

## Sliding Doors

Not too long ago Hollywood made a movie titled "Sliding Doors" It was a story of how different young woman's life may have been if she had slipped inside the closing doors of a subway train, or if she had missed getting on.

Reflecting on that incident made me think of elevators and the many everyday events that happen on them will relate to one later that had a profound effect on my life.

First though, funny things happen around those little rooms that move up and down in buildings. First, you will notice that on approaching an elevator, it will immediately wait for you to get within a few steps and then close. Then, as if waiting for the lottery results, you are wondering what the chances are of one opening near you, and when a crowd begins to gather in front of a particular door, you wonder if they know something you don't. Next, there is always a particular person that sees the up or down button light on...but still continues to push it as if to pump the elevator to its destination faster. Eventually though, when the elevator arrives, the group moves in and takes its place in the tiny cubicle. Now, the noisy chattering crowd that only a moment before was babbling away about mostly the weather or some business discussion...becomes immediately silent. The only thing that is usually uttered is from one guy who apparently didn't get the word that meekly says ..."Is this going UP?"

(When the lift is fully loaded and the doors close, my secret desire was to say."I guess you all have wondered why I have gathered all of you together here?".... Also. As juvenile as it sounds, I wanted everyone in the elevator to face the back to see what happens when the doors open and the next person tries to get on.) I guess the practical joker side of me will never fade.

If the elevator is going to one destination, the men will always be in front, because most are gentlemen and allowed the ladies to board first...But when the lift arrives and the doors open, the guys usually try and let the ladies off first, which causes a huge blockade in the doorway. Sometimes a slip of paper could not pass between folks comically caught trying to disembark in the confusion. Finally, after the elevator empties, the little movable room is only left with the aroma of "Tea Rose" or perhaps some other scent that should not be mentioned.

Happenings on elevators, however, can sometimes affect the course of events. The example that follows is another true story:

One day back in the 70's I was working in Two Shell Plaza in Houston as a geological consultant. The company I had been working for was downsizing, and I was faced with some office space that was not going to be used. For some strange reason, one particular day I had an unusual craving for a Milky Way candy bar and walked over to the elevator to catch it to the ground floor where there was a small stand that sold various items. Entering the elevator I ran into some oil executives from the New York area that were in our building to close a deal. I asked how the business was going and casually asked why they didn't consider opening an office in Houston. Before the elevator reached the ground we had outlined a deal for them to take over my office space and shortly thereafter, I had secured another trade to form a three-person oil exploration office.

To make a long story short, after about 3 years the New York executives were terminated, I left to form another office, and my replacement came in and turned our previous little office into a larger oil exploration company by the name of Weeks Exploration. A large number employees were subsequently hired and eventually the company became a part of a large Australian firm, Santos USA.

I take absolutely no credit for the eventual success of the oil company but always wondered what would have happened if I had not had that craving for a candy bar. ..What is truly strange is that.... I never eat candy bars!!

**James V. Richards 2001**