

08/01/2008

The life of an Elevator Man

An opinionated view on the everyday
struggles and fight for survival.

by John Fellin

Did you ever stop to think?

How long will you live after you retire?

Not the average lifespan of your typical
male which hovers around 78 years.

Not the typical male that goes to work
in a clean suit or clothing and comes home
the same way. Follow me in this short

journey. We just don't pull passengers to safety
when trapped in an elevator. We will even go to the
opposite end of the spectrum and help moving men
bring huge pieces of furniture up to higher floors.

Your eyes will be opened.

You will never look at us in the same way again.

We are humble in our work. No media coverage required.

Welcome to my world.

Did you ever really stop to think
about the life of an elevator man?

The man I'm talking about; is the
average elevator mechanic currently
investing 5,10, 20,30, 40 years of service.

The man who started in this industry
as a very very young adult whose lungs
have tasted the toxic environment of an
elevator motorroom. The fine particles of
carbon and copper dust whizzing about
spinning generators and motors. Dust such
as asbestos or other deadly material that
has accumulated in the shaftways, secondaries
cartops and into your lungs after a clean down.
Dusts of unknown origins that have settled into
the pits and into your ears, eyes, nose and lungs
after sweeping it clean. The exposure to elevators
containing feces, urine, hypodermic needles,
cockroaches, rodents, dirty condoms and
tampons are small list of our many encounters.

Did you ever really stop to think

about the life of an elevator man?

The man

whose every cell in his body has been exposed to the continuous pulsating surges of magnetic fields emanating from the controller equipment relays, huge generators, hoist motors, monstrous transformers power hungry SCR Drives, roof satellite, telephone, security, building transmitting units and other unknown sources of radiating agents.

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

The man

who for the sake of keeping his job clean and tidy has been exposed to toxic and outlawed cleaning solvents and chemicals that had found its way into his body through inhalation, eyes, skin and hair contact which over the years have settled and are waiting to wreak havoc on his internal organs and his whole physical well being.

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

The man

who has been exposed to high levels of lead required in the repairing of elevators whether its pouring and filling shackles or soldering to repair circuit boards and their connections. The glues and epoxies used for everyday repairs. The toxic cloud coming from burning bits in every day drilling, sawing, cutting and welding or burning controller relays, hoist/generator fields, armatures, brake coils, and dragging brake pads which at one time contained or may still contain asbestos or a mixture of other deadly material.

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

The man

who must carry besides his everyday tools, a laptop, safety gear, specialized tools, job specific equipment, parts, lubricants and rags; carefully carting his precious cargo up and down buses, trains, buildings stairwells rooftops, basements and some almost inaccessible areas. The physically taxing burden, pounding the spine and joints on a daily basis slowly eating away at his shoulders, hips, joints and spinal column to the point where they will eventually give way.

Did you ever really stop to think
about the life of an elevator man?

The man
who has undergone surgeries for disease
or to remove cancerous organs;
who was blasted by a jolt of electricity;
whose hand or foot was crushed by rotating
equipment, lost a finger, a toe, a hand, foot or arm;
was beaten every summer by extremely hot
temperatures between 100 to 120 F , bruised by
the repetitive wrenching of tools and blinded by
debris or arcing components; living off compensation,
disabled or crippled for life; crushed by an elevator,
succumbing to the cancerous diseases and never
returning home to his wife, children or family.

Did you ever really stop to think
about the life of an elevator man?

The man
who years ago had a helper by his side, a route
half the size of today and was afforded the luxury
of a company vehicle; who witnessed
10,20,30,40 years ago his elder peers his
mentors, retiring in a comfortable atmosphere,
for the bosses awarded them light work, a stationary job
or a position in the office for their dedicated loyalty
to them and the company.

Did you ever really stop to think
about the life of an elevator man?

The man
who constantly berated by his bosses to follow
company policies that ensures his safety and
their own employment attended safety courses,
elevator courses, inspectors courses, always
carrying and wearing all the anomalies within his
safety bag, signing forms and adhering to decrees
all while overloading his already pressed being into
continuously performing no less than top peak to the
point of bending the rules when the pressure is on
and putting his life in peril for the sake of not having
to here his boss moan and groan, and completing
and bringing the job in on time.

Did you ever really stop to think
about the life of an elevator man?

The man

who sits down with his complaints as he addresses his shop steward, business reps and labor department of the ongoing problems within the industry only to here the Corporate dragon breathing down his throat complaining of a bad economy putting the hiring of new employees on hold, not filling the routes of men who have quit or retired, increasing route sizes, adding extra responsibilities to an already taxed mechanic who not only repairs elevators but also conducts inspection, local Law 10, 2 year tests, 5 year tests, pressure tests, fireman phase 1 and phase 2 testing, performs emergency power testing, assists city inspectors, private consultants, repairs computers, phone systems and shocked to find his extra expenses, his current overtime a betrayal of the double time and triple times of years ago as well as his helper taken away. Parts are hard to come by and is expected to work the standby list, keep his mouth shut and not complain. How can you find the time to perform a full and complete maintenance, a quality repair or a modernization completed on time without turning over one big lemon. You wonder why planes fall out of the sky, trains get derailed, and cranes topple over? The answer is simple. The more the workload increases, the more the quality decreases!

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

The man

who is told there is little or no room for wage increases this contract to support his family as he struggles to keep up with ever increasing taxes, bills, while being asked to go backwards by giving back holidays and double time. The manipulation of corporate holdout during negotiations to perpetuate a strike for the sake of saving hundreds of thousands for each and every company while we get nothing? What's next? Give back vacations and sick days? Forced overtime for everyone? Why don't we just work for free?

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

If I were to take an educated guess you will be lucky to live 2 years into retirement.

I can not find currently available statistics depicting the life cycle of an elevator mechanic. It wouldn't surprise me to see the numbers much much lower than 78 years of age.

I am quite sure if these numbers were available, our negotiations at the upcoming contract would take on a whole new life of its own. Request for a lighter work load would lead the way. Today's mechanic can not sustain this current level of

work for any prolonged period of time without an increase in the number of injuries and death to the mechanic and to the riding public.

With 30 years in the business I have seen more of my retired friends dead than are still living and enjoying the Golden Years. I can only name one person who is retired over 15 years. I can name many many more who never even made it to retirement.

Did you ever really stop to think about the life of an elevator man?

Think about what you have read.

WHAT WILL YOU DO TO PROLONG YOUR LIFE?

Now is the time to sharpen that pencil
put your thoughts down on paper
and take ACTION !

yours truly,

John Fellin
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