

# Columbia Elevator Hosts Programs at Miami Plant

Article and photos by Ralph M. Newman

When the National Association of Elevator Contractors (NAEC) held its regional seminar at the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Airport Hotel on February 24-25, Columbia Elevator Products Co. chose to participate in practical, hands-on fashion. With its Miami factory in close proximity, Columbia invited seminar attendees to a reception, plant tour and series of on-site educational presentations, including demonstrations of the company's design and manufacture of elevator cabs and door systems. The program consisted of six educational stations, with each presenter conducting serial classes for rotating groups of participants and answering questions.

Columbia Elevator President Louis (LJ) Blaiotta Jr. explained:

*"On the 25th, following the final seminar component in Fort Lauderdale, we loaded a bus and drove guests down to the Columbia Southern Inc. Miami factory, with many others following in their own vehicles. We were actually quite surprised at the level of interest."*

Blaiotta led a discussion on commercial entrances, focusing on Columbia's new QuikEnt® Tower 2. He stated: *"It's all about speeding up installation in the field. We demonstrated how to make templates of sorts, by taking drawings and making marks in the steel on the landings to speed your installation. We showed how it's safer to work from a running platform, a much better environment than working from a hanging entrance slab."*

Comparing the Tower 2 product to Columbia's original Tower 1, Blaiotta explained that Tower 2 is easier to install, heavier duty than Tower 1, and can be used when government specifications require structural components. According to Blaiotta:

*"[Tower 1 was] conceived for passenger loading applications, while Tower 2 can be used in more commercial loading and in situations where you have a haunch, not just a sill support angle. It can be used in existing applications and not just in new construction. People still have an affinity for Tower 1, so we're keeping it for awhile, until people become more familiar with Tower 2."*

Speaking on residential and limited use/limited access (LU/LA) entrance systems, Kirk Lewis, manager of R&D for Columbia Elevator Solutions in Winfield, Kansas, showed how a fire-rated entrance can be installed in a pocket wall situation, with the door inside the wall to avoid losing shaftway space. Lewis explained:



Relaxing at the reception



LJ Blaiotta Jr. on Columbia's QuikEnt Tower 2

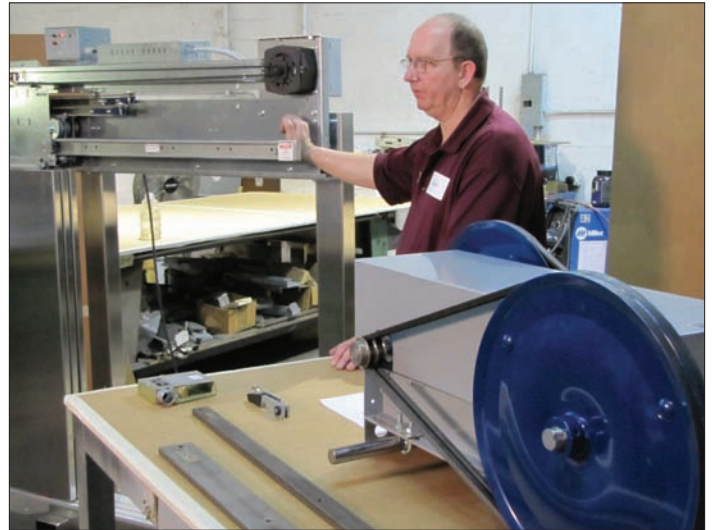


Kirk Lewis on residential and LU/LA entrances

*"This was originally designed for residential applications, to look 'pretty,' hiding it under drywall so it looks like a pocket door. However, these days we're finding an even bigger, unintended audience in the housing arena, or, in fact, any old commercial swing door replacement business – it works just as nicely. They take out a fire-rated swing door and they need to put in something that's fire-rated. They want sliding doors, but, because of the swing door, they don't have the room in the shaft to install the elevator on a sill support angle. They have to build it on a level landing and the only choice would be to install a pocket door. So, that's what we're now doing with our ALURE® In-Wall product. It's not just residential, it's also LU/LA, and we're seeing this requested more and more for commercial applications. This product has found a niche in our commercial swing door business because it's fire-rated and takes up very little space."*

A complementary presentation on operators, particularly the ALURE Linear Drive used with this residential door, was given by Dave Sutton, with R&D-Operators at the Kansas plant. Sutton showed how a three-speed door can be placed in the same space commonly used by a wood-fold door in a residential car. According to Sutton, "This new ALURE Operator is so compact that it requires no more space than you had planned for a wood-fold door."

