



Outrigger mats and cribbing in the old days

Dear Mr. Sparrow,

The picture on page 46 of the latest magazine shows what appears to be car garage pit boards complete with rope lifting handlings. Board lengths appear to be short for cribbing. The rope would also become trapped between wood and roll causing boards to slip under pressure.

In the bad old days, eight-foot-long railway sleepers were used, four to each outrigger, and how I cried when the fifth jack arrived! Who wanted to lift over the carrier cab anyway with another four sleepers to handle! When outriggers had manual bar screw threads – non-hydraulic – the dead weight of the crane was just touching the ground with added ground contact. Since the All-Terrain crane became site friendly, out went the old rule of ‘If you cannot walk on the site, you cannot drive on it.’ Mr. Dick Gale and Mr. Bill Green (The Crane Man) had many good alternatives to railway sleepers against lightweight plastic plates. An example of soft ground was the Darlington A1M by-pass, built in 1964, where the hard shoulder was non-load bearing just like most greenfield sites.

Thank you,

Fred Pole

Grove Worldwide Product Demonstrator 1987- 1998



Sadly, Mr. Pole did not send any photos from the A1M by-pass job, but he is right to refer to a time ‘when men were men’ and operating a crane was a highly physical job. It should also be said that not everyone back then was as diligent when it came to cribbing – although if you were setting up on uneven ground that was the only way, given the manually operated outrigger jacks. Cranes back then were more forgiving in some respects; the outriggers were short and, as he points out, they acted more like stabilisers compared to the modern hydraulic outriggers that can level a crane up. Manual handling rules forbid lugging sleeper timbers around these days. Comparing modern cranes with those older cranes is like comparing a thoroughbred racing horse to a shire horse or pit pony. They are all horses but that’s about all they have in common. Outrigger mat designs have and are developing beyond all recognition of what was available even a decade ago in terms of strength to weight ratio and versatility etc.



Singapore tower crane accident

Dear Sir,

A year ago, we experienced a fatal accident here in Singapore in which a luffing jib on a tower crane came crashing down on the job site, killing one man and injuring another. All very sad and traumatic. An investigation is still theoretically ongoing, although all the information has been gleaned already. The point of my writing is to draw your attention to a report that MOM has put out, that covers the events that led to the jib failure in great detail. Given your interest in crane safety and the potential benefits to your readers, I attach a copy.

Regards,

H Chung

The report is first class and, given that the incident occurred barely a year ago, impressive as health & safety authorities go. We did indeed publish the news of the report online and the following is a summary.

MOM tower crane incident ‘Learning Report’

Singapore’s Ministry Of Manpower (MOM) has published a comprehensive ‘Learning Report’ covering a fatal tower crane jib collapse in November 2019 in which the jib buckled and failed while lifting a bundle of scaffold components. The failure was caused, it seems, by the erection ropes catching up on the crane’s gantry, causing a sudden jib drop, with the dynamic and adverse load direction leading to the jib buckling and coming down onto the site. The report can be downloaded from the <http://www.vertikal.net/library>



Tumble dryer tech

Dear Leigh,

I agreed with your editorial regarding modern technology. My 1998 tumble dryer still stands outside the garage rear door and works a treat despite its rusty exterior. It cost £10 in West Bromwich when the kids were babies. One of the babies turned 20 in October and Max is 22 today!

With tumble dryer as consistently reliable as the day I carried it home in my car by taking out the back seat.

Keep up the good work!

Mike Ponsonby

Thanks, Mike. Our new old-school tumble dryer is working a treat... and all is well in the household once again.

Sherman Ward (Bud) Bushnell 1921 – 2020

This month brings the sad news of the death of Genie founder Bud Bushnell, who passed away on Saturday the 14th of November at the grand old age of 99.

Bushnell was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. During World War II he served in the United States Navy as a radar technician aboard the USS Siboney, operating in the Pacific Theatre. After the war, Bushnell joined and settled into his father's refrigeration business. However he had always been a bit of an inventor and was forever looking for a better way to do things and so began experimenting with a design for pneumatic powered doors. After 15 years working for his father, Bushnell began his own business building an innovative sliding door that was quickly taken up by local supermarkets. After building the operation into a profitable business, he sold it in 1964.



