

# Readers Letters



Dear Leigh,

I received the latest copy of Cranes & Access this morning and giving it a quick flick through after unpacking it, the article on page 49 about selling your business "Who will take over your company" caught my eye, and I started reading and went to the end. What a great story, I wish I had seen this a couple of years back, but that's life! I always enjoy the mag, and sadly perhaps read it cover to cover, but would be nice to see a few more things like this, maybe one in every edition?

Keep up the good work.

Geoff Giddings

We will certainly try to do more of this type of thing, just need the subjects and inspiration.

Editor

## John Rome 1949-2021

**UK crane market veteran John Rome has died after losing his battle with cancer.**



Rome was a gentleman in more ways than one and during his long career he worked with for Grove, Kato/Kranlyft, Spierings and Böcker. Since 2002 he has been operating his business - John Rome Cranes - doing what he knew best: selling a range of new and used cranes worldwide.

News of his passing predictably generated a great deal of tributes, here are a few of them:

*"A very sad day indeed for the crane industry. I'm proud to have known and worked with John professionally and socially for many years. He was a great guy who loved doing what he did best - selling cranes! RIP John." Peter Burwell*

*"Very sad news. I found John to be a true gentleman and enjoyed fantastic trips to Japan and Sweden with him. RIP John." David Slack*

*"Very sad news. Remember him very well and we had lots of fun together. RIP John!"*

*"Very sorry to see John go like this. We were competitors always, but we rubbed along very well. It was always nice speaking with you and you will be missed in the crane business. Thoughts for your family."*

*"This is such sad news. John worked alongside me on the Böcker product at Kranlyft UK and was a true gentleman. I lost contact with him over the past couple of years, so this news is such a shock. My deepest condolences go out to his family, RIP John."*

*"I only met John a few times and found him most helpful. RIP John"*



John Rome (L) handing over a Böcker crane to Alastair Weatherston of BCHC in 2014

Dear Leigh,

Was sorry to hear about the postponement [of Vertikal Days], but was thinking this week that it might have been a blessing? Weather is dreadful and all this talk of new variants would have been spoilers. September might be colder, the days shorter – but many of us are keen to get back to normal and meet up with everyone so fingers crossed,

We are really looking forward to it.

Jim Gray

## Alan Michael Hemmings 1944 – 2021

**UK crane and access industry veteran Alan Hemmings passed away on 4th of April, after a long battle with cancer. He was 76.**



Alan Hemmings at Hird

Hemmings spent the final 18 years of his career with Hull based crane and access sales and rental company Peter Hird & Son, where he was managing director from 2009 until he retired at the end of December 2011.

He was also a very active member of the Access Link, the association of privately owned regional rental companies, and past chairman of the Lincolnshire and Humber branch of the construction charity Lighthouse Club - a charity, he continued to support the long after he had retired.

Hemmings began his working life as an apprentice at the Scunthorpe steelworks, later joining the British Army and became a corporal in the East Anglian Brigade, serving in Cyprus, Germany, Malta and Northern Ireland. He left the Army in 1966 and found the crane industry joining Scott Greenham and then entering the powered access industry, joining PTP in 1993 after it was acquired by the Scott Brothers.

Hemmings was a keen pilot and at one time owned his own light aircraft, he once revealed that he had at least two crash landings during his flying career. He lived his life on the basis that you should "live life to the full and have no regrets". He leaves behind his wife Ann, children Yvonne, Dawn, and Richard, along with four grandchildren.



John Ball (L) presents an Access Link donation to the Lighthouse Club to Hemmings in 2017

He requested that rather than flowers people donate to The Lighthouse Club: [www.lighthouseclub.org](http://www.lighthouseclub.org) or Cancer Research: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/allan-hemmings1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/allan-hemmings1)



Hemmings retirement send off by the Access Link

**Sander George Splinter 1971-2021**

**Sander Splinter of Mammoet, ESTA and more recently Eriks, passed away on April 30th after losing a battle with cancer, he was only 49.**

Splinter began his career in 1995 as a project planner with Stork Engineers & Contractors working with petrochemical clients. His first direct involvement with cranes and heavy lifting came when he joined Van Seumeren in 1998 as a technical sales manager. When Van Seumeren acquired and merged with Mammoet in 2000 he was appointed branch manager for the combined business in the Netherlands. Three years later he was promoted to director of cranes for the Benelux region and was group information and technology director for a couple of years, before taking over as managing director of Mammoet Netherlands in 2010, and Mammoet Europe in 2011. That same year he was appointed as president of the crane section of European crane and heavy haulage association ESTA.

