

Readers Letters



Hi Ed,

I've just finished reading my Cranes & Access (Vol 22.3) which includes your article "The Changing Face of Boom lifts". It's an interesting read I don't know who provided the research but as one of this industry's 'grandfathers', I found the information provided to be challenging. For example, the picture shown of the first self-propelled boom lift is incorrect. The first machine was the three wheeled Condor 20 rather than the Condor 27 that was shown. Thanks for the read, though. Having documented this industry from the beginning, incorrect information is easily discernible. If you ever wish to 'fact check' future articles, please feel free to reach out.

Craig A Ihde, President & CEO

Aerial Specialists Inc, USA

Craig is very knowledgeable about the access industry. Like me, he has been around it forever. The article in question corrected a myth put about during JLG's 50th anniversary, that JLG had launched the very first self-propelled boom lift, which it most certainly did not. The first model, as far as we have ever been able to trace, is the Trump Orchard Girette, dating from 1956. As we say in the article, John Baerg then came up with the 'Tree Farmer', which was acquired by Selma Trailer/Selma Manlift. However, JLG did introduce the first telescopic self-propelled boom.

In 1970, a small team led by John Grove began work on the first boom lift after a Grove dealer – Craig Hopkins in Philadelphia – called John and asked him to look at a truck mounted platform that was being used for aircraft maintenance. John had already seen the Tree Farmer during an extended trip in his big RV to California in 1968. Along the way he met up with Grove crane dealers and it became clear there was a demand for "mechanised platforms".

In January 1969, Grove and a few colleagues kicked off their new business and the following year began drawing up plans for a product that was similar in many ways to the two ton Grove Stevedore, a pick & carry crane with a basket but no slew. This led to an argument with his fellow engineer Ben Stevens. The two had worked together at Grove, and Stevens could see that John was "doing the same old thing again". This along with other issues led to Stevens departure soon after. Grove did change the design and came up with the Condorlift 27-32 at a price of \$6,500. The company managed to sell 20 units in quick succession and the business was off and running. The three wheeled Condor 20 did not come along for another year or two and, in fact, the 500th JLG ever built was a 20 with JLG branding.

The information used in our article came from totally solid and documented evidence. Any outside sources were thoroughly checked, and most information came directly from those involved in the industry at the time. In addition, research was cross checked with John Grove's highly detailed official biography, written by his nephew Gerald Lute, who had full and open access to the man himself as well as all of the Grove archive material. If anyone else can help settle Craig's assertion, we would love to hear from them. Until then, I am not convinced but am ready to change my mind with hard evidence.

Leigh Sparrow

Condorlift
AERIAL PLATFORMS



Which is the first JLG? – Condor 2732 or Condor/JLG 20?

Scott Cornwall 1960-2020

Scott Cornwall, the longest serving employee of UK based Bernard Hunter Mobile Cranes, passed away on the 7th September after a long illness. He was 59.

Cornwall joined Bernard Hunter in 1975, straight from school at the age of 15. Over the next four decades he progressed from the parts counter to crane operator. He operated most of the company's flagship cranes, including the 500 tonne Liebherr LTM 1500.

Cornwall worked on several landmark projects, including operating a tower crane that dismantled the Queensferry Crossing, shifting the famous 'Mon's Meg' canon, as well as the Duke of Wellington statue at Edinburgh Castle. He even lifted a valuable Rolls Royce limousine onto the deck of the Royal Yacht Britannia when it was in Leith Docks.

Born in Woodburn, Scott lived in Midlothian and had a passion for rugby playing for Dalkeith Rugby Club, where he earned the nickname 'Tank'. He remained closely connected to the club until the end of his life. He is survived by his wife Hazel, son Ryan and daughter Kelly.

Bernard Hunter's Chairman, Jim Rafferty, said: "Scott moved from car spares to driving a Poclairn TY45 scrap handling machine in our yard, before gaining his driving and HGV licences. He had every crane operator's certificate under the sun. His hard work and dedication throughout his 40 year career cannot be underestimated.

His contribution to the success of Bernard Hunter was immense. He will be sadly missed by our staff, customers and suppliers."



Scott Cornwall

Ginno Debrabandere

Ginno Debrabandere of Belgian aerial lift, crane and fork truck sales and rental company Duma passed away on the 7th September, aged 82. In March, he fell down the stairs at his home, fracturing his skull and suffering injuries which confined him to a wheelchair and led to the decline in his health. He leaves behind wife Marie-Thérèse, son Stephan and daughter Fleur.



Ginno Debrabandere

Debrabandere and wife Marie-Thérèse Tytgat acquired the Duma business near Kortrijk in 1971, barely two years after it had started. Under their control the company grew quickly, both domestically and overseas. In 2002 the business relocated to the current site in Kortrijk, with a depot in Dunkirk, France. The company's rental fleet includes aerial lifts, telehandlers and spider cranes.