Bud Bushnell later in life



Bud Bushnell (left)

Meanwhile, in 1960, an electrical business in Seattle, seeking a solution for lifting and installing fluorescent lights developed a crude hoist type product that used bottled carbon dioxide as a power source. They called it 'Genie' after customers referred to 'the magic in the bottle'. Genie Manufacturing built about 200 hoists over the next four years, however they were poorly made and notoriously unreliable. The company ran into difficulties and went into receivership. It was bought by Seattle Bronze whose owner, Dale Fox, asked Bushnell if he would consider applying his skills to perfect the product and commercialise it.

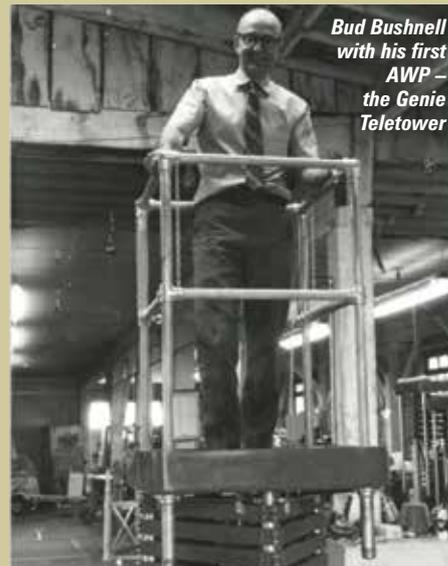
Bushnell took up the challenge and joined Seattle Bronze in June 1966. However, before he had completed the job, the company faced its own bankruptcy and Bushnell got the opportunity to take over the entire Genie inventory and business.

The next few years involved a lot of hard work and perseverance perfecting the product and selling hoists. Bushnell would travel around the country with a Genie Hoist in the trunk/boot of his car, visiting potential customers and demonstrating the unit, selling them one by one.



Genie hoist

In 1968 he got his first big break when Dick Kirk from the Washington State Department of Economic Development asked Bushnell if he could bring a contingent of Japanese businesspeople to see Genie and look at the Hoist. The visitors were infatuated with the device and soon an order for 1,500 units was received. Bushnell faced the challenge of ramping up production to cope, but from then on things became a little easier.



Bud Bushnell with his first AWP – the Genie Teletower

In 1974, while attending an exhibition, a fellow exhibitor is said to have remarked: "If you put three of those cylinders together, and put a platform on them, you could lift a man." Bushnell immediately set to work and created his first Aerial Work Platform which became the 42ft Genie Teletower.

In the 1970s, Bushnell brought his son-in-law, Bob Wilkerson, into the company, appointing him as president in 1978. His son Ward Bushnell also joined the business to manage manufacturing, while Roger Brown led the company's sales efforts. With a strong team on board, Bud Bushnell was able to step back from the business and let the young management team build the company into a world leader, moving to its current headquarters in Redmond in 1982.

Bushnell's wife Mary Jean Moore passed away in 2013, shortly after they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. Bushnell was described as a 'tinkerer and craftsman' throughout his life and his projects included building boats, tree houses, and other objects, mostly from wood. An example of his pioneering spirit is demonstrated in his 1974 adventure, in which he took his family on a voyage from Florida to Puget Sound, via the Panama Canal, in a 40ft ketch called The Sunpiper. Choosing to navigate by the stars alone, he was not only an accomplished sailor, but a keen rower something he continued until well into his 90s.

In the words of his family: "More than what he achieved was who he was as a man. Bud was someone who led our family with grace, compassion, and love and he extended that to everyone he met. His humility and generosity enabled him to treat all people with respect and honour. He was a thoughtful listener, able to remember details and reflect on what was shared using follow-up questions in response. A thinker who pondered, Bud always wondered and encouraged others about what could be. He was consistently optimistic, a continual learner who embraced technological changes moving from a Samsung to an iPhone at 95 years old so he could better communicate with his children and grandchildren on FaceTime."

"Bud was truly a legend, living an epic life that most could only dream about. He seized the life he aspired for while showing us the right way to live – investing in his family, following his and their dreams, bettering the world, and doing it all with love."

Bushnell is survived by his six children: Robbin, Ward, Peggy, Jann, Terry, and Bill, along with his sister Jerry, 18 grandchildren, and 30 great-grandchildren. A celebration of his life is planned for next summer. Donations in his name may be made to the Ben Towne Center for Childhood Cancer Research.