibson, the late Wayne Gilchrist, Jon Halpern, Len LeVee, Joe Montesano, Nicholas Montesano, Al Saxer, Hank Peelle, Davis Turner, Jim Fortune, Richard Peters and Sturgeon.

To conclude, let me take you back to the advice given to me by a veteran over two decades back: if you want to be anything in the vertical-transportation industry, you better master Strakosch. I wasted 15 long years before I accepted this simple fact. I would urge you not to wait so long.

The fourth edition of *The Vertical Transportation Handbook* is available at EW's online bookstore ([www.elevatorbooks.com](http://www.elevatorbooks.com)). In addition, the book will be launched at the International Elevator & Escalator Expo, to be held on February 16-18, 2012, at the NSE ground in Mumbai. For those who want an autographed copy, it would be a good idea to write to [anitha@virgo-comm.com](mailto:anitha@virgo-comm.com) and book your copy, in advance. 

**[www.elevator-jobs.com](http://www.elevator-jobs.com)**

## **Jobs available worldwide in the Elevator Industry**

**(UK / South Africa / Middle East /  
Europe / India)**

skyline indiarecruit.com pvt. ltd.

44-Deccan Court, 259-SV Road,  
Bandra W, Mumbai 400050

**Tel: (+91 22) 26558076, 26410877**

**E-mail: [elevators@indiarecruit.com](mailto:elevators@indiarecruit.com)**