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READERS LETTERS

SILVANO BENCINI 1937-2026

We have received the sad news that **Silvano Bencini**, the president and co-founder of aerial lift and equipment manufacturers **Imer**, has died. He passed away on **Thursday, April 9th, at the age of 88.**



Silvano Bencini

In 1962, at the age of 25, Bencini and his co-founder set up Bencini & Salvadori in the town of Poggibonsi, north of Siena, to manufacture concrete mixers and small equipment. At the same time, another company was established in Certaldo, further north towards Florence, for the same purpose.

In 1973, the founders of the two companies agreed to merge the two businesses and coined the Imer name, standing for Industrie Macchine Edili Riunite. In the 1980s, they began expanding internationally, with Bencini the driving force behind the strategy. They began in France in

1981, adding Spain the following year, and making the brave move into the USA in 1990. In 1999, they acquired batching plant manufacturer Le Officine Riunite - Udine, and in 2006 began producing truck mounted concrete mixers in Turkey.

The big move, as far as we are concerned, came in 2009 when Imer entered the aerial lift market with the launch of a spider lift, followed by the acquisition of Iteco, which was based in Pegognaga, south of Mantua. At the end of 2010, Iteco was rebranded as Imer, and a new Imer Access division was formed. It has been growing at a steady pace ever since.

Bencini had a real passion for the business and its growth on a global basis, he remained dedicated to that dream until the end of his life. In 2017 he received a GIS Lifetime Achievement Award and also collected a number of regional business awards along the way. On top of all this served as a city councillor from 1999 to 2004.

Mayor Susanna Cenni said: "He was an enlightened entrepreneur who gave so much to our region and the entire community, to which he was always deeply connected."



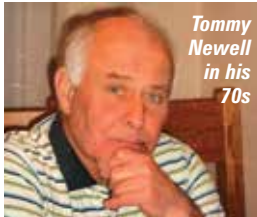
Silvano Bencini

The company added: "Today, a light that illuminated the lives of so many has gone out. He was the man who always dreamed and pursued, especially professionally, ambitious goals, goals we wanted to achieve together. Throughout his long life, he never stopped dedicating himself to his company and the people who were part of it, with a passion and foresight that are hard to match."

"He has always been and will remain the soul of the company, and at the same time, one of us. The man who, beyond his role, always had a helping hand to everyone, who made personal relationships his life's mission, who knew how to establish genuine relationships with people, without linguistic or cultural barriers."

THOMAS HENRY NEWELL 1938 - 2026

We have received the sad news that **UK tower crane and hoist veteran Tommy Newell** of **Vertical Transportation** has died. He passed away on **May 30th at the age of 87.** He leaves behind his son **Alan** and daughters **Yvette** and **Lisa**, sadly his wife **Yvonne** died some years ago, following a short illness.



Tommy Newell in his 70s

Raised in Muswell Hill, London, Tommy Newell became one of the well known characters in tower crane and hoist rental from the 1960s until 2017 when he sold the business to Trevor Jepson at City Lifting, and retired.

A talented motorcycle racer, he competed in many events including the Isle of Man TT and was still riding a 1,200cc Buell motorbike around London for site meetings well into his 70s. He also



On the racetrack

remained a hands-on tower crane erector.

His crane career began with Climbing Cranes Ltd, the UK dealer for Linden Alimak in the early 1960s. The tallest building in the UK at that time was the GPO Tower, now the Telecom Tower. It is rumoured he performed a handstand on top of the crane jib more than 180 metres in the air, purely for a bet.



He never quite gave up his biker days

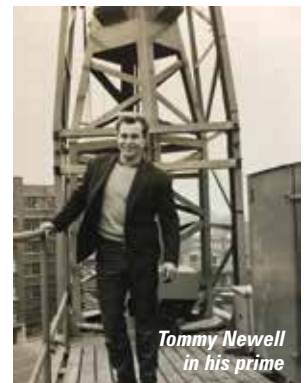
As a young tower crane erector



He then began working for Ferry Works Plant Hire, then a good few years later at Rapid Plant Hire until 1980 when he set up Vertical Transportation with his wife Yvonne, Ray Balach and three Swedish colleagues, Ingmar Pada, Nils Soderlov and Christer Klemets.

Tommy and Ray then took over the company and ran it together for many years. All the cranes

and hoists were of Nordic origin: Linden Alimak hoists, Linden Cranes, Tornborg Cranes from Sweden and Kroll Cranes from Denmark. The most well known cranes in the fleet were the Magni S40 and S46 Folding jib or swan neck tower cranes and the distinctive Kroll 103V 'pipe cranes'.



