

# Records peak at IPAF Summit

C&a

IPAF summit

This year's IPAF Summit and awards dinner held in the City of London broke all attendance records in terms of numbers at the dinner and international delegates and was arguably the best so far for the quality and content of the Summit presentations.

This year we are covering the event in two parts with a review of the Summit presentations - including a large number of interesting and important issues - published this month, leaving our popular photo album and 'tongue in cheek' look at the event for the May issue.

## The 26th AGM

The main aim of the Annual General Meeting is of course to get through the required business as succinctly as possible. While this year was not the shortest AGM on record, it was concise and to the point. Key elements included approving the re-election of officials, approval of accounts and the appointment of a new president. Having completed his two-year term as president, John Ball handed over to the new incumbent Steve Shaughnessy, of Skyjack. Steve Couling (Versalift) becomes vice president and Wayne Lawson (JLG) deputy president.

In his handover speech Ball thanked the staff at IPAF and his fellow directors at Height for Hire - Harry and Fergus McArdle - for their support over the past two years. He noted that IPAF membership now stands at an all time high of 771 and that the Federation is now a truly international organisation. He also noted the sad and sudden departure of George Reid who had been a strong and prominent supporter of IPAF's training efforts.



John Ball hands over the chain of office to Steve Shaughnessy

Shaughnessy thanked Ball for being one of the most energetic and charismatic presidents in the Federation's history, before saying that he regards the role not as a

privilege but more of an obligation, although it is a privilege to serve, adding that he is grateful to Skyjack and parent Linamar for enabling him to take up the role as IPAF president.

In his acceptance speech he said that he was lucky to grow up in his family's crane rental business in Boston. He added that his father, now 83, was a pioneer in the access industry and had a complete commitment to service, recalling that no machine would go out unless it was in the best possible condition. He attributed his later success to the early training he received from his father. He referred to 'the symbiotic relationship between manufacturers and rental companies' which makes IPAF a special association saying: "We all live or die together."

## New president's commitments

As to his vision for the Federation, Steve committed to represent the interests of members:

- To promote the safe and efficient use of powered access worldwide
- To continue IPAF's push into North America
- To promote the formation of national councils to add further services on a local basis, duplicating what is being achieved in Italy and Holland
- To support the provision of products and services to developing markets such as the recently launched 'training in a box' package

## The Summit

IPAF managing director Tim Whiteman made a brief introduction before handing over to Ward Bushnell and Roger Brown, co-founders of Genie industries, who talked about the early days of Genie and the challenges they have faced through four recessions. They detailed the strategies employed



Roger Brown and Ward Bushnell

not only to survive such times but also to grow and benefit from the opportunities that emerge as they end. They noted that the current downturn was the toughest yet, saying: "stay with it - it will end" and asked "What are your plans for the post recession environment? We are probably on the cusp of it right now".

The two noted that through most of their careers at Genie, the economic cycles meant that they 'built like hell for seven years then cut for three'. Each time they managed to pull through and eventually benefit from each recession. The early 1980's found the company having just moved into larger more expensive premises in Redmond causing it to seek out new products. It combined an articulated boom design from European trailer lifts with an electric forklift type chassis to create the Genie Z-30 and the articulated boom market sector. They noted that every time they thought they had reached a point where they were "bullet proof" a deep recession came along and knocked them off their perches. The recession of the early 1990's caused the company to completely change its management processes, which they said 'had gotten sloppy through the years of rapid growth and pushed it to further expand its product range'.

When the recession of 2000 hit, the company had more than 3,000 employees, while they knew what they had to do to get through it, a lack of cash caused a crisis. After

talking to a number of potential investors which would allow it to stay private, Genie received a proposal from a private equity firm but it was contingent on the company dropping its employee profit-sharing programme, something that the owners refused to do. It was then that they met Ron Defeo, of Terex, and recognised that they could not only ride out the storm with Terex. They also liked Defeo's plans for both Genie and Demag cranes to "change the face of his business" by being a positive influence on the rest of Terex.

Moving on to some of the reasons for their success the two talked of the importance of values. They asked: "Would your employees know what your company's values are? Would your customers know? And what about your competitors?"



