

# Readers Letters



**William 'Bill' Elio Sands** 1947-2020

**Crane veteran Bill Sands passed away on Monday 15th June, after a battle with cancer - he was 72.**

Bill Sands was clearly a real 'old school' crane industry character, especially on the London crane scene.

Around 20 years or so ago he left Emerson Crane Hire to establish his own company Premier Lifting Services to carry out contract lifts and was well known for being a bit of a 'chancer' and a bit of a rogue. But he was also kind and warm hearted, generous, funny and always always paid his bills and satisfied his customers.



We have already received a good number of comments from those who knew him best, which really sum up the big man better than we could possibly do. You can see them all below and we will update this item as we gather more details on his early crane career and details of his funeral etc... We received the following comments regarding the life and times of Bill Sands:

*"I am very saddened at the news of the passing of Bill Sands. He was not only my employer for 13 years at Premier Lifting Services, he was a father figure to me since I was two years old. His passion for cranes and work ethic was unrivalled. I owe all my knowledge and success to Bill, as do a lot of others in the industry. Many successful people in the industry have worked for or with Bill in the past and all have been in touch to offer their condolences with many funny stories of his antics which is lovely to hear."*

*"I strive to be as successful and hard working as he was, with much, not all, of his knowledge passed onto me. Bill Sands was a 'one of a kind' and will be greatly missed."*

**Daniel Snook** Snook's Lifting & Engineering

*"Shame to hear about Bill thoughts to the family"*

**Alec Glover** Terranova

*"Such sad news to hear about Bill's passing. What can you say about Bill? One of the industry's true old school characters and someone that will be truly missed. Even through his more recent period of ill health you could always rely on Bill for an entertaining conversation and was always a pleasure to deal with. RIP Bill"*

*"Condolences and best wishes to all he has left behind."*

**From ALL at Lee Lifting**

*"Bill Sands, one of the real characters of contract lifting and crane hire in London. He was the only guy who would hire a six axle Spierings mobile tower crane on a Saturday morning and use it on three different jobs and still be finished by one o'clock. Some jobs with permits some not. Most of the cranes from East London would travel in on the Highway E1 and the drivers would all wave at Bill who would be sat outside the pub with a pint and a cigarette at 7.00 in the morning. The pub would be open all night for those in the print trade."*

*"City Lifting along with many other firms provided Bill with cranes for many years. He was a very kind and gentle character who I learnt a lot from years ago. He was probably one of the Pioneers in contract lifting. I had known Bill for maybe 35 years, and he always wore a dark suit."*

**Trevor Jepson** City Lifting Limited

*"Saddened to hear the passing of Mr Bill Sands, an industry veteran and a true character R.I.P. Thoughts are with his family and friends at this time."*

**James Lawrence** (J&M) J&M Crane Hire

*"Sad news about the loss of Bill Sands, he was a smashing person to deal with and I've known him for many years. In all that time he was mainly sloshed but there was never a better bloke to deal with. Always honest. A lot of people in the trade couldn't say a bad word about him and must be very thankful for all the help and advice that he gave them. He's in a safe place now and he lived his life to the maximum. Sad loss. A true diamond to the trade."*

**Terry Cummins**

*"I have only known Bill/William just under 20 years, when I started working for Premier Lifting Services 17 years ago. Bill was definitely a one off and his team of Alan Murphy and Paul Jenkins (who have both sadly passed away) - the three cavaliers! Bill's sister Elvira would try her best to keep Bill in line."*

*"His step son Daniel Snook could write a method statement at the age of 14-15, with all the measurements, most senior reps weren't that good. Bill was so proud of him. It was Bill that gave me my first crane, a 35t Kato, and helped me with insurance and work for six months, along with Terry Cummins who originally had London Crane Hire."*

*"When I started writing this I found it very upsetting but just thinking of all the antics made me cry with laughter, some of the stories could never be explained because they were so unbelievable."*

*"RIP Bill you were a legend to the crane industry. Very best wishes to all the family."*

**Robbie Sturley** London Crane Hire & Engineering Services

*We are sorry to hear of the passing of Bill Sands from Premier Lifting Services, he was a great salesman, known for his quick wit, infectious laughter and passionate spirit to get the job done, an asset to our mobile crane hire and contract lifting industry who will be sadly missed, our thoughts are with his family.*

**Bill Frost**

Jun 23, 2020 emailed comment

*Bill Sands was a true gentleman one of lives natural characters and a family friend. Bill had a strong passion for cranes and lifting, sometimes bending the rules slightly but he always completed his jobs. He would only hire guys he knew and trusted and would not suffer fools. Whenever Bill asked for help with a job it was always a pleasure and normally a nice easy job.*

*Bill you will be truly missed by so many and such a huge loss to the crane industry.*