Tommy Newell in his prime

A Kroll 103V 'pipe crane' on a Skanska job in New Bond Street London



Tommy Newell's funeral will be held on Tuesday 14th July

Leaving From: The Woodman Inn, 21 Warrengate Road, Hatfield, AL9 7TT, with the Funeral Service starting at 13:00 at Oak Hill Lawn Cemetery and Crematorium, South Way, Hatfield, AL10 8HS. It will be followed by a reception at the Woodman Inn. The family has said that in order to assist with catering could anyone wishing to attend the reception please let them know via mail: michele@citylifting.co.uk or +44 7779 191331



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EUGENE C. 'GENE' GARDENHOUR 1932 - 2026

We have received the sad news that veteran Grove engineering vice president Gene Gardenhour has died.

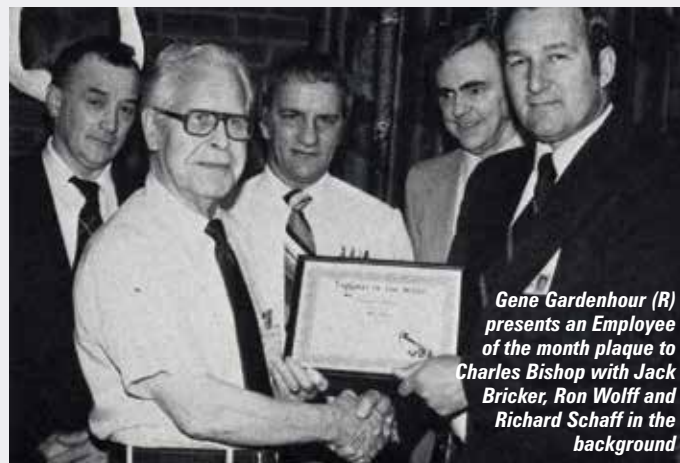
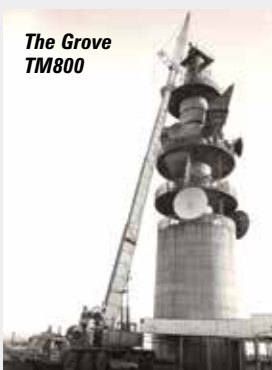
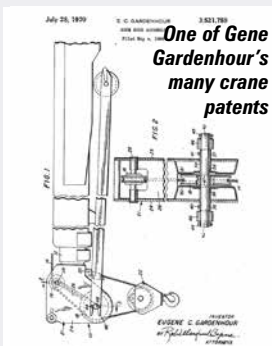
He passed away at Waynesboro Hospital, Pennsylvania, on May 29th at the age of 94. He is survived by his partner Teresa Papoutsis and his three children: Ray, Jan and Lee Gardenhour, along with four grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

After graduating from Waynesboro Senior High School, Gene Gardenhour began his career with local companies Landis Tool of Waynesboro, and Fairchild Aircraft in Hagerstown, Maryland. In the mid-1960s, when he was in his 20s, he joined Grove Manufacturing, which was beginning to shake up the staid mobile crane industry with its innovative telescopic truck and Rough Terrain cranes.

As his career developed, Gene faced the challenge of working alongside John Grove, a brilliant businessman who was not always the easiest person to work with, especially when it came to engineering and development. It has been said, on more than one occasion, that several Grove crane engineering developments credited to John actually came from Gene.

As the company moved into the 1970s, the pace of development gathered speed, and Gene Gardenhour became vice president of engineering at a time when the company made some of its greatest breakthroughs, including the futuristic TM800 with the innovative trapezoidal boom launched in 1971, the 45 tonne RT75s, and in 1978 the 73 tonne RT980, which took the Rough Terrain crane over 45 tonnes for the first time and became a best seller.

Gene also oversaw some less than successful products, such as the AT180 All Terrain, and in 1981, the world's largest truck crane at the time, the 225 tonne TM2500, which introduced the concept of boom pinning or 'Trap-Lock' as it was called. At



the same time, the team failed to overcome the challenges of developing a successful All Terrain. However, the blame for most of this was down to a corporate fear of selling products that were not totally reliable.

Many of the companies that dipped their toe into the All Terrain market at that time experienced serious reliability issues, mainly due to the lack of suitable componentry. Liebherr only managed to make a go of it due to a dogged determination to plough on in the face of regular customer breakdowns until componentry became 'state of the art'. That led to it taking over the leadership of the mobile crane market, along with a massive deal to supply hundreds of four axle All Terrain cranes to Russia for the new Trans-Siberian gas pipeline.

Gene Gardenhour was a first class crane engineer as well as a quite-mannered, tolerant and patient individual. He proved to be a good all-around manager, never losing his temper and rarely uttering a bad word about anyone, at least in public. He had a wonderful but quiet sense of humour and enjoyed a good joke.

