



105-foot ReachMaster lifts were used to carry out the waterproofing and glass replacement for the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory, known as "The Domes" in Milwaukee.

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Technology and talent help *Service One, Inc.* become leader in high-rise window cleaning

by Raja Moussaoui

Tom Trinen's experience in the high-rise window cleaning industry began in 1977, cleaning windows during summer breaks from college. After graduating in 1980, he was hired full time at a national window cleaning company as a sales and operations manager, and in four years built up a strong, well-organized division of 25 window cleaners from what started as a team of two.

Despite this success, he believed that employee relationships, growth opportunities and safety could be vastly improved by starting his own company, so Tom ventured out on his own in 1984.

Partnering with a colleague and experienced manager, Kurt Kruger, they launched a new company servicing the Chicago metro area. In 1987, Tom's ambition to grow the company led him to cast his sights on the glistening skyline of downtown Chicago and join the window cleaners' union. Tom wanted to work on projects involving world-class architecture that would challenge him professionally. Established on the foundation of attracting and retaining the most talented and passionate people, *Service One, Inc.* has become an industry leader using the best safety practices and specialized access equipment.

By 1995, Tom had grown the company to become the second largest window-cleaning company in Chicago's Service Employees International Union, Local 1.

TECHNOLOGY EDGE

Over the decades, as high-rise buildings have become taller and more architecturally complex, safely accessing tall atriums, facades and other work at height has made access for window cleaning and other servicing trades both challenging and potentially dangerous.

Tom ensured that Service One was always quick to adopt the best and safest access systems and equipment as soon as the technology became available. For instance, Service One seized the opportunity to become one of the first service companies in North America to invest in lightweight Denka Lifts, manufactured in Germany. These lightweight aerial lifts fit through narrow spaces and can access heights over 99 feet, making them perfect for accessing tall atriums.

The company purchased its first Denka Lift in 1996, subsequently becoming a distributor, and now has one of the largest fleets of narrow, electric boom lifts available for rent or purchase in North America. The scaffold and

Service One, Inc.'s crew performs a window cleaning at the flagship Apple Michigan Avenue store in downtown Chicago.

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Tom Trinen, President,
Service One, Inc.

aerial lift rental division is appropriately named Service One Access. Experienced mechanics provide the capacity to inspect, repair and refurbish the equipment. This investment also allowed Service One to earn the lion's share of interior atrium window cleaning work in Chicago, keeping its crews of workers busy throughout the cold, snowy winter months.

The company's rental fleet has grown over the years to provide other specialty lifts, by manufacturers that include BLUELIFT, Genie, JLG and Falcon Spider. Service One also rents and sells suspended electric swing stages, steel systems scaffolding, frame supported scaffolds and Instant UpRight aluminum scaffolding systems.

“We bring a high-tech approach to what has traditionally been a low-tech industry,” Tom says.

Service One Access has also developed a niche installing boom lifts into challenging areas such as on the roofs of construction sites, in swimming pools and on top of engineered scaffold platforms during construction or renovation. These projects are often complex, requiring engineering and design, but often save the clients thousands of dollars compared to other access methods, according to Tom.

PROMOTING CHANGE

To keep its workers safe, Service One has been installing, testing and retrofitting fall arrest, fall protection and suspended access systems for years, long before the updated safety standards were adopted by the United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

“People's perception of high-rise window cleaning is that safety is highly standardized and regulated, but until

the OSHA regulations changed in 2017, the work was often performed without the permanent anchorages that are now required, so enforcement was inconsistent,” says Tom. “Thankfully, that’s finally changing, as engineered anchorages capable of supporting a 5,000-pound load were not required by law until mandated by OSHA in 2017. The changes in regulations are a very good thing.”

Tom dedicated many hours sitting on American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) committees over the past three decades advocating for the need for these protection codes “for the safety of our workers,” he says. “It’s taken OSHA 25 years to make it law, but we’ve been educating our clients and employees on these issues for years.”

Tom served as President of the International Window Cleaning Association (IWCA) in 2000 and the IWCA board of directors for seven

years. He is a charter member of the IWCA, and the first chairman of the International Window Cleaning Certification Institute (IWCCI). In 2004, he received the Ettore Award from the IWCA for “unselfish devotion” to the industry.

SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE

Service One tackles the window cleaning of some of the tallest buildings in the world, and this technical, potentially hazardous work can only be accomplished through teams that are skilled, highly trained and who hold specialized expertise. When taking on a new building, Service One crews face intense, challenging but exciting work at dizzying heights. The training for rope access technicians is among the most intense, as it takes physical endurance and sharp mental skills to remain calm in the face of sudden climate changes, wind microbursts and other hazards.

“We take a personal approach to both our clients and our employees.

Our employees learn how to safely access all parts of a building and identify problem areas no one else can see. With that knowledge, they document those insights and establish trusted relationships with that building’s ownership or management, which is incredibly valuable,” Tom says.

