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PROFILE IN CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN: Eric Ettinger, President, Ettinger Engineering Associates

Following in the footsteps of his American idol



By Barbara Nelson

For nearly 50 years, Ettinger Engineering Associates has been a leader in the MEP Engineering consulting field, & with Eric Ettinger at the helm, the firm doesn't plan on giving up that position anytime soon.

President Eric Ettinger plans to carry on the tradition of his father Robert Ettinger, who founded the firm in 1960 & was the first to utilize four pipe fan coil & vertically split plumbing systems for high rise projects.

His father's breakthrough designs in modular hot water heating systems received accolades throughout the engineering community & the projects, on which this technology was applied, at Radisson and Haverstraw (New York), received several awards.

"I idolized my Dad when I was a kid," said Eric, who said his father is still a consulting partner with the firm. "He made the biggest difference for me when I showed an interest in engineering." "I was always interested in science & physical things," he continued. "I had an aptitude toward it. Since I had a close relationship with my father he nurtured that in me and I took it from there."

In 1981, Eric joined the firm. He became partner in 1987. Since 1987, Eric has served as partner in charge of over 150 new buildings in some of New York City's most prominent & unique renovation projects.

"It's a service business," said Eric. "What we try to do is to cater to developers & architects with personalized service so that they find us accessible &

ready to respond. I don't think you get that in a large firm. You can find it in a mom & pop firm, but not with the breadth or scope of service that we provide."

When awarded a project, Ettinger Engineering looks at the immediate needs & those that will most likely develop in the future.

"We take into consideration the architects' & developers' requirements, and the people who will live and/or work in the building," Eric said. "Once we assess these needs, we apply our expertise & develop plans, strategies and solutions that will be highly effective for both the builders & the eventual building inhabitants."

The firm's clients say personal service is why they keep coming back to Ettinger Engineering. "What really makes Ettinger Engineering Associates most appealing to work with is that Eric Ettinger is involved in all the strategic aspects of each project," said Bob Esnard, of Manhattan Skyline Management Corporation.

"He is an incredibly smart & talented engineer. The fact that Eric understands all three trades (HVAC, Plumbing & Electric) & is very creative is also invaluable. Eric has & is able to design solutions within the constraints of a project that are economic & practical."

The firm's portfolio of projects is diverse including low & mid-rise residential buildings, hotels, seniors housing, adult homes, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, commercial buildings, corporate interiors, municipal buildings, retail, theatres & physical culture establishments.

"Overall, we pride ourselves with completing complex & phased designs for major & landmark renovations as well as conceiving concise & smart creative designs for new buildings," Eric said.

How does Ettinger Engineering keep its leading edge? One part surely professionalism & the other Eric's enthusiasm. "One other thing I can also

say about Eric Ettinger...he will tell you the way it is," said Esnard "You will get a complete professional with Eric.

Eric's energy & enthusiasm is apparent "I love this work," he also said. "It's challenging. It's exciting. It keeps my blood flowing & it still interests me. We take engineering seriously, but we like to have fun with it."

But more than that, Eric and his staff are the go to firm that will not pull any punches or take any short cuts when it comes to engineering.

Another attribute of the firm is working within the projects guidelines, yet knowing when to push the envelope, without compromising the design. "As engineering technology develops, equipment & systems change, but engineering principles don't change," Eric said. "With every step you take you need to keep the principles in mind & what the goal is. "I think you also have to be flexible," he said. "A lot of engineers are very rigid in their thinking in terms of design. I learned to be flexible. You have to work with the design."

In keeping up with changing technologies, & the ever-changing needs of the market. "I try to hire young people so we have an influx of new innovative thought processes & minds," he said. We all read journals & attend society forums. The industry keeps us up. The needs of developers, government & the market also pushes the technology along.

As President of Ettinger Engineering Associates, Eric maintains client contact & sets policy for system design and specifications. Eric is recognized as a master at conceptual design and has conceived original designs for fan coil and heat pump applications for residential & commercial buildings. He participated in energy management studies & implementation of energy conscious designs, & his innovations in Green Building Design have provided great economy for developers & builders.