

## Readers

## Letters

**Electric power practicalities**

When will it sink in that the current fad of moving to all electric machines is not a practical solution, at least not yet. Can you imagine a couple of hundred machines on site all trying to plug into the mains? Assuming enough sockets were available the resulting power surge would surely kick out the power in the area? I can see site workers searching for an available socket unplugging one of the machines and swapping theirs.

Gearing up for electric cars, electric buses, electric telehandlers and electric platforms will need a massive infrastructure investment which will cause as much carbon and emissions as the diesels they replace. And what about all the lithium mining and then recycling them?

This needs some thought and a hell of a lot of planning before such a thing can be a reality. Perhaps you ought to address an article on this subject before you do more on how fantastic all electric machines are!

**Mike**

*'Mike' makes some interesting and valid points, which don't just apply to platforms or telehandler. If everyone suddenly adopted an electric car we would truly have a problem. However we do need to be moving towards zero emissions. Perhaps the solution will be even cleaner engines or carbon capture technology, all of which still seems far off. There is also the point of noise, utility workers that have used the latest hybrid truck mounts - regular diesel powered chassis and battery electric superstructures that recharge when travelling - speak highly of the fact that they can communicate with the team on the ground and/or work in residential areas without causing so much disturbance.*

*We will certainly consider coverage of on site practicalities of recharging large numbers of machines overnight.*

*Ed*

## GOING UP IN THE WORLD

**A history of Simon Engineering, the development of the powered access industry and a lifetime as an engineer, by Denis Ashworth**

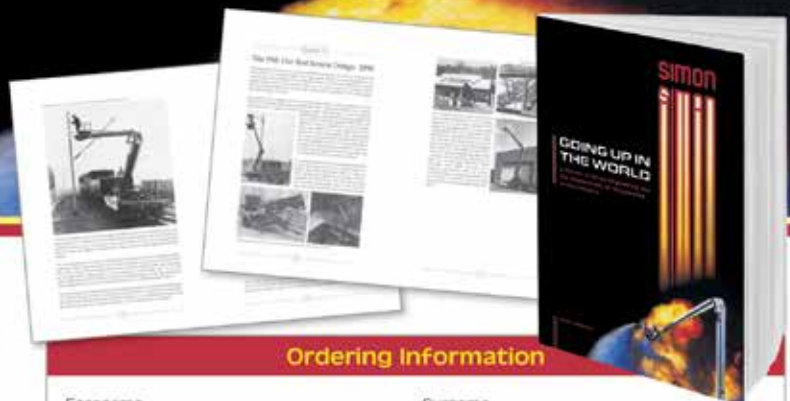
Ashworth was a keen engineer and from an early age found himself in at the very start of the modern powered access industry.

His book is an unusual combination of autobiography and history of Simon Engineering Dudley, a pioneer of the powered access industry and at one time, the world's largest manufacturer of aerial lifts.

The coffee table sized book, is highly readable and includes around 150 photographs and drawings from the very beginning of the industry. It is a 'must read' for anyone who is interested in powered access, the hydraulic equipment industry or in comparing modern day engineering challenges with those of an entirely different era.

The book is available direct from the publishers at £19.50, plus £4.50 postage and packing.

- Continental Europe €23 plus €6.50 postage & packing
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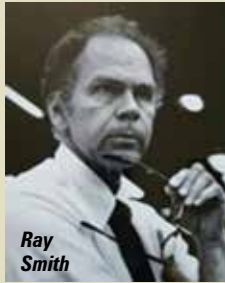
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I first met Ray Smith, owner of Smith Tool Co. just before Christmas 1975 at a time when I was busy promoting the introduction of aerial platforms into our plant hire business at what was then known as Elstree Plant, a wholly owned subsidiary of the John Laing Construction Group. At that time we had already built up a substantial fleet of truck mounted platforms offering working heights from eight to 45 metres (the only such machine in Europe at the time).



Ray Smith

The first self-propelled booms were being produced in the USA where a number of scissor lift manufacturers were also emerging, with products that left much to be desired in terms of basic stability, safety and reliability. I had heard about a company in Waukegan, north of Chicago, owned by an engineer with a reputation for original thinking in design terms, who had launched a range of scissor lifts which seemed to have significant sales appeal. I contacted the company expressing interest in the product line and my call was followed up by David Callahan, then representing the company along with an American supplier of high quality antique furniture reproductions selected from collections in stately homes in England.

That gave me confidence that the Scissor Lifts were likely to be rather better than others on the market at that time. I soon realised that the Smith Tool products would sell in the UK and negotiated to become its European distributor and agreed that we would place substantial numbers in our own rental fleet.