On technical issues or requests, Gene would listen and think about and digest what had been said, discuss it with his team and then either come back with an ingenious solution or quote a huge number of engineering hours in order to dismiss the idea, rather than say no at the outset. He never appeared flustered, but was careful and calculated, although he could react rapidly when needed.

For example, when Grove appeared to be losing its Rough Terrain market leadership to the innovative new P&H Omega models - which made the RT60S look antiquated - Gene and his team worked around the clock to develop the RT500 Series, which went head to head with the Omega while keeping the classic Rough Terrain design. The P&H Omegas began to develop reliability issues, thanks to their unusual and quirky design, while Grove's market share went on to reach new heights.

Altogether, Gene Gardenhour spent around 40 years working for Grove before retiring towards the end of the 1990s.



The Grove TM 2500 with Traplock boom pinning

**KENNETH LESLIE HUGHES 1952 - 2026**

Construction and rental industry publisher, ARA director and publisher of Rental Management magazine, Ken Hughes has died. He passed away on May 8th at the age of 73 in Corpus Christi, Texas, after losing a battle with Lewy Body Dementia. He is survived by wife Sonia, son Robert and three grandchildren.

Born in London, he began his career as a salesman with building magazine publisher Thompson, and later McLean Hunter, where he was associate publisher for International Construction magazine. Then, in 1996, it was off



to Chicago to join Primedia, which published mining-related magazines. Next stop was Scranton Gillette, where he was publisher for a number of construction related magazines, including Roads & Bridges. And finally, he joined the American Rental Association as publisher of its rental magazine - Rental Management. He was also very active at the ARA Show, during build up and the event itself, along with the side events and receptions - particularly the International Reception.

He was always consistent, interested in everyone and how they were doing, always charming and helpful and spotting him walking down the aisle towards you at the show was always a positive sight.

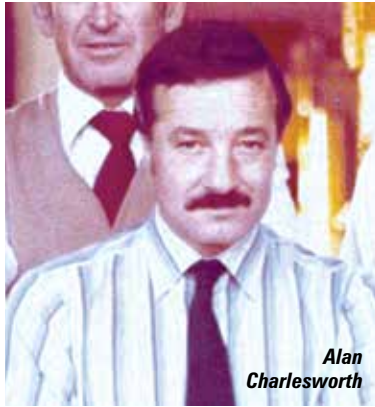
He was already missed by a good few people in the industry at the last couple of ARA Shows.

ALAN CHARLESWORTH 1940 - 2026

Crane veteran Alan Charlesworth, formerly of Grove International, Krupp, Eurocrane Sales and Terex Cranes UK, passed away in mid-April at the age of 85. He leaves behind his wife Beryl and sons Simon and Matthew.

Alan Charlesworth began his crane career, as far as we know, at the end of the 1970s, initially as a member of the Grove sales team in the UK and was later appointed as district manager for southern Africa. During his time in the job, Grove's market share was significant, while he also helped grow sales in Kenya and Malawi by working closely with the local distributors.

Charlesworth remained with the company until the mid-1980s, when he left for Krupp Cranes, which was expanding its All Terrain crane production in Wilhelmshaven at the time. He initially worked with the company at its UK office in Southall, London, before setting up a Krupp mobile crane division in Abingdon.



Alan Charlesworth



With the sales force from Premier Metal South Africa



In the Krupp Days - handing over a new crane to Hannah Crane Hire - under the Tyne bridge

Grove acquired the Krupp mobile crane business in 1995, and around that time, Charlesworth left to set up on his own. In mid 1995 he set up EuroCrane Sales to sell new and used cranes, later changing to European Cranes, selling new PPM cranes as its dealer, and then Terex cranes, when it acquired PPM. Finally, in 2001, the company became Terex Cranes (UK) after Terex decided to take over the UK crane distribution and acquired the business, later rebranding it as Demag Mobile Cranes.

Alan Charlesworth left the business shortly afterwards, but remained involved with the crane industry for several years after that, by helping set up Sunderland based Crane Parts in 2000 with Sam Walker and others, to distribute replacement parts for Krupp, Grove and Coles cranes, and then, as far as we know, he retired and was no longer involved with cranes.

Speaking of Alan, one person who worked alongside him said: "He was hard working, but also lots of fun with amazing events. Fortunately, I did not personally experience the sad closure of the Krupp Crane division in the UK in the mid 1990s. But most of the team joined Alan's new PPM set-up."

"Alan was certainly an unforgettable crane legend and was, what you so nicely call in the UK, a 'character'. I would not want to have missed a minute of the time I spent working with him, something I am sure is true for most of my colleagues at the time and his customers. In terms of my career and business life, I owe him a lot."