Roger Brown



Simon Rooks  
of Tyco

**Genies five values:**

- Quality - "We went to Japan three times to learn what quality was all about."
- Cost - "We did not know what our costs were until the recession of the 90's hit."
- Full customer satisfaction
- Delivery "right time, right place"
- Safety
- Morale - "If everyone cares it overrides everything else - Bob Wilkerson our majority owner always cared."

These five values became the foundation of the Genie culture. Roger Brown also stressed the importance of sales leading the company. "Every transaction in business starts with a sale - the accounts function - everything. Without a sale nothing else happens."

**One line wisdoms**

The presentation was full of excellent one-liners, including:

- "Hire the best people you can and let 'em run"
- "What gets measured gets done - if you can't measure it don't do it"
- "Know when to get out of the way"
- "People will listen to what you say but will do what they see you do"
- "Take work seriously but not yourself"
- "Take criticism on board"
- "Do not be afraid to fail"

**An accident changes everything**

Next up was Simon Rooks of Tyco Fire Protection and Electronic Security who discussed how a bad accident on the 7th June 2001, critically injured two employees after the scissor lift they were using went over and how it changed everything. He recalled: "It was a beautiful sunny morning yet within hours we

realised that we knew very little about the safe use of work platforms, but by 22nd June we knew too much. It was fortunate that no one died in the accident, there were materials all over the place, the ground was uneven, the levels of training were poor."

"We now use a single supplier for 90 percent of our equipment needs. Our relationship with the Health & Safety Executive has become proactive and we now treat them as a partner where we used to be scared of them. Having teamed up with Lavendon for our access needs we came across Blue Sky in 2004 and have worked with them to find solutions for handling the heavy steel sprinkler tubing that we install." Rooks said that the approach the company now adopts could not be more different than it was back in June 2001 and as a result the company's operations are both safer and more efficient with fewer employee days lost through stresses and strains.

**State of the industry**

Jenifer Mathis from Drucker Research provided an overview of the preliminary findings from the research that the company has done for the 2010 IPAF European and US aerial lift rental market



Jenifer Mathis of  
Drucker Research

reports which will be published at Bauma. It covers a five-year period from 2007 through to 2011, with data collected from 100 interviews in the EU and 30 in the USA. It believes that the companies it has covered make up 42 percent of the total market estimating that the European market - worth around €2.2 billion - has fallen by 11 percent while the US market is estimated at \$6 billion, after having fallen by around 25 percent since its peak in 2008. It predicts that both markets will begin to grow again in 2011.

The report looks at 11 EU countries, ranging from Spain as the worst affected by the downturn to the Netherlands which it says has fared the best. The presentation also took a specific look at the French market as an example of what the report offers, including rental rate performance, market maturity and the split between specialist aerial lift companies and general equipment rental businesses.

**Hard-hitting principal inspector**

Joy Jones of the HSE surprised almost everyone in the audience with the delivery of a riveting, hard hitting and analytical look at the causes behind accidents while working at height, and specifically accidents with aerial work platforms.

She kicked off with "I don't believe anyone sets out to harm themselves. There are many underlying reasons for accidents but knowledge is a key one and in many, if not most cases, it is a failure of management, with too much focus on the written word and the shifting of responsibilities."

"MEWPs are increasingly seen as the solution, when sometimes they are the problem! For example there are jobs where a small step ladder is the more appropriate method of access, and not an inappropriately large aerial lift for which no planning has been carried out, such as looking at ground conditions etc..."

"Few contractors really know how to select a MEWP. Many tend to order what they are familiar with, regardless of whether it is the right tool or the job. The rental industry has a major role to play here."

Jones is a member of the Strategic Forum for Construction Plant Safety and discussed some of the points that have come out of the work that it has been doing. She talked about trapping, such as between platform guardrails and an overhead



Joy Jones

obstacle. She pointed out that the seconds or minutes immediately following an operator becoming trapped are critical and yet almost invariably no one has a clue of how to rescue them. "This is due to no one taking the risk seriously enough, otherwise those on the ground would practice using a machine's emergency descent procedures before it goes into use. All too often people turn too quickly towards PPE when picking the right work-at-height equipment will make the biggest difference."