In 2017 he was persuaded to transfer to Eriks, the industrial services group within the SHV group, where he was appointed managing director of its Dutch operations. He was clearly being groomed for greater things, but sadly we will never know how it might have worked out. He leaves behind his wife Mieke and three daughters Tess, Lynn and Jenthe.

A formal statement from Eriks said: "With great sadness we inform you that Sander passed away on April 30, 2021 at the age of 49. Sander was not only a valued person within Eriks, he was also known for his charismatic and warm way of dealing with people. He was an inspiration to many and a very genuine and natural leader. Sander worked passionately to achieve the best for Eriks in everything he did for the company. He lived his life the same way, with lots of energy and enjoyment in his hobbies, especially cycling."

Eriks chief operating officer, Floris Jan Cuypers, added: "In Sander, Eriks loses a born leader and a particularly fine colleague. He worked at Eriks Netherlands since January 1, 2018. Before that he had worked with heart and soul at our sister company Mammoet for 20 years. Despite his love for Mammoet, Sander went fully for his new challenge at Eriks and found the passion for technology. He quickly felt an affinity with the business, customers and employees. You could say that there was purple blood running through his veins, red from Mammoet and blue from Eriks. Sander was a beacon of calm and resilience for both his customers and our employees. It must have been difficult for him to write his last impressive letter to the people of Eriks. Strong and caring until the very end. We will miss him dearly."

**Andy Whitfield 1964-2021**

**Andy Whitfield, a popular career long crane operator with UK based John Sutch Crane Hire, passed away in mid May following a battle with cancer. He was 57. He joined John Sutch in 2005 and in his time with the company was assigned a variety of cranes ranging from a 40 tonne Liebherr to a 70 tonne Tadano All Terrain crane.**

A statement from the company said: "It is with a heavy heart that we announce that our much loved and respected colleague of many years, Andy Whitfield has passed away. Our hearts and deepest thoughts are with the family at this time. He will be truly missed. Good night God bless to one of the best xx"

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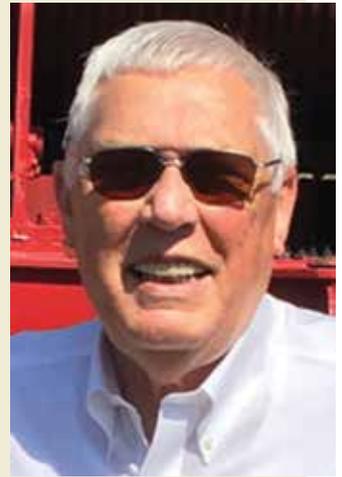
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### Stephen Edward Pirigyi 1937-2021

Stephen 'Steve' Pirigyi, 83, passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at the end of February, at the Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina due to complications from cancer surgery.



Pirigyi spent his entire working life selling cranes, heavy equipment and related services, a job he loved. He spent 38 years as salesman, and later regional manager for Manitowoc Cranes before 'retiring' in 2003. The retirement did not last long however and in 2005 he joined H&E Equipment, helping the company find Manitowoc cranes for its re-manufacturing and resale programme. In 2009, he began working with Wheco as a structural repair rep and finally Cleveland Crane & Shovel Sales right up until his death.

Steve Pirigyi had a well-earned reputation for integrity and honesty, and it is said that he never sold anything that wasn't right for his customer. He was even known to have pointed customers towards competitors when he believed it was the best product for their needs. He leaves behind his beloved wife Joan, sons Stephen and Christopher, three grandchildren and two dogs, not to mention dozens, hundreds of friends and past colleagues.

On the day he passed away his son Chris wrote: "My father passed away suddenly this morning after having surgery for cancer. He was doing fine and was supposed to come home on Monday. The doctors actually said he was cured, but I guess God needed to take him. He loved all you guys in the industry and loved cranes with a passion. He was Manitowoc through and through and loved doing his craft and never wanted to retire. He was the most amazing father and grandfather, and we are just devastated. I am who I am because of him. He was my mentor in life and he is the single reason why I was so successful in my career. He made me be the best human being I could be. I am blessed to have had such a wonderful life with him. No regrets!"

"He enjoyed so much posting on LinkedIn and getting his updates and stories and man did he have a lotta' stories! And you guys are always so kind to acknowledge his posts and I just wanted to say that thank you for being there with him. I love you dad and I don't know what we're gonna do without you, but we'll get through it. Hug your loved ones and appreciate every day you have with them."