Ginno's son Stephan took over the day to day management of the business in the early 1990s and continued to grow the company. He said: "We are losing a great businessman with a clear view of the world and a fantastic father and grandfather. His departure is a major loss to the family."

Robertson William Way 1934-2020

Australian crane entrepreneur Robert Way passed away on September 3rd after suffering a heart attack. He was 86 years old. In 1977 Way started the crane overload company Robway, for which he is best known. Way had already been involved in the crane industry for 25 years.

Robert Way's crane career began in 1952 when he won a contract to load and transport tram bogies as part of Adelaide's tram-removal programme. He needed a two-tonne crane for the job, so he had a local engineering firm build him a three tonner with a basic four-metre base boom, and two-metre extension, mounted on an army surplus Reo truck from the Korean War.

This experience led Way into the rental business as others looked for a crane to lift and shift heavy items. As a result, he set up Robert Way Cranes. In an interview with *Cranes and Lifting Magazine* last March, Way said: "We were restricted mainly to four-tonne mobile cranes, but customers wanted to lift heavier loads at greater radii, which led to overloading and overturning.

Way began installing basic load indicators into our cranes and proposed introducing these via Australian Standards, which I was a member of for 15 years. However, the unions objected to their use because they considered owners would use them to spy on operators. Fortunately, they now fully support them."

"Perhaps I could have started using load indicators a bit earlier than I did, although we trained our own



Robert Way

operators to military standards, but there still wasn't enough emphasis put on training Australia wide. One without the other doesn't equate."

This focus on crane safety led Way to sell his crane rental business to Brambles. He then established Robway Equipment Sales in 1977 to design and manufacture safe-load monitoring systems. He started by installing systems on Manitowoc crawler cranes imported into the country and built the business into a well respected international venture, with half his sales coming from exports. In 1983 he changed the company name to Robway Safety Systems after a restriction clause with Brambles expired.

In the late 1990s, Way designed a load moment system for Favelle Favco telescopic crawler cranes and installed a large number of them for domestic and export sales, extending substantial levels of credit which caused significant financial challenges to the business in the early 2000s, possibly leading to Way's decision to sell the business to Andrew Powell and Andrew Toop in 2003.

In 2012, business was acquired

by Canada's LSI in 2012 to create LSI-Robway, and acquired by Trimble two years later. In 2017 ownership returned to Australia when Powell bought the company back.

Robert Way was always ready to help others and thoroughly enjoyed the social aspect of the crane business. He attended events such as the annual CICA convention right up to the end. In 2018, he said: "It started in 1952 with the mobile crane division of the South Australia Road Transport Association which brought together a few people with problems and ideas to share."

"This developed into a more professional state association using the SA Chamber of Manufacturers. As the industry kept growing, we established our own secretariat and finally merged with CICA. It was my pleasure to meet and share ideas with people, not only from Australia but around the world. After several years trying to get state associations to agree to a national conference, it finally happened in 1979 at Broadbeach, with 150 people attending. This proved a great success and was followed by the conference committee meeting in Perth, when CICA was conceived. This has proved to be one of the greatest achievements in the history of the Australian crane industry."

Way's contribution to crane safety was widely recognised and he became the first recipient of CICA's Con Popov Memorial Award, in 1998, which recognises an outstanding contribution by an individual to the crane industry over a considerable period. He was made a life member of the association in 2002.

Robert Way loved life and never tired of it. He retained a twinkle in his eye to the very end. He was one of the last of the post-war crane men that designed and built their own cranes to get started. He will be missed by a great many in the crane industry and beyond. At Way's funeral his old friend Gordon said: "Robert lived respected and died regretted".



Heinz Helmut Kempkes 1947-2020

Heinz Helmut Kempkes, owner of German crane and access equipment manufacturer Kuli Hebezeuge, passed away on August 13th at the age of 72. Born in October 1947, Kempkes studied mechanical engineering at the Technical University of Darmstadt, staying on for further research work as chairman of material handling technology at the university.

In 1975, he joined the company that his father had founded in Duisburg, in 1947, becoming managing partner in 1982. He continued to manage the business on a day-to-day basis alongside his son Oliver Kempkes. The company now operates in more than 120 countries, manufacturing overhead and gantry cranes, lifting equipment and industrial aerial work platforms.

Luis Aguilar 1934-2020

Luis Aguilar, founder of Spanish crane and access rental company Grúas Aguilar, passed away on Sunday the 9th of August at the age of 86. Aguilar founded the company that bears his name in 1968, in Arganda del Rey, south east of Madrid.

He built Grúas Aguilar into one of the most professional companies in the lifting sector. He steered the company through several challenging economic periods and continued to invest in the best equipment and staff. Today the company operates from four locations and employs around 160 workers and remained at the helm almost until the end.

Aguilar was a big family man with traditional values and a strong sense of integrity which he instilled in his children who continue to build the company that he founded. His son Luis has been managing the day to day operations of the company for some time now as managing director.

Two of Rob Way's
first cranes