Ray Smith flew to London from Stockholm on December 18th, to sign the contract, before flying back to Chicago for Christmas later that day. That meeting was the start of a very long personal friendship and enabled my company to widen the range of platforms available to rent or sell.

Planning a trip for me to visit Ray's factory at Waukegan, David Callahan warned me that Ray had just purchased a new BMW and would not allow anyone to smoke in it, knowing that I was an avid pipe smoker and anxious to avoid a diplomatic incident, during the ride back from O'Hare Airport. Eager to test Ray's confidence, as soon as we pulled onto the freeway, I pulled out my pipe and to my surprise, he did not say a word, even when I pulled out my lighter, he clearly was not going to discourage me. So, a little disappointed, I put my pipe back in my pocket and it was not until we reached his home 45 minutes later, that he thanked me for not smoking in his car. I told him then that David Callahan had tipped me off and I only filled the pipe to test his reaction!

Ray was one of those people whose intense respect for others, his code of behaviour and conversation made a deep impression on all who met and knew him. His enthusiasm for his industry and his skill in putting his advanced ideas onto paper was only surpassed by his ability to turn his drawings into three dimensional products almost overnight at times.

There were occasions when he forgot that when a factory produces a complicated machine on a production line, it is important for the buyer that units in the same delivery have identical componentry. I lost count of the number of times that one of our service engineers went out to replace, a faulty part, only to find that the newer machine had a different component to the unit with the previous serial number, with no hint of modification having been made.

That aside, Ray designed and built some remarkable machines. For example, after visiting British Airways at Heathrow he came up with a large scissor lift on which the scissor arms telescoped as the scissor mechanism unfolded, thus speeding up cargo loading and offering greater lift capacity. He built a machine for the Sellafield nuclear power station in Cumbria which were regularly replaced as their radioactivity became too high to be used. His mind never stopped thinking of new ways to solve access problems and we mounted two of his modified scissors on three tonne Ford trucks to create mobile foam canons for the BP oil terminal in Kent when their fixed monitors were condemned by the HSE. These mobile firefighting vehicles added greatly to the safety at an oil storage farm where millions of gallons of flammable liquid were stored.

Ray was a wonderful family man and adored his wife Laurie and daughters Dana, Leslie and Maggi and son Bo, who was taken from the family so sadly when he suffered a stroke one afternoon while posting the company's mail at the local post office.

Our friendship grew and Ray used to visit England and Scotland with the

church choir from Lake Forest, performing in various Cathedrals for several years, he also visited us on our farm in Hertfordshire, usually just in time to help with the haymaking. As he became older the timing of these visits seemed to ensure that the hay was safely gathered in before he joined us!

Modesty was another of Ray's characteristics. Long ago I learned that he had been a fighter pilot in World War II. He had never mentioned it, but when I learnt about this and questioned him, he really did not want to talk about his experiences after being shot down in German occupied France in 1945. He was flying an Army Air Force P47 Thunderbolt as a second lieutenant in the 358th Fighter Group and spent five months in a prisoner of war camp. He never showed any grudges against his German captors.

On the 1st July 1977 Smith Tool were the 19th company to join the IWPA (International Work Platform Association) and joined IPAF when it was created in the merger with IFHPM 1983.

My wife Ruth and I really enjoyed Ray and Laurie's company and were so sad when our planned stay with them after our marriage in 1991 had to be cancelled due to Laurie being too sick. Once again Ray, despite his own problems arranged to borrow a friend's house for us to stay in for a week, complete with maid and the use of her car.

Ray and his family were always fun to be with and having met so many of his friends I feel privileged to have known him for so long and to have shared so many memorable times with his family and friends.

The use of powered access equipment exploded in the 1980s and competition grew equally fast in the USA putting smaller companies under pressure from the 'big boys'. I introduced Ray to John Grove, whose success with boom lifts was encouraging him to look at adding scissor and truck mounted lifts. John approached Ray to buy his company but Ray, a proud man declined the offer. Sadly as the recession bit in the USA Smith Tool was hit hard and never recovered.

It was so appropriate that Ray received the IPAF Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015. Better late than never!

Many who knew Ray and his family will mourn his death but at the same time will thank God for leaving him with us for 95 years, so many of them packed with adventure, wisdom, love and fun. To his large and widespread family we send our sincere sympathy and share your loss of a great and good man. May he rest in peace.

