

# READERS LETTERS

## GREAT COVER

Dear Sir,

Just received my latest copy of Cranes & Access what a wonderful cover photograph! Something completely different and reminds me of a great evening, well done and thank you to Team Vertical Days.

Now you need to think about how to up the ante next year.

Bob Simms



## EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Good afternoon Mr Darwin,

My name is Paul Keld, I'm a freelance guesstimator, primarily groundworks/civils/RC/traditional supers.

As I'm 65 my IT experience is limited to dim paper, scale rules, sharp pencils and Excel, which is more than adequate for chucking out BOC's with rates created from first principles.

However, as I really can't be arsed with spending money on continually updating estimating software packages etc... my capabilities are frowned upon by companies desperate for estimators. Mainly due to the young whippersnappers in charge, who have little on site experience, don't know what a 4 inch slipper is (100mm dia three quarter section branch channel bend, to be precise) or the difference between a Figure 7 kerb and an HB2 - there isn't, just it's modern name.

Most are just number crunchers who refuse to admit that us old-timers might not have flashy degrees in modern methods of quantity surveying BUT we know how to get things done in half the time and at a quarter of the cost.

However, as their HR departments insist on using the latest box ticking IT Gizmo packages costing £10k or more and we don't know what box to tick just to get us past 'page one' we have no chance whatsoever. My thoughts on the matter are backed up by my elder daughter's partner, who designs software packages and knows from first hand experience, grizzly old boys with decades of programming experience - going back to Windows 3.1 and before! - having their (handwritten) application letters binned.

Regards, Paul Keld, Romsey, UK

## HYDROCON - A POTTED HISTORY

Hydrocon cranes were built by Lambert Engineering of Glasgow, Scotland, a general engineering company owned by Jack Lambert who sold it to George Jesner who designed the first Hydrocon crane, starting up as a one-man operation in 1949. The name came from Hydraulic Construction with an O added to link the two abbreviations - the name was intended to highlight the fact that the company claimed to be the first to use hydraulic winches in place of the usual mechanical winches with clutches and brakes.

The first crane was bought by the engineering contractor Brown & Tawse, which became sales agents for Hydrocon in the north of England and also offered maintenance services from its workshops.

The first production facility was located at Maryhill docks in Glasgow, later relocating to Burnfield works in Giffnock. In the late 1950s the company was relocated to a new location on the site of an old ironworks in Coatbridge, Glasgow - by then it had around 500 employees.

In 1963 George Jesner sold the business to publicly quoted General Electrical Mechanical Systems and joined its board becoming deputy chairman. The company closed around 1987.

The first cranes were built on ex-War Department vehicles which George Jesner would buy at MOD sales and refurbish before installing the crane superstructures and fibreglass cabs. When steel production returned to normal as rationing finished in the 1950's, the cranes began using Thornycroft chassis and then Albion and Foden built units. It later began building custom crane carriers using components manufacturers such as Ford with its 'Trader' 4x4 chassis.



## A TIME FOR CHANGE

*The following comments have been received regarding the anonymous letter last month from a highly experienced crane operator, regarding the current pay levels in the UK industry. Sadly no crane hire company managers or owners have dared or risked commenting on the letter even confidentially.*

I have been seeing this issue come up more and more on social media lately so it's definitely a topical issue.

The op raises some very valid points but I think this would benefit greatly with some input from those at the helm of the crane rental companies themselves. No doubts at all that there is currently a lot of discontent from operators these days so balanced discussion can only be a good thing.

Cicsy

I am in total agreement with the points put over here. This person seems as frustrated as I am with the current situation. It seems as though this is the only service to the construction, wind power, oil and gas, rail and home building industries that the prices are customer driven and therefore companies are offering rock bottom quotes to obtain jobs. This needs to change and clients need to pay what's right for the service they receive. Well said this person.

Billy G

**MICHAEL C. LIPTAK 1931-2022**

**Michael Liptak the co-founder and driving force behind ALL Erection & Crane Rental in Cleveland, Ohio has died.**

**He passed away on Saturday June 18th, at the age of 91.**

Liptak started out as a dump truck driver working in a quarry, before starting his own crane rental company in 1964, when he and his wife Marvine along with brothers Larry and Jake - who died last year - founded ALL Erection in Independence (Cleveland), Ohio with the purchase of a 46 tonne/52.5 ton American #20.

The four built the business up over the years through sheer hard work, determination and commitment. In 1978 they acquired Dawes Rigging & Crane Rental of Wisconsin which was followed by the opening of an aerial work platform division in 1980. That same year it moved into West Virginia, buying an existing branch from a regional company ACE. The company continued opening new branches and spreading its coverage, moving into Georgia in 1989 and acquiring Jeffers Crane Service in North Western Ohio in 1995. The move into Tennessee came in 1999 when it also acquired a branch in Elkhart, Indiana from Central-Rent-A-Cranes. Further branches were opened in the Carolinas, Alabama and Louisiana, making it the largest privately held crane rental company in North America, with a total of 33 branches across the country with a fleet of more than 3,500 cranes, and 1,500 employees.

In the words of the family obituary:

“Michael Liptak was a blue collar guy from a blue collar city, and he built his business through sweat, time and a handshake that was his bond. In the world Mike and his brothers grew up in, nothing came easy, but he wanted to make life a little easier for the working people who relied on heavy lift equipment to do their jobs because he was one of them. Up until his final days, Mike was still involved in the daily life at ALL, visiting branches and offering his advice and expertise. He was well known to weigh in on critical, or even seemingly mundane-business issue, because even if he had handed over the mantle of responsibility, he never stopped carrying the weight of his life’s work.”

He is survived by wife, Marvine, his four children son Michael and daughters Michele, Connie and Vicki, as well as his brother Larry and sister Carol. Along with seven grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

**‘BIG MIKE’ - MY DAD**

Speaking of his father, son Michael L. Liptak, the current chief executive said: “He pushed those around him to be the best they could be. And he could be that type of leader because there wasn’t a thing he hadn’t done himself. He drove trucks, operated cranes, fixed cranes when they broke, and saved enough to buy new ones when they were needed. From that foundation, he built everything we know here at ALL.”

“Known to many as Big Mike, he never stopped being excited about the basics of the business, perhaps best characterised by the kid-like way he felt compelled to go out and operate any new crane the company acquired. You can’t keep an operator out of the seat, and Mike was an operator at heart. From his blue collar beginning to creating a business enterprise, from his charming smile to his ability to raise pulses, Mike was about balance. If you met him in a restaurant, casino, or auction, you felt his warmth and fun and kindness pour over to you. If you met the man who built the business, you know he was tough and strong and took creating an industry from nothing seriously. He was serious, and he challenged others to take this enterprise as seriously, simply because he knew it mattered.”

“Everything Dad did was for the thousands upon thousands for whom he provided jobs over the years,” added Michael. “That was never lost on me or the rest of the second and now third generation family working at ALL. We were all lucky to have the shade of his mighty shadow. Everyone here is treated like family - and many actual families make ALL their life’s work. The family feeling extends to our customers and suppliers as well. That all started with Dad. He created a place where everyone was welcome, and the sky was the limit as far as advancement. He’s my inspiration, both as a leader and a person. To say he will be missed is a monumental understatement.”