Rarely has someone from the HSE been listened to so intently at a Summit, leaving the audience in a thoughtful mood for the final speaker.

**A simple Derbyshire lad**

The last speaker of the day, David Shipman, chairman of UK rental company AFI, introduced himself as 'a simple Derbyshire lad who sees things in simple terms'. He began his presentation with a gloomy overview of the state of the powered access rental industry saying that he believes market activity has fallen between 15 and 20 percent since its peak in 2008, while rates have fallen by 10 to 20 percent. "With order book declines at major contractors beginning to tail off we are somewhere close to the bottom."

However he claimed that pricing pressures are not abating as contractors pass on their own pricing pressures - "it's the way of the world and it leaves us in a very uncomfortable position."

"I don't believe that activity levels will recover anytime soon; rate pressures will continue to grow, revenues will continue to fall, cash flow pressures will increase and investment in new equipment will





David Shipman

remain subdued. Fleets will age and costs will increase, as we slip into a prolonged period of stagflation - if we don't do anything, but it doesn't have to be like that."

Safety is a good business. The HSE is waging a very effective Shattered Lives campaign in order to cut down on the 2,000 plus falls and 21 fatalities in construction. This is an opportunity"

"I believe that powered access is the safest form of access in most applications, and we must promote that message as an industry, with one voice - and IPAF should be that voice. No one will help us out of this mess, we must help ourselves. We need a bigger pie to compete over and we need a common approach on critical safety issues such as:

- Training
- Familiarisation
- Product standards such as common controls

- The promotion of our industry

We need to get out and sell the story and IPAF should take the lead. The PAL card has been a great success, but we must promote the training of managers and supervisors."

He then asked how many training centres represented in the room had conducted an IPAF 'MEWPs for Managers' course? Just one company in a room full of training centre employees put its hand up leading Shipman to ask: "Why is this when Joy Jones of the HSE says that this is the most important factor to cutting work at height accidents?"

Moving on to machine familiarisation and handovers, he said that there is a demand for 'proper familiarisation', but acknowledged that it will be expensive, stressing that the only way to tackle that problem is either to have a sensible pricing policy for it, or to build it into the rental rate.



The winners with their trophies

As far as bolt-on devices for aerial lifts are concerned, Shipman acknowledged their potential benefits but condemned their fitment by third parties which appears to compromise a machine's CE certification. "Manufacturers ought to embrace such equipment and be involved with its development," he said and called on IPAF to condemn the third-party fitting, which does not involve the manufacturers' approval.

Finally he wrapped up by reiterating his point that the industry has a good story to tell and can prosper again far more quickly if it sells that story with a strong single voice. He then offered to contribute £25,000 to a promotion fund if other companies put up a further £75,000.

"The current picture is bleak, but it does not have to be," he said. More coverage of some of these presentations and our annual photo review will feature in upcoming issues of the magazine.

### 2010 Award winners

#### Best marketing campaign for IPAF training

- Alo Rental, Chile

#### IPAF instructor of the year - joint winners

- Jildou de Jong of Kamphuis, Holland
- Gerry de Palmer of HSS, UK

#### Best new IPAF training centre

- BS Technology, Singapore

#### Access Industry sustainability award

- RSC Rentals, USA

#### Access industry training award

- Serfin, Italy

#### Access Int' new product of the year award

- Mecaplus ME12SL Spain

#### Contribution to safe working at height, Manufacturer

- Niftylift UK

#### Contribution to safe working at height, rental company

- A-Plant UK

#### Contribution to safe working at height, End User

- Crown House Technology UK

#### Mast climbing work platform achievement award

- Harsco Infrastructure UK

#### IPAF safety champion of the year

- Joint winners
- Brad Boehler, Skyjack, Canada
- Kevin O'Shea, Mastclimbers, USA

#### Access Rental company of the year

- Lavendon Access Services, UK

#### Lifetime achievement award

- Ward Bushnell, Bob Wilkerson and Roger Brown, USA



Ward Bushnell