*Rest in peace and don't let my dad give you too much grief up there.*

**Colin Murphy** Nationwide Lifting Solutions Ltd

Jun 22, 2020 emailed comment

*I first met Bill when I was a boy, when he worked for London Lifting next to my dad's breakers yard. He was always a nice guy who had time to chat and laugh with me.*

*As a professional I worked with Bill when I started my own business. He always supported me, and we worked together a fair bit over the last few years. He was a very nice man, and I know that I, as well as lots of others, will miss him a great deal.*

*Sending my thoughts to his family at this sad time.*

**Jimmy Randall** on behalf of Randalls Crane Hire Ltd

**Dear Cranes & Access,**

Your take on the history of the boom lift on page 27 of this month's magazine, really caught my eye, and it was nice to see a version of the origins of the boom lift that did not just say 'John Grove invented the self-propelled boom lift'! He didn't! He almost certainly did introduce the telescopic boom to the party, and there is no argument that he is likely to have had more impact on the boom lift market than any other single person or company. If though he was doing it all today he would have struggled with health and safety and red tape. The first machines that he and his men shipped out to end customers were not quite the safe and rigorously tested machines that came later. Oh structurally they were sound - overbuilt even - but when it came to stability and handling the platform capacities that he claimed, well that was another thing altogether!

It was also nice to see poor old Carl Ruegg get some kudos for the important role he placed at Selma Trailer. He probably did more than anyone to promote the use of - non telescopic - boom lifts outside of fruit picking. True most of it was on the west coast, but he was a true visionary and a good communicator and touted the product all over the place to anyone who would listen, using photographs and film footage way before digital cameras or video arrived on the scene.

I would like to see you do a lot more on the history of the industry than just this brief throw away lead into an article on the latest products. You clearly have a good deal of material in your archives already and someone needs to start writing the definitive history of powered access before we are all gone, and it is forgotten!

Thank you though for another good read

**John Effingham**



*Well! Good bad or ugly? We appreciate the comments and yes would like to do more on the history of both the crane and aerial lift industry. Cranes are already well covered, but early material on the development of platforms less so. Although saying that there are some good biographies that cover a good deal of material, including John Grove's book - The life and legacy of John L. Grove - sadly now out of print, and more recently the late Art Moore's autobiography, My Story, not to mention Dennis Ashworth's book Going Up in the world published by us and is available to order online at <https://vertikal.net/en/going-up-in-the-world-book>*

*Finally our main mission is to cover and review the latest technology, and sadly we rarely have time or space for things like history. However we will make a concerted effort to do some standalone pieces but need to hear from you our readers a) Do you want to see more and b) please send us old photographs and information and we will publish it.*

**Abdul Latif Mohammed R.I.P**

**Abdul Latif Mohammed the man charged with establishing Kanoo Equipment Rental in Saudi Arabia passed away on May 19th.**

Abdul Latif Mohammed, or 'Ikka' (Elder Brother) as he was fondly called, joined Kanoo in 1985 and was charged in 1996 with creating its equipment rental business, dubbed Gulf Lifting Rental Company (GLRC), based in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The business grew rapidly to encompass a large and varied fleet which also includes fork trucks, hoists, mastclimbers and aerial lifts as well as excavators, skid steer loaders and generators etc...

In 2007 he took over the management of a major fork lift truck rental contract with Saudi Aramco and two years later added the even more significant Saudi Aramco crane rental contract.

He retired in November 2011 after 27 years with the company and moved back to his home town in Kerala, India.

*Abdul Latif Mohammed (R) with Srini Kadaba*



The following letter came in as a result of our coverage of the tower crane collapse in Nova Scotia last month.

**I would have married a crane**

I have been a long time in construction game. I started late in about 1986 and stayed till 2011. At 72 now I haven't got the strength any more, but the cranes and rigging was great while it lasted. In the days when I started you didn't have any safety harnesses. And if you couldn't keep up with the work, at the end of the day the boss would say: "I will ring you tonight if I need you tomorrow", which was in effect saying: "I don't need you anymore - you don't pull your weight." You didn't have one of these nice machines to take you up to your job, it was climbing with your riggers belt on. I used to pump iron before I went to work so that I could keep up with men that were 15 years younger than me.

I have always loved machinery and when I got older I was allowed to operate the cranes. I was probably lucky that I married my wife in 1973, otherwise I would have married a crane! To see any crane collapse is sad, there has to be a reason and when you find that out, will the insurance pay up or are you coming up with a loss? Anyway I really like checking out cranes and I like looking at yours.

Yours Truly

**Alf** - nick name (ugly)

*We assume that he means he likes looking at the cranes in the magazine and on the website or course, but nice to hear from a crane fan.*