Paul Adorian

30/04/2019



Ray Smith with his Lifetime Achievement Award

Dear Leigh,

I worked with Ray back in the early 70's when I was just getting started. As one of the 'Grandfathers' of the US-based aerial work platform scissor lift industry, Ray was instrumental in developing the first 'Self Loading' scissor lift however, in my mind his biggest accomplishment was the Smith 'Moonbuggy', designed and destined for the Alaskan pipeline. Two unique features of the Moonbuggy, was its platform mounted 'Steering Wheel' to steer the machine, plus a tag axle option providing six wheel drive, something that was unheard of in those days!

Ray also had a local rental fleet called: 'Safety High-Reach'. In my early years, I was sent to help run it.

This creative genius is now home with his son, Bo - the designer and developer of the Phoenix Scissor Lift - who died way to early and was sorely missed by Ray.

The industry Giants continue to pass away ... but it was a pleasure to know him.

Craig Ihde

**Eddie Brown** 1926-2019

**Eddie Brown, a senior manager responsible for all crane operations with Tarmac Construction in the mid 1970s and 1980s passed away on April 13th at the age of 93.**

He was responsible for both mobile and tower cranes, becoming a well-known and respected figure in the crane industry. He had a particular passion for tower cranes and later became involved with training as a founder member of the CITB.

Brown's first encounter with cranes came when he left school at 14 to work with tunnelling contractor Kinnear Moodie where he worked on steam cranes and specialist concrete mixers. He left to do his National Service in 1945 serving with the army in Egypt and working on aircraft in the Far East, a job he loved.

On returning to civilian life he resumed his tunnel construction work and was involved with a number of major projects, including Oxford Circus underground Station. He joined Mitchell Construction following its acquisition of Kinnear Moodie which was itself acquired by Tarmac in 1974. In his



Eddie Brown

time he worked on a number of major projects, including the Cairo Waste Water/sewers project in the 1980s.

Throughout his life he was a firm believer in keeping fit and eating healthily and was involved with setting up one of the first gyms in Staines. A particular passion was skiing which he kept up until he was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the age of 89. Although he managed to beat cancer, he sadly never skied again.

He also had a passion for fast and exotic cars avoiding company cars throughout his career. He loved working on his cars and insisted that both his son and daughter were able to strip and rebuild an engine before he would teach them to drive. He kept in touch with many of his crane industry friends until the end. He leaves behind his wife of 70 years, a son and a daughter.

**Chandrakant Sanghvi**

1954 -2019

**Chandrakant Sanghvi, chief executive of Indian heavy lifting company Sanghvi Movers passed away on Monday,**

**April 8th, following a battle with cancer, he was 65.**



Chandrakant Sanghvi

Sanghvi was born in Pune, India, gaining an engineering degree in metallurgy from the College of Engineering, Pune, followed by a masters degree in chemical engineering from Columbia University in the USA.

He established Sanghvi Movers in 1989, when he purchased his first crane, a new 70 tonne Tadano TG 700E truck crane. He took the company public in 1995 and ordered a number of new cranes with the proceeds, including a Demag CC 2400 crawler crane. He made a daring breakthrough in 1998 when he shipped 36 cranes from Singapore to India for a contract at the massive Reliance Industries petrochemical plant being built in Jamnagar, Gujarat. The company he leaves operates from 17 locations with 1,500 employees.

He is survived by wife Mina, son Rishi - who has taken over the running of the business alongside joint managing director and chief financial officer Sham Kajale - and two daughters, Ruchi and Niyoshi.

**Ron Jackson** 1951 -2019

**Access industry veteran Ron Jackson passed away suddenly on Tuesday 19th March, just prior to his 68th birthday, following a period of illness.**

He retired from JLG at the end of 2015 after 35 years with the company, having joined the company from the fork truck industry in 1981, initially as a driver/demonstrator, later becoming a senior product manager with the company, widely respected for his knowledge, experience and possibly more importantly his patience, consistency and good nature.



Ron Jackson

Karel Huijser of JLG Europe said: "Ron was considered to be instrumental for the development and evolution of JLG's access products and contributed to the growth of our organisation in the EMEA region. Ron led by example through his professionalism and passion for the access equipment industry. Thinking of Ron, we will remember his sense of humour, loyalty and passion and are grateful for so many shared memories. He was in many ways a true gentleman and probably the nicest person I have ever met. We wish to express our condolences to his family, close relatives and friends and hope they can find comfort and strength during this difficult time."

Ron Jackson was true professional and true gentleman - the world has now lost one of the good guys.

**Apologies**

**If you sent us a letter in the past month or so please accept our apologies for not publishing it yet. We have not censored it, but had far too many letters to publish them all this month, even though we have provided extra space. We will aim to carry them in next month's issue.**