

Nikola Tesla Slept Here

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Strangers on a Bus



Photo: Joe Kinney

Journalists must sometimes go to great lengths in order to track down an interesting subject for a story. But Bill Glovin [above, left] didn't have to go far to meet Joe Kinney [above, right], the man who keeps the memory of inventor Nikola Tesla alive at the New Yorker Hotel. He just took a bus home.

As described in Glovin's article "Nikola Tesla Slept Here," Kinney is the chief engineer of the New York City hotel where Tesla, the great electrical inventor and pioneer, died, nearly destitute, in 1943. Kinney takes a bus home every day from Manhattan to the town of Nutley, N.J., and Glovin, after a job change last year, started taking the same bus to the same stop. The two didn't interact, however, until Glovin and Kinney found themselves deposited at their stop during a downpour: Glovin called his wife to pick him up and offered Kinney a ride.

With the ice broken, the two began chatting during their commutes, but it was months before Kinney mentioned his fascination with Nikola Tesla. As it turned out, Glovin was acquainted with Michael Geselowitz of the IEEE History Center, and he thought someone at the IEEE would be interested in Kinney's work to commemorate Tesla's residence at the New Yorker Hotel. Geselowitz connected Glovin with *IEEE Spectrum*, and Kinney took Glovin on a tour of the hotel where Tesla spent the last 10 years of his life. Since then, the men have become firm commuter buddies: "He's

just a fascinating guy,” Glovin says. “Also, he fixes everybody’s stuff in the neighborhood, so that’s a good reason to be friends with him.”