

# Some words about .....

## Roy Markham

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By Johnny Nichols

Roy Markham died on 20 April 2012 after a courageous fight against cancer at The Cromwell Hospital with his family and loved ones by his side. A private family funeral was held on 30 April 2012

Roy was born 13 July 1946 to Violet & Edward Markham in Acre Lane, Brixton and the youngest of their three children. His Father was a French Polisher his Mother a Housewife. He went to school at Aristotle Secondary Modern and in 1962 left with a General Certificate of Education in 5 subjects.

Roy started work as a field apprentice with Waygood Otis just after his 16th birthday. He attended the Borough

Polytechnic for four years on a weekly day release basis, as apprentices did then, and did extremely well achieving his Higher National Certificate in Electrical Engineering (Electronics). He was one of the youngest students to accomplish this. It seemed he could accomplish anything he set his mind to.

Roy went on to have an illustrious career of 36 years at Otis then latterly 8 years at Schindler

I first met Roy around mid-1966 when he was an apprentice working with Jimmy Fall at Elisabeth House, in Borough Road. I had recently been made a supervisor by Harry Julier, working in the then South London Office based in the Falmouth Road factory. During the review of the men and jobs I was allocated, Harry told me Roy was an outstanding apprentice, both academically, and on site. (Harry took a keen interest in the apprentices saying they were the future managers). He said he had nominated Roy for a job in Uganda even though he would not have finished his time.

Walking round site the first time Jimmy said Roy was a "very good lad", high praise indeed from Jim. Roy was setting up the selectors and getting the machines running for test. Jimmy introduced me, Roy cheekily said "you look a bit young for a supervisor don't you?" I replied "yes, and you don't know how clever you are mate." (We had a similar sense of humour) We shook hands and laughed, a friendship was struck.

I often repeated the phrase to Roy whenever it fitted with the situation we were in over the following years.

Elisabeth House was finished, Roy did some development work in the factory for a while then, in 1966, just before Christmas and still just twenty years of age, he left for Kampala, Uganda where for two years he worked as a site manager completing several contracts, installing lifts employing local labour working as charge hand, trainer, and tester. No mean feat, even for such a self-confident, clever young man.

During the course of conducting some maintenance work on a lift in a government building Roy was invited to coffee by Idi Amin, who said Roy was the first white man in Uganda he had ever seen in overalls.



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### TIMELINE

DATE	EVENT
13 July 1946	Born at 35 Acre Lane, Brixton
July 1962	Started apprenticeship at Otis, London
1966	Posted to Kampala, Uganda. Site manager at the age of 20. Had malaria for his 21 <sup>st</sup> birthday party and was unable to attend
1968	Posted to Otis ETO, Paris. Met Heidi
October 1970	Married Heidi in Minden, Germany. Posted to Hong Kong
October 1971	Vanessa born in Hong Kong
1973	Posted to Tokyo
October 1973	James born in Tokyo
April 1974	Returned to the UK after experience of Typhoon Rose hitting Tokyo
1974-90	Became London Regional Manager (1975?); stand off with unions in Liverpool; Liverpool Factory Director 1985-87; won Canary Wharf contract in 1988 (123 lifts – largest contract in Europe at the time)
1984	Mini MBA at Insead
1990-94	MD Otis Southern Africa, based in Johannesburg – turned around performance from being loss making and heavily in debt to being one of the most profitable regions within Otis. Harvard Business School did a case study on Roy's positive action initiative and Roy lectured there in 1993.
1994-5	Heavily involved in acquisition of Express Lifts for c.£65m (UK's largest independent lift company) from General Electric. Merged Express with Evans Lifts (existing subsidiary of Otis) and became MD of combined group responsible for integrating both businesses into Otis. Remained Commercial Director of Otis plc at the same time
1995	IMD – Lausanne
1997	Left Otis. 2 year restriction for working for any lift company world wide deemed valid considering who he was in the lift industry
1999	Employed by Schindler. Ultimately Operations Director for UK and Nordic regions
2001	Bought and built safari lodge in South Africa next to the Krueger National Park
2008	Left Schindler and retired to spend half the year in his beloved South Africa.



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On his return in 1968 we worked together again this time in Zone Engineering at the Minorities Office, Roy as Method Study Engineer, I as Construction Auditor, with Harry Julier once again our overall boss.

