

READERS LETTERS

FRANSIE LYON R.I.P

We received the sad news that Fransie Lyon, the co-owner of Tadano distributor UK Cranes with husband Joe Lyon passed away in early June. The couple sold the business to Tadano in 2014 and retired to South Africa. Since then, they have moved to Mossman, New South Wales, Australia.

As we go to press, we are waiting to hear from Joe and hopefully provide a fitting tribute in the next issue.



Fransie and Joe Lyon the day they left UK Cranes in 2014

TONY THORNTON 1967-2022

So sad to see another nice fellow bite the bullet. I liked Tony. Never any smoke and mirrors with him, just right in your face.

Hope you find your peace.

My condolences to his family.

Jerry Kist

A TIME FOR CHANGE

Debate is my motivation for writing this, not controversy. I want to get that out there, right off the bat.

I'm neither protagonist nor militant in nature, but I am tired. Tired of hearing the same complaints again, and again, and again. Something needs to change, and I think it's high time our industry accepted this.

With over 22 years in the crane industry, I've travelled the length and breadth of this entire country for work. Never has the call for a wage rise been so loud, or so consistent. Yes, there are currently factors out of the control of our industry, with the cost of living and rising energy prices which affect everyone, but it's more than that. Operators are disillusioned with a general feeling of being grossly undervalued like never before. The need to work inhuman hours to put food on the table never more common.

The "poorest man on the building site" has never been more prevalent, and in a building industry that is positively booming! Why is that exactly? A building industry that has never placed more emphasis on health and safety, or direct responsibility for that matter on the operator.

Who on a building site has more responsibility than a crane operator exactly? And why isn't that responsibility reflected in the pay rate? We live in an age where most big building sites openly advertise "top rates paid" for every trade you care to mention, yet these same companies want to pay buttons for the machines that facilitate every worker on the site! The knock on effect of course is your pay rate remains paltry by comparison. It needs to change!

Skills and experience are earned the hard way, making mistakes and learning from that comes at a cost.

Improving and honing to the point where it's easy for the hirer to complete his job. Why should that be undervalued?

To travel with £1 million plus of machinery hundreds of miles around the country without incident on a weekly

basis. Why should that asset not be valued on a par with a bricklayer, a joiner, a plumber or welder. Are our skills worth less? If not, then why (conservatively speaking) do we have to work on average a third more hours for a similar take home?

Your chippy or brickie mates are on the way home at 14:30 because they can afford to. They will also be on the golf course at the weekend if the mood takes. How many of us can say that? You just know you will be last off that site and returning to that yard at 19:00 at the earliest. Oh and by the way "I need you to work on Sunday!" Sound familiar?

Consequently, as any seasoned crane operator will tell you, that eventually puts a strain on family life and relationships.

The whole "race to the bottom" argument in regards to hire rates has been done to death. I believe most guys in our industry understand and indeed sympathise with employers on this. We are acutely aware how competitive our Industry is.

Only the blind or the dim can't see the current trend of smaller firms going to the wall or getting perilously close to shutting the gates. The switch to white diesel and the inevitable M.O.T. legislation to follow will only ramp up pressure on firms, unless there is a collective agreement to pass on costs to the hirer.

So, what's to be done? What's the solution? Something tangible needs to be forthcoming because personally speaking I've never encountered so many people currently looking at alternative career choices.

Thoughts.....

by (an Anonymous Operator)

As you can see this person insisted that their name be withheld but has been keen to share his thoughts with the industry as a whole.

ELECTRIC CRAWLER CRANES - REALLY?

I have to confess to see the article on electric crawler cranes and thinking "here we go this will be a load of BS!" Not that I ever think this of your articles, they are always considered knowledgeable and more importantly readable - believe me that is not always the case with the trade media!

But I am sceptical enough about electric cars so a 250 tonne crawler crane be serious! However, after having read through it, I began to think 'well I can see how it might work as long as you do have a decent power supply of course which can be a big if. But here in Singapore its almost all urban and given the way the government thinks this will be a bigger issue and is likely to be handed down as an edit with a very short lead time, especially if it has been seen to work on real jobsites in cities like London.

So, thank you another great issue, just wish I had been able to make it to Vertikal Days, would have loved to have seen the machine and listened to it operating.

Keep up the good work - great job.

Ian

While this correspondent did not request that we withhold his family name he signed the letter off this way and has not responded to a request to use his full name before going to press. An oversight on our part as we should have asked when it arrived, not while proofing.

DAVID STEEL

Dear Leigh

I was sad to hear of the passing of David Steel and thought I would share the following photograph with you. It is one of the few I have found of David - (he never liked his picture taken) it is not that brilliant but maybe you can use it. It was the day he signed the Coles agreement with HDW in September 1983 - the other one signing is Wim Haasbroek.

Jeanine Decock

HDW was founded in 1982 by Wim Haasbroek, Frans van den Dool and Bas van de Wetering, following the bankruptcy of Coles crane distributor Van Kranenburg. David Steel and Cole then agreed that they would take over the account. In 1985 Grove acquired Coles and HDW was selected as the Grove Coles distributor over Grove dealer Geveke.

In 2001 the three partners sold HDW to Caterpillar dealership owner Pon, which also owned aerial lift sales and rental company Gunco. The company continues to prosper as part of the Mateco group.



Left to Right Wim Haasbroek, Frans van den Dool and Bas van de Wetering of HDW, Jeanine Decock (then Jappes), Peter Cooper and Andre Faes.