Service One teams often provide valued advice to building owners and managers on the safest methods and equipment to access their building’s facade or atriums in order to carry out all types of servicing work and projects, such as inspections, lighting, painting, glass replacement and waterproofing. Developers, building owners and construction companies rely on the company’s expertise to ensure compliance with regulations, but also practical efficiencies. These additional services have allowed the company to take on a dynamic role in the day-to-day operation and maintenance of some of the world’s most impressive contemporary architectural projects.



The Service One, Inc. team: (Top row, from left) Purchasing Manager Saul Gonzalez, Controller Mayra Diaz, Office Manager Liz Torres, Special Projects Lead Therese Pack, Administrative Assistant Pamela Renteria and Executive Assistant Day Aguilera. (Bottom row, from left): Division Manager Kyle Donahoe, President Thomas W. Trinen, and General Managers Walter Diaz and Bob Jacobs.



Service One Access' scaffolding erectors were hired to hoist a number of trees to the upper level of a 100-foot atrium at 77 West Wacker Drive in Chicago.

“I believe a lot of what they see here is opportunity for growth. It’s exciting to work with a building owner or developer from concept to construction, watching it take shape and become an iconic part of the skyline.”

..... Tom Trinen

SKILLED EMPLOYEES

“As a service business, great employees help create a terrific culture. We treat all our employees with respect, compassion and the goal of providing them with unparalleled opportunities and training,” Tom says. Recruiting and retaining skilled employees has

been one of Tom’s central priorities over decades of growing his business. After 36 years, Service One now has over 65 employees, including operations, mechanics, safety and technical managers, accounting and purchasing. Many have been with the company from 15 to 30 years.

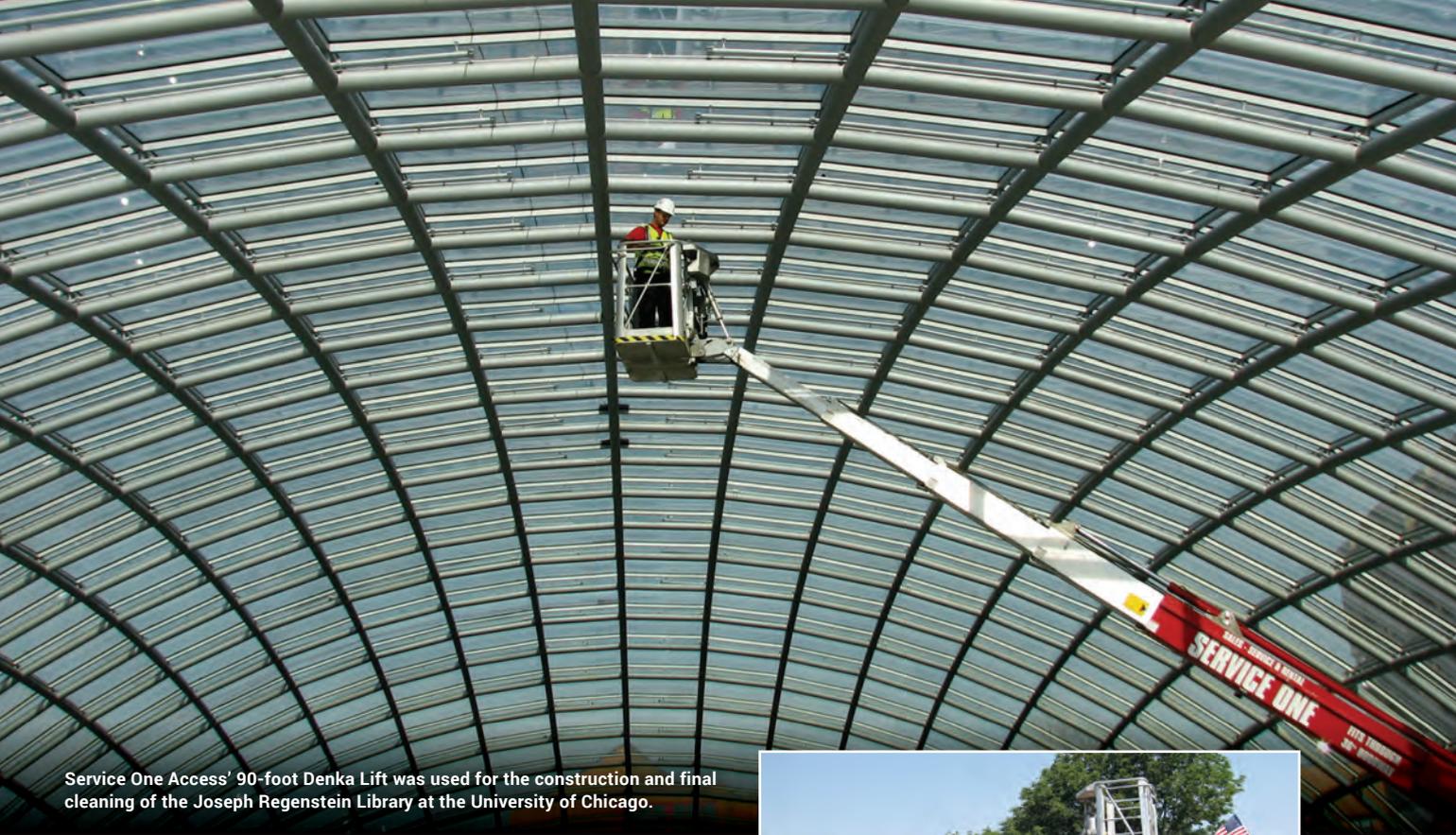
Both of Service One’s General Managers, Bob Jacobs and Walter Diaz, started their careers with the company as window cleaners and decades later are running the business alongside Tom. The company’s Office Manager, Liz Torres, has been with the business for 17 years.