A few months later Roy was assigned the job of Assistant to The Director of Marketing, in the Otis European Transcontinental Operations (ETO) headquarters based in Paris, where he met his wife to be, Heidi. They later married in Heidi's home town of Minden, Germany in 1970

His experience was further greatly enhanced in 1971 when he was then promoted to Project Manager, on major construction contracts, firstly in Hong Kong (where his daughter, Vanessa, was born), followed by Tokyo (where son James was born), returning to the UK in 1974.

During the years away, and each year since, he always communicated with his friends back home, and around the world every Christmas. In later years because he had so many good friends the card would come with a round robin letter saying how he & his family were faring, and wishing health and happiness for the coming year.

When people work away for a considerable time things at home, by nature, have to progress, and move on. There was no actual suitable situation for Roy on his return from the Far East and he was working in a holding job in Zone Service Department. I had been working in the Liverpool Branch, and was moving back to London. Harry Julier our "Old Mentor" was looking for a Southern Region Construction Manager, Roy and I, were in the frame. I told Harry I could not be committed to the travel that was required; I needed to finish work on my house. Roy of course would have got the job whatever the circumstances, he was by far the best candidate around. Later Roy said "Johnny, (expletive)? Lucky you didn't want the travel, I might not have got the Job" an example of his of generosity of spirit and thought, and of course not without humour, another small bond in our friendship.

Around 1977, I was superintendent on Special Contracts which included London Underground, the original Jubilee line modernisation with the Heathrow Extension, which was due to be opened by the Queen, and the Liverpool Link & Loop, both of which had considerable customer, material, labour, program, and industrial relations problems, and which included an infamous six week national strike. I remember a senior manager at the time, in an internal meeting to get labour, and material for the Liverpool Link and Loop, prior to meeting British Rail in Derby saying, " the situation's hopeless".

Fortunately Roy became Special Contracts Manager. From the very start he took on the challenge to "get things done", setting programs, leading from the front, sorting out problems; in many cases eye to eye, toe to toe, stuff, I can assure you. He had a determination to accomplish what had to be done, that is very rare. In all these difficult situations however there were things Roy could see the funny side of especially, (the situation being hopeless), these sessions of laughter usually subsided in tears with Roy saying "You've got to laugh haven't you, otherwise you'd shoot yourself" usually with an expletive

I worked for Roy another three or four years until he was promoted to Zone Executive London Manager, then on to become Director of Sales and Service.

In 1990 Roy was appointed Managing Director of Southern Africa, spending a very successful and happy four years there, where his approach to work and life made him many, many more very good friends.

South Africa was also however where Roy was to argue vehemently, as only he could, with his seniors by refusing to make some management changes he thought were wrong, that had been requested by Otis World Headquarters. Unfortunately, that refusal was to be noted in a black book for future reference.





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Of course back in the UK he was missed. I spent a lot of time out on sites and offices, The most frequent question I was asked during that time was “ when’s old Roy coming back then” as if I knew, then in general conversation things like “ I liked Roy, he’s done it” “ at least you could have a laugh with Roy” “you knew where you were with Roy he told you straight” he was well regarded throughout the company, in particular by men in the field.

I would like to quote some words attributed to John Mizon which I think are so very true “ Roy always did his best to look after those below him, & wasn’t afraid to stand up to those above him, and that was why he was so well respected”

Returning to the UK he became Director of Commercial Operations, then in 1996 Managing Director, Express Evans & Director, & Commercial Operations, Otis Plc. I think during this period he was also President of LEIA

Roy eventually left Otis in 1997 following a fatal accident for which he was held ultimately responsible, however having been close to the issue at the time my firmly held view is Roy was made an example of to others; the note in a black book was to be erased.

There then followed an imposed break from work for some two years till in 1999 he became Operations Director for Schindler, However Roy’s indomitable character came to the fore as it would, in what I’m told was a somewhat heated meeting with a VIP in Europe. Roy told him to go away into the distance in no uncertain terms. Roy left Schindler in 2008 which concluded Roy’s forty-four years in the lift industry.

In 2002, had Roy asked me if I would like to join him in an African adventure, he was having a lodge built in Olifants North game reserve. We were to visit there first, we stayed several days, Roy delighted in showing me everything. Then we made our way back to Johannesburg and from there drove 800km to Ais-Ais in Namibia and then hiked 90km down the Fish River Canyon for 6 days carrying all our food and kit with some of Roy’s Otis friends. He loved every moment apart from blisters. It was a great time, we laughed a lot and had a fantastic experience.

Roy loved people, and people loved Roy, there was nothing he liked better than talking laughing & socialising with his friends and colleagues. He had a great creativity for life combined with love of life and the ability to live it.

A remarkable man, he will be much missed by all who knew him

