

# No Free Rides

BY RICHARD CANON, RRC

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 11 YEARS OLD MY brother and I were given a soap box derby—one of those classic, stream-lined kinds. We called it the Silver Streak. It had been built by a man who worked for my Dad, a man named Herbert Yates. We used to push that heavy contraption up Granny Smith T's Hill in Opelika, Alabama, jump aboard and ride that little wooden car down the hill like a bat out of hell—until we ran out of hill, that is. Back up we would go, huffing and puffing until we reached the top again and then back down.

We worked mighty hard pushing the Streak up hills. Nobody could ride the Streak unless they did their share of the work. Work your turn or just watch with envy as the Streak cut the air racing down Granny Smith T's Hill. There were no free rides on the Streak.

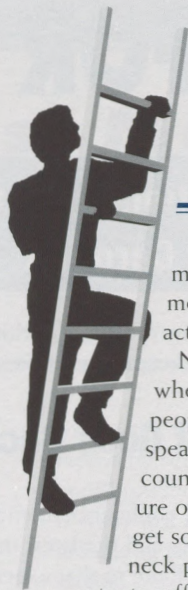
I learned in the years that followed that you did not wear an Eagle on your scout uniform unless you *earned* twenty-one merit badges. You did not get to wear the Mile Swim Badge unless you had fought the five thousand two hundred and eighty feet (or seventy-four thousand three-hundred and sixty inches) of water, one stroke at a time. You did not get a degree from college or registration as an engineer until you served your time, learned from others, made some mistakes, and passed some tests. Then and only then could you carry the title of Professional Engineer.

And then I woke up one morning, many years later, after a lot of experience in highway construction, the military service, and structural engineering, and found that my new job title was not Down Hill Racer, Eagle Scout, Mile Swimmer, College Graduate or Structural Engineer.

I was a Roof Consultant!

One of the hundreds of proud roof consultants in the area—the mecca of roof consultants, the one-hundred mile stretch of Interstate I-85 between Charlotte, North Carolina and Greenville, South Carolina. Why, most of the people I ran into at the grocery store were my competitors! A preacher I knew even said he was going to be one until he found out there were fewer preachers in the area than roof consultants, so he chose a profession with less competition and fewer encounters with sin and Satan—a Carolina evangelist.

This new life style, this new title called Roof Consultant, did not always represent what we would call an "elite" group. We had in our midst a form of Heinz 57. This was a mixture of X's. Ex roof materials salesmen, ex construction specifiers, ex structural, mechanical, chemical, electrical, and industrial engineers. Ex architects and dozens of other varieties of X's. Then we had all the "still am's but gonna diversifiers." These are all of the above except they ain't X's yet. But their employers say that they may be if they don't start "generating a little income." Then there's the final group, which I call the "sigmas." This is a Greek word sometimes meaning "the sum-



mation." The Latin of this may be *et al.* That means, "and everybody else who wants in on the action."

Now all of this adds up to a pretty grim scene when you walk into a school on PTA night. Twelve people are concentrating on the principal, who is speaking at the podium. The other 851 people are counting water-stained ceiling tiles and trying to figure out who they should call in the a.m. to try and get some roof consulting work. (You know cricks and neck pains are the most common ailments roof consultants suffer—next to knife wounds in the back, that is.)

The problem with all of this was that although there's a profession called Roof Consulting, there used to be no distinction between "one who are" and "one who ain't." This, my friends, brings us to the Registered Roof Consultant.

From the first meeting of the Roof Consultants Institute (originally the National Association of Roof Consultants and Surveyors) to this day, a common complaint among bona fide, experienced, and qualified roof consultants has been that there was no distinction between a fast-talking charlatan or a crooked snake-oil salesman and a legitimate professional Roof Consultant. Where would this profession wind up if something was not done to curb the runaway misuse of the title "Roof Consultant?"

So the Certified Roof Consultant (now Registered Roof Consultant) certification program was developed by RCI and implemented in 1987. The procedure requires successful completion of a rigid written examination and documentation of the applicant's education and/or work experience in the field of roof consulting. Since that time, hundreds of aspiring roof consultants have taken the test, and some 200 plus have earned the prestigious designation of Registered Roof Consultant or RRC.

All-in-all, we have come a very long way in a relatively brief period of time. We still have years of work ahead of us to implement recognition of the registration program by governmental agencies and in the private sector. But to become a Registered Roof Consultant requires work. Just like riding the Silver Streak—you can only enjoy the pleasure and benefits if you exert personal effort, work and labor. There will be no free rides to registration, no grandfathering, no give-always.

Become a Registered Roof Consultant. Earn the title to which you aspire.

*This is reprinted (with some updates) from the June 1987 issue of Interface. Dick Canon is a charter member, a past president of RCI, a Fellow of the Institute, a registered Professional Engineer and Registered Roof Consultant and was recipient of the coveted Herb Busching Award in 1996.*