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Genie John moves on



John Fuller

The New Year saw the departure after 25 years of John Fuller from Genie. During this time he was the face of the company in the UK to the extent that he was known as Genie John. Few will recall Genie without Fuller and given his unusual achievement of retaining the same role over a quarter of a century - as Genie

revenues grew from \$12 million to over \$2.3 billion - we thought it would prove interesting to look back at his career.

Fuller was born in the leafy town of Maidenhead, on the Thames, west of London. One of three children he had an older brother and a twin sister. After leaving school he took up a mechanical engineering apprenticeship at GD Peters of Slough, which made steel profile cutting tables, doors for the underground and labelling machines.



GD Peters plant in Slough

After completing the apprenticeship he headed off to the Greek Islands for the summer, something he repeated over the next five years, taking casual retail work back in the UK over the winter.

One year Fuller and his friends attempted to cycle to Greece, giving up in Belgium and taking the train. Then while in Mirtiotissa on the west coast of Corfu he met a German girl, Petra, who would become his wife. As that summer ended he hitchhiked to Tehran to visit a friend based there with Thomas Cook. During his 10 week stay he was told that he had won second prize - £250 - in a competition entitled 'The improper use of ladders', run by scaffold and ladder manufacturer Stephens & Carter. He had entered while working at Maidenhead Décor selling ladders and steps. The funds were wired allowing him to answer the call of love, taking a seven day bus trip to Austria and then hitching to Petra's

home in Lünen, near Dortmund. He moved in and stayed for two and a half years, working on the roads, digging trenches in coal black earth as well as in a factory before getting homesick.

Back to the UK

While away his parents had relocated to Southall, Nottinghamshire so the plan was for him to move back, find a job and a place to live so the couple could set up home together in the UK. The year was 1980 and Fuller headed for the employment exchange in nearby Newark, looking for a job in sales. By chance he found an opening with Acklift the Southall-based truck and trailer mounted aerial lift company. He put a deposit down on a small terraced house, rented a van and went back for Petra.

The next three and half years were spent demonstrating and selling Acklift products in the UK, principally to local authorities and utilities. In late 1983 Acklift, received an enquiry from Böcker regarding the distribution of its trailer lifts in Germany. Fuller was dispatched to Germany to visit the Werne-based company. Böcker was already manufacturing its range of ladder type material lifts, but also had the Genie distribution for Germany. Robert Böcker junior told Fuller that Genie was looking for a salesman for the UK and Ireland. Impressed by the products, he called Malcolm Cardy, Genie's European sales manager, based in The Hague. Cardy suggested he come for an interview. After the meeting Fuller he was told that he was one of two short listed for the job, however Genie plumped for the other

c&a

face to face



Fuller's first week, training with Novon in Holland

candidate, who had distribution experience while Fuller did not. Two weeks later however Cardy called to say that the first candidate had not worked out and offered him the job which he accepted without hesitation, becoming Genie's second European employee.

Starting with Genie

Fuller's first week was spent in Holland training with Karel Verhuel and Rob de Jong at Novon. Next stop was Seattle for a week on the production lines and then Missoula, Montana, travelling with Roger Curtis, ending up helping at an exhibition in Tacoma, Washington. Back in the UK he was kitted out with a Mercedes 207D van and a range of demonstration equipment including a Superlift, PLG and Air-Hoist.

Fuller's brief was to build up a regional dealer network in the UK, after ending a dealer arrangement with Walter Summers. While Genie products had sold in the UK, its customer list comprised of just six or seven names, including HSS, LGH, Speedy and Concord lifting and AC Lighting. Letters were sent out informing them of the change and giving the number of an 'office phone' in Fuller's house. He recalls being amazed when the phone rang within the hour, it was LGH wanting to order two Air Hoists, taken aback he said "do you want a quote?" to be told "No we have the



price and terms." What a great start.

Fuller's first dealers included Graham Campbell, Rod Fox, Rapid Platforms and William Laird. He had up to £2,000 a month to spend on advertising, and ran a lead generation campaign targeting the industrial and institutional market, passing the leads on to his growing dealer network.

With business getting off to a good start he hired Yvonne Johnson-Cooper, from Acklift, as office manager, initially working out of his house. They soon moved to a small office in the town and began building a team with Fred Johnson-Cooper, Yvonne's brother in law, handling parts and Rob Johnson service - both came from Acklift. The group moved through four small offices in Southall before transferring to proper premises in Newark. Until then products had been stored in the bonded warehouse of GR Warehousing in Felixstowe and dispatched directly to customers.



