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## One Pioneer Who Won

It was a happy thought which led Frank Hedley, W. B. Potter, Gano Dunn, President Hoover and other distinguished engineers to suggest the tribute of the profession to Frank J. Sprague which brought so many engineering notables together last evening at the Engineering Auditorium. Most men are lucky to be honored after they are dead. Too often the admirable sentiment of "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*" seems to mean that nothing good need be said until mortality has been demonstrated. Frank Sprague is very much alive, for all his seventy-five years; for this week's tribute was a birthday party as well as an occasion to sum up his career.

Every one who rides in an electric streetcar or behind an electric locomotive is debtor to Dr. Sprague, for it was he who conceived and built that historic traction line in Richmond, Va., with which electric railways began. Every one who rides in elevators owes him tribute, too, perhaps most of all because one rides so fearlessly; for Dr. Sprague also was a pioneer in developing the electric elevator and elevator safety. Only a few years ago he was responsible for the novel method of operating two elevators in the same shaft, one car above the other, a system which alone makes practicable the use of the highest

floors in some tall buildings of today. That elevator traffic and electric traction are the safest means of moving human beings ever devised is a tribute to the soundness with which Dr. Sprague and his associates did their work.

It is the habit of many business men nowadays to decry pioneering, asserting that no pioneer makes money, but that a proper business policy is to let some one else take all the first risks and then to buy what he has developed after his creditors get through with him. There is all too much truth in the doctrine, for it unfortunately is a fact that too large a proportion of new enterprises conceived in enthusiasm end in failure and despair. Frank Sprague's career is living proof against any such necessity. As Mr. Hedley made clear in his address last night, the early Sprague enterprises suffered from no lack of critics or of difficulties. That these were mastered proves that a true pioneer, and an unusually original one, can survive and keep his gains if he but has the needful blend of perseverance, courage and common sense.