A cab presentation, given by Tom Birdsall, sales engineer for Columbia Southern, Inc. (Miami), featured several examples of Columbia's Underwriters Laboratory-labeled cabs: residential, LU/LA, standard commercial and an oversized freight application. It showed how to obtain independent, third-party certification of the structural integrity and fire resistivity of the product by meeting the requirements of the ASME/A17.1 section 204 code. Birdsall focused on several Columbia innovations. Additionally, he demonstrated Columbia's sectional car top,



Dave Sutton on Columbia's ALURE operators

which Birdsall described as "much safer to install than hanging a large single piece with a chain overhead," and an adjustable base system. He explained:

*"Often, in the past, people submitted a request, especially in modernizations, stating that the flooring was a certain size thickness. We built an elevator to fit that specification, but, when we did the demolition, we found that the flooring was actually a different size, that all the wall panels were now the wrong size, which was very difficult to adjust for in the field. With our new adjustable base system, if, in the field, we discover variances in the flooring, we can easily react to and work around such a 'surprise.'"*



Columbia's adjustable cab base system

On the engineering side, Columbia Vice President of Information Systems Marc Dinkes conducted a class on the company's parametric drawing abilities. He showed how this is tied into the company's online quoting system. Additionally, as an educational component, Dinkes showed how the system embodies error checking. "Everything is drawn parametrically to size, so the system warns you if you're off," he added.

Louis (Lou) Blaiotta, Columbia's founder and chairman, conducted a class titled "Pitfalls of Modernization," which addressed the installation of new equipment in existing buildings. He provided advice on what to watch for when placing new equipment in older installations, originally done under now outdated code requirements, and how to apply new code requirements to existing stations. He gave this same presentation several years ago at the NAEC convention in Dallas.

Blaiotta Jr. said after the presentations were completed: *"This program was extraordinarily well received. People were extremely enthusiastic, asked a lot of questions, and were thrilled that we could do this in conjunction with NAEC. Several expressed surprise at the scope of our Miami plant with our four punch presses, five press brakes, automated painting system, conveyer system, and other equipment. While it was a lot of work to prepare for this, and we lost some production time that we've had to make up, it gave us the impetus to get our house in order as a showcase, and a great opportunity to give back to the association on the education front. Our plans are to do this again every couple of years, rotating among our several locations."*

Columbia plans to post videos of portions of the presentations online, with details on how to access them to be announced later.

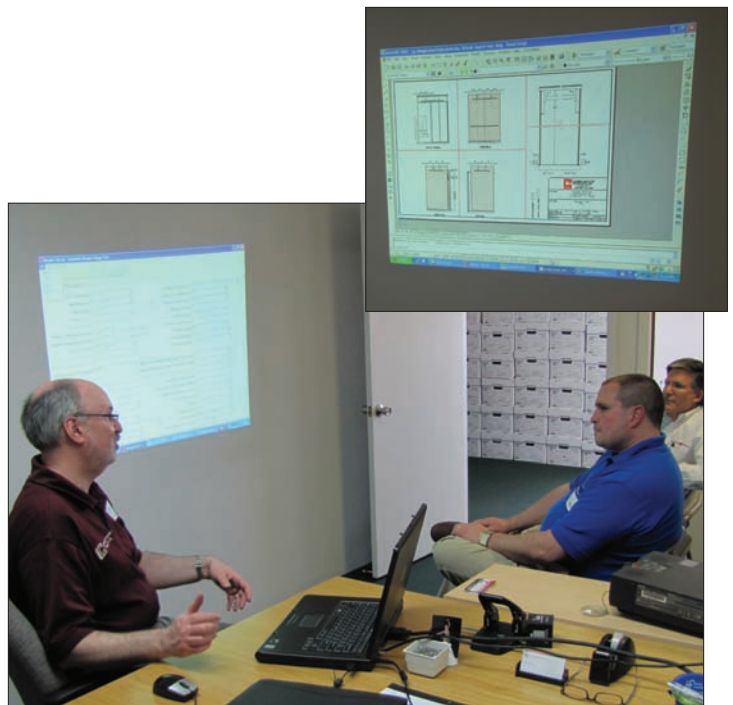
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**Ralph M. Newman** is a freelance writer with experience in the elevator industry

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Lou Blaiotta on "Pitfalls Of Modernization"



Marc Dinkes on parametric drawing



Tom Birdsall on UL-labeled cabs