The lone John Fuller on Genie's first show in the UK - PMECC



After four years or so Genie moved to its premises in Newark

A few years in, Fuller recalls being introduced to Jim Daintith, then with Hewden, where he was struggling to get on with boss John Hutchinson. The two met and Daintith agreed to purchase the 'Genie dealer starter pack' - a PLC24, Superlift and Air Hoist at total cost of around £4,000. Daintith and APS went on to be his star dealer.

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Star dealer Jim Daintith (L) with John Fuller

Boom time

Within two years Genie launched its first self propelled boom lift, the Z30/20HD. With the new product range in hand Fuller set out to show it to the UK access rental industry. His first visit was to EPL, followed by John Ambrose at Universal, Mike Evans and the Morts at PTP and John Hutchinson at Seymour Plant. However the first order - for four units - came from CSG in London, rapidly followed by six units for Glover Crane Hire in Northern Ireland.

Genie's best known product, the Z45/22, arrived a year or so later. Fuller recalls one of the first major orders for it: "We were exhibiting at Haydock and had a cabin and some plastic chairs - Malcolm did not believe in extravagance - Ray Ledger of BET, came and sat down with us and asked what we'd do for several of them? In those days it was list price - list less 25 percent for dealers, so I gave him the standard discount and he said "OK we'll take 16". an incredible deal at the time!" The boom lifts also led to an end-user distribution deal in the mid



John Fuller with one of the many UK dealer trips to the US

1980's with Instant Zip-Up (IZU) in Telford which it sold alongside UpRight scissor lifts. He notes that Frank Huish of IZU placed the first Genies with Nationwide Access which went on to become one of Genie's best customers.

Surprise award

The Genie that Fuller joined was very sales orientated, each year the company would host a sales meeting at its Redmond headquarters. In his second year Fuller was the surprised winner of the Salesman of the Year award, a major honour at the time. He recalls Bob Wilkerson's introduction to the winner, "He was going on about this great guy, totally dedicated, and highly successful, selling over a million in his first year etc.etc. . . I remember thinking - sounds like a hell of a guy. And then out came my name! I thought he had made a mistake or I had missed something."



Award: Roger Brown (L) recognises the Genie Europe Team, John Fuller, Linda and Malcolm Cardy.

The reaction is typical of Fuller who is modest of his achievements and quite self depreciating. "I was so lucky to have this job, I got to travel to fantastic places, eat in spectacular restaurants and meet some fantastic people, many of whom became great friends, all I had to do was talk to them about our products."

He notes though that it was not all plain sailing, recalling problems with the first Z45's, fitted with Onan engines, designed for marine applications. The Onan dealer, a small company in Southampton was not able to support machines dotted all over the UK. "Genie's three owners



(L) John Fuller with David Price of Lavendon and Bob Wilkerson, presenting Lavendon with a customer of the year award

As the company built-up its support staff and facilities to handle the growing demands from both the UK and the rest of Europe. Newcomers took over responsibility for these aspects of the business. Fuller's position/title has ranged up and down over the years but he never allowed himself to get too upset about reporting lines, as long as his boss let him get on with the job. No matter what his title, his status in the UK market never changed.

Fuller says: "I am just a salesman and love what I do, I was not desperately keen to take on a bigger territory with more travel, and not really one for lots of reporting and administration. I have not yet adapted to the latest technology, perhaps now that I have more time I can change that?"

Since November he has been travelling with his replacement, Phil Graysmark, introducing him to his customers, officially departing at year end but will be working with Genie a few days a week to complete the hand over and assist where necessary.

At 55 he is hardly ready for full retirement. Initially he will be kept busy with a new home, having just sold his house in Southwell high street to downsize now that his three boys have started moving out. He has purchased an old house on the outskirts of the town which "needs a lot of work" and will project manage the renovation/building works as well as doing a lot of the labouring. After that who knows? We may see more of John Fuller yet.

were very customer focused and reacted quickly to such problems, in this case changing to a Kubota engine," says Fuller.

Other 'disasters' included scaffold towers and the acquisition of the Hyster/Fabtek V series sigma lifts. Both ranges were eventually dropped by Genie. While Fuller sees them as disasters, the products were good, but were simply not profitable for the company.

Market leadership

Genie quickly dominated the UK personnel lift (AWP) market, and Fuller gradually won leadership of the boom market in the 1990's by taking more than a fair share of the big orders from companies such as Lavendon, SGB, Hewden, David Meek, Universal, The Platform Company, Height for Hire, GPT and Skylift. For many years, he managed to keep JLG and Haulotte at bay.

Universal

New Spider widens the fleet

The new Falcon Spider FS290 has arrived and is ready to hire. With 29 metres of working height and able to enter through a doorway of 0.8 by 2m, it allows internal applications rarely available. Not only will the spider FS290 set up on uneven ground conditions but can give outreach of 14m with one man operation.

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