Kelvin Prince added:

"Very sad news to read, I met Alan when I worked for Baldwins Industrial

A European Cranes advert from the late 1990s

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Services, my stepfather, Clive Ritchie also worked for the same company. Unfortunately, Clive had been diagnosed with cancer, which had become terminal. Alan & Marlis had always stayed close with Clive and my mum during his illness, and towards the end Alan suggested arranging a benevolent dinner to raise some money, which in turn sent Clive, my mum and my two year old sister on, I guess their last holiday."

"With the help of Marlis and, I believe, The Lighthouse Charity, the night was arranged in London with all the crane hire companies and I'm told it was a great success with plenty of wind-ups & dodgy presentations. I understand the money raised also went on to help other people within the industry. Not only was he a great businessman but showed great compassion and will be hugely missed."

"My sincere condolences to the family."

Ex-colleague Paul Richards said: "Alan was some character - we had many good times together at Grove in the UK and travelling in Europe in the 80's - working hard and playing hard ... long time ago, but it seems like only yesterday. Sad news, fond wishes ... to Beryl and the family from Paul and the 'Taffia'"

Laurie. E. Wilson 1929 - 2026

We have also received the belated news that Australian crane rental veteran and entrepreneur Laurie Wilson of Wilson Mobile Cranes and Skymaster Plant Hire, passed away on February 6th, having been ill for some time. We plan to do a full tribute to this incredible individual in the next issue of Cranes & Acces magazine.

DIRK VOLKER KELP 1939 - 2026

We have received the sad news that Dirk Kelp, a former chief engineer at Mannesmann Demag, and chief executive of Gottwald Port Technology - now part of Konecranes - and a non-executive director



Dirk Kelp

of Demag cranes in the UK in 2001/2002, has died. He passed away on May 6th at the age of 86 and leaves behind his son Tim and daughter Ulla, along with five grandchildren.

Dr Kelp worked with Demag throughout the late 1970s and through the 1980s. In 1988, he was given the challenging job of integrating the Gottwald acquisition into the Demag fold.

In 1994, he moved to Gottwald Port Technology, where he was appointed chief executive. The business was sold to private equity firm KKR in 2002, with Kelp remaining at the helm until his retirement at the end of 2004, some five months after reaching the age of 65. Afterwards, he cared for his wife, who was seriously unwell until she passed away earlier this year.

A past colleague at Mannesmann Demag said: "Dr Dirk Kelp was a polite and approachable chief, always accepting new ideas and interested in future things and developments."

"He had a keen ear for new concepts from Demag customers and headed up the development of iconic lattice boom cranes such as the CC 2800, TC 4000, TC 2800, PC 9600,

1,250 tonne CC 8800 and then there was the 1,600 tonne CC 12600, which was truly a product of the future, initially built in 1996 as a special one off crane for Van Seumeren - now Mammoet, (it followed the CC 12000 built for DevriTras - part of Italian heavy lift group De Vizia).

"He and his team were at the forefront of heavy lift cranes and led the market for many years."

Konecranes, which acquired Gottwald Port Technology issued the following statement:

Dr. Dirk Kelp

Our long-time managing director of Konecranes GmbH, formerly Gottwald Port Technology GmbH, passed away at the age of 86. Until his retirement in 2004, he played a key role in shaping and influencing the development and career of our company.

Dr. Kelp was distinguished by his high level of expertise, his integrity, and his energy, and embodied the image of a leader in the best possible way. He was a role model within the company.

The further development of the Gottwald brand was always close to his heart, which he continued to pursue even after his retirement.

We will cherish his memory and his heart.

The Management and Employees of Konecranes Bright days, don't cry when they are over, Smile that they happened.

More tributes

Former colleague, Barry Barnes, said: "My personal memory was meeting him for the first

time in 1979. I was standing on the outrigger of the TC 4000 that we sold to J D White, while it was on test at the plant in Benrath, Düsseldorf."

"I had just joined the company, and from that day on, we became good friends. He was always there for a chat and willing to share his knowledge. He had a great respect for crane rental companies worldwide and was always interested to hear what the market wanted and often visited customers with me to show our latest developments."

David Morton, who ran Grayston White and Sparrow in the early 1980s, remembers Dirk very well and how they cooperated with Demag to design and deliver the PC 9600, which led to similar cranes since. He remembers him with admiration as "a listener and someone who delivered."

An ex-colleague added: "Unusual for an engineer, he would rarely, if ever, say No. If you asked for a change or new development, he would typically say: "I think that this is possible." He was honest as the day and totally reliable, while having a wonderful sense of humour which he never lost."



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