“I believe a lot of what they see here is opportunity for growth. It’s exciting to work with a building owner or developer from concept to construction, watching it take shape and become an iconic part of the skyline,” Tom says.

This is true for Kyle Donahoe, who after gaining a business degree joined Service One as an Operations Manager. He then decided to go back to school to earn a Master of Architecture degree and returned to Service One to head up the OSHA compliance for the company, overseeing suspended access, site specific safety plans, scaffold and anchorage design layouts and installation and testing of roof anchors, davits and monorails.

“Service One prides itself on providing custom solutions to difficult problems,” says Kyle. “The company stays a dynamic place to work because we are always taking on new challenges, improving our skills and our knowledge, and working with our team members to improve what we do. I look forward to growing with the company and pushing the limits of what’s possible.”

Service One’s Safety Director, Marine Veteran Luis Baez, started with the company as a scaffold erector, which has given him a unique perspective on the daily challenges of keeping crews



Service One Access' 90-foot Denka Lift was used for the construction and final cleaning of the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago.

safe. The company runs multiple levels of training and certification programs for Service One's team of drivers, mechanics, equipment operators and window cleaners.

The company proudly boasts a multiracial, multigenerational workforce, and is one of the only window cleaning companies in the Chicago union that consistently employs female window cleaners, according to Tom.

ICONIC ARCHITECTURE

Service One's primary market is the Midwest, focusing on the Chicago area's commercial office, high-rise residential and institutional buildings, such as the University of Chicago, Soldier Field football and soccer stadium, and the Field Museum of Natural History.

Over the company's 36-year history, it has provided window cleaning, maintenance or high-level access for the construction or renovations of many iconic structures. This has included the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion bandshell in Millennium Park, every terminal at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, and the Sears Merchandise Building Tower.

"When the Navy Pier waterfront reconstruction project in Chicago was completed in 1995, Service One was one



The Service One Access rental yard with several Denka Lifts. These lightweight aerial lifts fit through narrow spaces and can access heights over 99 feet, making them perfect for accessing tall atrium spaces.

of the only companies that could complete the massive cleaning project in just seven days," says Tom. The company was given only three days' notice to mobilize its teams, who worked double and triple shifts to finish the project on time.

"We cleaned all the glass and metal, high superstructure and skylights, and separate crews power washed and striped all the parking garages," Tom says. More than 25 years later, Service One still provides service at the site.

Service One Access has also deployed and installed its atrium lift equipment in hundreds of iconic buildings in cities around the country and around the world, including



Service One, Inc. employees during a recent operator training day for the BLUELIFT track-driven boom lifts the company distributes.

the Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle; Giant Magellan Telescope observatory in Chile; the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; the American Museum of Peace in Washington, D.C.; Caesars Palace In Las Vegas; and Duke University Chapel in North Carolina.

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Located in East Garfield Park, a diverse neighborhood in Chicago’s West Side, Service One supports numerous local and International trade organizations including Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International and the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF).

The company provides jobs, training and technical advancement for minority workers through its own apprenticeship programs and works with other local organizations to sponsor events like the neighborhood’s annual summer block party. This year, Service One is partnering with BOMA/Chicago on its Emerging Leaders Network initiative, which gives educational opportunities to rising stars. A few years earlier,



Service One, Inc.’s shop and mechanic team (from left): Mechanic Alex Gudino, Assistant Shop Manager Daniel Trinen, Master Mechanic Dave Hernandez, Warehouse Manager Tony Diaz, Mechanic Jason Torres and Supervisor Luis Aguilar.

Service One’s rope access technicians made the local news when they visited Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago dressed as Spiderman, Batman and Iron Man to the delight of the hospital’s young patients.

During recent weeks of civil unrest in Chicago, Service One took on pro bono work to install scaffolding barricades and facade protection for local small businesses that were at risk of being damaged. The company is also currently part of the Storefront Strong initiative, donating its labor

and expert services to restore and remove graffiti from neighborhood business shopfronts in preparation for reopening.

Tom knows the years of hard work, team building and dedication that it takes to run a successful business and to realize a big vision. After years of growth, he and his team at Service One are proud to use their unique expertise and ingenuity to support other Chicago businesses and the local community. 🐼

Trained as an architect and journalist, Raja Moussaoui is internationally known for her insightful writings on architecture and urban issues.